



**Papers for the St. Mary's Church
Congregation AGM
4th February 2024**

Also available to read on the church website:

www.stmaryshorsham.org.uk

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
ST. MARY'S CHURCH CONGREGATION & COUNCIL**

The AGM will be held in St. Mary's Church on Sunday 4th February 2024
during the 10.00 service

AGENDA

1. Opening prayers
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the AGM held on 23rd April 2023
4. Matters arising
5. Items from the Team Rector
6. Review of 2023
 - a) reports (included in paperwork)
 - b) pastoral update
7. Financial report
8. Nominations:
 - a) Parish Wardens (3 vacancies to be elected at the APCM)
 - b) Deputy Church Wardens (3 vacancies)
 - c) PCC (2 vacancies)
 - d) St. Mary's Church Committee (8 vacancies)
 - e) Deanery Synod (4 vacancies)
9. Chairman's comments
10. Closing prayer

Parish of Horsham
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of St. Mary's Church Congregation
Held in St. Mary's Church during the 10am Service on 23rd April 2023

Revd. Lisa Barnett, (Team Rector and chair) along with 168 members of the congregation were present.

1. Opening Prayer

Revd. Lisa Barnett opened the meeting with a welcome and prayer.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Linda Emery, the Lickiss family and Toni and Alex Spence-Holey.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 28th April 2022

Minutes of the 2021 AGM had been circulated in advance of were available on the Church website. It was agreed these were a true record of the meeting.

4. Items from the Team Rector

Lisa asked Nick O'Riordan to update the church on the progress of the South Aisle Project. Now in the middle of Ecclesiastical Planning and consultation. Consultees have been sent details. The Victorian Society has declined to comment which means they have no objections. Comments have been received back from the Church Building Council and those are being dealt with. At the moment the project is moving at an Ecclesiastical pace but should be approved by the end of May hopefully. Detailed contract documents would then be produced so we could go out for tender. The biggest problem is finding a builder willing to work on a Grade 1 listed building in a reasonable time scale. Offers of new homes for ten pews have now been received with just 10 more awaiting a good home. More people to join the fabric team would be welcome.

Lisa thanked Nick and the team for all their efforts.

5. Reviews of the reports

Report papers had been sent out by email to everyone via ChurchSuite and made available on the Church Website in advance of the meeting.

There were no questions.

Those who had written reports were thanked for writing them.

Morag Davies gave thanks for the lives of those from our Church family who had died in 2022 – Barry Dendy, Jane Wallace, Edith Gilliland, Peter Evans, Richard Cossins, Roger Lintott, Roy Smith, Maria Mitchell, Jill Denman.

6. Financial Report

Nikki Barber gave an update on the finances of the church. She thanked everyone who contributes whether large or small to the church. 2022 opened with a surplus of £23K and by the end of the year this had risen to £63K. Staff costs were higher than the previous year but building and grounds cost were £11K lower. Looking ahead to this year significant repairs are needed to the organ which have been delayed from last year and extra funds will be needed for that. Budget plans for this year are expecting a small surplus of £9K but so far there has been an extra £265 monthly pledged in January and hopefully others may prayerfully consider increasing their giving during the year. There is £87K in the South Aisle project

fund out of the estimated £100K needed. Ideally, we need to end the year with a surplus as a quinquennial is due at the end of the year that could throw up several unknown financial issues. Nikki urged everyone to keep on supporting the church with their time and finances.

Lisa thanked Nikki and commented that when she arrived at St. Mary's finances were dire, and she is pleased to note that money is now stable.

7. Nominations

Deputy Wardens

Cath Hatton, Peter Fruin and Morag Davies are proposing to continue as Churchwardens for another year. In view of this it was proposed and seconded that Sue Keegan, Paul Goodwin and Linda Emery be elected as Deputy Wardens which had the agreement of the majority of the congregation.

PCC

Three people – Nick O'Riordan, Richard Pearson and Paul Goodwin were proposed and supported by the meeting to be elected onto the PCC at the forthcoming APCM.

St. Mary's Church Committee

Five people – Linda McLean, Linda Emery, Nick Davies, Hennie Sleeman and Liz Wingett were proposed, seconded and duly elected by the majority of the congregation to serve on the Church Committee.

Deanery Synod

There were no new nominations, but St. Mary's do currently have three people on the Deanery Synod.

8. Chairman's Comments

Please do come and talk to us if you think you want to know more about the money or another bit of the report. We really do want this to be an open conversation.

Thanks for all you are and all you do in our church family.

9. Closing Prayer

The church service continued with the closing hymn and final blessing.

Reports for the year 2023

Almshouse Report to St. Mary's Church

St. Mary's Almshouse provides ten, one bedroom flats at a beneficial rate. One flat is occupied by the Resident Warden. The accommodation is split between east and west houses situated on Normandy. The flats cater for the older person of limited means, still wishing to lead an independent lifestyle. St Mary's Almshouse is a separate, registered charity, run by Trustees who are in post by virtue of their office: the vicar and three churchwardens, plus a co-opted Trustee.

This report is an opportunity on behalf of the church family to thank all those who help with the running of St. Mary's Almshouse. Particular thanks go out again to our Resident Warden, Joanne, and wife Gill who carries out small maintenance jobs and is our resident gardener. The care and assistance they give assures the almshouse runs smoothly. The Almshouse grounds always look amazing and well kept. The residents frequently pass on compliments about how well they are cared for by Joanne and Gill. Joanne and Gill are available for our residents, seven days a week.

Linda Goodwin, our Pastoral visitor, visits the residents with a caring and listening ear and our grateful thanks go to her for her regular visits. Thank you also to Janet & Clive Palmart, our honorary treasurers, who maintained the accounts in 2023. The Almshouse accounts are independently examined by Mark Thompson (Kestrel Accounting). Finally, a vote of thanks to our Clerk to the Trustees, Michael Miles.

