

# The Parish Church of St. Mary, Shortlands



## Parish Profile

July 2018

[www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk](http://www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk)

St. Mary's Church endeavours to bring the love of God into the everyday lives of the people of Shortlands.

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## Overview

St. Mary's is a Central Anglican church. We place great value on being inclusive and welcoming to all. Our mission statement is to bring the love of God into the everyday lives of the people of Shortlands.

We are committed to a ministry working alongside our local community. This is the motivation for the activities outlined in this profile which are already extensive and much valued. We feel passionately that there is tremendous potential for St. Mary's to develop further, and we have a strong sense that there is a lot more that God is calling us to be and to do. Our aspiration is to be a church which more deeply communicates and shares with the people of Shortlands the transforming power of God's love for each individual, our community and the world in which we live.



In our church family there are many people with a rich variety of backgrounds, gifts and experience, who are eager to be able to use their gifts further in the ministry of the church - we want the whole congregation to feel involved and inspired. In recent years there has been a strong focus in the PCC, the Ministry Team and in a number of working groups on how we could use a potential site development to support these aspirations. We have been very conscious of the importance of putting mission at the heart of any development plans. Reflecting on this together and drawing on the Five Marks of Mission has helped us to identify our priorities more clearly and has reinforced how much we need to keep God, and God's mission, at the centre of all that we do. There is a lot of excitement about future possibilities. This is not dependent on the site development, but could be enhanced by it.

At St. Mary's there is strong lay involvement at all levels of ministry. We like to work collaboratively but with clear leadership. We believe that, under new leadership, there is now a real opportunity for the church to grow, both spiritually and numerically.

However, recently we have struggled to manage some difficult issues. This has resulted in some tensions within the church which continue to affect us. There has been a lack of unity, and a lot of effort has been made trying to resolve these issues. This has prevented us from moving forward as much as we would have hoped by now. It has been hard to draw together the undoubted gifts and commitment of both the congregation and the lay leadership. There has also been a slight falling off in numbers. Whilst we can come across as a fairly confident congregation, there is currently an underlying vulnerability, and a recognition of our need to be nurtured spiritually.



We have a real desire to heal, rebuild and grow so that we can to continue to worship God together, support each other and serve our local community.

## Person Profile

### **We are seeking an incumbent who:**

- is a strong leader who wants to work collaboratively;
- has the wisdom, spiritual maturity, skills and commitment to help us to continue to rebuild after a difficult period;
- can recognise, draw out and use the strengths of each member of the church;
- can lead worship and preach to a large congregation in a big physical space;
- has a strong commitment to teaching;
- communicates the reality of God and the relevance of the Christian faith, both in church services and in everyday interaction with the congregation and the wider community;
- can relate well to people who have a wide range of perspectives and experience of Christianity;
- will value and encourage the variety of musical traditions within our church, including our robed choir and music group;
- has good people skills and will be committed to the development of the pastoral work of the church;

- will value and nurture our work with children and young people, including our Junior Church, Pre-School, uniformed organisations, Toddler and Parent Group and links with local schools; and
- recognises and appreciates the wisdom and experience of the older generation, and understands their needs.

## Our People

St. Mary's is currently served by:

- two Churchwardens;
- two Licensed Lay Ministers (LLM);
- two active Readers (one licensed and the other PTO), the latter is licensed to take funerals;
- two Pastoral Assistants;
- two people who have just completed the Foundation in Christian Ministry, one of whom is continuing into LLM training this year and the second of whom is hoping to do so in the near future;
- a Director of Music who is also an Honorary Lay Canon of the Cathedral;
- an Organist;
- a robed choir;
- a music group;
- a Junior Church Co-ordinator;
- a Treasurer;
- an Assistant Treasurer;
- a Parish Administrator and an Assistant Administrator;
- a Parish Safeguarding Officer;
- a Pre School Leader with six staff;
- a Sexton



Other lay volunteers who also support the work of St. Mary's in a wide variety of ways:

- those authorised to administer communion;
- a team of servers;
- those who read lessons and lead prayers;
- Deputy Churchwardens and Sidespeople who assist the Churchwardens with their duties;
- church flower arrangers, cleaners and gardeners;



- those who prepare and serve refreshments after 10.30 a.m. services;
- those who edit, collate and deliver SPAN – the parish newsletter.

## Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

St. Mary's has a highly inclusive ministry. Baptism is provided for all those who request it and children are welcomed to communion prior to confirmation. It is the church's practice, in certain circumstances, to marry people who have been divorced.

The number of special offices taken by clergy of St. Mary's last year was:

- Holy Baptism - six
- Holy Matrimony - three
- Funerals (church and at crematoria) – thirteen.



## The Parish and Community

St. Mary's is a leafy, residential parish between the towns of Beckenham and Bromley.

The parish population is approximately 8,000. There has been a steady increase in the number of housing developments in the area which has, in turn, added to the number of young families in the parish. There is also a large ageing population in the Parish, more of whom live independently than in any other ward.

The state schools in the parish are Highfield Infant and Junior Schools and Harris Primary Academy, which opened in 2016. There is also an independent Catholic School, Bishop Challoner. The schools are well ranked and popular, and there are good links between them and the church.

There are currently 238 people on the electoral roll, 118 of whom live outside the parish.

St. Mary's has strong links with community organisations such as the Safer Neighbourhood Team and Shortlands Residents' Association. We are in close communication with our Ward's elected officials, and our Member of Parliament, Col. Bob Stewart MP. We foster a close and interactive relationship with all our community leaders.



The outreach of St. Mary's Shortlands to the wider community of the parish aims to creating a strong sense of openness and welcome to all, by providing pastoral, educational and social activities as well as fundraising events.

## The Parish Church

The first church on the site, consecrated in 1868, was destroyed during World War II. A new church was consecrated in 1955, and provides seating for about 350 adults. The clergy vestry can be used as the incumbent's office.

The church possesses a substantial three manual organ. Although the instrument has remained relatively trouble free for many years, it is beginning to show signs of wear, and is due for major refurbishment.

Church House houses offices, a choir vestry, meeting rooms, toilets, the boiler room in the basement and a three bedroom flat which generates rental income for the church.

The church hall complex, linked to the church house, is used extensively for public meetings and by



uniformed organisations, dance companies and private hire, all of which generate income for the church. A chapel, built in 1999, incorporates the original concept of a memorial chapel to replace that destroyed in World War II, commemorating the men of Shortlands who died during the Great War. It houses the reserved sacrament.

The last Quinquennial Review of the church was carried out in 2016, and a team from the congregation is working through the list of repairs identified in the review. The plan is for these to be finished by the next

Quinquennial in 2021. Quinquennial Reviews are no longer carried out on the other Church property. However, we commissioned a review of the Church Hall as part of the Development Project. While this shows nothing critical, it revealed that over the coming years a considerable sum will need to be spent on the Hall if it is to be maintained in a usable condition.

## Church Gardens

The church is surrounded by landscaped gardens, which are used widely by the people of the parish. There is a valued garden of remembrance within the grounds.



## Junior Church

We highly value our children and young people, and the joy that comes from being a congregation of many different generations. We currently have a Junior Church of around thirty-five children and young people. They meet weekly in the following groups for thirty to forty minutes during the 10.30 a.m. Sunday service, except when there is a Parade Service or an All Age Service and during some of the school holidays:

- Crèche: babies and toddlers up to two years old
- Beginners: two to five year olds
- Climbers and Explorers: five to eleven year olds
- Pathfinders: eleven to eighteen year olds.

We have a committed team of leaders who work on a rota basis and are co-ordinated by our Junior Church Co-ordinator. Sadly, numbers have fallen slightly in the last few years, noticeably in the younger age groups, where we have not seen so many new families joining the church as in the past. We are very keen to find ways of encouraging new families to become part of the worshipping community at St. Mary's, and for their children to grow up as part of our church family.

## St. Mary's Pre School

St. Mary's Pre-School is held in the Church Hall each weekday morning during term time from 9.15 a.m. - 12.15 p.m. There are currently forty-two children on the register (thirty-two attend each session), and there are seven staff who all hold early years qualifications. The Pre School Committee includes three people who are appointed by the PCC; it runs as a separate organisation which is financially independent, but is ultimately the responsibility of the PCC. It was graded 'Good' at its most recent Ofsted inspection (March 2018).



