**St Martins Church – Nacton**

St Martin’s like all churches has continued to be significantly influenced by the presence of Covid-19. However, as restrictions were reduced during the summer months and the vaccination programme has unfolded it has been possible to provide services which resemble a more normal programme of events. Weddings, funerals and baptisms have again taken place with a sensible application of restrictions, principally the wearing of face masks which continue.

Five weddings during the year, an increased number of services, and a welcome return to a couple of regular annual events, also provided a welcome bolster to the funds. Costs were kept under control allowing the Church of England quota to be paid in full and St Martin’s also made a significant contribution to the new Benefice Fund.

It is hoped that in the future more people will feel confident to return to the regular church services which take place every other Sunday. Church flowers have continued to be provided throughout the year with terrific displays at Easter and particularly over Christmas. We are fortunate to have a skilled group of volunteers who, unseen, provide displays that enhance and brighten St Martin’s. The Flower Ladies are happy to arrange a display on the Memorial table in the Broke Chapel in memory of a loved one. Details are available in the church porch.

A small group of volunteers ensure that the church is open seven days a week throughout the year between 9.30am and 4.30pm.

Just before Christmas a coffee morning was arranged in the village hall. We were delighted by the numbers who came to support the event which far exceeded our expectations given the presence of the Omicron variant at that time. I think we learned that there is a desire within our small community for people to enjoy each other’s company again. As humans we are gregarious and need the company of others to thrive. Holding events like this are not only a demonstration of faith but also a practical way of enabling people to reconnect with friends and communities outside their normal circle.

Covid has had an impact on our income due to the reduced attendance. Our approach has therefore been one of husbanding resources and prioritising essential repairs.

We have been fortunate that there have not been any major repairs - loose tiles on the roof have been replaced. Given that there are many thousands of tiles we will no doubt need to return to this issue in due course.

In the Autumn we held another round of bulb planting in the churchyard in weather conditions which were not optimal! The good news was that the bulbs were well watered in. The event was possible owing to a generous donation of bulbs which were much appreciated. The churchyard continues to be available for burials and the interment of ashes and has been used for this purpose on a number of occasions throughout the year.

In the autumn part of a tree on the north boundary fell across the bin area. Upon inspection by the parish tree warden it became clear that the tree was a Wych Elm which is now a rare species It has somehow avoided the ravages of Dutch Elm disease.