No major works were carried out in 2023. However, there are always numerous ongoing works: annual checks for the eleven boilers on site; quarterly inspections of the fire alarm system; annual electrical inspections; annual rainwater clearance work; general maintenance and repairs.

Steve Benson, Co-opted Trustee

.....

Bellringers Report

In February 2023 we had an Open Morning when we showed over 60 people around the belfry, this was very successful. From the Open Morning and the publicity about Ring for the King we have had several new recruits. Unfortunately just after the open morning we had an accident in the belfry resulting in the 4th bell breaking, fortunately nobody was hurt. A new bell was ordered and the cost was covered by insurance. In August 20 bellringers went to Taylors in Loughborough to see our new bell being cast and in September the new 4th arrived and was blessed by the Vicar before being hoisted into the belfry.

The bells continue to be well maintained by members of the band.

Several of us continue to help out at Rusper and Lower Beeding who, without our help, would not be able to ring.

On Practice nights we regularly ring Cambridge and Yorkshire Major, Stedman and Grandsire Caters.

Several of us enjoyed a Tower Dinner in November.

We sent a donation of £110 to Cancer Research instead of sending Christmas Cards.

My thanks must go to the Committee and the rest of the band for all their support.

Val Burgess Tower Captain

.....

Building and Fabric

1. St Mary's Church (QI architect Simon Dyson, next report was due October 2023)

1.1 Church Fabric

Simon Dyson's workload was such that the Quinquennial inspection Quotations for the church could not be carried out until 2024.

Deterioration of the Horsham stone roof of the church, in the form of continual spalling and erosion of mortar, continues. A significant hole, temporarily patched last year was fully repaired in October.

We were granted a Faculty for the reordering of the South Aisle in July and after a period of competitive tendering and assessment, Pilbeam Contractors Ltd were appointed. The works were carried out very satisfactorily and were completed within 6 weeks. The underfloor heating was fully commissioned on 30 November. 19 of the 20 pews removed as part of work have found good homes.

A separate Faculty application is in preparation for a kitchenette to be installed at the West end of the South Aisle; we anticipate that the kitchenette will be fully functional by mid 2024.

Quotations for the structural stabilisation of the Hoo Memorial canopied tomb have been obtained and we continue to seek funding for the works.

1.2 Heating controls

After a successful trial in the Bethany building and thence through our Ecochurch team initiative, we obtained a grant from HDC's Climate Change Fund for the installation of Nest learning thermostats across all buildings in the Parish. Thermostats have been installed and are working well in the church and Church Centre. Further installations in Holy Trinity and St Leonard's churches are planned in early 2024.

1.3 Churchyard

Again through the Ecochurch/Caring for God's Acre initiatives, we continue to meet with Horsham District Council (HDC) staff to improve enjoyment and use of the accessible spaces to the west of the churchyard area and to improve biodiversity.

2. Church Centre (QI architect Robin Nugent, next report due January 2026)

2.1 Change of Use

A small but still significant part of the motivation in the minor improvements to the Church Centre made in 2021 was to enable the St Mary's Pre-School to use the Manor Room weekdays and the Barn on three weekdays, termly. This required a Planning Change of Use and the process became stalled by the intervention of Natural England in requiring HDC to demonstrate water neutrality in non-domestic planning applications. We installed water metering in the Causeway in July and within the Church Centre in December so that we can closely monitor usage in future. We have resubmitted the Change of Use application using the new data and we hope for progress to a conclusion of this matter in early 2024.

3.2 Sound Transmission

Working with our party-wall neighbours at 31 Causeway, we successfully installed a trial acoustic panel in 2022. This will enable a permanent installation to hopefully be installed in 2024, subject to agreement with HDC Conservation officers.

3. Energy use and carbon footprint

In 2021 the PCC endorsed the General Synod's aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A particular challenge has been that the Parish has eight fossil fuel-based heating systems across its five buildings, of which only one can be considered modern and efficient. Through the year all of our heating systems have required repair and careful attention, against a backdrop of changes to Faculty rules in mid 2022 that no longer permit a straightforward like-for-like replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems.

We renegotiated our electricity and gas supplies in July and September. We obtained favourable rates although, due to market forces, they have increased by a factor of between 2 and 3: with consequent impact on our energy bills.

We have taken on board the Net Zero Action Plan that the Diocese published in the Autumn and are hoping to interact positively with those with expertise that is growing, so that we can continue to drive downwards our carbon footprint.

The table below shows our recorded energy consumption since 2019, together with the associated carbon footprint:

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
St Mary's Church	Gas (kWh)	262000 (95600 in Q4)	122000	168000	180000	196100 (69500 in Q4)
	Electricity (kWh)	16800	10500	10200	13000	13500
Church Centre	Gas (kWh)	100000	59000	50000	91200	59200
	Electricity (kWh)	10500	7500	7600	9200	8700
	Total Carbon footprint	73 tonnes	37.5 tonnes	44.5 tonnes	55.3 tonnes	52.3 tonnes

Through better, more mindful use of environmental controls and investment in more efficient heating and lighting systems, our aim is to reduce our carbon footprint to well below 2019 levels whilst increasing the level of use of our buildings.

The Fabric team is committed to drawing up a plan for the logical phasing out of as many of our fossil-fuel heating systems as possible over the next seven years.

Nick O’Riordan

.....

Caring report for the AGM

I would like to thank all of our pastoral visitors who carry out this ministry so faithfully and another thank you to those involved in Stepping Stones Bereavement Support. Also the Lay Ministers who take Communion to the housebound and nursing homes.

Over the past year several members of the team from St. Mary’s and Holy Trinity have attended workshops led by Steve Gurr on bereavement support. This gave a core of us the confidence to restart Stepping Stones which is an informal friendly coffee morning held on the first Thursday of the month in the Leslie Room. Numbers vary from month to month but we feel it is a very important ministry. Should anyone need to talk privately we do have the use of the upper room.

Following on from the workshops, the final one in the series was on self care. This session had a huge impact on attendees and Steve received excellent feedback.

