

**ANNUAL REPORT and FINANCIAL STATEMENTS of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL for the year ended
31st December 2023**



Incumbent:	Jane Kustner
Churchwardens:	James Hollingdale
Treasurer:	Tim Dawson
Independent Examiner:	Graham Smedley
Secretary:	Jay Sharma

Trustees' Annual Report 2023

Report and Accounts for the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Mary's Church, Shortlands

Aim and Purposes

St Mary's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 of cooperating with the Incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Church buildings, halls and grounds of St Mary's, Shortlands.

Objectives and Activities

Our Mission is "Sharing the love of God" and we as a PCC place great value on being and welcoming and inclusive to all. Our Vision develops our Mission in four key areas: our heart for God; building fellowship and confidence; becoming a community hub and, in time, becoming prophetic and challenging - the 'go to place' in the community for spiritual support and encouragement.

The PCC aims to reflect our mission, values and strategic objectives in its development of leadership, programme planning, site development and governance of the church.

Key activities in the church are under the leadership of committees; mainly managed by volunteers and supported in some cases by paid staff. Committees include: Standing and Finance, Children and Youth (including Uniformed representation), Fabric, Future Generations (physical development of site); Vision and Mission; Pastoral and Worship and Ministry.

We are also committed to serving our local community with representatives on Deanery Synod, Churches Together in Beckenham, Welcare and Shortlands Residents' Association. The PCC is reliant on volunteers who contribute to various tasks, including maintaining the property and grounds, ensuring a warm welcome to our services, decorating the church weekly and especially for major festivals, catering for events, administration and ushering for occasional services. The officers of St Mary's are also volunteers, specifically the Treasurer and Secretary to the PCC and Churchwardens.

Achievements and Performance

Our Vision and Mission was adopted at the beginning of 2023 after extensive consultation, under the guidance of our interim priest in charge, Rev Jane Kustner. This has given us a strong foundation to build on and we have a clear sense that there is much more that God is calling us to be and to do.

We recognise that there have been issues and challenges in the life of our church. We have been listening. This year we have adopted Values as part of our Vision and Mission work and committed to these in our PCC code of conduct. We are continuing to work on embedding these and ensuring we have a healthy culture.

Our Values are that we should be:

- Christ-centred
- Inclusive and Flexible
- Kind and Caring
- Learning and Growing
- Open and Nurturing
- Welcoming and Valuing

Rev Jane Kustner continued to support us through 2023 as our interim priest in charge and we would like to register our thanks for her leadership, guidance and loving care over the year.

During this year, we have been developing our draft parish profile as part of our preparation for looking for a new incumbent when Rev Jane leaves after Easter in 2024. Describing our activities in our draft parish profile has helped us focus on how we are applying our vision and mission in practice and how we are looking to develop our mission. This in turn has enabled us to clarify what we are looking for in a new incumbent, and the commitments we need to make as a church family, as reflected in the draft parish profile. We see huge potential for St Mary's if we can carry through our Vision and Mission, as it evolves over time. To do this though, we will need to harness our collective gifts, working together as a church under the leadership of a new incumbent.

Worship

We celebrate the diversity of Anglican worship and seek to give people of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to worship in ways that enable them to build their spiritual lives, reflecting the first part of our Vision: *"it starts with us and our heart for God."*

In seeking to grow as disciples, we want to:

- ensure that our Liturgy reflects our rich heritage and meets diverse needs;
- embrace our vibrant musical offering: choral tradition, modern and other worship music;
- encourage wider participation in leading worship; and
- encourage our young people to create and deliver worship.

In 2023 we set up a service planning team with a wide representation across the different areas involved and have been experimenting with different types of worship and liturgy as we work through how best to achieve these objectives.

