



St. John the Evangelist Merrow

Annual Report 2017-2018

Our Vision is:

To be a vibrant, worshipping and witnessing Church at
the heart of the Community

The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Merrow.

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**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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ST.JOHN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018.

Review of the Year.

Personnel

The whole of the past year has seen the church with a vacant Rectorship and with clergy, PCC and congregation pulling together to continue God's work in the Parish.

The recruitment of a new Rector is of necessity a time consuming project which started back in October 2016 when Revd. Chris Luckraft retired. The "Job Description", officially called The Parish Profile and Statement of Needs, had been agreed by the PCC and endorsed by the Diocese and our Patron, Lord Onslow back in January 2017. The post was first advertised in April and three candidates were interviewed in June. It was decided that none of these offered the specific gifts which it was felt St. John's needed at this time and the post was readvertised, attracting eight new candidates, from whom a strong field of four was interviewed in September. The interviewing panel unanimously agreed to offer the post to the Revd Rona Stuart-Bourne, then Vicar of Empshott and Hawksley with Priors Dean. Rona graciously accepted the call and she was presented by the Dowager Countess of Onslow, on behalf of Lord Onslow, and instituted by Bishop Andrew, Bishop of Guildford, at her Institution Service on 18th February 2018. She was welcomed with acclaim by the congregation of St. Johns, the Deanery and representatives of the Merrow community at the reception following the service.

We are most indebted to our Assistant Curates, Jacqueline Drake-Smith and Dermot Verschoyle who, along with Diana Matthews, have continued to lead and nurture our worship, pastoral care and outreach during the extended period of the vacancy. Dermot completed his training during the year to his and everyone's delight and we congratulate him on both his academic achievement and the pursuance of his calling.

Jacqueline's time as a curate came to its conclusion in July with her passing out with flying colours. Following a period of prayer for discernment, she has been appointed, regretfully for us if not for her, as Vicar of St. Peters, Wreclesham, to which post she was installed on 13th March 2018. Jacqueline joined us for her training in June 2014 and she has contributed much to our church and community during this time. Her

empathy and outreach with the love of Christ touched many people here and our love and prayers go with her to the next stage of her ministry.

Helen Chambers and Robert Avis were elected unopposed as Churchwardens for the second year running and have been most grateful for the support of the whole team in doing so much for the Lord during the vacancy. They are particularly thankful to Dick Pyper who remained as Treasurer for a further year to give essential continuity and who will now be retiring at the Annual Meeting. They are also extremely grateful for the continuing support of Michelle Hayward, Parish Administrator and Centre Manager, for her unwavering steadfastness under pressure during the year.

Property and Land

During a Vacancy, little beyond routine maintenance is allowed to the fabric of the church.

- A List B approval for the installation of an overhead microphone over the choir was obtained. The choir's musicality is now better projected throughout the building.
- An Archdeacon's approval was obtained for the hanging of the plaque, donated by Chris Luckraft, in the Prayer Area.
- A replacement desk for the Clergy Vestry desk was kindly donated by Joan Boxall in gratitude for her 100 years of worshipping at St. John's.
- Significant efforts were made during the year of the Vacancy to keep the Rectory grounds under control. As part of the Parish's responsibility for the Rectory, arrangements were made for it to be decorated throughout in readiness for the new incumbent. The Diocese carried out upgrading work to kitchen and bathroom facilities and installed a new boiler.
- Work at the Curate's house at 42 Finches Rise included the installation of a new boiler and the property is now being prepared for a commercial letting until a new trainee curate is installed.
- The main works in the Centre have concerned routine maintenance to keep the building up to the expected high standard. To this end a major programme of refurbishing chairs has been undertaken and the sound system upgraded with the help of a generous contribution from the Merrow Residents Association.

Overview

The team has tried hard to do more than just keep things ticking over during the year of the Vacancy. The full range of regular worship has been maintained through Sunday and weekday services and the great seasons of Christmas, Lent and Easter. Our worship has been blessed with the presence of two visiting Bishops, an Archdeacon and other guest preachers and presidents.

There are 184 people on the Electoral Roll, the same number as in 2016.

The numbers of occasional offices remained steady with 18 baptisms, 8 weddings and 15 funeral and thanksgiving services held during the year.

Although there has been a slowing down in the numbers attending Junior Church, our junior members have continued to play an active role through participation in our All Age services and as readers and acolytes. Their involvement in the Christmas Nativity play alongside actors of all other generations was a fitting culmination of the year.

The PCC has given considerable attention to the issue of Safeguarding and, guided by Rosanne Bond, our Safeguarding Officer, has reviewed all our policies and procedures in this respect.

There have been are some events to particularly note:

- For the third year running, the Carols on the Green service was organised with the other Together in Christ Churches and a large crowd gathered outside the Bushy Hill Community Centre to sing carols and enjoy mince pies and mulled wine.
- A Baby and Toddler Group has been re established and carries out a vital piece of outreach weekly in the Centre under an enthusiastic volunteer staff.
- The continued generosity of the congregation and friends enabled £6,690 to be raised through the Mission and Outreach Committee's programme of social and fund raising events.
- The bleak financial situation reported last year was addressed through a targeted Stewardship Campaign, the result of which has been to greatly increase our regular giving by some £19,000 a year, effectively wiping out the forecast operating deficit for this last year, replenishing the general church fund reserves by some £150,000.00 and giving us confidence for a sustainable financial future. We had been praying to God that we would respond generously and the response exceeded our expectations.