On November 9th we held a “thank you” lunch for all pastoral visitors from across the parish. A good number were able to attend. We welcomed Richard Jackson from Horsham Churches Together who updated us on the local churches’ involvement in visiting nursing/residential homes. We now have a clearer idea of which homes are visited. We are very fortunate that Linda Goodwin has agreed to be the St. Mary’s coordinator for this ministry liaising with Margaret from St.Leonard’s and Jan from Holy Trinity. Morag is now on the chaplaincy team at Horsham Hospital visiting each week and giving Communion to any patient who has requested it.

There is a small team of lay ministers who take Communion to our church family that have become housebound.

Pastoral visiting all going well. Going forward into 2024 we plan to recruit new members to the pastoral team from across the parish and to hold a couple of workshops on pastoral visiting.

We need to set up a small team from St. Mary's to oversee the Caring ministry and to reflect on ideas as to how to move forward in Caring Support.

Morag Davies

.....

Children & Families Work Report

Sunday Club

Our journey through the life of Jesus was completed at the end of last year and in the Autumn Term we began looking at the Old Testament also using True Way Kids materials. At festival times we focus instead on the special occasion. Usually we open with a chat about the season/subject and ask for suggestions of things to thank God for, taking this into the Lord's Prayer with actions. The bible story follows and we move into thinking about this through a game, acting it out and a craft activity. We have welcomed some new families some of whom have become regular members. Numbers fluctuate but on average we have a dozen children.

There are a couple of parents who regularly attend and will be joining the rota (safer recruitment procedures having been followed). I'm grateful to our regular helpers Dana, Kulod and especially Liz Lobb who leads when I'm on leave.

During school holidays we join the crèche for a more informal morning of craft, games and chat in the chapel.

Crèche

Last year we were pleased to open up the crèche in the chapel again. This has been much appreciated by those using it during the 10am service. Following the Christmas celebrations it was decided to keep the crèche permanently set up for use during times when the church is open including weddings and baptisms. Hopefully this will make good use of the chapel and not clash with other activities. Having it as a permanent fixture will help parents to feel more able to bring little ones to church. Sue West has been very dedicated in setting up and supervising during the 10am service and I'm very grateful to her.

Fused

Following the success of our first joint Sunday morning get together of children and young people in the barn Lee and I held another session in November. This went down well with both the children and adults who attended. We enjoyed exploring the idea of 'Sabbath' with lively worship songs, games, prayer, sand cross crafts and biscuit baking. We plan to run one of these each term.

Informal Family Service – 3.30pm

Having moved to once a month we have a good group of regular families who come along to enjoy action songs, stories, prayer and craft along with the very popular tea upstairs afterwards. The tea team have reduced in number and their dedication is much appreciated. Michael Miles operates the technology and joins us to help with clearing the teas which is also much appreciated.

Little Footprints

We have a good group of around 15-25 children and their parents/carers each week, though this fluctuates according to the weather with sunny days being quieter. Most of the current group of volunteers have stepped away as their children have moved on. Jane Lane is able to help serve hot drinks occasionally. Lai has kindly offered to come to help when possible. I'll be asking for new volunteers once we've settled into the term so that we have enough help to set up and serve teas.

Open the Book

Delysia continues to do a great job leading the team with dedication and excellent planning. Throughout the year we have continued to bring bible stories alive using costumes, props and acting, involving the children as much as possible, on a fortnightly basis. Our new headteacher Emma McLaughlin has put together a thorough schedule of assemblies during the week which makes for a more cohesive programme.

Church Team Assemblies at St Mary's School

Alternating with Open the Book, the church team (Zoe, Lee, Christine, Linda & Sam) present an assembly on a Wednesday morning. There is now a clear progression from the Open the Book story to the follow up Church Team Assembly on the term's theme.

School, Beavers & Cubs Visits

Regular services for St Mary's Pre-school & School continue. Many schools and other groups visited the church over the year especially in the summer term and Christmas periods.

Sam and I welcomed Arunside Year 2 to Holy Trinity for the first time during Advent. I visited the school to tell the Christmas story to the two Arunside reception classes. The remainder of the school held their carol service at St Mary's. We received very positive feedback from these events. The religious studies teacher is keen to continue the relationship so we look forward to further collaboration.

The church comes alive when these young people visit and it is a privilege to give them a taste of what it means to be a Christian and to show them our beautiful church.

Good Friday Family Activity Morning

We welcomed 70 children and their families into church for creative prayer, Easter Garden making, Holy Week calendar colouring and an Easter Egg Hunt. Lisa got us off to a great start with her presentation and an action song before everyone dispersed to the various activities. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped organise and clear away the activities.

Flower Festival

Sunday Club children enjoyed planting up tubs for the 'A New Heaven and a New Earth' display.

Summer Holiday Activities

During the school summer holidays we pioneered morning sessions in the barn once a week calling them Wonderful Wednesdays. Both the art and craft and drama sessions proved popular. Children and parent/carers enjoyed a wide range of arts activities together including biscuit decorating (and eating), salt dough moulding, painting and craft play/construction. At the end of the drama workshops adults watched the children interpreting the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. The encouraging feedback suggests that these would be good to run again in the future.

Christmas Nativity Service

Over 500 people attended each of the two crib services leaving with big smiles and compliments about the service. About 25 children, both regular attendees and some new faces, presented the story of Christmas. Together we enjoyed making a craft, lighting candles and singing carols. There is a genuine sense of wonder during these special events.

It was lovely to work alongside Erin and Izzy our new interns who both did a great job, Erin taking a central role in the story and Izzy supervising costumes and props. As always Lisa did an amazing job of directing the whole show, especially as there were several very young cast members and a few wandering shepherds and angels. Thanks to Open the Book for the costumes and props.

Messy Church at Holy Trinity

I have been pleased to attend and support Messy Church a couple of times this year. Last spring I opened Holy Trinity’s Messy Church by telling the Easter story using a collection of props concluding with a Hosanna procession.

