

**The Parochial Church Council of the
Ecclesiastical Parish of
St Mary the Virgin Bletchingley**

Charity Commission Registration Number 1189453

**Annual Report
&
Financial Statements**

Year ending 31st December 2023



Contents

<u>CHARITY PARTICULARS</u>	3
Governance and Structure	4
Aims and Purposes	4
Objectives and Activities	4
Public Benefit	4
Mission Statement	4
Vision Statement.....	4
Mission Action plan	23
Achievements and Performance	5
Minutes of Parishioners Meeting 2023	6
Minutes of APCM 2023	7
Priest-In-Charge’s Report To The APCM 2024	9
<u>REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2023</u>	
Safeguarding	12
Churchwardens Report 2023.....	12
PCC Secretary’s Report	13
Finance Report 2023.....	14
Worship Committee Report	15
The Blessed Breakfast Club	15
Our Young People	16
The Ark	17
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC).....	17
Church Choir	17
Church Bellringers	18
Flower Arrangers.....	18
Churches Together	18
Hungry Hermit	19
Parish Website	19
Discussion Groups	19
Social Committee	19
Deanery Synod Report.....	20
Mission Action Plan	23

Charity Particulars

Charity Name: The Parochial Church Council of The Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mary The Virgin, Bletchingley. The PCC is a body Corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956), Church Representation Rules 2020) and is a charity registered with the Charity Commission under the Charities Act 2011.

Charity Registration Number: 1189453

Registered Address: Church House, Church Walk, Bletchingley, Redhill RH1 4PD (for correspondence)

Officers:

Chair: The Reverend Captain Paul Fitzpatrick C.A. SCP

Lay Vice-Chairman: Richard Fowler

PCC Secretary: Valerie Muller

Treasurer: William Alexander

Electoral Roll Officer: Clare Sturgeon

Church Safeguarding Officer: Jeffery Marks

Trustees and PCC Members

Priest-In-Charge: The Reverend Captain Paul Fitzpatrick C.A. SCP (Clergy ex-officio)

Churchwarden: Richard Fowler, Jeffery Marks,

Deputy Churchwarden: Victoria Gillespie

April Alexander

Jennifer Hyde

William Alexander

Christine Markham

Gillian Black

Cyril Mighall and Verger

Trevor Dawson

Valerie Muller

Rosa Diacon

Ann Pressey

Kate Doody and Children's Representative

Clemmie Sellick

Deanery Synod Representative:

Richard Fowler (ex officio)

Jennifer Hyde (ex officio)

April Alexander (ex officio)

Bankers: NatWest

Independent Examiner: Mr. Anthony Cock

Name of Insurers: Ecclesiastical Insurance Group

Website: www.bletchingleyparishchurch.org.uk

Name of Architect: Russell Hanslip, Hanslip and Co Unit 401 Bon Marche Centre, 241-251 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BJ

Governance and Structure

Aims and Purposes

Bletchingley Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the Priest-In-Charge, the Reverend Captain Paul Fitzpatrick, in promoting in the Ecclesiastical Parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also spiritually responsible for the maintenance of the Church complex of St Mary the Virgin within the Parish of Bletchingley. It must consult with the incumbent on matters of general concern and importance in the parish. The PCC must also comply with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults – and record at the APCM that it has done so.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our Services and Worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

Public Benefit

The trustees of the Charity are aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit and have had regard to it in their administration of the Charity. The trustees believe that, by promoting the work of the Church of England in the Ecclesiastical Parish of St. Mary the Virgin Bletchingley it helps to promote the whole mission of the Church (pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical) more effectively, within the Ecclesiastical Parish, and that in doing so it provides a benefit to the public by:

- Providing facilities for public worship, pastoral care and spiritual, moral and intellectual development, both for its members and for anyone who wishes to benefit from what the Church offers; and
- Promoting Christian values and service by members of the Church in and to their communities, to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

Mission Statement (for more details see Mission Action Plan on page 21)

Come and discover God Maintaining a welcoming church to all. We do this by sharing the gospel of God's love by living and exploring faith together through worship, reading and hearing scripture. We achieve this through prayer, loving service and support for all in our village.

Vision Statement (for more details see Mission Action Plan on page 21)

We want to discover and rediscover God by:

- Being a truly inclusive, joyful and welcoming church.
- Being forgiving people and seeking to be reconciled,
- Living out that spiritual growth by sharing God's love in the village: achieving this through worship, prayer, and loving service.
- Having a sense of going forward in our growing faith with wise financial management.

This is summarised on our website, www.bletchingleyparishchurch.org.uk as:

We believe in an inclusive church - a church which celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate on the grounds of disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, sexuality or any other grounds. Everyone is welcome.

Achievements and Performance

Worship

During 2023 Sunday services were maintained with one principal service each week during the vacancy. From June we offered an 8 am and 9:30 am service.

We celebrated festivals on relevant days as they fell, usually on the nearest Sunday.

Daily Offices Tuesday – Friday (morning and evening)

St Mary the Virgin Church is open each day to enable visitors to enjoy the peace and prayerful space.

Occasional offices

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. Through baptism we thank God for the gift of life, in marriage public vows are exchanged with God's blessing and through funeral services friends and family express their grief and give thanks for the life which is now complete in this world and to commend the person into God's keeping.

During 2023, we had 4 baptisms and 2 weddings. The clergy took 13 funerals, some in church and some at the crematorium and 4 burials of ashes.

Education through courses, study groups etc

- Lent discussion groups, Basic Theology courses, bible discussion groups - regularly and in season. Baptism preparation classes, marriage preparation courses.
- Learning about the Christian faith is fostered by sermons, quiet days and services.
- Contacts have been made with some local schools, and links. In normal years parties of local school children visit the church as part of their curriculum and are introduced to the building and the activities that go on in it. This work takes place in the context of our ministry for Children and Young People. St Mary the Virgin also has a longstanding connection with The Hawthorns School and The Bletchingley Village School.

Pastoral Care

A team of volunteers and clergy visit people in the parish who are ill or have been bereaved. The clergy visit and minister to those in hospital or hospice.