The Pre School holds concerts in church involving the incumbent at Christmas and at the end of the summer term, and the children perform in church at the Toy Service in December and at the Mothering Sunday Service. There is a long waiting list, and places are offered on proximity to the Pre School so that it serves the local community. The Pre School is affiliated to the Church, and would like the future incumbent to be involved by engaging with the children and their parents, however, children of all faiths are welcome and we celebrate the variety of lifestyles and cultures within our community.

## Parents and Toddlers

Parents and toddlers meet on Thursdays, when there is one session in the morning and one in the afternoon. These groups are very popular in the community, and they currently attract at least forty children. A special service for the group is held in church at the end of every term.

## Uniformed Organisations

We are blessed with a high number of uniformed organisations; ten groups for boys and girls are connected with St. Mary's, and four Parade Services are held during the year, with and without communion.

An exciting programme of age-appropriate activities is planned by the leaders for the children in each unit; all leaders have completed the Girlguiding/Scouting training programme. Extra help is always welcomed, and parents who volunteer to join the leadership team gain automatic places in the unit for their children.



## Durham House

A weekly service is held at Durham House (extra care housing scheme), led by a team consisting of Lay members, a Pastoral Assistant and one Reader. A Service of Holy Communion takes place once a month.

## Pastoral Assistants

Pastoral Assistants (PAs) offer support through visiting or communicating with the elderly, housebound, disabled or sick of the parish, and are part of the team who take round Home Communion. Bereavement visiting and assistance at Baptism Services are also part of the role. PAs provide listening support to Pre School parents and staff, and support the Toddler Group and Junior Church.

Those seeking healing for themselves or loved ones have the opportunity to join the PAs for personal and confidential prayers for healing at the 10.30 a.m. service once a month (assisted by Readers and a team of trained lay persons).

## Pilgrimage

Our journey in faith, both as individuals and as a church, has been supported over the years at St. Mary's through pilgrimage and cultural holidays. These are parish and community events which welcome people from other churches and denominations as well as those who have no faith. Our many pilgrimages include those to the Holy Land and Santiago de Compostela, and cultural visits have included Krakow and Turkey. We are taking part in a pilgrimage to Malta in 2019, and one of our Deanery Synod members is leading a Deanery visit to Oberammergau in July 2020. We hope that a future incumbent would see these



as an opportunity to provide spiritual growth, fellowship and support to those who enjoy this expression of their faith.

## Home Groups

We have three home groups which meet either fortnightly or monthly, and run through most of the year. The groups operate independently, and decide on their own study subjects and materials/sources. We also run a specific programme of home groups during Lent, offering an opportunity for those who do not attend home groups throughout the year to get involved in a small group for a short period.

Home Group members value these greatly as a source of spiritual encouragement and the opportunity to build friendship and provide mutual support. However, leading the groups is a considerable commitment, and the number of groups has reduced over recent years (from five to three groups). There is a sense, particularly among those who have put a lot of effort into leading the groups, that home groups have never been seen as a particular priority at St. Mary's and we are looking at ways to address this, since many of us have had previous experience of our faith being nourished and built up in the informal home group setting.

## SPAN

The parish monthly newsletter – SPAN – is delivered free of charge to every home in the parish. It aims to feature a blend of information about the activities at St. Mary's, the spiritual life and people of the parish, and news from and about the local community. Some copies are posted to former members of St. Mary's, and a stock is held at the church for those who live outside the parish. It is also published on the church website: <http://www.St.marysshortlands.org.uk/span/span65718/>. SPAN acts as a bridge between the Church and the community - and very many local residents, who are not currently church attenders, value it highly. The cost is supported by advertising by local businesses and personal donations.



**SHORTLANDS PARISH NEWS**  
St. Mary's church  
endeavours to bring the love  
of God into the everyday  
lives of the people of  
Shortlands  
[www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk](http://www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk)

# the SPAN

July 2018 Year 38 Number 7

## Moving forwards - and business as usual

The beginning of July sees the Parish of St Mary's, Shortlands going into a vacancy. This is always a challenging time for the local church members and wider community as they begin to think about who their next Vicar might be and what will he or she be like. More pressing might be: "who will take the christening or conduct the funeral" in the meantime? Please remember that somebody will look after these matters and you might want to contact the church office in the first instance.