Horsham Churches Together Collaborations

A team from St Mary’s supported the HCT children’s craft stall at Horsham District Council’s coronation celebrations for King Charles III in May. The crown making was extremely popular with happy families coming to the stall throughout the day.

Linda Baker
Children and Families Worker

.....
Choir – DM’s Report 2024

St. Mary’s Choir is an integral part of the church and provides a valuable leadership with regards to all aspects of music within the service. As Director of Music it is my job to provide and lead the music in the church. I do this to the best of my ability but it is all the members of the choir that help me fulfil that requirement and I thank them for their continued support and enthusiasm. As a Parish church we are very lucky to have a good sized choir and produce music of the calibre we do!

2022 / 23 has been a busy year and productive year for the choir. At Christmas time we provided the music for three carol services, the Advent, Nine Lessons and Carols and the Epiphany Carol Service. Plus our usual choral evensongs and special services and concerts (Faure Requiem on Good Friday was a special concert!).

The choir trips we have had to Cathedrals have been a highlight of mine and it is always nice to sing and perform in different environments. It is also a great opportunity for us to ‘bond’ as a choir and it is great to finish the year on a high! It is always hard work organising these trips, and I would like to thank Steve and Jo Benson who have been the main people in arranging the accommodation.

We are looking forward to our next Cathedral visit for 2024 and will be singing the services at Bristol Cathedral for the week of 19th – 26th August.

The choir would not run effectively without other key members and I would like to take this opportunity in thanking the following people:-

Mike Overend, our Assistant Organist continues to provide support in all areas and without his excellent skills the choir wouldn’t be able to provide some of the performances we do!

I would also like to pay tribute to Valarie Lintott who has helped me in training some of the choristers, it has been greatly appreciated by me and the choristers themselves! A big thank you to all the ladies (and gents) who kindly feed us before choral evensongs and important occasions. Jenny Watts for keeping our robes up to date and of the right length. To our Chairman, Steve Benson and all our choir committee.

The choir do a fantastic job and the standard of singing remains generally very high. I am looking forward to continuing this for the remainder of 2024.

Jeremy Weaver
Director of Music

“Deepening” report

Homegroups have continued to run well. We currently have 7 groups in operation for members of the St. Mary’s congregation – around 60 people are attending these groups, with 2 meeting during the daytime and 5 in the evening. There has been little change in the composition of the groups during the last year.

There are some spaces available in the current groups for any potential new joiners. Anyone who provides their details to welcomers in church is given further information about home groups in case they would like to learn more.

In addition a number of courses have taken place across the Parish:

- The Diocesan Lent course based upon characters from the Old Testament ran twice a week across March/April 2023
- A confirmation course was run leading to the confirmation of 9 members of the St. Mary’s congregation in September 2023

The Lent course for 2024 will be the Church of England “Living in Love and Faith” course, which will run on Monday evenings (virtually) and Thursday mornings (face to face) during Lent. This course explores Christian teaching and learning around identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

Anyone interested in joining a homegroup should email: homegroups@horshamstmarys.org.uk

Prepared by Linda Emery

.....

Eco Church report

Team members: Richard Herrington, Nick O’Riordan, Hennie Sleeman.

Achievements in 2023

Bronze Award

During the year St Mary’s met the criteria to qualify for an A Rocha Eco Church Bronze Award. The award covers the five domains

- Worship and teaching (about caring for creation)
- Management of church buildings (ensuring our church buildings do not damage the environment)
- Management of church land (managing church land to allow our wild neighbours to flourish)
- Community & global engagement (engaging with our community and the world on issues such as climate breakdown, pollution and species loss)
- Lifestyle (encouraging our church family to care for God’s creation)

We were the 6th member of Horsham Eco Churches to achieve a Bronze Award, and one of four in 2023.

HDC Community Climate Fund grant

In August the Eco Church Team applied to Horsham District Council’s Community Climate Fund grant scheme. This followed a successful trial in Bethany of a Nest learning thermostat which showed potential for reducing gas consumption on heating. The application was successful and HDC awarded a grant for £1,095.00 to cover the cost of 5 new thermostats. Three have now been installed – one in the church and two in the Church Centre. Many thanks to Nick O’Riordan and Paul Goodwin for this practical work. The other thermostats are destined for Holy Trinity and St Leonard’s.

EV evening

In December the Team organised another evening event to follow on from the Spring Talks. This was a discussion evening on electric vehicles led by Nick O’Riordan and Denise Herrington. They provided a lot of information based on shared experience and answered many people’s questions. Thanks are due to Nick and Denise as well as others who contributed to the discussion from their own experience of EV ownership. The slides are now on the Eco Church page of the church website for anyone who missed the event.

Newsletters

Newsletters have become a little more consistent with their timing over the year, and tend now to go out once a month alongside the Church Newsletter. There are always a few printed copies available at the Welcome Desk.

Team expansion

After Hennie spoke at the end of the service in late July, several people expressed interest and they are becoming more actively involved as we start 2024.

Community engagement

St Mary's is actively linked into the Horsham Eco Churches wing of Horsham Churches Together. Hennie Sleeman has attended regular joint meetings during the year and helped to support the Horsham Eco Churches stand at the monthly Sussex Green Hub.

Objectives for 2024

1. Create a Churchyard Management Plan. Richard Herrington is co-ordinating a small working party to work on a general management plan for the churchyard. This will eventually involve looking after the land alongside Horsham District Council, supporting the Gardening Team, and enabling churchyard use for a variety of different purposes and is likely to be a long-term project.
2. Work towards reinstatement as a Fairtrade Church by committing to regular use of Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar and promoting Fairtrade during Fairtrade Fortnight.
3. Support the Flower Team who are looking for more local, sustainable sources of flowers for decorating the church, and who are starting to trial a sustainable coir-based alternative to oasis / floral foam for some arrangements.
4. Continue to improve and develop website, newsletters, general information sharing with the congregation.
5. Work on steps towards achieving the A Rocha Silver Award.

