

St Mary's APCM, 23 April 2023 : Other Reports

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT FOR APCM

April 2023

The Deanery Synod continues to move the Anglican churches and Christians of Beckenham forward. Our two meetings were in person this year which was a blessing, and we had a joint meeting with local Deaneries. We welcomed Revd. Jane Kustner and said goodbye to Revd. Gary Best.

In our March meeting at St George's Beckenham, the main topic was the Eco Church initiative. An interesting and informative presentation was made by St George's and St Paul's who have attained gold, silver, and bronze awards in various areas of the Eco Church criteria. There were examples and encouragement for churches to begin their assessments and find some quick wins. Parishes shared their response to the crisis in Ukraine and how they had come out of the pandemic.

At our July meeting, held at St Paul's, we welcomed Jennifer Ross, Diocesan Communications Manager and Bishop's Media Adviser who gave an insightful presentation on the work she does on publications, and the website as well as how we should communicate effectively in our locality, so we share God's love with others. Margaret Riches from Holy Trinity gave an update on the situation with regard to the work with Ukrainian refugees at Living Well where six families had been welcomed into the Baby and Toddler Group, café, and services. She also reported that some Bromley Adult Education classes were open to Ukrainian refugees and that Hope Church, Bromley Common was developing its support for refugees.

For our November meeting, synod members travelled to St Augustine's Church, Bromley Common to join with five other Deaneries to meet the new Bishop, Jonathan Gibbs. Bishop Jonathan outlined his priorities for the role and took questions.

Ann-Marie Jefferys and Glo Sherman remain on Diocesan Synod and the Deanery Synod Standing Committee respectively.

We look forward to working together to further God's kingdom in this community of Beckenham!

Ann-Marie Jefferys

Annual Safeguarding Report for St Mary's Shortlands

It's been a busy year for me monitoring training and the Disclosure and Barring Service requirements as the latter is once more required 3 yearly instead of 5, but allowing 2 years to catch up. I am contacting those concerned near their renewal date. Any new PCC members will also receive a DBS check.

The Practice Guidance for Safeguarding Training and Development has been revised with the Basic Awareness and Foundation training modules (a pre-requisite for any other training) still being accessed online. Safeguarding training should be renewed every three years to the highest level previously completed and I have been alerting those who are nearing the 3 year limit and reminding them to renew this. The church wardens are also required to complete Leadership Training as soon as possible after their appointment. This year there has also been a requirement for all PCC members, church wardens and other officers to complete their 'Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse' training which they have done.

Safeguarding courses are open to everyone in this church and I would invite everyone to consider completing this half hour training. As we have all heard on media and social networks Domestic violence has greatly increased during the past year so everyone needs to be vigilant especially at our Mother and Toddler groups and community café. Please report any concerns you might have about others to me. I am always available to discuss these. Please also ask me if you would like further information on training.

I too keep up to date with my training and shall be completing an online course on Recruitment of Church Officers very soon and I urge any church officers who are involved in this to please do the same. I have also attended a zoom PSO meeting in the past few months and attended a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) zoom workshop last year.

'Safeguarding Sunday' will take place on Sunday 19th November this year. It will be another good opportunity to raise awareness of safeguarding and for us to highlight all St Mary's is doing to create a safe environment.

Our new Bishop Jonathan Gibbs currently holds the national church portfolio of Lead Bishop for Safeguarding completing his 3 year term at the end of March 2023. Greg Barry remains the Lead Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser with **Caroline Smith now the lead Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor for the Bromley and Bexley Archdeaconry.**

I would like to thank the PCC for their continuing support with all safeguarding matters.

Kay Coleman
Parish Safeguarding Officer and Lead Recruiter

Mission beyond the Parish

Cheques have just been given to the reps for those charities supported by St Mary's in 2022. It is hugely encouraging that we as a church community are able to do this, especially during the current economic climate. Most of the charities we support have been nominated by members of the congregation. Our selection of charities to support in any given year remains a democratic process, with the annual general meeting (held in October) open to everyone. Support is shared between local, national, and international charities. Some are supported annually, others bi-annually and others as one-off donations.

Each charity supported at St Mary's has a designated representative who is responsible for being the liaison person between the charity and St Mary's. Every month a new display is put up at the back of the church on the charity board. This serves to give members of the congregation and visitors more information about the work of the charity. In addition, an article is included in the monthly parish newsletter SPAN, which is distributed throughout the parish. So, charities benefit both financially and through spreading the word about their work.

Susie Shelton

Music

2022 has been a busy and productive year for the choir. We welcomed 3 new members to the junior choir: Althea, Lance and Vaishnavi who are contributing well and an asset to us. Congratulations to Isaac Myers for being awarded with the Friends award for 2022.

In July we had a very successful week singing in Peterborough Cathedral and have been invited back! We were also invited to provide the music for the ABCD Carol service at St George's Bloomsbury in December. A service which is now imbedded in our choir calendar.

We continue to form links with other choirs and as a choir we have contributed to the new organ at St Mildred's Addiscombe by adopting an organ stop. St Mary's and St Mildred's have done joint evensongs in the past and we hope to start this link up again this year.

We have also been selected as the choir to represent Beckenham Deanery at the Installation of the new Archdeacon of Bromley and Bexley at St John's Welling on April 23rd. This is a choir formed from one church from each of the Deaneries so a great accolade for us as a choir and for the church. Whilst we are not doing a choir tour this year, we have a booking for August 2024 to sing at Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff so are very excited about this.