As you would expect, there is a process to be managed. The Church Council will draw up a profile on the church and wider community and also a person specification, making sure they get a priest who will appreciate the issues facing the parish of Shortlands and the aspirations of those who regularly attend the church. There needs to be a balance – the Vicar is NOT the personal chaplain to those who turn up Sunday by Sunday but one who is committed to working with and across the community. Working with the local schools would be one such expression of that ideal.

The Church is not a business but it needs to be business-like in managing this process. Those clergy interested will fill in an application form and we will hold interviews. We need to pray for a spirit of discernment – so that a

## Social Media

For a number of years, St. Mary's has had a Social Media platform, and we continue to develop this.

Our Facebook page has a large following within the congregation, and proves to be an efficient digital notice board.

Our Twitter account has over 150 followers, and serves as a more versatile immediate tool that updates the congregation and parishioners.

## Our Worship

Our regular services are:

Day and time	Service	Average Attendance
Sunday 8.00 a.m.	Said Holy Communion - CW (1st. and 3rd week) BCP (2nd, 4th, 5th week)	12
Sunday 10.30 a.m.	Sung Family Communion (CW)	125
Sunday 6.30 p.m. *	Choral Evensong BCP (3rd Sunday of the month)	55
Wednesday 10.00 a.m.	Said Holy Communion (CW)	18

\*Occasional additional evening services are held in addition to the regular services of Choral Evensong.

On Monday evenings, Evening Prayer is said, attended by the ministry team, and there is also a wide-ranging programme of special and occasional services which take place throughout the year.

## Music

Music is an integral part of the worship at St. Mary's.

### Robed Choir

St. Mary's Shortlands has a long choral tradition, which has been sustained throughout the years and is affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music.

The current Director of Music is Canon Claire Tillotson who, together with her Assistant Organist, Daniel Beach, leads a strong four-part choir of thirty plus singers. The choir leads the music for the 10.30 a.m. service every week, and sings Choral Evensong on the third Sunday of each month.



The choir also has strong links with the Charity ABCD (*Action around Bethlehem for Children with Disabilities*), and sings for their Annual Carol Service in London.



The choir has sung at Rochester Cathedral, Southwark Cathedral and St. Edmundsbury Cathedral, and for the last week in July this year were resident in Exeter Cathedral.

The Choir welcomes children from the age of six to grown-ups of all ages! New recruits are always welcome. Until the age of eighteen the choristers are paid according to their experience. The church supports the choir both financially and spiritually, and the choir is well respected within the church and in the locality.

## **Music Group**

St. Mary's embraces the best of traditional and modern Christian music. Alongside our superb robed choir, we have a thriving music group which has introduced a wealth of contemporary hymns and worship songs to the church.

As well as playing at some of the main morning services, the group leads informal evening worship and other services, such as Songs of Praise, on several occasions during the year. It has also provided the music for events organised by Churches Together in Beckenham.

The band comprises keyboard, acoustic guitar, electric bass, flute, harmonica and occasional drums, accompanying a group of six to eight singers. The Shortlands Praise collection of hymns and songs was compiled especially for use at St. Mary's, and compliments our main Common Praise book.



The informal services weave music and song together with poetry, drama, art, prayer and meditation, often with personal contributions from members of the group and the wider congregation. With the support of fundraising from the music group, St. Mary's was recently able to enhance the worship experience by investing in an upgrade to the sound system.

## Social and groups

The life of the parish is enhanced by a number of groups:-

### The Friends of St. Mary's

The Society of the Friends of St. Mary's was set up as a registered charity when the church was being rebuilt after the original church was bombed during the last war. Its aim is to raise money for the church by way of annual subscriptions and events, while organising social gatherings which encourage friendship and fellowship. Money raised is used to support the work of the church, and in recent years has funded gardening equipment, cutlery for the hall, cassocks for child servers, and a contribution to a new music system.

There are eighty-eight members, made up of a mix of the current congregation and former members of the congregation who have moved away. The Friends also present the Paul Baker Junior Chorister of the Year Award at its annual service of evensong.