Hennie Sleeman

.....

English for Asylum Seekers

After a very busy and successful Christmas period, the New Year began with a very busy Tuesday with lots of new arrivals. A couple of our volunteers have moved on, but we have been lucky enough to welcome some new faces to help with our lessons.

We continue to visit Cisswood every Tuesday morning to offer English for Beginners, Intermediates and Advanced learners as well as a children's group and crèche. We also assist HRSG with sourcing items that are needed by the residents as well as offering general help and support. Our funds are running quite low at the moment though we are hopeful that Spring events will raise some much needed funds. We will be running the lent lunch on Saturday 16th March.

On Friday 1st March at 7pm in the Barn, we will be holding an evening entitled Engaging with Child Migrant Voices. There will be an opportunity to hear from Eithne Nightingale with excerpts from her newly published book "Child Migrant Voices in Modern Britain - oral histories from the 1930s to the present day". You will be able to listen to the experiences of child migrants themselves, together with speakers from Horsham Refugee Support Group and others involved in supporting refugees. The evening will be compered by BBC Radio 4's Chris Aldridge and at the end there will be a chance to chat to the speakers over refreshments and buy a discounted copy of the book. Entry is free with a retiring collection in aid of 'St Mary's English for Asylum Seekers'. If you are interested in coming along please register your attendance at <https://horshamteamparish.churchsuite.com/events/xbn9bs5r>

We are very grateful for the continuing support of our volunteers, the congregation at St Mary's and those of other churches.

Sue Keegan

.....

Flower Arrangers Report

I would like to thank the small group of flower arrangers who every week arranges, waters and look after the flowers in our Church.

In 2023 we did extra flowers for King Charles III Coronation.

Most of us did an arrangement for the Flower Festival.

We would welcome anyone who would like to join our small group no experience necessary.

Val Burgess

.....

Health and Safety Report Year to end December 2023

Accidents/Incidents

Our accident reporting system has recorded a number of accidents that occurred during the year, all of which were subject to a completed accident report form. These accidents have been investigated and, where appropriate, changes made.

Injuries sustained were in most cases minor, requiring first aid treatment only, but in one case a pupil from St Mary's School suffered a fracture to her thumb whilst attending a school carol service in the church, when her hand was pinched by the heavy wooden doors in the north entrance swinging back on her. The injury required surgery.

Risk Assessments

Several risk assessments for offsite activities were approved by the PCC during the year. These relate to offsite activities undertaken by the Youth and Ukrainian Families Group, the Asylum Seeker Group, as well as the St Mary's Choir.

No changes were made to any other existing risk assessments nor were any new risk assessments required.

Service patterns

Service patterns have now returned to pre-Covid arrangements, and all restrictions lifted.

Covid is still present within our communities, and it has affected some church family members during 2023. Testing is now a matter of personal choice, but hand sanitizers continue to be available in church at the north door.

Church and Barn cleaning routines, whilst scaled back from the height of the pandemic, continue to be thorough and robust. However, cleaning within pews at St Mary's has been increased to deal with dust and other accumulations.

Our thanks to John and the team at Atlantic Cleaning.

Further Covid-related action is not anticipated.

PJF

.....

Prayer Report

Our regular prayer meetings and ministry have continued with intercessions during the services and arising from prayer chain messages, our monthly Parish Prayer meeting on the 1st Sunday of the month, morning prayer on Tuesdays at 9am and laying on of hands during the 10am Eucharist. A few changes have been made during 2023 and so some further points about these are below.

A few people gather for morning prayer each Tuesday at 9am to listen to the daily Lectio 365 and then have time of Intercessional prayers together.

The monthly Parish Prayer meeting has sometimes been replaced by the Horsham Churches Together Prayer meeting where all the churches can come together to pray for our town and surrounding villages and the wider world.

The prayer area in the church has been revamped and we now have a board for putting up prayer requests. This was because our intercessions list for the sick had become very lengthy and people were reluctant to come off it. It was decided that names for the sick would be read out for one month, at the same time as being on the list on the prayer board.

Names of those from the church family who have passed away are read out for three weeks or until the funeral has taken place, whichever is sooner. These names are also on the board.

The cards left for the prayers to be added to the board can cover sickness, needs, peace etc.

The prayer chain is for our church family and requests must be for people that are known to us it covers sudden illness, operations & bereavements.

There have also been some specific times during the year to focus our prayers:

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Members of St. Mary's church again joined alongside members of other churches in daily prayer meetings, culminating in a service at St. Mary's on the Sunday evening.

Bible Reading Marathon

Alongside the Bible Reading event, supporting prayer stations and other resources were set up to help visitors, including many school groups, to engage with the bible in a deeper prayerful way.

Flower Festival

Many of the Bible Reading prayer stations were used again to inspire visitors along with the beautiful flower displays linked to different books of the Bible.

Prayer for the Israel & Palestine Conflict

Members of the public have been invited to tie a ribbon as they pray for peace in the Middle East.

Karen Taylor

.....

Pre-School Report

2023 was a challenging year but the staff team has helped meet the needs of many families who may not have been supported by other pre-schools or nurseries. The number of provisions with a similar ethos to ours has sadly decreased once again with the closure of Brighton Road Baptist Playschool. Brighton Road Baptist Church has been very kind in donating a good deal of valuable equipment to us because they are really keen that we continue to serve our community in this way now that they no longer can.

By the end of the summer term 2023, we had 47 children cared for by 13 staff. 25 of these children went on to 9 different local schools in September.

The number of children for the Autumn Term was higher than it has been for the last few years with 43 as at 31st December 2023. All the remaining places are booked for later starters with a total of 54 children for the coming term. The plan we had last year of reducing our sessions due to lower take-up was abandoned when we saw the increased demand for the coming year.

