

**ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI CHURCH
RAVENSWOOD AVENUE
WEST WICKHAM, KENT BR4 0PW
(CHARITY NO: 1134856)**

**ANNUAL REPORT &
FINANCIAL STATEMENT
OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
For the year ended 31st December 2021**

INCUMBENT:

Rev. Hazel O'Sullivan, St Mary's Vicarage, The Avenue,
West Wickham, Kent BR4 0DX

BANK:

CAF BANK LTD
25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill
West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:

Mr Keith Earthrowl

St Francis of Assisi West Wickham **Annual Report 2021**

Background:

St Francis is part of the United Benefice of St Mary of Nazareth and St Francis of Assisi, West Wickham, with each church having their own PCC. We are also in a Group Ministry with St John the Baptist, West Wickham. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure, and is a registered charity. It has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church: pastoral, evangelical, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the church and hall buildings and grounds with the buildings being insured by Ecclesiastical Insurance. The PCC met 6 times in 2021 with an average attendance of 70%.

Membership:

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio, co-opted or elected by the APCM in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. Members are elected to serve for 3 years.

Vicar	Rev. Hazel O'Sullivan
Assistant Priest	Rev. Richard Ford
SPAs	Mrs Lesley East and Mrs Rowena Griffiths
Churchwardens	Mr Barry Burford and Dr Kate Dyer
Treasurer	Mr David Wada
Secretary	Mrs Nichola Nightingale
Deanery Synod Representatives:	Mr Brian Griffiths and Mrs Sheila Hawkins

Elected Members:

Until APCM (2022):	Mrs Joan Burford, Mr Michael Hurlstone, Dr James Pitt-Payne
Until APCM (2023):	Mrs Barbara Goodchild
Until APCM (2024):	Mr Roger Dyer, Mrs Kim Teare

Committees:

The PCC operates through two Committees which meet between full meetings of the PCC:

- Standing Committee: this is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any direction by the Council.
- Hall Committee: has responsibility for the management and maintenance of the hall.

Church Attendance:

There are 102 on the Electoral Roll. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 a pattern of Sunday services alternating between St Francis and St Mary's was introduced and continued through 2021. The average weekly in-person attendance was 47 counted during October, with an additional average of 49 views for an on-line service shown jointly with St Mary's.

Ministry and Mission Report - 2021

St Francis of Assisi Church in West Wickham is part of a united benefice, together with St Mary's Church. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 we established a pattern of Sunday services for the united benefice at 8am and 10am alternating between the two church buildings, as well as having something on-line and a paper-based message being sent to those who could not come in person to a church and who are not on-line. This pattern has continued to serve us well during 2021 which started in a very dark place, with cases of coronavirus increasing, so that we took the decision to close the church buildings again, even though we were not legally obliged to do so.

Prayers were said for many people during the early months of the year when they had Covid or another illness (sometimes made worse if they were in hospital and had a limit to the visitors allowed).

We did a number of things to keep spirits up, including a Burns Night and Candlemas service at the end of January and a virtual visit to Bromley town parks and gardens in February. Then at Easter we were able to bring our focus outside our homes and we displayed Easter crosses outside the churches to develop connections with our wider communities.

We built in important opportunities for reflecting on our experience during the pandemic. National events included a Day of Reflection in March, one year since the first lockdown was announced. Then in July we held a series of services beginning with a theme of lament, continuing with reflections on how God has been with us and then looking forward to healing and wholeness.

We held a first joint PCC meeting in July, which was an important step in developing our vision on how we might take advantage of current opportunities as we emerge from Covid-19 restrictions. The following bible verse is key to understanding this vision:

*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.
John 15:5*

It's all about our church community becoming fruitful vine branches (which means transforming lives through having authentic friendships, cultivating community assets and being a blessing to others using those assets). During the year we developed the following aspects of our vision:

- Closer links with the Bromley Borough Foodbank, including regular donation days on the High Street and Christmas Hamper deliveries
- Increasing telephone befriending support for lonely people
- Continuing our bereavement support group (which is now connected into the local NHS social prescribing service) and distributing bereavement support bags

to those recently bereaved

To continue with this vision, we need to remain connected to Jesus through prayer, worship, home groups and in other spaces where we can share our faith with each other.

In October and November there was a global focus on climate change, with the COP 26 conference in Glasgow. We marked this with making a pilgrimage to Southwark Cathedral where a prayer vigil was held.