We are blessed with a relatively high attendance at our main Sunday services with 75-80 adults and 4-8 children joining us and especially at the major Christian Festivals. Mothering Sunday, Parish Picnic, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday services attract around 60+ children and 100-130 adults. These are parade services which include our uniformed organisations and are Services of the Word. Services during Advent are also very popular attended by members of the local community with 90 children and 120 adults joining for Christingle, 130 for our service of Nine Lessons and Carols, 90 children and 155 adults for our very popular Crib Service and 85 sharing Midnight Mass.

There is a wide-ranging programme of other special and occasional services which take place throughout the year, including informal evening services led by the Music Group. There are opportunities to introduce new ways to worship, such as our Come Holy Spirit offering, and to experiment with different timing. We now hold a 9.00 am Sunday Said Holy Communion (CW) when a Service of the Word has been our main service. Occasional services for 2023 have also included 21 Baptisms, 6 young people and 1 adult were confirmed during the year with 1 child prepared for first communion, we had 3 weddings and 1 wedding blessing plus 9 funerals/committals.

The PCC is keen to offer a range of services during the week and over the course of the year that our community find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. In addition to our 10.30am Sunday and 10.00am Wednesday services, services take place on major feast days such as Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Ascension Day. We aim to continue providing these services during the vacancy. All these services demonstrate how we are looking to build on and to realise the third part of our Vision: "*reaching out to the community.*"

Music

The musical tradition of St Mary's comprises the robed choir and the music group. Claire Tillotson, Director of Music (DOM) has embraced both groups and enabled greater cooperation and creativity, including the combined Taizé service which is very popular. In response to requests for increased diversity in worship our 'Come Holy Spirit' has been well received, which is led by our lay ministers and other lay members as well as the incumbent and ordinands.

The Choir

The choir started the new academic term singing Choral Evensong at Rochester Cathedral in September. They were made so welcome and have been invited back to sing for the weekend of 20th/21st July 2024. It has been a busy year singing monthly Choral Evensongs and providing the music for the regular Sunday morning services. December was particularly busy starting with Advent Carols and the choir were then invited to sing at the annual Carol Concert for ABCD Bethlehem, at St Georges Bloomsbury, and have been asked back to sing this year. They also sang carols at Tesco in Holmesdale Road, raising over £30 for charity and a week later at The Bricklayers Arms on Masons Hill. This was very well received and raised £110 for Diabetes UK. The year ended with Nine Lessons and Carols and the regular Christmas services. Thanks go to the choir for their commitment and also to the congregation who are very positive and extremely supportive.

The Music Group

The music group continue to play for some morning services and their evening liturgies are very popular. They are a very committed group of people who provide alternative music from the choir and there have been services where the music group and the choir have sung together. The music group are a valuable asset to the music at St Mary's and thanks go to them for their hard work in making each service so successful.

Children and Youth

Children and Youth ministry continues to grow at St Mary's. Good numbers attended services over Christmas, especially the crib service which, with some revisions from last year, was a great success. A new service was introduced, a children's service, which whilst not well attended by families, was well received by our regular congregation with many enjoying the

different service, especially the puppet show! Both Youth Group and Teatime Together are thriving with a number of the same families attending regularly and we have started seeing some of them at other services too. Thanks are extended to all those who support Junior Church, preparing and leading on Sunday mornings; the Youth Club Team who help control the many teenagers who come on a Sunday evening and to those who regularly lead and support Teatime Together and finally the congregation of St Mary's for supporting Rachel in all she is trying to do to increase family participation at St Mary's.

Baby and Toddler Group

The Baby and Toddler Group at St Mary's continues to attract large numbers having 35-45 children in the morning group with at least 30 adults and 15-20 children attending the afternoon group. Many parents and children from the Pre School come to the latter bringing their lunch along and it is a good social learning experience for them. We had a very successful summer party with over 65 children attending with their carers with a bouncy castle and ball pond which will be used again this year. The Christmas service with puppets attracted at least 45 children and nativity story books and little stockings knitted by the craft and chatter group were given to the children by Father Christmas after the service. The stockings contained a chocolate figure of Father Christmas. We look forward to our Easter puppet service and Easter egg hunt at the end of this term. Unfortunately, we will lose one of the helpers for the afternoon group after Easter, but hope to recruit someone else from the mothers that attend. At present we have three/four helpers for the morning and two for the afternoon and hopefully the latter group will be able to continue.

