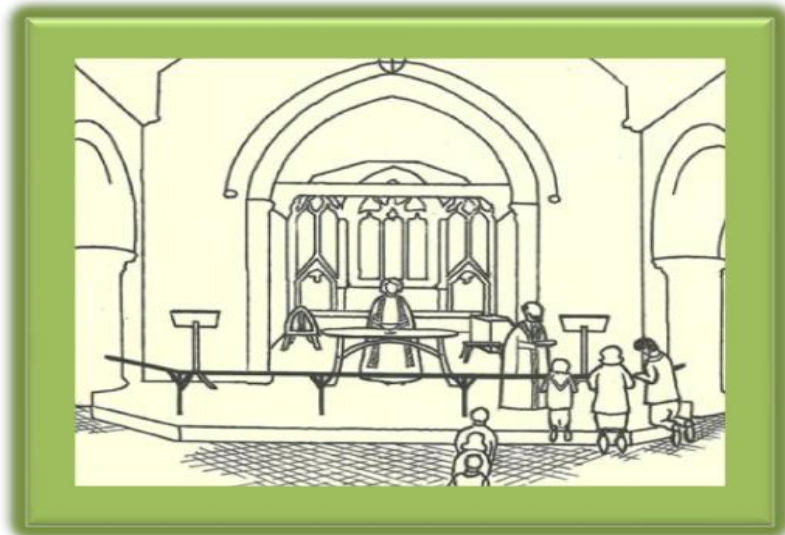


St. John the Evangelist Merrow

Annual Report 2015-2016



*Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering
and come before him! Worship the Lord in the splendour of
holiness*

1Chronicles 16:29

The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Merrow.

Our Vision:

To be a Vibrant, Witnessing and Worshipping Church at the heart of the Community

St. John's Church is the Parish Church of Merrow. It is part of the Diocese of Guildford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Parish Office, 222 Epsom Road, Guildford GU4 7AA. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St John's was registered with Charity Commission in January 2008. Officially called The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Merrow, its registration number is 1127555.

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Review of the Year

Personnel

A highlight of the year has been the ordination to the priesthood of Jacqueline Drake-Smith on 4th July at Guildford Cathedral which was attended by many of our congregation. Jacqueline celebrated her first mass the day after, at which the Very Rev'd Victor Stock preached, followed by a barbeque in the Rectory gardens. The round of training continues as she was then able to start conducting Weddings and Baptisms, as Dermot Verschoyle's development in these areas grows. We continue to be grateful to Diana Matthews in her supporting role as Associate Priest.

In September, Jean Spencer started training as a Pastoral Assistant and we look forward to her commissioning later this year.

Dawn Nunney stepped down as Secretary of the PCC and we thank her very much for all her hard work. Nick Bond kindly agreed to take over.

Property and Land

Following the grant of a faculty, a glass plaque was erected in the porch to commemorate the Enlightening God's Space reordering project. Individual brass plaques were fixed to the church chairs sponsored by individuals where they had requested this.

A faculty was also obtained to make permanent the enlarged Prayer Area which we trialled under an Archdeacon's licence. New lighting has been installed and joiners are currently constructing a wider pew using wood from our redundant pew. Once this work is finished, new cushioned pew seating will be bought. We would be very grateful for any donations to go towards buying the pew cover and back rest.

A faculty has also been granted and planning permission obtained from Guildford Borough Council to demolish the old redundant boilerhouse next to the church. The work will start when we get the go-ahead from the council about one of the conditions of the planning permission.

Following much negotiation with Deekes and Steere and our former architect, we settled on a reasonable price for repainting the church where the paint had flaked and for stripping the stone arches, capitals and columns (the latter have also been repainted). This work has now been completed.

Purchases during the year have included an extra children's table and chairs and a new CD player.

The regular programme of routine maintenance and decorating has kept St John's Centre up to its usual high standard under Michelle Haywood's dedicated management. More chairs have been reupholstered as part of our ongoing process.

The usual Churchwarden's inspection of the church and centre was undertaken and found both to be in very good order. An inspection of the graves was also carried out. Some problems were found with some of the more recent gravestones and the Churchyard Manager is attempting to contact the families involved.