We are looking forward to May 7th where we will be singing Choral Matins at St Mary's at 9 am following the Coronation of King Charles III.

I would like to thank Mike Harrison and Robin Hogg for our new pigeonholes in the choir vestry which has made a huge difference to the life expectancy of our books and music!

I would also like to thank the choir for their continuing support and commitment to me which enables us to produce the standard of music which enhances the worship at St Mary's. My thanks also go to Richard Pilliner for his support as an organist.

Last and by no means least I would like to thank the PCC and the congregation for their continuing love, prayers and support to myself and the choir over the past year.

The music group is continuing to grow and has had a successful year. We are encouraging more links between the choir and the music group and our joint Taize service in January was a fine example of this. Their recent Songs of Praise service was excellent as are all the services they provide, and I would like to thank everyone in the music group for their enthusiasm and dedication. The thought that goes into all of their services is immense.

Music is flourishing and thriving at St Mary's at a time when a lot of churches struggle to have either a choir or a music group. We have both!

Claire Tillotson, Director of Music

Pastoral Team

Members of the pastoral team continue to support members of the congregation of St Mary's and others both spiritually and practically.

The team meets every week for prayer and support for each other as well as for those we seek to serve. During this time those in need are discussed confidentially within the team and actions reviewed.

Home communion is offered to those who are housebound, either temporarily or permanently. Members of the team offer a short service to residents of both Blenheim Court and Durham House once a month. These would include hymns, prayers, bible readings and a short reflection. Visits are made to individual residents of both settings at other times as needed.

Pew papers/SPAN/newsletters are delivered to those unable to attend church.

The members of the pastoral team are mindful that other members of our congregation and community also offer support to local friends and neighbours and acknowledge all such beneficial contributions.

Youth Work Update 2022 – 2023

Youth at St Mary's has continued to grow in the last year. All children aged 4 – 16 meet in the hall during the Sunday services, following materials from Roots the children are led by an excellent team of volunteers in learning all about Jesus. Roots follows the Gospel for that day, meaning what the congregation hear and are preached to about in church the children are also hearing and learning about upstairs, usually through hearing the reading and then doing activities around this.

This year we tried a new service for the crib service as an alternative to a nativity. This was run and led by Jane Kustner and was a great success, with nearly 200 congregation attending. A big thank you to the instrumentalists of the music group for playing in this service. Also thank you to the members of Junior Church who were involved in the service through reading and helping show congregation members where to go throughout the service.

Community youth work also continues to grow. Tea Time Together has been active for a year and a half now and is going strong. Through this, in the last year we have seen up to twenty new families come to the sessions, with the average number being ten each month and we are seeing the same families returning and coming to Sunday morning services too.

Also in the last year, Shortlands Youth Club has opened its doors to the youth in our community, the first time there has been a youth club at St Mary's for at least 10 years. Over the course of the year we have seen 50 young people aged 10 – 15 come through the doors to socialise with others their age through football, swingball, table tennis, air hockey, video games and more. The free snacks also seem to go down very well! The fact that of those 50 only 5 are children who already come to our church and of those 5 only 2 now come regularly shows how much the community needed a youth club.

There is lots going on in terms of Youth Work within the church, with the hope to grow the amount of families and young people who regularly attend St.Mary's. Rachel would like to say a big thank you to all who support and help with youth work; the Junior Church Team, Sue Harrison, Lynsey Grover, Rebecca Aldred, Jane Kustner and the community café team who give their time to Tea Time Together each month and the Youth club team.

Rachel is always looking for more helpers with any of the groups. If you feel you could give one or two Sunday's a term to any of the groups please do get in touch with Rachel.

Rachel Tillotson

Twinning

Following what we had feared was a valedictory visit to Douai in May 2022, we were delighted to hear that several French friends in our twin parish were planning to get passports to keep the Jumelage alive. We are now preparing to welcome a group of 9 people coming in a small minibus with 2 of them sharing the driving. As 1st May, a public holiday in France, falls on a Monday this year, they will be staying for an extra night as the minibus cannot be handed back until Tuesday morning. A special 10.30 service will be held on Sunday 30th April followed by a lunch for all those connected with Douai, regardless of whether they are offering home hospitality. We are pleased to welcome Jay onto our Twinning Committee.

Gill Dawson

Welcare in Bromley report to PCC March 2023

Stephanie Lynch, the new Family Support Worker has commenced work and is in the process of completing her induction and mandatory training. Welcare is now advertising for the Senior Family Support Worker post.

The Bromley team has continued to provide vital support to families, children, and young people with advice, practical support, and resources to families to address the cost-of-living crisis. Services to 19 families and 46 children.

Welcare has provided school support to Poverest Primary School and Parish Primary School. Services provided have included family support, individual support, and Workshops.

Also, the FAST programme is expanding and has generated a considerable amount of interest amongst the schools in Bromley. The focus in these groups is to build confidence and emotional wellbeing. Many of these children struggle with anxiety and self-esteem.

My Next Steps (transitioning to secondary) is being planned to be delivered during the latter part of the school year.

An online Parenting Programme continues. Feedback from parents reflects improved self confidence in their parenting skills, and enhanced relationships with their children. Also, stronger community connections.

The 17-week Caring Dad's group will recommence in September 2023. There is clearly a demand for CD's group, and we will continue to offer this group on a rolling programme.