Pre School

St Mary's Pre-school Shortlands is held in the church hall each weekday morning during term time. The school is a separate organisation which is financially independent, but operates under the oversight of the PCC and uses the same Charity number. The PCC also approve three trustees for St Mary's Preschool board together with the chair of the board.

The children sing in church during the Mothering Sunday service and visit the church at other times such as taking Harvest goods into church. The children are sometimes allowed to play the organ under Claire, The Director of Music's guidance. The parents are invited into church for the pre-school AGM, a Christmas service and the end of school year leavers' service. Parents are also encouraged to join in with church activities such as the Parish Picnic and Christingle which help families feel part of the church community. A recent OfSTED inspection graded the Pre-school as "Good" which was an excellent result.

Stewardship

Stewardship is the Christian expectation that as a demonstration of their discipleship members of the congregation make regular donations to finance the activities of their Church. Regular giving is currently by monthly envelope and standing orders. A Stewardship campaign was held early in 2023 to focus on promoting regular giving. The church is joining the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) in 2024, which is run on behalf of parishes by the Church of England. This will reduce administration and improve cash flow as Gift Aid will be paid monthly in arrears rather than annually in arrears.

Fabric and Maintenance

The Quinquennial review of the Church was carried out at the end of 2022. During the year a plan to address the findings of the review has been prepared that ranks these issues in order of importance. Work has started to address all the high priority issues. A detailed report on the Fabric and Ornaments for 2023 is circulated separately.

Mission and Evangelism

Mission beyond the Parish

For many years the church has nominated and supported many worthy causes close to the hearts of the congregation and the wider parish. In October each year a meeting is held to decide which charities will be supported the following year. The meeting is open to all those who are interested in this aspect of our outreach, not just those who are nominating a particular charity. A different charity is supported each month and the aim is to have a mix of local, national and international charities each year. Some charities are supported annually, including Christian Aid and the Children's Society, with others supported every few years or as "one offs" and the charities do not have to be Christian, but many are. Some have a particular resonance with individuals because of a family connection with loved ones having need of a charity's input, specifically St Christopher's Hospice or The Chartwell Trust.

Those nominating a charity usually become its "rep", acting as the liaison between the charity and St Mary's, writing a short article for SPAN plus providing information on the charity board at the back of church. With recent charities as varied as Welcare in Bromley, Mission to Seafarers, Bromley Homeless Shelter, the Mines Advisory Group and ABCD Bethlehem (Action around Bethlehem Children with Disabilities), it is important that St Mary's continues to help those in need both at home and abroad.

Pastoral Care

Several members of our congregation are unable to attend church services or events because of infirmity and illness. The pastoral team visit, run services in nursing and residential homes and take home communion as requested. They also are present at our weekly Community Café sessions should anyone need their support. They meet weekly for sharing in confidence, mutual support and prayer. Healing prayers are also offered monthly during the main Sunday service.

Deanery Synod

The Deanery Synod continues to move the Anglican churches and Christians of Beckenham forward. It welcomed Revd. Richard Jones and Ray Shergill and said goodbye to Fr Leon Carberry and Revd. Nigel Poole who both retired after many years of service.

The March meeting of the Synod focussed on the impact of the pandemic on our churches and the meeting in May welcomed the new Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley, the Ven. Allie Kerr. She was keen to learn how she could serve the Deanery, outlining her vision for the future of the Archdeaconry and her ministry. The September meeting was a social for new Synod members to enable them to meet and engage with longer-standing members and to elect the House of Laity and House of Clergy members to the Standing Committee. In November the group learnt about Hope into Action Bromley, based in Penge which aimed to mobilise, unite and unleash Christian prayer, investments, donations and relationships to

fight the injustice of homelessness. We look forward to working together to further God's kingdom in this community of Beckenham!

