

The Priory Church of St Mary
Keep in Touch
September 2025

Priory Church
of St Mary



Team St Mary are pleased to celebrate the achievement of the Gold ECO award and all the good work across the church community this summer whilst looking forward to a busy autumn and winter.

Our next team meeting is Saturday 27th September at 9:30am in the meeting room – everyone is welcome.

Going for Green Eco Church

Following a rigorous assessment, we have been granted a Gold Eco Church award. We are the first church in Monmouth Diocese and the only Grade One listed church building in Wales to achieve this level - an amazing achievement! The Archbishop of Wales will be presenting us with our Gold Award Plaque during our Harvest Thanksgiving Service.

But we are not stopping, we are continuing to work on making our church an example of the way in which we, as Christians, care for God's Creation.

We hope that you will also consider taking steps in your lives to do the same. Thank you to all who help us on this journey.

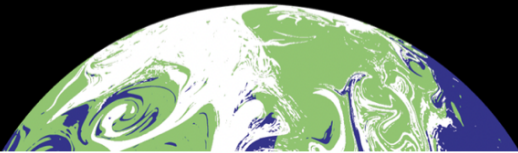
Please join the ECO team to celebrate the achievement of the Gold Award at Harvest together with the Archbishop of Wales the Rt Revd Cherry Vann.
9:30am on Sunday 21st September



DISCIPLESHIP

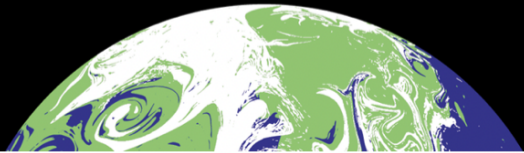
WE PRAY FOR OUR ENERGY SYSTEMS...

Almighty God, you molded our earthly home, breathing life and motion into a vast emptiness. Grant us the courage to work with your nature, to harness renewable resources to warm our homes and illuminate our shared spaces. Amen



WE PRAY FOR NATURE...

Creator God, who formed us and all living creatures from carbon dust, forgive us for viewing ourselves as separate from creation; give us a humble sense of ourselves as belonging to the earth so that we use our skill and power as stewards of the land from which we come and which we will return. Amen



God of Creation, we meet You here
In colour, scent, texture and pattern,
The humble perfection of all that grows.
Out of our restlessness we come,
To still our minds and open our senses to
beauty

In your name we cherish the web of life,
Light and shadow, bee and butterfly,
the shy birds that return when we leave.

Bless this land, bless its soil.
Our hands, our toils be blessed,
Our toil and our rest,
From seed to leaf,
from flower to fruit,
bless the garden, bless the growers.
Daniel Rutland, Celtic Daily Prayer

Stewardship

During the summer months the MA organised a series of Stewardship workshops, led by Zoe Ward from the Diocesan Office.

Sarah and Anne attended these on your behalf - the information a discussion focused on ways of increasing not only income, but useful use of time and resources.

Ways of increasing income included 'Easy Fundraising' a scheme which we at St Mary's are signed up for but are not yet using to advantage.

Bible Course

Starts in September

Three opportunities to join the course in either Raglan, Usk or Llanover

See the poster in church for details

St Mary's Book Club (Caroline Coogan)

If you enjoy reading and discussing your faith, then Book Club is for you.

Join us in the Meeting Room on the first Thursday of the month from 7 - 8 pm and you will receive a warm welcome.

What's happened in church over the summer?

Open Gardens

A couple of days full of joy as we welcomed visitors to the Usk Open Gardens Event to enjoy quiet time in the church and refreshments.

Thank you to everyone who helped to make the church so welcoming with plants in the porches, flower displays and warm smiles for all our visitors.

Ukrainian Family Support (Debbie Harper)

The final two-day trips for Ukrainian families took place over the summer with visits to Weston and Cattle Country. The families supported are very grateful and would ask that you continue to pray for those affected by the war who are currently living in the UK and their families at home in Ukraine.

History Day (Debbie Harper)

Our second history day was enjoyed by over 60 visitors who explored the mysteries of the churchyard. Our research took us to many interesting historical events including the life and times of St David Lewis.

Thank you to Andrew and Ian for helping to prepare the churchyard for our visitors.

Ken Phillips

At our recent strawberry tea Rev Sally presented Ken Phillips with a gift voucher from St Mary's in recognition of his time as Tower Captain.

Ken was also thanked for the many roles he has held, the work he has done and those that he continues to do. **Thank you, Ken.**

Concerts

Over the summer we welcomed the organ recital featuring Sam Bayliss was a treat – so lovely to hear our wonderful organ at its best, and the Chepstow Chatelaines with soloist Emilee Parry Williams also exploited the wonderful acoustics and provided the audience with a wonderful evening of music.

The singers from Graben-Neudorf entertained visitors following the strawberry tea. “Thank you” to the Usk Twining Organisation who presented the donations from the Graben Neudorf concert to the church.