The Annual Review accompanying this Report tells the fuller and more intimate story of the people of St. John's journey with God these last twelve months and in reading these reports we express our thanks and appreciation for all involved.

The future is upon us in the shape of Rona and we welcome her in love for God and look forward to her taking us forward on our journey to bring the Kingdom to the here and now in St John's and Merrow.

Helen Chambers and Robert Avis, Churchwardens

Safeguarding

The profile of safeguarding was raised significantly last year largely due to the number of policies, procedures and guidance issued by the Church of England for parishes to consider.

Time was given at each PCC meeting to discuss and endorse the various aspects of safeguarding which now run like a thread through the life of St John's. It is definitely not a matter to be treated in isolation. All safeguarding issues are dealt with in line with Diocesan procedures.

As a result risk assessments have been carried out on groups involving vulnerable people.

Job descriptions have been written for those leading or helping thus ensuring that everyone knows how to deal with any concerns about someone. Do **you** know what to do? Just share your concerns with the Rector or Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible without investigating matters for yourself. The welfare of everyone is of paramount importance and we might be able to help that person.

The PCC is aware that it is accountable for safeguarding so, as Parish Safeguarding Officer, I now either attend each meeting or submit a written report. The majority of PCC members were able to attend a parish safeguarding training course held on 4th November along with those St John's parishioners who volunteer to work with children and/or vulnerable adults in the parish. I attended the Diocesan conference for Safeguarding Officers last March.

Four Disclosure and Barring checks (DBS) were carried out last year for those wishing to help in children's or vulnerable adults groups on a regular basis.

First aid boxes and wheelchairs were checked and any incidents recorded in the accident reporting books were forwarded to the churchwardens.

Rosanne Bond Parish Safeguarding Officer

PCC

The PCC meets bi-monthly (the Finance & General Purposes Committee meets on alternate months) and during the year has discussed and decided upon, amongst other things, Buildings & minor works including the Rectory refurbishment, the Parish Safeguarding policy, the Parish Giving Scheme, the Stewardship Campaign, Finance, Junior Church, a Friends of St. John's scheme and the new regulations regarding Data Protection. In November the PCC attended a Diocesan Safeguarding Training session. With regard to the process for the appointment of a new Rector the PCC has been meeting its additional responsibilities during the vacancy. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the PCC for all their dedicated efforts during the vacancy as we worked towards the successful appointment of our new Rector.

Finally, I would like sincerely thank those PCC members for their service and who are retiring this year and I look forward to welcoming new members to the PCC.

Nick Bond, PCC Secretary.

Electoral Roll

Over the past twelve months, the number of church members on the Electoral Roll has remained fairly static and at the time of writing the total is 184, which is identical to the same time last year. 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 congregation. New members are always welcome and I would urge anyone who attends church on a regular basis and who is 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.

Just an early warning – the Electoral Roll has to be renewed every six years and this will take place in 2019 prior to the ACPM. This will involve all current and new members completing application forms and generates a considerable amount of work so will need to commence as early as possible in the New Year. Information will be available nearer the time.

Jean Spencer, Electoral Roll Officer

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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 gift of £131,471.

Parish Giving Scheme.

The Parish Giving Scheme became available towards the end of 2105, but was not really fully operational until the end of the first quarter of 2016. 2017 was the first year where the parish had the benefit of the full operation of the scheme. Half way through the year the PCC introduced the Stewardship Campaign and this has lead to an increase in the level of the Giving Scheme.

Reserves and Cash

It is essential that sufficient reserves of cash are held to cater for all our day-to-needs and also to allow for any unforeseen contingencies.

We certainly have sufficient funds for 2018. However 2017 would have been the fourth year in which the Church was run at a deficit. Without the benefit of the legacy and gift the position would have been much improved, but the deficit would not have been eliminated.

Outlook

The Stewardship Scheme has dramatically improved our position, and the full benefit has yet to work itself through. However a very careful watch will have to be kept on expenditure. Last year there were very serious concerns about the future. However, this year I think that the parish can look forward with much more optimism.

Thanks

Very little can be achieved in a worshipping community without the dedication of all the parishioners who give so generously of their time and resources. The work of the Treasurer would be so much harder without the unfailing support of every member of the PCC. Whilst it is invidious to mention individuals there are 2 people whose names very rarely appear in headlights.

- Michelle Hayward our Parish Administrator and Centre Manager
For yet another year I tried Michelle's patience well beyond the call of duty. Without her support and enthusiasm the Treasurer's task would have been much more difficult.
- Martin Thompson has continued to maintain the confidential records of all our regular donors. Most are now using the Parish Giving Scheme, but some have continued to use the Standing Orders and for those parishioners records have to be maintained and from time to time claims have to be submitted to HMRC for Gift Aid.

Dick Pyper
Treasurer