Mission activities through community events

- Weekly Foodbank collections
- Ark – a provision for early years children and their parents and /or carers
- Hungry Hermit - a weekly coffee morning
- Big Lunch for the King's Coronation

Missions and charities (see details in the Financial statement)

The PCC gives to missions and charities from voluntary income. Missions and charities also benefit from funds raised by special collections and fund-raising activities. The congregation of the parish are kept informed about the charities and raising funds to support them.

Minutes of the ANNUAL Parishioners MEETING held on Sunday 23rd April 2023

The Minutes of the 2022 Parishioners Meeting which had been circulated prior to the meeting, in the Annual Report of 2022, were taken as read. The Meeting agreed them as being a true account of that meeting and they were signed by Jeff Marks (churchwarden).

Election of Churchwardens

Churchwardens are elected annually and usually, and here at St Mary's, they are elected for a maximum term of office of four years. However occasionally the PCC feel it is appropriate to ask a warden to stay for a fifth year. Richard has completed five years but as he is involved in a number of ongoing projects the PCC have recommended that he serves a sixth and final term.

Richard Fowler was proposed by Pamela Cock and seconded by Valerie Muller to be elected for a sixth term in office.

Jeff Marks was proposed by Vicki Gillespie and seconded by Valerie Muller to be elected for a third term in office.

There were no other nominations, so they were duly elected.

There was a short discussion about the need to return to the four year cycle for churchwardens as had been agreed at the Parishioners Meeting in 2016.

Penny Sherrington thanked the wardens for their hard work in the parish. We are all enormously grateful to them. There was a show of hands indicating our appreciation of them.

....

St Mary's Bletchingley
Minutes of the ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH meeting
held on Sunday 23rd April 2023

Jeff Marks (churchwarden) chaired this meeting

Apologies for absence: Dame Sarah Goad, Vicki and Charlie Gillespie, Chrissie Markham, Kate and Patrick Wills, Richard and Anne Fowler, Annabel Smith, Louise and Mark Tantum, Angela and Nigel Price.

Minutes of the 2022 APCM were taken as read as they had been circulated in the Annual Report prior to the meeting. The Meeting agreed them as being a true account of the 2022 meeting and they were signed by Jeff Marks (Churchwarden).

Matters Arising. There were no matters arising

Reports.

The Electoral Roll. There are now 118 names on the Electoral Roll, sadly 1 member has died during the year, and 1 new person has joined. 91 are resident within the village and 27 are non-resident.

Other Reports. All the other reports are in the Annual Report for 2022 which has been widely circulated before this meeting.

Financial Statement 2022. The treasurer presented the Financial Statement for 2022.

Compared with last year which showed a surplus, 2022 showed a considerable deficit of £8,770, although this was less than had been budgeted. The reduction in deficit was largely due to certain parishioners making generous one off donations towards the end of the year. This deficit brings our reserves down to £20,400 which is less than the three month's revenue prescribed in the Finance Policy

Certain points comparing 2022 with 2021 were explained:

- The most noticeable difference is the absence of the £9,600 grant from the Thomas Chapman charity which leaves a gaping hole in the accounts.
- Stewardship is down due to some donors leaving the parish and others reducing their donations or just terminating their subscriptions. There have been some new subscribers but not sufficient to compensate.
- Income from collections and fees (weddings and funerals) have both risen considerably as church activity has increased post covid.
- The cost of the administrator has risen due to the absence of furlough grants.
- The effect of the rising energy costs only affects the last two months and is therefore modest. This cost does include a provision of £300 to allow for the fact that our supplier has not deducted any direct debits for the last two months. In addition, there was a grant from the diocese of £1400 to cover excess energy costs, but this has largely been deferred to 2023. These two factors together result in £1350 appearing as 'creditors' in the balance sheet
- Donations from the parish are considerably larger than the sums raised from appeals largely due to the donations from parish funds to Welcare, Christian Aid and A Rocha as agreed earlier in the year by the PCC

The treasurer invited questions:

Q. If money is tight do we send less money to the Bishop?

A. We have not increased our giving to the diocese for 3 years. There have been discussions with them about our finances.

Q. As we don't have an incumbent do the diocese make an allowance for this? **A.** No

Q. Has the administrator's salary been increased? **A.** Yes

Q. Is our giving related to the number of people on the Electoral Roll? **A.** No, the parish itself pledges to give so much a year.

Bill Alexander would like to share this job.

The treasurer thanked Anthony Cock for his work and assistance as our Independent Examiner and Lisa Swan for looking after wages.

Bill Alexander was thanked for his hard work in looking after the church finances.

Elections

To PCC For 3 years

Kate Doody	Proposed by	Valerie Muller	Seconded by Pamela Cock
Gill Black		Jeff Marks	Jean Osborne
Vicki Gillespie		Jeff Marks	Ed Muller
Ann Pressey		Jeff Marks	Ed Muller

For 2 years

Bill Alexander		Jeff Marks	Cyril Mighall
Cyril Mighall		Jeff Marks	Valerie Muller
Valerie Muller		Jeff Marks	Vicki Gillespie

Electoral Roll Officer

Clare Sturgeon

Appointment of Independent Examiner Anthony Cock

As there were no other nominations for these posts the meeting elected everyone en bloc.

Deanery Synod

There was one vacancy but no nominations

Closing remarks from Jeff Marks.

It has been a busy year but finally we are looking forward to our new 'priest in charge' being licensed in June.

We have been very fortunate to have John, Kerry and Penny to lead most of services, particularly John who came out of retirement and arranged the rota of clergy as well.

The following were thanked;

Cyril Mighall for his advice about services and for maintaining altar supplies, Valerie Muller as PCC Secretary and all the other things she does without complaint!, Richard for his willingness to climb ladders, Bill as treasurer, Ed for maintaining the churchbells and the clock and Kate for all the wonderful work she does with the young people and all those that help with Hungry Hermit and the Ark and to all those who help when needs arise.

Thank you everyone.

We are looking forward to welcoming Father Paul.

