

St. John the Evangelist Merrow

Annual Report 2016-2017



Be still and know that I AM.

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.

Contents:-

• Personnel	page(s):	2
• Property and Land		2
• Overview and Looking to the Future		3/4
• PCC		5
• Electoral Roll		5
• Protection of Children and Adults at the Risk of Harm		6
• Financial Review		7/8/9

Review of the Year

Personnel

St John's has been in an interregnum since Rector Chris Luckraft's retirement in October. Chris presided at his last and moving Parish Eucharist on 18th September, followed by a very well attended parish lunch during which we celebrated his nine valuable years of ministry at St John's. Amongst the many contributions to the life of the church, his vision and guidance in the reordering of the Church building itself will be a lasting memorial of his time with us. He and Pippa take with them to retirement in Dorset our heartfelt thanks for their ministry amongst us.

Progress towards recruiting a new rector is slow but steady. The "Job Description", officially entitled The Parish Profile and Statement of Needs, has been agreed by the PCC and endorsed by the Diocese and our Patron, Lord Onslow. The post will be advertised towards the end of April and a date in June had been provisionally scheduled for interviews.

Since Chris's retirement, our worship, pastoral care and outreach has been led and nurtured by our Assistant Curates, Jacqueline Drake-Smith and Dermot Verschoyle, with Diana Matthews selflessly contributing the extra help, as she always has in such circumstances.

Helen Chambers and Robert Avis, who were both newly elected as Churchwardens at the APCM in Aril 2016, have been most grateful to be part of the team that is doing so much for the Lord during the interregnum.

Jacqueline's curacy and working out of her Title Post is coming to its final months, and she is prayerfully seeking discernment as to where she might be called next. She has been with us since June 2014 and has graciously stated that St John's is 'the best curacy in town.' She looks forward to completing her time at Merrow with thanksgiving and hopeful anticipation for whatever new ministry beckons her.

Property and Land

Three works have been the subject of Faculties during the year and have been successfully completed.

The Prayer Area with its new cushions has been commissioned with a blessing and our thanks are due to those who generously donated towards the cost.

The Prayer Area has been enhanced by Chris Luckraft's retiring gift of a fine wall plaque inscribed "Be still and know that I AM."

The demolition of the redundant boiler house and the paving of the area were completed with generous donations of time and resources from our contractors.

New bell ropes have been fitted and commissioned with the costs covered by generous donations.

Overview

Following Chris's retirement, there was a period of prayerful reflection and consultation culminating in October with an inspiring Parish Vision Day. This confirmed to us that we should continue the directions set two years ago in our Parish Development Programme all be it in little lower key at this time of vacancy. In the spirit of increasing our Passionate Spirituality, the fruit of the past year has seen new study groups working through Luke's Gospel, and Bible Study and reflection sessions during Advent and Lent. The two existing house-groups continue to flourish.

For the second year running Together In Christ Churches held a Carols on the Green service at the Bushy Hill Community Centre. A large gathering of local folk sang carols and enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine. Once again, it was good to be able to bring all parts of the community for this occasion.

The second blessing of the Vision Day was to enable us to define the basic outline of the Parish Profile and Statement of Need, the specification that would hopefully bring forth the new Rector that God wills for St. John's.

Any interregnum is potentially a difficult time in which to keep everything ticking over. The numbers on the Electoral Roll remain steady and, with God's help, we have maintained a continuity of spirit through the Sunday and weekday services and the seasonal periods of Christmas, Lent and Easter. The occasional offices of baptisms, weddings and funerals continue to be pastorally met by the clergy team and it has been wonderful to see an ongoing spiritual journey as wedding couples return for the baptism of their new babies.

The Junior Church continues to be a faithful and valued part of our church family under Jacqueline's guidance. She describes it as a 'gathered' community – families coming as other weekend commitments allow, but growingly faithful in their rootedness in the life of St John's. The Christmas nativity play saw some two dozen children participating in a wonderful interpretation of the birth of Jesus. They regularly take part in our worship through reading, leading intercessions and as acolytes. We are encouraging some of our older children to consider being confirmed next year as the next step of their spiritual journey.

Despite this being a financially difficult year for us, we have maintained our continuing generosity to those less fortunate than ourselves. The Mission and Outreach's programme of charitable events has enabled us to reflect God's abundance and generosity (and have a lot of fun) in giving £7,857 to various local, national and international charities.

The Centre continues to fulfil its role of being for "God and the Community" providing the church with admirable meeting facilities and enabling us to offer a high standard premises to the community at large. We continue to view this as an important pastoral and outreach opportunity. The full story and Michelle Hayward, our Parish Administrator's role in it, can be read in the Annual Review

You will see from the Treasurer's financial review later in this report that we suffered a serious operating deficit for the third year running. This is eating into our reserves and the PCC set up a Stewardship Committee to recommend specific actions to address the matter. The Committee, chaired by Ian Farr, has just reported back to the PCC with their recommendations and plans are being made to launch a Stewardship Campaign on Sunday 21st May next.

There are so many people who offer love and service to St John's that it is impossible to list them with our thanks and appreciation here. The Annual Review, which accompanies this Report, tells the full story of all that is going on at St. John's in God's name and we commend it to you.

At the end of Chris's final Annual Report he reflected that an interregnum 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.'