The government's announcement of further 'free entitlement' for younger children has caused new uncertainty for pre-schools and nurseries. Currently the funding levels for 2 year olds are artificially high due to a one-off supplementary grant. We are not allowed to charge a top-up and, as we have no idea what the rates will be in the future, like many other pre-schools, we have not committed to accepting this funding.

Two staff members, Liz and Diana, left us at the end of the summer term and Hazel left in the Autumn Term. They had been with us for many years and contributed a huge amount to the life of the per-school. Liz started up our forest school provision, brought us up to date with our technology and was our bursar for many years, while Diana led us in teaching Spanish and was our expert at leading music sessions. Hazel looked after our students, introduced us to loose parts play and ran parenting courses with Hennie. We are very pleased that she has agreed to continue to run the parenting courses.

In September, we welcomed Keighley and Bethany to our team and Rosie will be joining us in January. Keighley has 12 years' experience taking a lead role in a day nursery. Bethany has a degree in education and will be studying for the Early Years Teacher Status qualification while she is with us. Rosie has worked in a children's hospice and has cared for many children with additional needs so we are looking forward to the insights she will bring from her previous roles.

We continue to have a supportive group of parents, although they are all busy, and they have run small scale social events throughout the year. We have a couple of parent volunteers who are going to be helping us with forest school sessions in the New Year and Jo Benson, as a previous grandparent, is a faithful helper for us.

We had a great team of people from the church helping us to work on the 'secret garden' which is the walled part of the Vicarage garden which Lisa and Stephen kindly let us use. The children love visiting and seeing the wildlife and doing gardening projects there.

We continue to have services in the church at the end of each term, led by Linda, while Lisa leads a service earlier each term for both the pre-school and the St. Mary's school reception class. Linda is going to start coming in to pre-school to read stories to help the children to get to know her better and we are hoping to find other ways to strengthen the links for families between pre-school and church.

Karen Taylor

.....

Safeguarding Report

- During the early part of 2023 a **Safer Recruitment Process for Volunteers** booklet was developed with significant amounts of assistance from the PCC Secretary, using Church of England templates. The booklet was approved by the PCC in March 2023. The revised booklet & its sections can be accessed via SharePoint in 'Parish Safeguarding' where the hyperlinks on the pages will work. All sections of this booklet are available for leaders to utilise when recruiting new volunteers to their team by adjusting the templates as required for particular roles.
- **St Mary's Safeguarding Team** consisting of St Mary's Safeguarding Officer, St Mary's Safeguarding Training Officer & the PCC Safeguarding Officer have met with both Holy Trinity's & St Leonard's Safeguarding Officers termly during 2023. The meetings have enabled the team to become more cohesive, to share working practices, to update on information received from the Diocese, to highlight any operational issues & to support one another in the important yet vital roles they each cover. In January 2023 Jude Wolstenholme, as the replacement St Mary's Safeguarding Officer covering DBS applications as Lead Recruiter, joined the team when Alex Fletcher stepped down. Also, Laura Fletcher as another Lead Recruiter commenced assisting with DBS applications in terms of ID verification if necessary. In July Katherine Potter replaced Sue Keegan as Safeguarding Training Officer.

- Both **training & DBS checks** are key to ensuring we have a safe & caring church. Therefore, can the team kindly and respectfully request that individuals respond at their earliest convenience when asked to undertake the training relevant to their role or are required to have a current DBS certificate? Both training & DBS clearances (where required) are set out in the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook 2018 with which we need to comply/have signed up to. Just because training has been undertaken in other organisations does not preclude individuals from having to undertake the Diocesan Training relevant to their respective role.
- **St Mary's SQP** was reviewed by the Team Rector, the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), the Church Warden responsible for Health & Safety & the Youth worker on 2nd November 2023.
- Since the AGM of 2023 there have not been any **Safeguarding issues**.
- The PCC Safeguarding Officer would like to thank the Diocesan Safeguarding Team & the Team Rector for their advice & support in respect of Safeguarding matters. She would also like to thank St Mary's Safeguarding Officer (previous & current), St Mary's Safeguarding Training Officer & the PCC Secretary for all their assistance/efforts as well as all those who have completed their training &/or obtained DBS clearance in the past year.

Linda Goodwin Parish Safeguarding Officer

Servers Report

The serving team provides servers for all the main morning Sunday services and additional services as required. We have welcomed two new team members during the last year, but also said goodbye to two long standing servers who stepped down, so the team currently remains at 12 members. We continue to look for new members, and operate with a reduced three person server team for the 10.00 Eucharist services.

The team remains very dedicated and it is through their support, enthusiastic hard work and commitment that we can help support St Mary's worship.

Chris Button

Serving MAP Team report for the St. Mary's Church AGM 2024

Team members: Mandy Fifield, Veronica James, Hennie Sleeman, Nigel Stalley
 During the year Brenda Large stepped down from our team and we want to express our grateful thanks for all she has done over many years to support the work of our team.

Objectives from 2023

Mission Partners in 2023	Hospitality & Links
Harvest gifts – Family Support Work	Sunday Lunches
Harvest donations – Engineering Ministries	Thursday coffee mornings
International	Coffee team
Christmas Appeal – Home For Good	Mother's Union
On-going	
• Horsham Churches Together Foodbank	

Mission Partners and Giving 2023

Lent

Our Lent Lunches in 2023 were very popular and raised £565, which was given to Roundabout Talking News. We are very grateful to the teams, from across our Church family, who came along and prepared the food and provided hospitality each week. Thank you to Hennie for co-ordinating the Lent Lunch teams

Harvest

Our Harvest gifts of food went to Family Support Work this year. Thanks to everyone who donated food items. At our Harvest Lunch, Simon Quail spoke about the work of the Engineering Ministries International (EMI) and the work his son Rob is doing out in Nicaragua. We also watched a video interview with Rob and his wife, Helen. We are very grateful to Jay Pearson who organised a team of people to prepare and cook the food for the lunch. We raised £500 at the Harvest lunch which was given to EMI.