Priest-In-Charge's Report To The APCM 2024

REVIEW OF THE YEAR FROM MAY 2023 TO APRIL 2024

Coming to serve among you has been a real privilege. In October 2022 the Bishop and the Archdeacon gave me an outline of the possibilities and challenges that the benefice had been wrestling with. My ministry amongst you commenced on Monday 12 June 2023, it was lovely to receive my licence from the Bishop of Croydon. My licence as Interim Priest-In-Charge is for three years. An "interim" role within the church is an indication that changes needed to be engaged in to create long-term stability. It was judged that three years was long enough to address the issues that led to the previous Rector resigning and the Living (the role of Rector) suspended at the request of the Patron and the Diocesan Bishop.



In my opinion two of the qualities that a leader should possess are an open mind and a loving heart. These are crucial as we embark upon the journey of reconciliation, growth and stability. As I write, I sense that these two qualities have met a need to a good number of those connected with our church and wider community.

STRATEGIC INTERIM PERIOD GOALS

After settling in, I met with the PCC in September 2023, and we agreed and set out our strategic interim period goals. These goals, I believe will help us to engage in and measure the change that is needed. Some changes can be achieved quickly, while others are changes that can take a lifetime. Therefore, being grounded and realistic we can all move forward positively.

We (the PCC) agreed that our core purpose was to allow anyone to Come and discover God.

This core purpose can be achieved through committing ourselves to be led by God and engaging in our mission and vision statement, set out earlier in this annual report.

I then set out four priority areas for us to intensely engage in over the first 12 months and build upon it in subsequent months and years.

1 - A joyful and worshipping church

When people feel safe and happy in church then we can be joyful and truly worship God. With the assistance of the Worship Committee a new order of service was agreed and we are now using this across the liturgical seasons. After 11 months we are in a different place, but we still have work to do. Further details can be found in the Worship Committee report

The 8:00 am congregation is stable and is a place where I can invite those who are troubled or bereaved. 9:30 am is growing in number with a good number of people returning to church. This is a great indicator that we are developing in the right direction.

Moving the refreshments into Church House has proved to be a good endeavour. Similarly, I have been encouraged by the uptake of new recipients to my weekly message (repeated on the website in Thought For The Week).

2 - Activities towards growth

This has been the area that takes much of my time and energy. Mission is exciting because if we engage in it in a smart manner, we can undoubtedly build upon what has been achieved over the last three or four generations. Since my arrival, I have been fishing to see where the opportunities are and what is needed to engage and grow the next generation of those who will worship here. As it becomes clear what the mission plan in this area will be we can agree and engage a clear path.

Work with the children and families has been encouraging, a huge thanks to Kate Doody and the team, together we accessed finance for resources for the Sunday Club and the Family Service has been a great

encouragement. Connected with this is my work in Bletchingley Village School on a monthly basis and termly services in church have been very encouraging. Equally my work with the Bletchingley United Charities helps to strengthen the connections further. Renewing relationships in Hawthorns School has been good. I am encouraged that ARK has a place in the life of the church and I am grateful for Sue Morris and the team as they develop it further with those in our community that come under the banner of “early years”.

Blessed Breakfast is effective in its work with men, our prayers and encouragement for Rob Tucker as he leads the initiative. This ministry amongst men, who on the whole are on the edge of church life is a core part of people getting to know God. There are some nascent thoughts about looking at meeting the spiritual needs of women. Likewise, there are some thoughts about how to reach out to older residents within the village. I am excited as God calls men and women from our community to serve and lead in this mission.

3 - Strengthening reconciliation

One of the reasons why I was appointed was to address the effects of the division that came about in the period prior to my arrival. The effects for some are deep and others are mildly affected, and clearly some are not affected at all. Reconciliation can only be achieved when those contributing to and affected by division have a renewed confidence in the process that they are invited to engage in. The strength of private conversations means that trust can be established and maintained. Trust leads us to truth and understanding. This enables healing and wholeness to be embedded once again in the lives of those who want to receive it. In your daily prayers, please pray for all involved in this area of our mission.

4 - Striving towards financial stability

I am very proud that the Finance Committee and the PCC agreed a budget for 2024, this is a legal requirement under the changes made in the Charities Act that came into effect in 2022. A budget allows us to put a cost to mission and to measure our progress.

We have communicated to all who regularly worship with us our financial needs for 2024. Shortly we should be able to compare with the pledges people have made with our budgetary goals.

The PCC agree to meet its obligations for its pledge to 2024 towards the Parish Support Fund, which amounts to £65,040.

SAYING THANK YOU

The above was a quick review of our past year – much of the detail of what we have done and what has happened has rightly been set out by others in this Report. My report to the APCM should never simply be a list of “thank you’s” to those who keep the wheels turning, although of course my thanks go to all who contribute to our common life together to all who served the parish during the uncertain period of vacancy.

On behalf of you all I want to thank a number of individuals, in no order of priority. Revd Penny Sherrington, Revd Kerry Tucker and John Buck who stepped in during the vacancy, and after my arrival and after due prayerful reflection, have each chosen to support the ministry within St. Mary’s – thank you, for without you we would not achieve so much.

It fell to the Churchwardens and deputy Churchwarden to settle me into post, I am grateful for their wisdom and encouragement; together we began to set new “traditions” within our community life. Particularly we pray for God’s blessing on Richard Fowler as he comes to the end of his term of office.

The role of treasurer is time consuming and largely done out of site. On behalf of you all I express our thanks to Bill Alexander for all his hard work throughout the year.

A special thanks to Val Muller, who as PCC secretary has helped me reshape the administration of PCC meetings and refine, compile and proof read the new format for the annual report.

One of the life blood of church management is the PCC and members of its subgroups, thank you for your commitment. I express my thanks to the choir and their efforts to ensure we have had an organist each week. It has been very helpful to have had the guidance of the Sacristan and his team as we have adapted our orders of services. I want to acknowledge our thanks, those who take part in looking after the church fabric, flowers, cleaners and those who lock up, whose quiet and unobserved service enables the mission of the Church.

The benefice office is at the heart of our work, we express our sincere appreciation to Elaine Chalcraft, our administrator, for all her hard work.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

It is important to reflect theologically on the year too. When I arrived the primary emotion, I encountered here was fear, courage and loving action has seen that area transform this towards trust. We all need to do our bit to rebuild. As you engage in that journey, consider that Jesus knew he would suffer greatly, be rejected and killed. How would you deal with that knowledge if you somehow knew this about your own future? Most people would be filled with fear and become obsessed with trying to avoid it. But not our Lord. Luke 9:22 shows just how intent he was on embracing his Cross with unwavering confidence and courage.