## The 2WWs

A support group which organises regular outings, visits and lunches, promoting companionship for those who might otherwise be alone.

## The Men's and Women's Groups

These groups organise *ad hoc* social events – walks, meals out etc.

## Craft and Chatter

An open and welcoming group that meets every Tuesday morning. They create wonderful hand-crafted items for dementia patients and special baby care unit. They also raise money for the church through the Christmas Fair, and make seasonal items for Easter and Advent.

## Senior Self-help Exercise Class

This is an informal exercise class held on a Monday afternoon, which attracts twelve to fifteen people each week (some of whom do not attend services at St. Mary's). Tea and cake is served afterwards!



## Important Links

### Deanery Links

St. Mary's is one of twelve churches which form the Beckenham Deanery. The Deanery encompasses the full range of churchmanship, and is geographically distributed from St. Mary's at one end to the edge of Crystal Palace (and of the Diocese) at the other. St. Mary's has four representatives on Deanery Synod, one of whom is a Rochester Diocesan Synod member.

The Deanery Mission Action Plan has been formulated to encourage parishes to work together and support each other in outreach events and projects. This links into and supports the Diocesan strategy *Called Together*. St. Mary's fully supports and engages with this by supporting our local *Christians Against Poverty* work, offering space on our Parish Pilgrimage, and with individual church members engaging with Deanery Short Courses and social events such as Golf Days and Flower Arranging courses.

### Churches Together in Beckenham (CTiB)

St. Mary's involvement with CTiB has ebbed and flowed over the years. The last four years have seen renewed participation from both clergy and lay members. Activities have included joining in with two very successful Picnics on the Green in Beckenham. On one occasion St. Mary's Music Group provided all the music. A number of parishioners joined CTiB Lent groups held at St. John's, Eden Park, when members of

eleven churches came together. We were also involved with pulpit exchanges on several occasions during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In addition to this, there has been involvement with carol singing on Beckenham High Street at Christmas and singing outside Waitrose in aid of *Christian Aid*.

Clergy and lay representatives meet about four or five times in the year to plan and pray together, and share fellowship and news. There is representation from most churches, and a willingness and openness to share and reflect about what it means to be a wider grouping of Christians in the town.

## **Jumelage Oecumenique**

St. Mary's Shortlands has something very special which not many other churches have. It has a twin parish in France - St. Francis of Assisi in Douai, a parish consisting of four Catholic churches, and there is thriving friendship between the congregations. Every year we get together, one year in France and the following year in Shortlands to celebrate our Jumelage Oecuménique, or Ecumenical Twinning. Home hospitality is enjoyed during the two day stay, with the highlight being the shared Eucharist, which epitomises our strapline "United in Christ / Unis en Jésus-Christ".



Many strong friendships have been forged, and every year new people join and discover what fun it is being part of this unique relationship. The Jumelage has been going for twenty-three years, so the next time the French come to Shortlands we shall be celebrating our Silver Anniversary.

## Fair Trade

For the last twelve years, St. Mary's has been a 'Fair Trade Church': this means whenever possible we serve fair-traded refreshments. We support fair trade fortnight, and we have a monthly Fair Traded goods stall at the back of the church after the 8.00 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. Sunday services.



Fair Trade is about doing things right and addressing the global imbalance of power and treating growers, artisans and customers as equals. The church family of St. Mary's embraces the opportunity to give dignity and justice to our fellow human beings, and consider it an important part of living in a Christian way of life.