Thank you, every one of you, for contributing to the challenge set us. We look forward to new and hopeful times to come under the leadership of a new Rector.

Please continue to hold in your hearts the intentions of our Vision Prayer:

***Lord of life, as we work to build a vision for St John's,
enable this Church to hear your calling,
to discern your direction and to prepare the way.
Limit us not to our own hopes, ideas and agendas,
but enlighten us to your eternal vision for our church, community and new Incumbent;
so that together we can be messengers of your gospel,
walking faithfully in the ways of your Son Jesus Christ.***

Amen

Helen Chambers and Robert Avis, Churchwardens

PCC

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 Parish Giving Scheme, the Stewardship Campaign and Finance. During the current period the PCC has been meeting the many statutory requirements and additional responsibilities of an Interregnum and I take this opportunity of thanking the PCC for all their efforts in this respect as we work towards appointing a new Rector.

Finally, I would like thank those PCC members who are retiring this year namely Barbara Lawrence, Richard Mithen, Jane Farquharson and Judith Sampson 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 due to several people moving in and out of the area or for various other reasons. At the time of writing, the figure stands at 184, which is six less than at the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting. Being on the Roll enables individuals, amongst other things, to vote at the Annual Meeting and provides more accurate information in relation to regular church members. Contact details also ensure you receive any information that needs to be distributed to the whole congregation. New members are always welcome and I would urge anyone who attends church on a regular basis and who are not yet on the Roll to think about applying to be included on it. The necessary form is 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. 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 seven 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
Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Financial Review

As a Charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales our accounts have to be presented in a prescribed format. These are different to those required for other organisations; this is due to moneys received from donors, in many cases, being given for specific purposes.

A full set of accounts is available; this review will only touch on salient points and is intended to be a very brief summary of our financial position.

Our Accounts are presented in a unified format, however, for this report these will be covered under two headings.

The Church

Once again it is to be emphasised that the Church is almost totally dependent on the continuing generous support of the congregation. The figures below in parenthesis are for 2015.

Income

Regular and Occasional giving including Legacies £110,758 (£97,963)

Expenditure

Total Expenditure £133,619 (£126,759)

Effective Running deficit £22,861 (£28,796)

The Parish Share was much the largest item of Expenditure

£83,040 (£82,190)

Planned giving increased to £76,223 (£68,278 - +11.6%), whilst expenditure increased to £133,619 (£126,759 - +5.4%). The main increase apart from the Parish Share was the contribution made towards the cost of redecorating the Church £9,375.

The Parish Centre

The main source of income for the Centre is from the hire of the facilities.

During the year total income was £60,645 (£62,044)

The costs of running the Centre £58,846 (£51,449)

Revenue reduced by £1,399 (-2.3%) and expenditure increased by £7,397 (+14.4%). One or two regular hire contracts were lost. The main increase in expenses was due to the repairs to the roof.

Legacies

Over the years the Church has been fortunate to benefit from the generosity of parishioners' legacies. These have enabled the parish to undertake important additional developments. All parishioners are encouraged to remember the church in their wills.

Last year we received a single legacy of £5,000.

Parish Giving Scheme

The Parish Giving Scheme became available to the parish in the latter part of 2015, but was not fully operational until the end of the first quarter of 2016. Some 50 parishioners have now joined the Scheme, which is running very smoothly.

The main benefit for the Church is that donations are received in the same way as before, but with the additional benefit of the Gift Aid being received on a monthly basis, which helps our cash flow considerably.

A number of you are not using the Giving Scheme and are to be encouraged to change.

This year, Gift Aid Receipts have not been shown separately as they are received through both the Parish Giving Scheme and from Claims made direct to HMRC.

Reserves and Cash

It is essential that we continue to hold sufficient reserves of cash to cater for our day-to-day needs, and also for unforeseen contingencies.

Whilst we continue to have sufficient funds 2016 was the third year in which the Church has run at a deficit. It must be emphasised that on the current basis our Unrestricted Funds will be exhausted by the end of this year.

Outlook

In my Report last year I mentioned that we had spent £1.20 for every pound received. The position at the end of 2016 was very much the same.

Last year I pointed out that we had had two years of deficit. 2016 is now the third year where expenditure has exceeded income. The effect of this is that in 3 years we have overspent by some £54,318. Money cannot continue to be haemorrhaged at this rate.

The budget for 2017 gives little hope that the deficit will be reduced. I will close this section by saying that unless income increases we will have to seriously curtail our activities.

Thanks

Despite my comments above very little would be achieved in a worshipping community without the dedication of so many volunteers and supporters. The work of the Treasurer would be so much more difficult without the unfailing support of every member of the PCC. It is invidious to mention individuals but I have to mention 3 people who very rarely appear in the headlights

- Michelle Haywood our Parish Administrator and Centre Manager.
I am sure that I have tried Michelle's patience, but whilst maybe she appears a bit harassed, she always looks after many of the foibles of our accounting systems most effectively.
- Martin Thompson has continued to maintain the confidential records of regular donors. This role has changed with the introduction of the Parish Giving Scheme, but for those who continue to use Standing Orders the old records have still to be maintained.
- Mike Newell has looked after the Church Yard, and between us we have to resolve the accounting issues.

Dick Pyper
Treasurer.