This is just one of several times that Jesus began to break the news to his disciples about his pending fate. And each time he spoke this way, the disciples for the most part remained either silent or in denial. Recall, for example, one such reaction of St. Peter when he responded to Jesus' prediction of his Passion by saying, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you" (Matthew 16:22). The strength, courage and determination of our Lord shines through by the fact that he speaks so clearly and definitively. And what motivates Jesus to speak with such conviction and courage is his love.

Too often, "love" is understood as a strong and good feeling. It's perceived as an attraction to something or a strong liking of it. But that's not love in the truest form. True love is a choice to do what is best for another, no matter the cost, no matter how difficult. True love is not a feeling that seeks selfish fulfilment. True love is an unwavering strength that seeks only the good of the person who is loved.

Jesus' love for humanity was so strong that he was driven toward his pending death with great power. He was unwaveringly determined to sacrifice his life for us all, and there was nothing that would ever deter him from that mission.

In our own lives, it's easy to lose sight of what true love actually is. We can easily become caught up in our own selfish desires and think that these desires are love. But they are not.

Reflect, over this coming year, upon the unwavering determination of our Lord to sacrificially love us all by suffering greatly, by enduring rejection, and by dying upon the cross. Nothing could have ever deterred him from this love. We must show the same sacrificial love.

As I hold each of you in my prayers, I ask for your prayers.

With my prayers and blessing,

Father Paul, Interim Priest-In-Charge March 2024

REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2023

Safeguarding

The parish is committed to the safeguarding of young children, and adults.

Safeguarding Policies

We update our policies regularly; all our current policies are to be found on our website. You will find links to the policies and practices of this parish to ensure that we are a safe and welcoming place for all.

All PCC members are DBS checked. PCC members receive basic safeguarding training as and when the diocese provides courses. The aim is to give them an awareness of the subject.

All members of the church who have dealings with young people and vulnerable adults are DBS checked and also need to attend one of these courses.

Safeguarding Report

We have updated DBS checks for all members of the PCC through the year and we will continue to keep any new members to the PCC at the required level of DBS checks.

We have had no cause to refer any cases to the Diocesan Safeguarding team during the year.

We are still waiting for the Safeguarding team to agree on a benefice Basic Awareness course that we can hold locally.

Jeff Marks, Parish Safeguarding Officer

Churchwardens Report 2023

The year started with planning for the Licensing of our Interim Priest-in-Charge, Fr Paul, in June.

Preparations and the consultations with SS Peter & Paul meant that this event passed off very smoothly.

We were all aware that the old gas warm-air heating system was coming to the end of its life and we sought comparative quotations from three companies offering similar systems of warming the people rather than the whole church space. In the end we went with the system of electric under-pew heaters, and this was finally installed in the autumn. The old gas fired air heater was decommissioned and sent for scrap before the new system was installed. We also had to get the gas connection capped off and the meter removed – we now have NO gas connection to the church. However, the removal of the old system left a rather large and deep hole in the choir vestry which we are nearing signing off a contractor to correct.

Following Fr Paul's arrival, he was very instrumental in helping us to clear up some outstanding faculties that were still to be completed. These are now all satisfactorily concluded. Other faculty applications have been submitted at the end of the year, for which we await approval, including the choir vestry and tower roof repairs.

Last spring we trained some more people to help out with Eucharistic Ministry and for this we thank Oliver Jackson for his time and patience.

We continue to offer coffee and tea after church on Sundays but we desperately need more people to help with this – we may have to curtail this activity.

The choir lost Robert Trotman last year but were fortunate in having Geoff Stone join in the summer.

Jeff Marks Richard Fowler

PCC Secretary's Report

The PCC, which met 6 times during 2023, had a busy year.

The year started whilst we were still in an Interregnum. St Mary's was fortunate to have the Revd Kerry, the Revd Penny and John Buck to lead our services and we are very very grateful to them for this.

Our meetings throughout the year regularly review the following subjects:

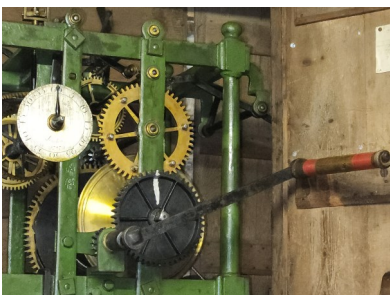
- Safeguarding,
- JPIC and Mission Action Planning
- Finance including our PSF and charitable giving,
- Our work with young people.

In May Archdeacon Moira Astin addressed both the PCC's from St Mary's and St Peter and St Paul.

We welcomed Father Paul as he was installed as our Interim Priest-in-Charge in June.

We discussed and agreed a new heating system, reviewed our Mission Action plan, the finance committee reviewed 'Giving for God's Purpose' and various faculty applications were submitted whilst others were completed. The weekly newsletter was reviewed, a new website designed and work continues with encouraging our young people.

The PCC invited other village organisations to help organise a Big Lunch for the Kings Coronation. (see Social Committee report.)



The PCC considered the need to automate winding the church clock, which otherwise needs winding every week and, following problems with the strike mechanism, the clock is undergoing a thorough servicing.



We celebrated the 80th birthdays of 6 members of the congregation with a small celebration following the 9.30am service one Sunday in September.

The PCC are very grateful to the many people who quietly do numerous jobs behind the scenes to maintain the life of our beautiful church and her community, the welcomers, readers, those who lead our prayers, money counters, coffee makers, flower arrangers, cleaners, grass cutters, choir and bellringers and many more.

We also owe a huge vote of thanks to our Churchwardens, Richard Fowler and Jeff Marks who do so much for our church.

Valerie Muller, PCC Secretary

Finance Report 2023

Last year, 2023, showed a deficit of some £5,000 which was less than the deficit in 2022. This reduction was largely due to many parishioners responding to our appeal early in 2023 and increasing their regular donations for which they are heartily thanked. Collections taken in services markedly increased. The church also benefitted from the increase in interest rate paid on our deposits with the Church Board of Finance (CBF).