## Dementia Friendly Churches Network

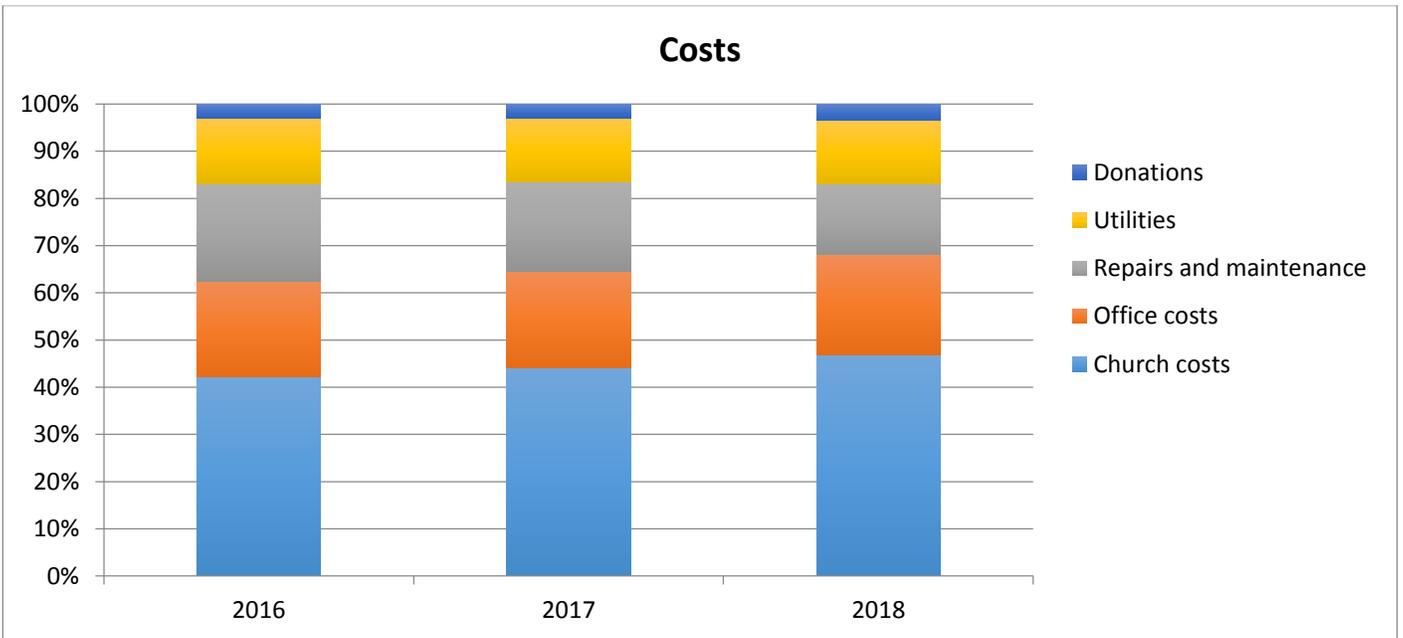
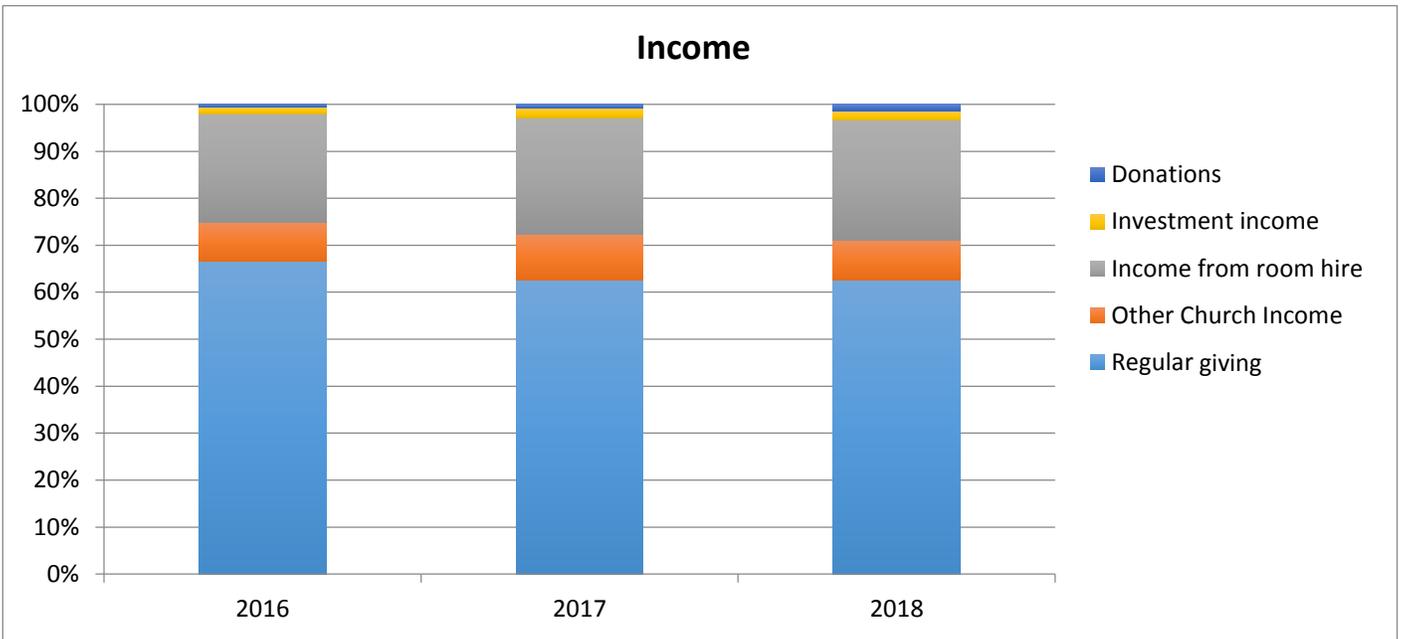
Our aim at St. Mary's is to become a Dementia Friendly Church. We are members of an ecumenical group that was founded three years ago to discuss how churches in the Beckenham area are responding to the needs of people living with Dementia, and their carers. They meet half yearly to discuss progress and any further initiatives. Two members of the church usually represent us at these meetings, and in 2016 they held a Dementia awareness workshop for Sidespeople and PCC members. In December 2017 St. Mary's hosted a Dementia Friendly Carol Service for those with memory loss and their carers. This was well attended by people from many parts of the borough - not just members of the group churches. It is hoped that we will continue to host similar events in the future.