What's happening in church?

Local Wardens Report (Sarah Byford and Carol Southwell)

During the summer months the regular Sunday services have been well supported, and we have had the pleasure of welcoming several newcomers to our congregations, and we were pleased to welcome Rev'd Hannah who officiated for the first time in Usk at an 8.am eucharist. Thursdays' Healing and Wholeness Service continues to fulfil its purpose with numbers attending on the increase.

Our thanks go to all those who contribute in any way to the smooth running of our services and providing access to visitors during the week - too many to name, you know who you are! The positive comments in the visitors books are an indication of how much our church being open is appreciated. Other services have included two weddings and several baptisms, and sadly several funerals. The Civic Service when our town's new mayor, Dianne Richards was welcomed to her role was a truly joyful occasion, attracting a large congregation.

During the next few months, we look forward to our Harvest Thanksgiving Service with Archbishop Cherry, who will present our Gold Eco Award Shield, followed by Harvest Lunch; the Art Exhibition; All Souls and Remembrance Day services; supporting the Usk Town Christmas celebrations in Bridge Street and to end the year our Carol Service, Crib service and midnight mass.

Music (Judith Lee)

The choir continues to be successful and recently joined the Raglan choir for the service at the end of August.

St. Mary's will be the venue for a number of concerts in the next few months – please support the events organised by local community organisations.

Please contact Judith if you are interested in helping with future concerts to liaise with the organisers and overseeing the arrangements for rehearsals and at the performance.

**Sat 18th October. - The Newport Philharmonic Choir and Byrdsong
Sunday 15th December -NSPCC Carol concert**

Ministry Area Report (Sarah Byford)

On Sunday June 29th the Annual Vestry meeting took place disguised as a wonderful and joyful service celebrating all that goes on in our Ministry Area. Copies of the fantastic Annual Report for 2024 are available at the back of the church.

At this service all the Members to the Ministry Area Council were elected, and hence to the two newly formed committees, Management and Mission. Since this service there has been a full MAC meeting, one Management and one Mission meeting.

The main business of the Mission meeting was the Chaplaincy Tent at Usk Show, where as well as providing hospitality, we will be hopefully increasing awareness of the united and positive contribution the church makes to community life in the Heart of Monmouthshire.

Draft minutes of MAC meetings are available at the back of the church, and if you wish to ask any questions or have issues which you would like discussed speak to **Ian or Jo Thompson** who are the members of MAC representing St Mary's.

Building Update (John Harris)

Churchyard Maintenance

James Pinder Arboricultural Consultant surveyed the trees in the churchyard and produced a report dated 4.7.2025. Although there are no serious concerns, we need to address the issues raised in the report.

Morris's ground maintenance has been instructed, they will complete the work in the report and also clear the excessive vegetation around a number of graves, the work will include treatment that will prevent future growth.

Lighting

The lighting control system was modified to include a dedicated router, this will make the system more robust to future developments.

Pantry

I have now received the drawings for the proposed pantry from the architect. The project is very straightforward however to satisfy all the conditions of a Grade 1 listed building and to provide access for all it has evolved into more than just adding shelves. I will submit a full faculty for the September DAC meeting this will include

A Heritage Impact Statement

A Statement of Significance

A Statement of need

Full Specifications

Schedule of Work including detailed drawings

Photographs

MAC evidence of consent for the work including financial approval

We will have to consult with CADW and satisfy all of their questions, they are very robust. I have had a provisional meeting with the CADW surveyor so hopefully this will make the process easier.

We will consult with the Victorian Society they always object, I believe our proposal is sensitive to the historical significance of the pews so I am confident we can satisfy any concerns.

Display Report (Caroline Coogan)

Many thanks to everyone who has helped with the displays in church.

In particular, it was a joy to see the ECO display which informs our many visitors of our achievements in that area.

The boards at the back of the church continue to advise details of our church life activities and the porches provide a welcome and a place to reflect.

Finance

We have been very grateful to David Wilmott who has managed to juggle the treasurer role alongside work and personal commitments. It is now time to find a successor for both the treasurer and the Gift Aid administrator. Please contact Revd. Sally. If you are interested in either of these roles.

What's happening in our community?

LHGG update, September 2025 (Jan Harding-Smith)

Our summer growing season has been a challenge because of the dry weather, but we've still managed to grow some great crops and give out almost 50 Gift Bags so far this year. The poly tunnel's irrigation system has proved invaluable and has reduced the amount of watering required throughout the summer.

We have been experimenting with drying techniques for preserving summer flowers, with a view to making dried flower posies for winter Gift Bags.

In the autumn we are planning on using some of our grapes and elderberries to make wine, as this is an activity that the group is very enthusiastic about!