Overall, our expenses were fairly similar to the previous year, in particular, the largest item, our contribution to the Parish Support Fund paid to the diocese remained unchanged.

The deficit leaves our unrestricted reserves* depleted to just under £15,000 which is barely more than half of the £25,000 specified in our Finance Policy. This trend cannot continue for much longer.

During the year the heating system was converted from gas to electricity, partly to replace an ageing gas furnace but also to move to an energy resource less dependent on fossil fuel. The cost of £26,400 came out of the Fabric Fund. This was partly redressed by a very welcome donation of £7,400 from the Friends of Bletchingley Church. Some of the costs of conversion are still outstanding, including the replacement of the electricity meter. There is also a hole in the floor of choir vestry to be repaired and the two together may cost some £2,000.

We cannot be certain at this stage how the new system will affect our annual energy costs because we have not yet had a proper account from our supplier, but estimates indicate that these should be in the region of £2,500.

These transactions are reflected in the £32,000 reduction in our deposit with the CBF. The increase in the cash at the bank reflects the donation from the Friends referred to above.

The next section in the accounts records the various donations made by the church, amounting to just over £3,000. This is approximately balanced by the money raised in various appeals. At the year end not all of the funds had been distributed but this was largely completed early in the New Year, leaving £560 remaining for Bletchingley in Bloom.

The Hungry Hermit had another good year, it made a surplus of more than £1,000 and of that £488 was donated to Christian Aid, leaving a balance of £765 to be distributed.

Other restricted fund items which have changed during the year include the flower fund which has a balance of £697. The collection at Robert Trotman's funeral yielded £725 which was paid to Redhill Food Bank and a further £1,679 which is available for a new lectern.

*The sum available to meet unforeseen emergencies

Bill Alexander Treasurer

Worship Committee Report

The committee met in June to review the order of service. Fr. Paul was grateful for the wisdom of the committee as it considered how, through worship we allowed our church to be joyful again.

The committee agreed on the rota of services for 8:00 AM Holy Communion each Sunday and then 1st Sunday of the month Holy Communion; 2nd Sunday of the month Holy Communion with healing and Sunday Club; 3rd Sunday of the month family service; 4th Holy Communion with healing and Sunday Club; and 5th Sunday of the month Holy Communion. The rota has been agreed through to January 2024. After which there was a slight adjustment for the Family Service moving forward a week.

Order of Service:

Some of the congregation expressed disquiet or tension about the texts in some of the orders of service. The churchwardens asked Father Paul to examine this and offer guidance to the worship committee on a suitable order of service. Therefore, bearing in mind the interests of the whole parish and all of the worshipers, a framework was formulated that could be reused in a booklet for each season with variants.

The new order of service falls into four major sections:

The Gathering,	in which we come together as God's people, and prepare in penitence and joy to receive Christ in Word and Sacrament;
The Liturgy of the Word,	in which we listen to the words of Scripture (culminating in the reading of the Gospel), explore the faith through the sermon and the Creed, and bring our prayers to God;
The Liturgy of the Sacrament,	in which bread and wine are blessed in remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection, linking his sacrifice on the cross with our offering of prayer and praise, and transforming the elements of bread and wine into our spiritual food, the food we are invited to share in Holy Communion;
The Dismissal,	in which we are sent out to be the Body of Christ in the world.

The service falls within the alternatives permitted in 'Holy Communion Order One' from Common Worship Services and Prayers for the Church of England.

Fr Paul, Interim Priest-in-Charge

The Blessed Breakfast Club (BBC) Men's Breakfast Group

The BBC started in 2018 and meets bright and early once a month at Bletchingley Golf Club.

Our main goal is to ponder and discuss topical subjects and consider any related 'faith' issues.

The conversation is largely focused on the issues and with attendance spanning the faithful, the sceptics, and all in between, the conversation is usually lively with plenty of candid input! We frequently have to agree to disagree and build good friendships in the process. There is no preaching, no membership, no pressure, no golf, just good sausages, companionship and humour.

A selection of recent topics tackled include;

- Sin. Basic, better, best
- Handling criticism
- Church attendance; going, going, gone?

Our March group, 'Conflict and peacekeeping' attracted 15 attendees

Our Young People

2023 was a fun year for Sunday Club! We continued to meet twice a month, recently switching to the first and third Sundays of the month, and welcomed children aged three and upwards to join us. We start in Church in the main service before going out to Church House for games, crafts, activities, and fun, and then re-join the congregation for communion.

We continue to share our activities with the congregation after communion and try to keep the Sunday Club board updated at the back of the Church- do stop and look at our crafts and activities and ask the children about them, they really enjoy talking about what they have been doing and learning and they frequently surprise me with how much they take in and how insightful they are.

We have settled into a new format for the Family Service on the second Sunday of the month and the children are really engaging with the story and teaching, which is lovely to see. We invested in some new beanbags this year, much to the delight of the children who love sitting (and sliding around!!) on them!

We held a children's service on Good Friday and once again the Easter trail boards were set out around the churchyard for children to follow and learn more about the Easter story.

In June we ran a stall at the Village Fair, engaging children with crafts and activities- a great opportunity to share some of the sorts of activities we do at Sunday Club with a wider audience.

One of the highlights of the year was Ride + Stride, a sponsored walk from St Mary's Bletchingley to St Peter and Paul, Nutfield, and then on to Christ Church, South Nutfield. Families from Bletchingley and Nutfield raised over £1,500 which was split between St Mary's and St Peter and Paul, and the Surrey Churches Preservation Trust. It was particularly challenging as it was the hottest day of the year! Lots of ice lollies were required to get the children to the finish line. It was a fantastic event, and a really good opportunity to get to know some of the Nutfield families.



Everyone enjoyed our annual Christingle service on 23 December, with adults and children alike joining in the fun and dressing up as the nativity characters.

Finally, a huge thank you once again to Max and Rosa and to Caroline, Severine and Immy without whom we wouldn't be able to run Sunday Club.