## Safeguarding

At St. Mary's we are committed to promoting a safer church. We believe that the care and protection of children, young people and adults involved in our church activities is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the life of the church. We have recently appointed a new Parish Safeguarding Officer and Lead Recruiter, and are committed to the Rochester Diocese Safer Recruitment Policy. Our PCC and all church workers are being asked to complete online safeguarding training, with others completing further training as appropriate to their role or position.

## Church Finances

	2016	2017	2018
<b>Income</b>			
Total income	£188,801	£189,424	£186,636
<b>Costs</b>			
Total costs	£199,763	£193,268	£186,418



## Vicarage

The vicarage is an attractive property with front and rear gardens, garage and parking spaces, and is situated adjacent to the church. It has two reception rooms, a study, five bedrooms and usual offices. It is located half a mile from Shortlands Railway Station, which has frequent trains to and from London.



## Site Redevelopment Project

As highlighted in the Overview, we have been considering the options for a site development. Our current hall buildings will either need to be replaced or refurbished and this presents opportunities to redesign aspects of our site in a way that will support our mission at St. Mary's.

The Church House and the Church Hall complex were built in the early 1960s. At the time badminton and amateur dramatics were in vogue, so we ended up with one large, tall hall with a stage!

### *Positive points:*

- the hall is large enough to host social events, and has plenty of space for the flourishing pre-school;
- the hall has a catering standard kitchen and some small rooms which can be used for small group work;

*Negative points:*

- it is only one hall, so if being used by Pre School, dance class or guides it is unavailable for anything else;
- the hall is built on a hill on clay and is suffering heave and subsidence. A lot of money will have to be spent on solving these issues in the short to medium term;
- the scouts need to replace their sixty year old prefabricated hut.

In the autumn of 2014 the PCC established a sub-group to look at the issues involved in re-developing the hall complex. This sub-group presented a report listing the problems with the existing hall complex, some key issues to be addressed and options for progress. As a result a Project Steering Group was established in September 2016.

**The aim was to:**

- put mission at the heart of our plans;
- communicate effectively at all stages;
- address the fund raising challenges;
- take a professional approach on any development process.

We therefore set up four sub-groups, drawing on the skills and experience of the congregation, and reporting to the Project Steering Group with responsibility for each of these areas.

**We have:**

- carried out a consultation with a wide range of stakeholders;
- commissioned some initial designs;
- refined the brief;
- obtained a revised design and outline price and, for comparison, costings to refurbish the existing hall.

The proposed schemes will have some options to raise capital by building and selling/leasing some houses and flats. Whether we refurbish or replace the hall we are looking at needing to raise between £500,000 and £1,000,000.