Overview

Numbers have remained fairly consistent throughout the year with an average number of baptisms, weddings and funerals. However, there must be concern over our financial position as is clear from the Treasurer's report.

We continued to implement our Parish Development Programme during the year. The results of the parish questionnaire were analysed which led us to develop three ways to help us with our aim of increasing Passionate Spirituality: a new house group and a bible study group have been set up and a course tackling Puzzling Questions was run jointly by Merrow and Clandon clergy.

The PCC launched the new Parish Giving Scheme in November – a new scheme organised by the Church of England to help parishes administer their regular giving. It is a direct debit based scheme and allows us to access the gift aid on people's donations much more quickly than before. Nearly 50 people have already signed up to the new scheme and we would urge other parishioners to do so.

As part of the Together In Christ Group of local churches, a very successful Carols on the Green event was held on 19th December at Bushy Hill where local people all came together to enjoy singing carols and having refreshments afterwards.

The Junior Church, under Jacqueline's leadership, has continued to grow and develop with some of our youngsters taking a much more active role in our regular worship through reading, leading intercessions and as acolytes. Some are now beginning to train as servers under the careful tuition of Helen Chambers.

Looking to the Future

The coming year will be one of change with both our Churchwardens standing down and the Rector's retirement later this year. The interregnum will throw an additional burden on the Churchwardens and PCC and, whilst we shall have continuity with the rest of our clergy team, Jacqueline and Dermot, as Assistant Curates they are still under training and neither can take on the role of "stand-in Rector" – that role is the preserve of the Rural Dean! Diana Matthews will continue to support as Assistant Priest.

Although there will be a change in personnel, other aspects of church life should continue as normal. It is a chance for the church to examine where we are and look to develop ideas on where we would like the next Rector to lead the church community.

Chris Luckraft, Rector, Sara England and Andy Nunney, Churchwardens

PCC

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Dawn Nunney for all her dedication and hard work during her time as PCC Secretary.

The PCC meets bi-monthly (the Finance & General Purposes Committee on alternate months) and during the year has discussed and decided upon, amongst other things, the Parish Development Plan, Junior Church, Building & minor works, Safeguarding policy, the church interior paintwork, the new Parish Giving Scheme and Finance.

I would like thank the PCC for all their hard work and efforts this year especially those who are retiring namely Isla Stables and Ian Farr and to Sam Pake who resigned earlier and I look forward to welcoming new PCC members in the near future.

Nick Bond, PCC Secretary.

Electoral Roll

Over the past twelve months, the number of church members on the Electoral Roll has fluctuated very little and, at time of writing, stands at 190, which is the same number as at the last ACM. Being on the Roll enables individuals, amongst other things, to vote at the Annual Church Meeting and provides more accurate information in relation to regular church attendees and contact details. New members are always welcome and forms are available at the back of the church and can be given to me, left in my pigeonhole or handed into the Parish Office.

Jean Spencer, Electoral Roll Officer

Protection of Children and Adults at Risk of Harm

The PCC has stated its commitment to the safeguarding, care and nurture of all those who use the church and the Centre including children, young people and adults at risk of harm. This commitment underpins the Parish Safeguarding Policy Statement which was reviewed last May alongside the parish drugs and alcohol statement. Copies of these statements are on display in the church porch and in the Centre. A signed copy of the policy statement was sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

Helpline telephone numbers are available on posters in the Centre whilst a reference file of additional resources is maintained in the parish office. The resources file was updated during the year. As Safeguarding Officer I keep a supply of leaflets which I hand out to individuals when required. My photograph and contact details are on display in the children's and welcome areas in the church.

Appropriate records continue to be maintained by the leaders of Junior Church and also by the Wednesday Coffee Club to ensure that they are run safely. Records are updated on a regular basis. The Coffee Club has participated in a fire drill during the past year.

First Aid boxes in the church and the Centre have been checked at regular intervals throughout the year. The churchwardens are advised of any entries in the accident books but none has required any further action. A First Aid box is also available in the Bell Tower which is maintained by the Tower Captain. No significant issues to report.

St John's Church has carried out eight criminal records checks in the past year on those working with children and /or adults at risk of harm.