Kate Doody



The Ark

The Ark is a toddler group held in Church House for all Preschoolers and their carers. At present our regular attendees are young, many under 2's, some babies and a few 3-4 year olds.

It has been encouraging to see once diffident people being drawn in and children and carers alike growing in confidence. Children enjoy unstructured play time, learning new skills. A very popular snack time is followed by a story and singing ending with our signature Hokey Cokey.

Thanks to God for another happy year. Our volunteers enable the Ark to thrive, grateful thanks to them.

Sue Morris

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

EcoChurch

We are very pleased to announce that St Mary's Church has now been recognised as having achieved the EcoChurch Bronze Award.

The JPIC committee are coming up with plans to work towards achieving a Silver Award as soon as practicable.



Modern Slavery

Jennifer Hyde, as part of her role with Reigate Archdeaconry Social Justice Focus, has been busy delivering courses for churches in Caterham, Oxted, Reigate and Merstham with each group then setting up an action group to keep the momentum going in their area to raise awareness of modern slavery. Links with the Southwark JPIC movement have deepened this year and we hope to do more work together and to spread the message beyond the Reigate Archdeaconry .

Jennifer Hyde

The Church Choir

We are an enthusiastic group of singers who enjoy singing and making music together. Virginia and Geoff have joined us this year and they are very welcome.

Sadly, in June, we said goodbye to Ian Skipper, our organist and musical director. He was an accomplished choir master and we miss him. We are grateful to Tristan Hall for standing in for him with enthusiasm and humour.

We were very sad when our longest serving choir member Robert Trotman died in October. He leaves a big gap in the choir.

We continue to sing a wide range of music from Thomas Tallis to John Rutter.

The choir would love to welcome some more singers, particularly altos and tenors. We are a very friendly group – do think about joining us.

Valerie Muller

Church Bellringers

The most notable ringing during the year was to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III on 6th May, when 14 ringers (9 from Bletchingley, 2 from Outwood and 3 from Horsham) joined in ringing our 10 bells.

Our own ringers continue to ring every Sunday for the church's morning service, and to practice on Wednesday evenings. They are gaining experience as the band strengthens its skills after Covid. We are pleased to also welcome back two former ringers.

The bells are recognised as one of the finest rings of 10 bells in Surrey, and we have had several groups of visiting ringers, even some from the Manchester area. It was particularly refreshing to have a visit from a band of Surrey's younger ringers, whose skills and enthusiasm emphasises that bell-ringing can be a skill/pastime for all ages.

We continue to train new bell ringers to build up our band. Anyone interested in finding out more about the bells and bellringing, is always welcome to look in at one of our practices on a Wednesday evening or arrange to climb the tower to view the actual bells and to find out how they are rung.

Ed Muller Tower Captain

Flower Arrangers

Our small dedicated team has continued much as before, always ensuring there are flowers in place each week for us all to enjoy. We then have others to join us for festivals. It is always such a joy to see everyone coming together to fill our beautiful Church with flowers at these times.. As well as Easter, Harvest and Christmas, we celebrated King Charles's coronation with colours of red, white and blue.



Funding has continued to be a problem. Previously most of our income has come from weddings, but again fewer weddings have taken place this year, and most have opted not to have any special flowers.

We are very fortunate that the flower team fund their own flowers, which we consider as part of our giving, but other sundry items are purchased through the flower fund. The sponsorship scheme has been slow, but a few people have asked for loved one to be remembered. Others have preferred to remember someone special, by giving a donation towards the Easter lilies. We appreciate all donations.

We continue to look for alternatives to floral foam, and we have been virtually foam free for the past year. Using British, locally grown flowers has proved more of a challenge, both in terms of cost and availability. This is therefore a work in progress.

Vicki Gillespie

Churches Together

The tradition of an interdenominational Carol Service continued and was held in December. It was my first time to share ministry with Deacon Tim (RC). My desire is to find a way of working together as we explore more ways to draw the wider Christian community together.

Hungry Hermit

The Hungry Hermit village cafe opens every Tuesday from 10am to 12noon in the Basement of Church House serving homemade cakes and hot drinks. Customers include a regular group of village residents, other users of Church House, visitors to the village and sometimes clients of the specialist local vet. Everyone is very welcome.

No specific charge is made for refreshments and profit from donations is given to charity. This year £2,411 was raised and after costs deducted including room hire £1,246 remained and £488 was donated to Christian Aid and the remaining money to be distributed to other charities.

The cafe is also a donation hub for the Caterham Foodbank which supports residents of Bletchingley and large amounts of donated goods are regularly delivered to their warehouse ready for distribution.

The small cafe team continue to feel that the aim of the cafe is being fulfilled in providing a welcoming, friendly space open to everyone who visits our village.

Hungry Hermit Team

Parish Website

In September we redesigned our website, the old design was about to expire. There have been technical issues with this but we have learnt a lot and, as we move forwards, we hope to make the website a useful tool for all who would like to find out more about life at St Mary's. We feel that the website is a way to develop our message. Equally, we need more strategically about how our website, Facebook, and Zoom align with our missional goals. I have been thankful for those with keen eyes to spot errors or ways to improve things who took the time to let me know.

Discussion Groups

During the year we engaged in two discussion groups. In the autumn we discussed the book *A Way Through The Wilderness* by Paula Gooder, through which we considered reconciliation and what it means to us. Fourteen parishioners journeyed together on that group. During Lent 2024, we discussed the book *This?* by Susan Sayers, who helped us to consider the climate and our responsibility towards it. We had two sessions with one of 11 people and another of 6 people.

Father Paul Interim Priest-in-Charge

Social committee

St Mary's regularly hosts events for the village to celebrate major national occasions. The Kings Coronation was no different. As soon as it was announced the PCC secretary invited other groups within the village to form a committee to host a 'Big Lunch for the Village' on Grange Meadow.

Despite a few hiccups and worries along the way we entertained over 450 people to lunch on a lovely dry Sunday lunchtime. This was an excellent opportunity to catch up on old friends, make new friends and generally have a good time. The children really enjoyed the 'space' on the meadow to have fun. We were grateful to Ellie M for providing background /



live musical entertainment. The tickets were £5, children were free and yet we were able to send a generous donation to the food bank as well as buy a new seat for Grange Meadow to commemorate the event. The last guests left at 7.30pm!!

