

# The 2023 Community Christmas Lunch held at St Mary's Church Aylesbury



## Leading up to the big Day ....

A lot of preparation and planning goes into making the Community Christmas lunch a success and much of that starts in September. Fund raising is one area that is done throughout the year with sponsored walks and other events but in the months leading up to December the effort increases as further money is needed to be raised to cover the cost of food and other items. Luckily, we are very well supported by local businesses and individuals and the money is normally found to cover these costs.

The lunch was once again held in St Mary's Church and this year the big challenge was to cook all of the food on-site in the newly refurbished kitchens. 62 volunteers were recruited and a number of us met on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December to wrap up 120 presents and do as much prep work as we could. In the kitchens the 50 kg of veg was peeled and sliced and a Cordon Bleu chef was on hand to start the cooking. High quality turkey had been provided by Starveall Turkeys of Upton and this was pre-cooked before the day ready to be steamed on Christmas Day. So all was set for the 25<sup>th</sup>!





## The Day Arrives

On Christmas day the doors opened at 11.15 and the Church was quickly transformed into a large full-service restaurant. It is an open-door event and we have no idea how many people will turn up but shortly after opening lots of guests started arriving on foot and by mini bus. Christmas Entertainment provided by a Ukulele band and a local Ladies Choir and in addition to the food and entertainment free haircuts and nail painting was available and was much appreciated. In all 132 guests were served a three course Christmas meal - numbers were 20% higher than last year and a record for this event. All were accommodated including those that wanted seconds and any remaining food was distributed in take away boxes. Apart from the meal the guests really appreciated the opportunity to celebrate Christmas with others instead of spending the day on their own.

After the meal Father Christmas gave everyone a gift and guests were entered into a free raffle. At the end of the event all were invited to take a carrier bag and help themselves to any goods that they wanted from our 'free shop' which was filled with donated goods to help them over the holiday period. We would like to thank our amazing group of volunteers that made the whole event possible and we would like to give particular thanks to our main sponsors Waitrose and Helping Hand (a DWP Government Household Support Grant Scheme provided by Buckinghamshire Council) that gave generous donations which allowed us to offer the whole day free of charge to anyone who turned up.



If you would like to volunteer or sponsor the event in 2024 then please take a look at our website [www.freechristmasdinner.com](http://www.freechristmasdinner.com)

We will post volunteer meetings on the site from September onwards.

