**Church Wardens Report 2022 – 2023**

Regular services have been resumed after covid on a bi-weekly basis with the occasional benefice service. It may appear odd in a sense that maintaining regular services is a thing to note but covid meant this was a challenge. More people have felt confident to return to the regular church services and this has been good to see. Coffee and biscuits and high quality cakes continue to be available after services and I believe this is an important part of our fellowship.

The church remains open 7 days a week throughout the year between 9.30am and 4.30pm.This is along with cleaning, flower arranging and administration is achieved by a solid group of volunteers.

The church has enjoyed some successes this year. Schools including Nacton CofE primary school and Orwell Park have made increasing use of the church and this has been noted by the diocese. In addition we have run a couple of ‘Messy Church’ events aimed at children which proved to be very popular particularly in the summer months. There is a desire to run more Messy Church events.

The church has run two very successful events in the village hall. The pre-Christmas ‘Bazar’ and the post - Christmas ‘Soup and Sweet’ events filled the village hall to capacity. The recent ‘Travellers Tales’ exhibition was well attended with many positive comments and it was great that the church was able to support Nacton Open Gardens.

We have become smarter in terms of our event marketing with continued use of leafleting and better use of WhatsApp to engage a range of people within the village and beyond. 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.

A key challenge this year has been the cost of heating. In very round terms it costs us about £100 to heat the church for each service.

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. Previous planting of bulbs has meant that the churchyard benefits from a terrific display of daffodils in the early spring

A key challenge we now face is the retirement of Rev Ian Wilson. The benefice is actively seeking to recruit a new Rector but inevitably this takes some time which will mean that there will be a gap between Ian’s departure and the arrival of a new rector. However I have no doubt that St Martin’s will rise to the challenges presented by the vacancy period however long it may be.

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.