Christmas

Our Christmas appeal in 2023 was for 'Home For Good'. We had the opportunity to watch a video, at a few services, about the work done by 'Home For Good' and Sarah and Graham White also spoke about the Foster Care work they have been involved in. Over the Christmas period we collected money from our collections which to date has raised over £500.

On-going

Donations to Horsham District foodbank have continued whenever the church building has been open; thanks are owed to Anne Banner, who has collected and taken them to Horsham Matters. Donations are collected in a box located by the North door of the church.

Hospitality

Sunday lunches continue to be extremely popular and are regularly oversubscribed. Thanks to Denise Herrington who co-ordinates the lunches and to the teams of volunteers who give up their time to prepare and cook the food for the lunches.

The monthly Thursday Coffee mornings take place in the Barn and we are very grateful to Delysia Hill who organises these.

Thank you to all those people who take a turn as part of our Sunday morning coffee teams to provide refreshments after the 10am Sunday services. Particular thanks to Jay Pearson and Nikki Barber who help co-ordinate the teams.

A Sunday afternoon Newcomers Welcome tea was held in April, for those people who had recently started coming to St. Mary's Church. It was a great opportunity to meet new people and find out a little more about all that happens at St. Mary's. Thanks to Pam and Ray Whitehouse for organising the refreshments.

In April we held a Quiz evening. Alistair Inglis-Taylor was our quiz master and along with our pudding auction we raised £366.

A Parish Summer Social was held in the Vicarage Garden in August. We had a Pizza van and good weather. A great time was had by all. It was a great opportunity to meet people from across the wider Parish. Thanks to Lisa and her family for providing the venue.

A concert (in conjunction between Horsham Music Circle and the Loiyangalani Trust) was given by Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Plinio Fernandes in September. It raised £3,578 for St. Mary's South Aisle project as well as money for the Loiyangalani Trust.

Our Jazz Night in October once again featured 'Andy Walker and Friends'. This year it was held in St. Leonard's Church. A great time was had by all, and we raised £268 for Church funds.

Mission Partners for 2024

In August 2023 our church family were invited to make suggestions for Mission Partners in 2024. These were reviewed by our team who then made a proposal to the Church Committee. The Church Committee has approved the following Mission Partners for 2024.

- Lent Lunches – Work with Asylum Seekers (Local)
- Harvest gifts – Salvation Army (Local)
- Harvest donations – Christian Blind Ministry (Global)
- Christmas Appeal – Turning Tides (Local)
- On-going – Engineering Ministries International

Details about our Mission Partners can be found in the 2024 Mission Partners booklet, available in Church. The booklet also gives suggestions other organisations that people might like to consider supporting. The notice board at the back of Church is regularly updated by Hennie Sleeman which gives details of the Mission Partners we are currently supporting.

Objectives for 2024

To continue to support and help to re-develop the regular hospitality activities and teams – Sunday Lunches, Coffee Mornings, coffee after Sunday services, Welcome Teas for newcomers, and to consider setting up other hospitality events such as afternoon teas for wedding couples.

To seek to develop greater engagement with our Mission Partners.

To encourage more social events to take place.

Looking forward, the Serving MAP Team would like to plan a few events that are likely to appeal to the wider Horsham community, with the emphasis on community engagement, and break-even rather than directly raising money.

Nigel Stalley

.....

Treasurer's Report - Financial highlights 2023

The 2023 year end accounts for the Parish are still in preparation, but I am able to provide some financial highlights for the year pertaining to St Mary's:

- Overall, it was a positive financial year and we estimate a general fund surplus of circa £25,000
 - Our regular stewardship increased by an encouraging 5% compared to 2022.
 - Open plate and machine gifts were significantly above budget and 2022.
 - Fee income particularly for weddings and funerals exceeded expectations:
 - There were 19 weddings at St Mary's in 2023 and 54 funerals or memorial events.
 - Hall, church and car-park lettings were in line with budget.
 - We continue to benefit from the generous financial support of a small number of donors for our Youth Work, as well as from St John's, Broadbridge Heath for work that Lee undertakes there.
 - Costs were generally lower than budget. Some expected items did not occur, including our quinquennial architect review of the fabric, which has been delayed until 2024. We re-tendered a number of contracts, including insurance, which resulted in savings.
 - We have continued to benefit from fixed price contract for our gas and electricity since 2020. These expired in the last quarter of 2023, so going forward these costs increase significantly.
 - We were able to meet the Deanery contribution target for our Parish Share which was 5% above the amount required to cover the costs of our clergy (stipends, pension and housing) and the wider mission of the diocese.
- The fundraising appeal earlier in the year for the South Aisle project achieved its objective. Our fundraising together with the legacies and proceeds from the sale realised just over £106,000. As you will know work has been completed with the general fund meeting the small shortfall versus costs. Planning is underway for the addition of a kitchenette, the cost of which is estimated to be £10,000 and we will need to raise funds for this.
- Looking forward to 2024, we have budgeted at break even on the general fund. This is down to higher costs overall, including significant increases in energy costs noted above. The PCC agreed to apply the bulk of our surplus to cover some of the larger expected costs for 2024 including the quinquennial architect review, some essential fire safety work at the Church Centre and some refurbishment of the cottage at 33 Causeway, once the currents leave and we prepare for our new curate's arrival.

Nikki Barber, St. Mary's Treasurer and Greg Andrews, PCC Treasurer

.....

Sides People 2024

In no particular order

Richard Hop
Margaret Hope
Peter Stock
Barbara Stockwell
Richard Herrington
Denise Herrington
Owen Pigott
Alex Holey Spencer
Sue West
Sue Keegan
Moirra Ansell (on occasion)
Hennie Sleeman
Pauline Welch

Jenny Holden
Veronica Kidd
Carol Stalley
Nigel Stalley (on occasion)
Delysia Hill
Joanne Kinsley Smith
Maureen Muggleton
Simon Bannister
Ron Glaysher
Christopher Brough
Sarah Brough
Jeremy Quinn

.....