Valerie Muller

Deanery Synod Report

Tandridge Deanery Synod meeting - 23 February 2023

Mark Russell, CEO of The Children's Society: 'Helping children thrive, not just survive'

The Deanery Synod watched part of this talk which was given to the Diocesan Conference in September 2022. It is available on the Diocesan website: <http://bit.ly/3m4bcQo> and well worth watching in full.

Chief Executive of The Children's Society since 2019, Mark Russell is an inspirational, engaging and passionate speaker with a good sense of humour and a lovely Irish accent. The Children's Society dates from 1881 when Edward Rudolf, a young Sunday school teacher in South London, decided to do something about the effects of poverty on young children. You can read more here:

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/about-us/our-history>

Originally called 'The Society of Waifs and Strays', it has been re-branded over the years. Mark Russell talks about that white anger that life is still just too hard for too many children, after 141 years. The Society's roots are deep inside the Christian faith and deep inside God's heart for children. He sees his work as his vocation, to fight for the children of this country. There are proportionately more children living in poverty in London today than when The Children's Society was formed. That is a disgrace.

The Children's Society's Good Childhood Report, is not just research by academics but the voice of children themselves. The 2022 Report shows a worsening situation and you can download the full and summary reports at

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/good-childhood-report-2022>

The research shows there are more unhappy children in Britain than anywhere else in Europe. This is attributed to the pressures of the exam system causing worry about failure and the fact that Britain has the highest levels of poverty. The goal is, by 2030, to overturn the damaging decline in children's wellbeing, which has worsened every year since 2009, setting a path for long lasting growth. Children will be happier than they are now, more hope-filled and more secure. A good strategy is needed, with Christ-centred, outward focused parishes. Mark Russell said he believed in the power of the church to make a difference and change the world for children.

Tandridge Deanery Synod - Wednesday 14 June 2023

Mervyn Thomas CMG, Founder President of CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide)

The vision of CSW is a world free from religious persecution, where everyone has the right to practise their religion or belief freely. The specialist team of advocates works in over 20 countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America to protect and promote everyone's right to freedom of religion or belief.

They work to challenge and change laws, behaviours and policies which lead to abuses of this vital right.

Mervyn Thomas founded CSW 44 years ago at the age of 27, following the suggestion of an MP friend. He felt God had spoken to him and that this would become his life's work, which it did. There was little interest in others joining at this early stage and no understanding of the extent of the problem. The Keston College study in 1979 on prisoners provided useful evidence of the violation of the right to freedom of belief in the countries of Eastern Europe, Asia and around the world. Over time the work expanded to countries beyond Europe and people of other religions and beliefs in addition to Christians. When as Christians we speak up for them, this is missional and what Jesus would do. Proverbs 31: 8 says '*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.*' Consider also the story of the Good Samaritan.

Following publication in 2019 of the report requested by Jeremy Hunt, Foreign Secretary, by the Bishop of Truro (assisted by Mervyn Thomas), all 22 recommendations were adopted by the British Government, including a Special Envoy for the Freedom of Religion or Belief. This is Fiona Bruce MP for Congleton and

there are now 170 MPs on the all-party parliamentary group. 84% of the world's population lives in countries with high or very high restrictions on religion freedom. In Britain there may be discrimination in places, but there is not persecution. Governments should put human rights before trade. India is the worst country for attacks on religious minorities, but little is said about it because we want to trade with them.

We can: **PRAY - PROTEST** (write to your MP) - **PROVIDE** (letters) - **PROCLAIM** (tell people what is happening, speak out, invite a speaker from CSW to your church).

See **CSW.org.uk** for more information.

Elections/appointments:

April Alexander was re-elected as the Lay Chair, by the House of Laity. She extended a personal welcome to newcomers including 16 new lay members and also Father Paul Fitzpatrick, Bletchingley & Nutfield United Benefice and Revd Ellen Goldsmith, representing Tatsfield. Janet Harman was re-appointed as Secretary and Joanna Brown (Lingfield), with many years of financial experience, was welcomed as the new Treasurer. The Deanery Leadership Team (DLT), will comprise: Clergy: Michelle Edmonds, James Ashton, Helen Burnett and Paul Fitzpatrick and Laity: April Alexander, Janet Harman, Joanna Brown, Susan Gibbin and Geoff Izzard. The Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee (AMPC), led by the Archdeacon, considers the implications of any proposed pastoral reorganisation and the following were elected as members, leaving one clergy vacancy: Michelle Edmonds (Area Dean), Nigel Hinton (Dormansland), Annie Kurk (Whyteleafe) April Alexander (Lay Chair), Sue Fairclough (South Nutfield), Jennifer Hyde (Bletchingley) and Sue Mallinson (Tandridge).

Tandridge Deanery Synod Meeting – 4th November 2023

The Nature and Impact of Unconscious Bias

Many issues were covered in this meeting but the following are a few of the themes we discussed.

“Our goal is to create a beloved community, and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.” **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR**

What are Diversity and Inclusion? Are they the same or different? Diversity: is simply about the mix of people in your setting. Inclusion: is about making the mix work.

Unconscious, or implicit, bias has been identified as a significant challenge in the workplace, introducing unintentional prejudice and poor decision-making.

Unconscious biases can be defined as

‘our implicit people preferences, formed by our socialisation, our experiences, and by our exposure to others’ views about other groups of people’.

The Essentials of Unconscious Bias - Fast thinking – unconscious Involuntary, effortless, intuitive, massive resource vs **Slow thinking – conscious** Voluntary, effortful, rule-driven, limited in resources

We were then given these challenges:

What patterns /associations of people/groups do you notice around you every day and in your work life?

Think of a time when someone has made a snap judgement about you that was not accurate.

Where do you see In-Groups and Out-Groups within your organisation?

Can you list some?

How do you know if you are part of the In-Group or the Out-Group?

What challenges might be faced by those in the “out” group?

“People have a tendency to automatically associate positive characteristics with their in-group more easily than with out-groups and more easily associate negative characteristics with out-groups than with their in-group.”