Ecumenical Relationships

Our church is committed to Churches Together in Beckenham and several members of the church take part in CTiB activities. CTiB is an active group which organises a range of joint activities. Over recent years St Mary's has maintained links with CTiB through participation in their regular meetings of clergy and lay representatives. These occur four or five times a year, with representation from most churches in Beckenham and they provide an opportunity to plan and pray together and to share fellowship and news. A small number of church members participate in CTiB and related activities, including the Good Friday Walk of Witness, services, and activities in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, CTiB Lent groups in 2023, services for the World Day of Prayer and some joint fund-raising activities for Christian Aid were arranged.

Twinning/Jumelage

St Mary's Twinning/Jumelage with the Parish of St Francis of Assisi in Douai, France has been going strong for nearly 30 years! It has survived the Covid lockdowns and problems posed by Brexit requiring French people to hold a full passport (which relatively few of them do, as their ID card used to be enough to get them into the UK) Nonetheless, a small group from Douai visited us in 2023 and enjoyed the Sweeps Festival in Rochester. This year it is our turn to visit them in France, then next year we will be celebrating our 30th anniversary here in Shortlands.

The Twinning/Jumelage has always been based on home hospitality and a warm welcome which enables each nationality to experience the ways and traditions of their friends from across the Channel.

Social Media

As well as the website, we use Facebook for streaming services and have several WhatsApp groups for wider communication. Our church newsletter, SPAN, is produced 11 times a year and is published on the church website. The Facebook page has over 700 followers and seeks to provide real time, more informal updates about St Mary's. During the pandemic services were streamed via Facebook, with up to 50-80 viewers remaining online for the whole service. Online numbers reduced substantially at the end of lockdown, but the streaming of Sunday services remains particularly important for congregation members with access issues. Funerals were also livestreamed, which was welcomed by those who could not attend in person. A new, improved system was installed to livestream services and there is a pressing need for more volunteers to help run the streaming and audio-visual system. A detailed social media policy is in place and we subscribe to music copyright licenses suitable for online services.

Café

St Mary's Community Café, on Wednesday mornings, clearly fulfils a need in the community to bring people together. Begun as a trial, during Covid 19 as soon as restrictions allowed, it was never anticipated the impact it would have. Many people who first came had nobody to talk to during Covid, so the Café met that need. The general consensus from our attendees is that the Café is a warm and welcoming place for everyone and offers friendship and kindness, in addition to delicious homemade cakes, tea and coffee.

The Café is open to the community and visitors as well as people from the church who enjoy the warmth and conviviality. The vicar and members of the pastoral team are usually on hand for anyone who needs a deeper conversation. It is now tradition to celebrate milestone birthdays for Café guests and fundraisers for worthy causes such as Macmillan Cancer and Christian Aid have been hosted. Our services have been extended to other church events such as plant sales, concerts and charity bridge afternoons to raise funds for the church. We have also hosted a funeral reception and memorial service for two of our regular church family. The Café is staffed by volunteers and all our baked goods are made by volunteers from the church and the community with a number undertaking serving and baking and also offering warmth and welcome to all.

Volunteers

Thanks are extended to all the volunteers who work so hard to make our Church the lively and vibrant Christian community it is, especially considering the difficult year we have all experienced. The time and effort put in by so many is greatly appreciated, including the flower arrangers who keep the church looking splendid week by week playing an important role in preparing the church for our worship and special services; the Churchwardens, who have worked tirelessly on our behalf; Tim Dawson and Robin Hogg who continue to provide sound guidance and judgement on the Church's accounts and its finances; the grounds and buildings team who ensure everything is in order and those who staff the Community Café, bakers, servers, flower arrangers and the team who set up the tables and chairs every week.