Welcomer's (during the week) Report for 2023

We have a wonderful team of Volunteer Welcomers at St Mary's, who each bring their individual gifts to this special ministry.

We have been able to keep our beautiful church open all through this past year, 2023 every morning 10-1pm. During that time we welcome through our doors many different people, all ages, coming from our own community, near or as far as Australia! Some who are able to converse with us in English and some with just smiles and gestures. Many come into our church to find Peace and a place of Sanctuary, or just to look at the amazing building and it always is an absolute pleasure to watch the faces of people who have never been in our wonderful St Mary's before! Their awe and wonder at how large it is inside, how amazing the stain glass windows are and the architecture are just some of the comments. Alongside that is the comfort that many find in just 'coming in' through those doors and lighting a candle and having a few words with one of us ! What a very special privilege it is to be a Welcomer at St Mary's!

We had a shared lunch together in October, where it was lovely to catch up with one another and see other members of our team. I would very much like to thank each member of this wonderful team, who readily support each other each bring their different individual gifts to this Ministry. They adapt easily to the changes of time on occasions when the church is booked for concerts or funerals and they willingly do extra shifts. For example during the Bible week in March and during the Flower festival in June, they will go to extra lengths if need be to cover even longer lengths of time to keep our lovely Church open.

Cath Hatton Team Organiser 2023

.....

Youth Work

Introduction

2023 was a very busy year in our youth work. Our youth club continued to grow. We started a Boys group, Start to Stir course, and ran our first Silver DofE. We saw a new set of young people join our youth system. We did our first young leaders' course which 6 attended. In September I also started my Certificate with CMS which is the first year of a university degree, in Theology, mission and ministry, with a focus on youth work. We had all

our normal trips and camps which have seen steady numbers. We have also been able to strengthen our leadership team. We have also seen a larger number under 30's joining our team.

The Core

We have seen a larger amount of young people join us on Sunday Mornings, mainly year 6's. We have explored the Bible and how it breaks down into 66 different books, letters, and poems. We have been bonding as a group and grown our leadership team.

TGI's

Our youth club has grown this year with a new group of year 7's and more friends being invited. Since January we have had 25 – 30 each week and since September we have been getting 40 -50 each week. In the summer term we had a car wash, colour party, Zorb balls, Hunger games and more. We were able to have 2 sessions in which parents have joined us. We have also been able to supply Dunelm with gifts for those at Crawley open house and Horsham Matters.

Youth Alpha

We have almost finished our Youth Alpha course. We have had 10 young people from year 6 &7 attend these sessions. They have asked for some type of youth group to continue afterwards, which has Christian content. We have enjoyed looking and exploring who Christ is and the importance he can have on our lives.

Start to Stir

We have never done a Start to Stir course before. This was run with last year's year 6's before they started at TGI's. We learnt that we are spiritual beings, and we can find spirituality from world issues, music, the world, and our homes. This has been a good chance to build rapport with a few young people before they start in TGI's.

Zoom Bible studies

For a while we had online Zoom sessions for 15 minutes. We looked at Hebrews and explored into each Chapter. We sometimes had young people read and deliver a deeper explanation of what the chapter meant.

Young leaders course

At the beginning of the year we did a young leaders course for year 9+. They looked at safeguarding, running session, using our strengths and weaknesses. This then allowed these 6 young people to support us at TGI's, Café Connect and at May Camp. The young leaders we have are invaluable to what we do and are trying to achieve in our youth system. We are hoping to bring up leaders who want to serve, give and do it well.

Café Connect

Café Connect is our youth service, which is held once a month at Holy trinity. We gather with young people from the parish, St Johns, Warnham and other who attend from other churches or youth clubs. We have had guest speakers, youth workers and vicars who joined us in worship and preaching the Bible to the young people. We get 15 -20 young people from across different Churches. A big highlight for us was having the young people start to do the cooking and leading worship for us.

Schools work

I have been running a regular lunchtime club in Millais for the year. We have seen good attendees, which have now leaked into our youth club. I have been going in to Tanbridge since September, meeting with those who attend Church and youth club, meeting their friends and inviting them to TGI's. We have started to see some of these attend youth club. I have also been doing assemblies and doing a few Easter sessions in St Mary's getting to know the young people and the year 6's better.

May Camp

We took 20 young people this year to May Camp. We joined 350 other young people in the Diocese at May Camp. We experienced God's presence via worship, community, and seminars. We had young people who had never been before or experienced this style of worship. We also took some who have attended previous years. I

believe those who have attended before were able to go deeper into their beliefs and feel the Holy Spirit. For us this is a gateway and an invitation to Christ and Church.

Mini May Camp

We attended Mini May camp as well. This is organized by the diocese with the idea of getting young people excited for May Camp and bringing those who have attended back together for a reunion. We had a great time in Worship, playing football and enjoying some sweets.

Duke Of Edinburgh

We have finished our second year of DofE. We had 7 young people do their Bronze, 6 who passed. We had 6 young people do and pass their Silver. This means we have taught them about reading maps, compasses, co-ordinates as well as volunteering, doing something physical and learning a new skill. One of the girls went around Horsham litter picking. Another young person did their first aid certificate and then attended Brighton and Hove football games as a First aider. It is great to be able to offer this opportunity for our young people.

Satellites

We attended Satellites in the summer. This is a 5-day Christian camp with about 4,000 young people. We had seminars, mini seminars, worship, games and more. This was our first year here. We had a great time and really enjoyed the vibe there. The young people we took are very keen to go back and experience the presence of God again.

October Retreat

We took 20 young people to Edenbridge for a retreat. This is hugely inspired by the young people. They suggest the speakers, topics, worship leaders and activities. We had a moment during the worship where we were worshipping in a circle and the worship leader was in the middle. I couldn't explain the feeling or how it happened. I believe most felt the same feeling, which I could only describe as the Holy Spirit working amongst us.

Lee Buck
.....