

For more case studies, information and resources about Friends visit: www.givinginGrace.org/friends

Making Friends

Setting up a Friends group to support your church



“...we’re also very assiduous about acknowledging and thanking everyone who makes a donation or helps our group in anyway. We like to have an attitude of gratitude.”

The Friends group is mainly composed of former and current church members and people who have a connection to the church. A touch of international glamour is lent by internationally renowned singer Katherine Jenkins, former Head Chorister at St David’s. “Katherine always comes back for our Midnight Mass at Christmas which is lovely. Her family still attend the church. We even have two German friends of the church who visit regularly because they are big fans of Katherine’s.”

The Friends of St David’s, the church and the community work closely together, as Mark explains. “Neath people and organisations in the community are very supportive of our church and group, and that’s largely because we are known as such a friendly and welcoming church. That really matters to us as a group, and we’re also very assiduous about acknowledging and thanking everyone who makes a donation or helps our group in anyway. We like to have an attitude of gratitude.”

As the Friends of St David’s look to the future, they want to continue to build on the good work done so far. “There are always jobs to be done and money required for them. We would love to increase our membership, and that’s something we’re working on. For now, we will continue to hope and pray that the work of the Friends will help further the work of the Church in this community. St. David’s is a church which strives to ‘care’ for its members and it is this focus on ‘welcome, care and love’ that hopefully shines through the Friends too.”

You can find out more about the Friends of St. David’s by visiting the Rectorial Benefice of Neath website on: www.parishofneath.org
Or tweet on: [@rectorneath](https://twitter.com/rectorneath) Or visit: [Neath Benefice Facebook Page](#)



St David, Neath

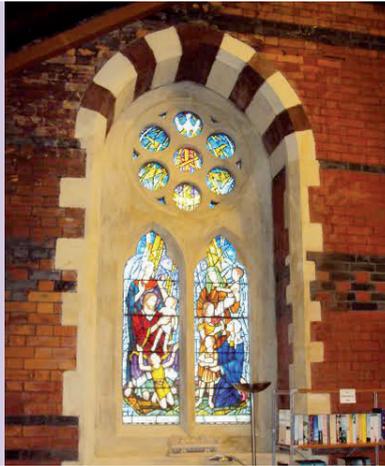
How the Friends of St David have supported over 80 projects to repair and restore this imposing Victorian church and resource its life and ministry

Helping your Church

St David's church is an imposing mid-Victorian building in the town of Neath, seven miles north of Swansea. Structurally, it's in good order, but as with all old buildings, the fabric of the church and its fixtures and fittings are showing their age. In 2000, the church was facing problems with its finance and fabric. The church's organist, Mark Ritzmann, suggested the idea of setting up the 'Friends of St David's' group. This launched in November 2002, and since then they've never looked back.

"We're a properly set-up organisation with a constitution, 15 committee members and we have 90 or so friends members. I am greatly supported by the Friends Secretary, Helen Bennett (who is also a churchwarden at St. David's) and the committee is made up of some very hardworking and committed individuals who work hard at fundraising for the Friends."

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St David's is one of six churches in the Rectorial Benefice. One of their sister churches, St Thomas's has followed St David's in setting up a friends group and Mark is pleased that members of other churches in the town have chosen to join the Friends of St David's. "We ask for a yearly subscription and all Friends receive a regular newsletter. As well as the income from subscriptions, we also run a number of fundraising events."

One of the main sources of fundraising has come from the success of the Friends day trips. "We run two big trips a year, one in summer and one in winter."

A lasting Gift



We organise a coach, people book their seats, then it's up to them what they do when they arrive. Our Rector is very keen that people enjoy themselves while raising funds and that's the principle we work on!"

In the spirit of enjoyable fundraising, the Friends have their own stall in the church's September and Christmas

Fayres which raises about £600 for Friends funds. Other events have included Afternoon Teas, a French Evening, Chinese Auction, Music Night and other events, usually in some way including good food too! In 14 years the Friends have generated over £31,500 additional funds for the church.

The Friends have instigated and contributed to 80 or more projects to date, and spend most of their funds on repairing, restoring or replacing items within the church as Mark explains. "One of our rolling projects involved restoring our stained glass windows and cleaning up the Bath stone around them. Other examples have been the repair of the Victorian communion cup, chalice and wafer box, flower stands, outside notice board, nativity crib..... the list goes on. On the domestic front, we paid for a new vacuum cleaner and a fridge for the church Gift Shop, and have purchased chairs, tables, cloths, mugs, curtains, kneelers – whatever's needed. We are very fortunate to have some creative members of our committee who have, over the years, made an altar frontal for Feast days, Easter and Advent themed wall hangings, Chasibules, Stoles, and Copes, curtain linings and even a cover for the grand piano. Our group helps to fix things that otherwise wouldn't get done. A lot of our church furniture and fittings are the original Victorian ones and just need a bit of tender loving care."