Ladies Group (Heather Evans)

As always, we have quite a few regulars that enjoy our company & one or two newcomers for tea, coffee & cake. We keep up to date and Carol Southwell our leader informs us of any important Church Services & social events. Sometimes, someone will give a little talk on an interesting subject. We enjoy our annual Christmas/New Year meal - usually at The Castle Inn, Usk as central for everyone. Also, in the summer we have an afternoon tea. The venue this year will be at the back of the Church where there are good seating facilities and we are providing our own food. These events are kindly organised by Elizabeth Baker.

We continue to be a happy & fruitful 'Ladies' Group.

What's happening in our community?

Food Pantry (Sue Cowburn)

Although Usk and the rural community is seen as an affluent area, through my work with the Alms House Trust, I know that there are individuals and families who struggle to make ends meet.

Thanks to Sally and St Mary's we have been able to set up a "food pantry" for people to come and help themselves to basic groceries and toiletries during opening hours of the church.

Since the beginning of July there has been a steady uptake of the relatively few items on offer (funded by a donation and an MCC grant) which are housed temporarily in boxes on shelves by the north door.

Plans are afoot for a permanent pantry with an increased range of items on offer which will be funded by grants and donations of money when necessary.

Social events (Dee Seabourne)

The Social Group events are going from strength to strength and we have had a very busy summer. First, we opened the Church during Open Gardens Weekend and sold Tea/Coffee cakes and Ice Creams which went down extremely well due to the extremely hot weather on that weekend. Followed shortly after with the Strawberry Tea which we held in the Memorial Hall. We had a wonderful afternoon and 48 of us were joined by 37 members of the Youth Choir who came over from Germany as part of the Town Twinning. Strawberries and Cream and Scones with clotted Cream/Ice Cream were the order of the day and a great success. This couldn't have happened without our dedicated catering team and I would like to give them my sincere thanks.

Open the Book (Dee Seabourne)

We celebrated another successful year with our final school performance in June and were honoured to be invited by the school to watch the leavers performance put on by the year 6 children in July. Some of our groups were also able to attend the year 6 School Leavers Church Service in St Mary's in July. In July had a lovely afternoon in Beth Foden's garden where we had a review of our performances throughout the year and Beth outlined the programme for the new Academic year in September. We start the new term with Noah. We have a dedicated team of performers but there is always room for more so if anyone is interested in joining us, please tell one of the team or myself

Usk Town Events (Local Wardens)

We continue to support Usk Town community events. Over the summer volunteers supported the Alfred Russel Wallace event and the Picnic in the Park. At both events children's crafts were available. Watch out for the Christmas event at the end of November!

Future Events

Meetings, Events and Activities

Details can be found on the website or check the events sheet issued each week or the noticeboards.
Contact Dee Seabourne to be added to the email distribution list.

<https://uskma.uk/calendar/>

Save the Dates

Watch out for the postponed Art Exhibition – date tbc

Sat 18th October. - The Newport Philharmonic Choir and Byrdsong

Late November: Usk town Christmas Celebrations – we hope to support the event with children's crafts

December

Sunday 15th December -NSPCC Carol Concert

Sunday 21st December at 6pm – Carol Service

Christmas Eve at 4pm – Crib Service

Christmas Eve at 11:30pm – Midnight Mass

Harvest

21st September 2025

9:30am Service with the Archbishop of Wales

Collection of non-perishable foods will be taken at the service to support Ravens House

12:30pm Harvest Lunch
(contact Dee, Carol or Sarah)

Team St. Mary next meeting
9.30am on Saturday 27th September

All are welcome - please contact Sarah Byford (chair) for more information

BIBLE COURSE



Have you ever wanted to know more about the Bible ? We are running the 8 week Bible society, Bible Course. We will meet in three groups. There will be chatting, learning and a great time together. There will also be an option to join a group online. Please register by speaking to or emailing one of the clergy (contact details at the bottom of the sheet) by **7th September**, as we need to order materials for the course

**SEPT.
22**

Starting Monday 22nd September.
6:30- 8:00 pm at St.Cadoc's Church, Raglan.

**SEPT.
23**

Starting Tuesday 23rd September.
2:00- 3:30 pm at St.Bartholomew's Church, Llanover.

**SEPT.
23**

Starting Tuesday 23rd September.
6:30- 8:00 pm at St.Marys Church, meeting room, Usk.

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William Ingle-Gillis williaminglegillis@cinw.org.uk 0742144331
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HEART OF MONMOUTHSHIRE MA

AUTUMN WALK

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN A GENTLE STROLL ON
20TH SEPTEMBER AT 10.30AM

STARTING FROM LLANDENNY PARISH HALL CAR PARK
(DOWN LANE OPPOSITE RAGLAN ARMS)
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED AT THE CHURCH

PLEASE WEAR SUITABLE CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR
BRING A COLD DRINK AS COULD BE A WARM DAY
CAR SHARE WHERE POSSIBLE

FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL WALKS - PLEASE LEAVE DOGS AT HOME

FUTURE MA WALKING EVENT 18TH OCTOBER
FROM COED Y PAEN