Finally, to quote the Diocesan team "safeguarding is a matter for everyone". We all have a part to play to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to develop their faith whilst experiencing fellowship and friendship in a safe and secure environment.

Rosanne Bond

Financial Review

As a Charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales our accounts have to be prepared and issued in a prescribed format. These are different to those required for other organisations. This is because whilst moneys are usually held for general purposes, donors will frequently specify how the money should be used. In general such funds can only be used for the purposes specified.

The full set of Accounts is available, although they are not touched upon in this review, which is intended to give a brief summary of our financial position.

The Church

As you will all appreciate, the Church is almost totally dependent upon the continuing generous support of the congregation. It is hoped that the following will provide a clear summary of our position at the end of 2015 (2014 figures in parenthesis).

Income

Regular and Occasional giving, including legacies -	£102,979 (£ 91,722)
Receipts from tax recoverable from HMRC -	£ 12,435 (£ 16,004)
Total Income -	£115,415 (£107,726)

Expenditure

Total Expenditure -	£135,780 (£121,599)
Effective Running deficit -	£ 20,365 (£13,873)

The Parish Share was by far the most significant Item of expenditure -	£ 82,190 (£79,029)
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The Parish Centre

The main source of revenue for the centre is derived from the hire of the main hall and other rooms

During the year total income was -	£62,044 (£55,505)
The cost of running the centre was -	£51,449 (£54,360)

Revenue increased by £6,539 (+11.8%) whilst expenditure reduced by £2908 (-5.3%)

Legacies

We have been fortunate over the years to have received gifts and legacies from our parishioners. These have and will enable us to fund extra and important developments. I would encourage all members of the congregation to remember the church in their wills. There have been no legacies this year.

Reserves and Cash

It is essential that we hold sufficient reserves and cash to cater for our day-to-day needs and also for most unforeseen contingencies that might arise. I can confirm that I do believe that sufficient reserves are held at the moment. However 2015 was the second year in which the Church has run at a deficit.

Parish Giving Scheme

The Parish Giving Scheme was introduced towards the end of last year. The basis of the scheme is to enable donors to give by Direct Debit rather than the original Standing Order arrangement. As part of the Scheme the organisers have arranged that Gift Aid can be claimed back monthly from HMRC.

By the end of March 44 parishioners had joined the Scheme. This has already had a good effect on our finances and cash flow.

The scheme operates very effectively. For some of us this has been in operation for over 6 months with no problems.

Outlook

Last year, effectively, we spent £1.20 for every £1.00 received

As already mentioned our cash reserves remain at an acceptable level. However, in 2014 our expenditure exceeded income by £13,873 with another £20,365 in 2015. This is a potentially very serious situation. The PCC will need to consider what steps need to be taken to improve the position. Our Policy has been that reserves are not used towards the general running of the Church; however in both the last 2 years this has not been the case.

The Centre covered its costs and left a 17.5% surplus. This is an excellent position, and will enable more money to be put to reserves for the inevitable repairs and renovations that will be required. £5,000 was added to the reserve last year. The hire rates have not been increased for 2016. The position will be reviewed at the half year.

Inevitably a treasurer is going to make the point that we should all consider the level of our giving. If your giving is not subject to Gift Aid and you are paying Income or Capital Gains Tax please consider including Gift Aid. This costs you nothing but adds an extremely useful 25% to your donations.

Thanks

Very little would be achieved in the church without the benefit of so many volunteers. The work of Treasurer would be infinitely more difficult without the generous help from;

- Michelle Haywood our Parish Administrator and Centre Manager. Michelle has, as always, been most patient as I have continued to learn the intricacies of our accounting systems. Without her help I would have been in very serious difficulties.
- Martin Thompson who has maintained all the records of the regular giving and looked after the negotiations with HMRC and ensured that we receive the correct amount back.
- Mike Newell for looking after the Church Yard and providing me with all the accounting information.

Finally an enormous thank you to everyone has contributed to the financial position of our church, however small or large that contribution may have been. If one group is singled out it is those who have agreed to join the Parish Giving Scheme. This has helped our cash flow and it has enabled us to obtain the benefits of money from Gift Aid to reach us very much sooner. If you have not already joined may I encourage you to do so?

Dick Pyper, Treasurer.