The following is material taken from the Southwark Diocesan Antiracism Charter

This work continues but there must be renewed urgency to our actions amid rising concern about

insufficient progress towards racial justice, equality and inclusion in our organisation. It is time to embed this work strategically into our governance structures for the Diocese and the parishes and also in our liturgy, our preaching and teaching, our prayers and our everyday actions as we live out God's love in the world.

We recommit ourselves to this transforming work to become a truly anti-racist organisation. We intend to do this by embedding the three key principles of this Anti-Racism Charter (ARC) in our Diocesan strategic response to issues of racism, racial inequality and racial injustice and indifference

Principle 1

An explicit theological understanding that God's kingdom is multi-ethnic, and that it is through our baptismal covenant that we recognise and respect the dignity of every human being and our unity in Christ.

Principle 2

An intentional focus in our theological studies, liturgy, teaching, prayer, word and work to take strategic and practical actions to combat racism and racial inequality.

Principle 3

A clear strategy for increasing and sustaining diversity in our governance structures at Diocesan and parish level, so as to ensure representation and participation of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds at all levels of our organisation.

Mission Action Plan

This mission Action Plan pulls together the Interim Goals discussed previously. For practical reasons, these are described as *Priority Mission Areas* in this document.

What you read below, on the whole, will not be new; I desire to lead you into growth by building upon and affirming what is already established and healthy.

<p>Benefice: The United Benefice of Bletchingley and Nutfield</p> <p>Parish: St Mary The Virgin, Bletchingley</p> <p>Agreed by PCC On: 7th September 2023</p> <p>Review Date: Annually</p>	<p>Deanery: Tandridge</p> <p>Archdeaconry: Reigate</p>
---	--

What we do need to do is encourage more people to volunteer.

<p>Our mission statement</p> <p>Our core purpose</p>	<p><i>Come and discover God</i></p> <p>Maintaining a welcoming church to all.</p> <p>We do this by sharing the gospel of God’s love by living and exploring faith together through worship, reading and hearing scripture.</p> <p>We achieve this through prayer, loving service and support for all in our village.</p>
<p>Our vision statement</p> <p>How we want to be described three years from now</p>	<p>We want to discover and rediscover God by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a truly inclusive, joyful and welcoming church. • Being forgiving people and seeking to be reconciled, • Living out that spiritual growth by sharing God’s love in the village: achieving this through worship, prayer, and loving service. • Having a sense of going forward in our growing faith with wise financial management.
<p>Our priority mission areas</p> <p>A maximum of four for the next 12 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A joyful and worshipping church</i> • <i>Activities towards growth</i> • <i>Strengthening reconciliation</i> • <i>Striving towards financial stability</i>

Priority	Goal	Activity to be measured	By when	Responsible person/body
<i>A Joyful and Worshipping Church</i>				
1.1	To create a joyful worship experience for those currently attending and those returning to church.	Design an Order of Service with seasonal variants, with an additional healing element once a month.	For use by the 1 st Sunday of September 2023	Worship Committee
		Move refreshments to Church House	Mid-June 2023	Churchwardens
		Start 8 am Sunday, Said Eucharist	Mid-June 2023	Fr. Paul
		Weekly message via email from Fr. Paul	Mid-June 2023	Fr. Paul
1.2	To create a joyful worship experience for the unchurched from the village, especially young families, young adults and working-age people	Review and test out a new format for Family Services	September 2023	Fr. Paul/Kate Doody
		Prayer slips and prayer box	Mid-June 2023 then ongoing	Fr. Paul
1.3	To create a joyful worship experience by integrating a children's choir	At this stage, this is an aspiration as we need to recruit a permanent organist first.		

Activities towards growth				
2.1	To share the gospel message of God's love through engaging with children and parents	Recruit additional leaders for Sunday Club & Family Services	September 2023	PCC
		Weekly slot in Bletchingley Village School	September 2023	Fr. Paul and a new team
		Hawthorns School – Carol Service and some slots in school	September 2023	Fr. Paul
		Ark	Ongoing	Sue Morris/ Chrissie Markham
2.2	To share the gospel message of God's love through continuing to build ministry opportunities to focus group	Blessed Breakfast	Ongoing	Rob Tucker
		Men's Prayer Group	September 2023	Fr. Paul/Rob Tucker
		Spiritual Needs of Women	TBD	
		Walking the parish	Ongoing	Fr. Paul
		Blechingley Magazine	Ongoing	Janine Marks
		Hungry Hermit	Ongoing	
		Quiet Days in Church	Autumn 2023	Fr. Paul
		Bible studies/home groups		Fr. Paul
	Priority	Goal	Activity to be measured	By when
				Responsible person/body
2.3	To share the gospel message of God's love through reviewing our communications via the website and other mediums	Weekly newsletter review	Review in September 2023	Communications Committee
		Website review	The new website will be up and running by the end of September 2023	Val Muller Fr. Paul

Strengthening reconciliation				
3.1	To lead people towards healing and wholeness by strengthening trust, integrity and openness	In general, some are deeply affected by the “division”: some are mildly affected, and others are not affected at all. Gently discovering who has or who may have been impacted.	Ongoing	Fr. Paul / Churchwardens/Fr. Paul’s Mentor
3.2	To lead people towards healing and wholeness by offering 1-2-1 support	Private conversations	Ongoing	Fr. Paul, with oversight by Churchwardens/ Fr. Paul’s Mentor
3.3	To lead people towards healing and wholeness by listening and learning from the experiences of individual journeys	Group work. First will be on living with crisis as they struggle through life's wildernesses	September 2023	Fr. Paul
Striving towards financial stability				
4.1	To sustain and grow the financial viability of the parish by setting a realistic budget	Create a draft budget in September for the following year	September 2023	Finance Committee/PCC
4.2	To sustain and grow the financial viability of the parish by communicating our plans to everyone twice a year with a clear ask.	A personal message from Fr. Paul and Bill to everyone via email or in writing	October/November 2023	Communications and Finance Committees
4.3	To sustain and grow the financial viability of the parish by contributing towards our PSF pledge	Review the PSF indicative costs for the Benefice as scope out pledge	Set PSF pledge in September each year.	Finance Committee/PCC

