



Forward Momentum

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE WAY FORWARD PROJECT

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Stages for Funding



Renovation Update

With the major restoration work now complete, the final finishing touches are coming together beautifully. The new bricks have been carefully set in mortar, the porch is finished, and the new glass doors are not only elegant but also an impressive feat of engineering. Once the church reopens, the original inner porch doors will be pinned back, allowing clear views through the glass and inviting passers-by to glimpse the space beyond, helping to make the church feel even more open and welcoming.

The furniture at the back of the church is now almost complete. The new bench seating awaits its comfortable cushions, while new carpeting will soon be fitted in both rear corners. Cupboards, sockets and the control panel are all installed, and it's lovely to see original pew ends thoughtfully reused to decorate the cupboard ends.



The kitchen makeover is also nearing completion, and the toilet has been upgraded with new sanitary fittings, including a baby-changing unit. A radiator has now been installed too, which will make the space warmer and help tackle the persistent damp that has been an ongoing challenge.

New, discreet speakers are in place. Can you spot one hiding up near the rafters?



Take A Look Tour: In November, we held our final inside peek welcoming around forty visitors over three hours. Guests explored the church and table displays charting the renovation journey, including close-up photographs of the carved faces at the tops of the columns.



Planting for the Future: Later that day, after a heavy downpour that thankfully cleared, villagers and church members planted saplings in the church car park. Guided by Richard, our ecologist, the young trees and shrubs were carefully planted while the project team provided hot chocolate and biscuits. Each tree was tagged and “adopted” by its planter, with many tags carrying thoughtful messages in memory of loved ones.



Time Capsule Burial: We buried a time capsule within the church, in a specially crafted space set into the floor. Pupils and staff from Stebbing Primary School, alongside

members of the local community, the ministry team and the project team joined us for this special moment as we laid our 2025 time capsule to rest, preserving a snapshot of today for future generations.



School Engagement: Pupils at the school have also enjoyed assemblies led by Esther and Caroline, where history was brought to life through stories told by the church’s resident (time travelling) bat, “Battholemew”, and his inquisitive younger sister, Betty, much to the delight of children and staff alike. Rev. Sue has also visited the school, leading lessons and helping to unpack big ideas in an accessible way, from the meaning of Christingle to the tricky concept of the Trinity. It was lovely to see so many school families at the recent Christingle service in Priors Hall Barn.

Helen, our Volunteer and Training Co-ordinator, together with Esther, has hosted several enjoyable **volunteer social evenings**. Guests enjoyed cheese and wine, warm drinks, snacks and great conversation, with some even trying their hand at crafting in preparation for the Victorian Christmas Experience.



Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and these are sure to become a regular feature in 2026!



And finally, on 6th December, the Village Hall was full of festive cheer as the community gathered for our **Victorian Christmas Experience**. Families and friends enjoyed traditional Victorian-style crafts, from crepe-paper flowers and dried fruit garlands to Christmas crackers filled with jokes and sweets. It was lovely to see people of all ages crafting together and sharing the moment. Our Victorian hosts, dressed in period costume, helped bring the past to life, while St Nicholas delighted children with festive storytelling beside the Christmas tree. With warm drinks, homemade treats and plenty of cheerful conversation, the hall buzzed all afternoon.



Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make this a warm, creative and memorable celebration!

Looking Ahead: We are looking forward to moving back into the church next spring once the renovation works are complete, followed by a short period of settling back in as stored items are returned and the space arranged. We hope to return to the church for our first service back as a congregation on Palm Sunday, 29 March, followed by an open day for the wider public on Saturday 4 April. We look forward to many joyful celebrations next year!

