

Friends of St John's Churchyard.

St John's Church is quite literally at the heart of our community being, as it is, in the very centre of Devizes. We would like to develop the churchyard not just as a place where the souls of the dead find rest, but also as a place where the souls of the living find succour and restoration from its beauty and peace. The churchyard is a place where we can all help to nurture and cultivate natural ecosystems so that it becomes a living churchyard.

The churchyard needs friends with spades, forks, pruning shears, and a bit of energy. Gardens and green spaces have the power to renew not only themselves but also our own spirits. However, they need help to be maintained, to grow, and to regenerate, and we would like to see the churchyard developed and cared for in a way that encourages natural fauna and flora. Our hope is that it can become a space that is 'owned', not just by the parish, but by the whole community who engage in some light toil in a companionable way.

There is routine maintenance required but also some exciting ideas for re-designing parts of the churchyard. One of our first ideas is to design and install a designated reflective area with seating and a central focus, where people can sit and enjoy the peace and quiet.

So, we are looking for volunteers to help with this work and would welcome whatever time you feel able to spare. As a guide, we would probably be looking at organising either weekly or fortnightly group activities for maybe a couple of hours per session and at a time that best suits most people - pandemic allowing!

If you would be willing to devote some time to this community project, please email me back at livingchurchyard@stjohnwithstmary.org.uk and please also feel free to share this email with anyone and everyone. Clues as to what you like to do and/or are good at would prove helpful as would some idea of availability.

Once we have a group of volunteers, we would be looking to organise an on-line meeting to begin to put some structure to a support group for the churchyard. This is provisionally diarised for Thursday 25th February at 7pm.

An idea of the sort of jobs that need doing would be as follows:

- Routine maintenance and the clearance of drains and gullies
- Creating an area for reflection – paving slabs, focal point, seating, etc
- Reorganisation of parking facilities near the gate
- Rewilding of designated areas and related maintenance
- Planting and maintaining of borders
- Uncovering gravestones - removing ivy, etc
- Building bird boxes, bug hotels etc.

(Routine grass cutting is undertaken by the Town Council)

Mike McClelland
On behalf of Parochial Church Council
Building & Grounds Committee



Devizes St John & St Mary