

The Friends of St Mary's, Linton

A Case Study

Linton is a village of just over 4,000 people 8 miles southeast of Cambridge. St Mary's Church is the largest space in the village and its activities are ably supported by a long-running Friends Group. The Friends of St Mary's, Linton, was established in 1984 to help fund the repair of the church roof and reconstituted in 2001 as a separate charity to care for the Church and Churchyard.



The Friends have benefitted from writing a strong constitution that defined their role. Their constitution states that the Friends of St Mary's exist for 'the restoration, preservation and repair, maintenance, improvement, and beautification of St Mary's Church in Linton, Cambridgeshire, and of any monuments, fittings, fixtures, stained glass, furniture, ornaments and chattels in the church and the churchyard belonging to the church.'

The Friends of St Mary's success has been based on their members' fantastic commitment and is founded on a strong relationship with the PCC. Establishing a key set of goals and a clear constitution has also been important to that success. The group is overseen by a committee that is comprised of Friends Group members, and 3 ex-officio members from the PCC, a Churchwarden, and the Incumbent Rector. The mix of church members and non-church members on the committee allows the Friends to stay in step with the goals of the parish church, and maintain a good relationship with the PCC, whilst still remaining independent of them. The Friends of St Mary's has over 50 members, some who are invited to pay an annual subscription of £20. Currently all members (except the ex-officio members) pay the annual subscription fee, and many generously give more either monthly, quarterly or annually. However, members who give their time are considered in-kind members, and are not required to pay the subscription if they cannot afford to or do not wish to.



In addition to the income from membership donations, the Friends run a program of fundraising events throughout the year. They have also benefitted from bequests, most notably from a generous gift in 2007 from the estate of their late organist, Richard Godel, which has been invested to increase their annual income. The Friends of St Mary's host several events in the church each year including hosting a garden party and quizzes.

Their activities have been key to supporting the upkeep of the church building, their projects have included repairs to the nave roof, and tower, and installation of new lighting in the church building.

Many of their activities are jointly run with the church and PCC members, and some (e.g. the garden party) are jointly run with village stakeholders like the Parish Council and Linton Free Church. The Friends of St Mary's have been key ambassadors for the church, helping the parish church to connect with key stakeholders in their village and draw support and engagement from a wide range of local groups.



Key lessons to learn from the Friends of St Mary's, Linton:

- The Friends of St Mary's started with a specific purpose and clearly defined role in mind, and once they achieved their goal (i.e. to fix the church roof) they consolidated their support and defined their long-term support for and relationship with the church and its PCC.
- They began as a sub-committee of the PCC and became a charity much later. This is a sustainable approach that allows some form of flexibility in the governance of the group.
- Anyone regardless of background or relationship with the church can become a member of the group, and there are different types of members and membership to fit everyone's needs and abilities.
- The Friends have helped the PCC to expand its support in the village and have built strong links with village stakeholders (e.g. volunteer groups, faith groups, the Parish Council, businesses, and schools).
- The Friends work closely with the PCC and though they are a separate charity, PCC members sit on the governing committee. This means that the Friends and PCC always communicate well, and collaborate on projects and events.

More information:

For more information about the church and their Friends group visit the following addresses:

- Friends of St Mary's website - <https://www.friendsofstmaryslinton.org.uk/>
- St Mary's Linton Parish website - <https://www.stmaryslinton.org.uk/>
- Visit St Mary's to collect a copy of the Friends created 'A History of St Mary's' booklet.

For more information about Friends groups and creating a constitution see the following guidance:

- Diocese of Ely Friends Group Guidance:
<https://www.elydiocese.org/xdb/churchbuildingsandchurchyards-guidance/show/volunteering-and-friends-groups.>