Other important aspects of our ministry include:

- Continuing our series of Inclusive Church meetings (this year we looked at mental health and LGBTQ+). We also showed a film for Black History Month at St Mary's and some groups looked at the Church of England Living in Love & Faith material
- Giving our stewardship programmes a boost through a series of sermons in April and May and encouraging congregational members to sign up to the Parish Giving Scheme, which makes our income more secure
- Messy Church, which has never stopped happening, but returned to in-person sessions at St Mary's in August
- Coffee and Chat continued throughout the year, with a move to one Zoom and one in-person meeting in St Francis' each month from September

In July we gained feedback from congregation members on what people would like to see continued from the previous months, and what might be restarted or form a new venture. The results were summarised and presented at an Afternoon Tea in August, after which the following activities happened:

- Community lunches restarted
- A return of lunchtime and evening concerts in St Francis' church
- The St Mary's Christmas Market went ahead in person with a reduced number of stalls compared to 2019

Christmas saw a return to some of the restrictions associated with the virus and reduced numbers at our services and events such as The Big Christmas Sing. Early in 2022 a new Youth Group started and has been very successful with over 30 young people attending.

At the start of 2022 there was one weekend when a significant proportion of the ministry team were unwell and services for that weekend were on-line, except for an 8am communion service. We have now returned to a pattern of three services on a Sunday morning, with one Sunday each month involving a joint service at 10am, except in circumstances where it is important, or more practical, for the churches to worship together. Our on-line presence, streamed from both church buildings continues, as

does our paper-based communication for those not on-line and pastoral visiting in person and by telephone for those who are housebound.

Connections with other community groups in West Wickham continue, in particular:

- The 7th West Wickham scout group continued to meet on Zoom in the early part of the year. When they returned to in-person meetings, the group started a second cub pack, who meet at St Mary's
- St Francis' Pre-school now has a new owner – Kelly. Unfortunately, their plan for a nativity in a Carol Service could not happen due to increasing rates of Covid, but we hope that we can build on this link in 2022
- Matchbox Theatre returned with a performance of a new play in December

With many thanks to the ministry team who have continued to keep our worship and discipleship groups meeting throughout the year. With Debbie Adams from St Mary's being accepted to train as a Reader, we have already benefitted from a different perspective on ministry, and we look forward to this continuing as she gains further experience.

Financial Review/Report:

A much better year than 2020, greatly helped by the reduction in the Parish Share, that we give to the Diocese. Despite lockdown, our total Church income was up by £6000, and Hall bookings are showing signs of positive improvement in usage. Roof repairs to the Hall cost £3996. Hall refuse removal costs over £1650 per annum. The main items in Church maintenance were lighting works of £4152 and organ repairs of £828. The PCC have agreed that Missions of £400 each should again go to EarAid Nepal, The Anglican Eye Clinic in Ghana and Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF), because of contacts within our congregation. Reports from them are regularly updated at the back of the Church and in the magazine.

Fabric Report:

During 2021 with the relaxing of Covid restrictions and in between lockdowns, we were able to replace the felt on the small church hall roof and on the North side of the Church the guttering and downpipes and facer board was replaced. The drains to the North side of the Church were cleared.

In early 2022 the PCC agreed to upgrade the security lighting to the main entrance and pathway to the Church and this work was undertaken in March 2022. Also in early 2022 a new electricity cable was installed to the hall along with smart meters and three of the gas heaters have also been repaired in the hall.

Due to the storm in February 2022 part of the copper on the roof to the west of the Church had lifted and currently awaiting a quote.

Hall Report:

Bookings are finally returning after Covid and the Winter break for the markets. The main hall was redecorated by the Explorer Scouts in the Summer holidays and now has a fresher, cleaner feel to attract occasional users. We are very grateful to them for their efforts. The windows will need attention in the near future as these were not tackled due to deterioration of the frames.

The Scout Group made a lump sum payment in the year which was a big help as other revenue streams continued to be depressed. The Matchbox Theatre also made a substantial contribution to the Church with part allocated to replacing the main hall lights with LED units. This will be a substantial improvement.

The Pre-School is a valued community asset and revenue stream and we are working with them to be more involved with both the Hall and the Church itself.

The heaters in both halls have been a regular issue, although the front hall ones have now been repaired. We will need to review these old gas guzzlers in due course, in line with a green energy policy and having reliable heat for users. Issues lurk with the roof, drains and the general age of the kitchen and toilets and so fundraising will be required in the near future. A Hall Committee is being re-assembled to address this.

March 2022