Financial Review

The Accounts for the Year ended 31st December 2023 are appended at the end of this report.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure and the PCC is a Registered Charity.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St Mary's the membership of the PCC consists of the Priest in Charge, Churchwardens (2), Deanery Synod representatives (3), members elected (12) by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the Church and one co-opted member. All those who attend our services/members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

The PCC has six regular meetings during the year, but in 2023 met on eight occasions. Extra meetings were needed to address the arrangements for extending the contract of the interim priest in charge to cover the busy periods at Christmas and Easter (attended by Acting Archdeacon Katrina Barnes) and a detailed discussion of the budget for 2024.

The Standing and Finance Committee has power to transact the business of the PCC between the meetings subject to any directions given by the PCC and financial limits. Other committees - Children and Youth, Mission Beyond the Parish, Twinning, Fabric Committee and Future Generations report back to the PCC as required.

The Friends of St Mary's is a separate charity which supports the Church in practical ways, raising funds through subscriptions from members and fund-raising social events for "those little extras" that the church cannot always afford.

Electoral Roll

At the last APCM there were 171 members on the Church Electoral Roll, 90 living inside the parish, with 81 living outside the parish. A report from the Electoral Roll officer has been included with the papers presented to the APCM.

Safeguarding

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults). There were no events reported during the year.

There has been a complete overhaul of most of the training needs for the Foundation module and both the SGO training and Leadership courses. These training courses are all offered online under the direction of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. The Diocese has a comprehensive Safeguarding website which gives details of all those who need particular levels of training and how to access them. An excellent supplementary safeguarding training session had been run by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team in early December, comprising 16 excellent, realistic safeguarding scenarios offering suggested ways of dealing with each one after they had been discussed. It was recommended that these be used for ongoing PCC training.

DBS

At the start of the church year there were 34 post holders that should have held a DBS certificate. Under the "3 year rule", which was introduced in January 2022, at 31st December 2023 there were none that were awaiting renewal. Since that date a 35th has been added.

Risk Register

The PCC, having introduced a Risk Assessment document and evaluation procedure in 2022, has reviewed and kept the risk assessments up to date. The PCC must identify, review and manage the risks facing the Church and the Risk Register currently lists 31 risks. For each one there is a rating of severity and likelihood, mitigation actions have been identified and a team or individual tasked with responsibility for managing the risk. This Register was last reviewed by the PCC in November 2023 and will be reviewed again as soon as the new PCC is in place, or when one of the risks changes or a new risk is identified.

Administrative Information

St Mary's Church is situated in Shortlands, and it is part of the Diocese of Rochester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Parish Office, Church House, 39 Kingswood Road, Bromley, BR2 0HG. Registered charity number 1130802.

PCC members who have served at any time from the date of the last APCM until the date this report was approved are:

Ex Officio Members:

Incumbent: The Reverend Jane Kustner (until March 2024)
Wardens: Kate Buchanan (until September 2023)
James Hollingdale (from May 2023)

Elected Members:

Catherine Bingham (LLM)
Jan Boam (representative on Deanery Synod)
Pat Chase (Deputy Warden)
Tim Dawson (Treasurer and Deputy Warden)
Julie Fox
Prof. Mark Fox (Sacristan and Deputy Warden)
Robin Hogg (Assistant Treasurer)
Ann-Marie Jeffery (LLM) (representative on Deanery Synod and Diocesan Synod)
Dr David Jefferys (LLM) (Deputy Warden)
Pauline Lambourne (Safeguarding Officer)
Keith Mills
Jay Sharma (Secretary)
Glo Sherman (representative on Deanery Synod, Diocesan Synod and Deputy Warden)
Sue Slaney
Rachel Tillotson (Junior Church Coordinator)

We thank all those who contribute to the governance, running and mission and ministry of the church. In particular we thank those PCC members who retired during the year: (Kate Buchanan and Rev Jane Kustner).

Report approved by -----:

Signature

Date