

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, MERROW

Parish Profile



From Bishop Andrew

The Diocese of Guildford is a warm and friendly place to be, with a strong cohort of gifted and passionate laity and clergy, some excellent Church schools and plenty of beautiful countryside to enjoy a day off!

Our vision as a diocese is to see lives and communities transformed through the love of Christ; and, to that end, we have recently refreshed our Diocesan Strategy Transforming Church, Transforming Lives, with a particular focus on Growing Disciples, Growing Diversity and Growing Community. Although our congregations are generally rather larger than average, we are all too conscious that we are only reaching a tiny proportion of our Parish populations ,

and are particularly keen to become more effective in passing on the baton of faith to younger generations.

Our team of Mission Enablers is committed to working every Parish in fleshing out that vision in an appropriate way, going with the grain of the Church's history and tradition, whilst also suggesting new ways to "proclaim the gospel afresh in each generation".

The pandemic, whilst presenting many challenges, has helped to forge new relationships between many of our churches, creating a spirit of "us and us" more than "them and us", and opening up new approaches to partnership and inter-church collaboration.

If you share our vision for transformation, and have a track record of growing disciples, growing diversity and growing community, we'd love to hear from you!

+Andrew Guildford



From the Archdeacon

Thank you for showing an interest in the post of Rector of Merrow.

Merrow constitutes the north-east suburb of Guildford. The western boundary of the parish is within a mile of the High Street of Surrey's thriving county town. The eastern and southern boundaries of the parish face the beauty of the North Downs and Surrey Hills. To the north is Clandon Park, a 1000 acre private Grade II listed agricultural parkland estate owned since the 17th century by successive Earls of Onslow. The proximity to culture, commercialism and country (as well as its easy access by rail from Guildford to London, Gatwick and Heathrow) makes this parish a very desirable place to live.

The 12th century church at the eastern end of the village was the centre of a small medieval village which remained a relatively small population until the mid-twentieth century. The first major

expansion happened with the building of the Bushy Estate in the 1950s (originally council owned but by now mostly owner occupied). This was followed by the Merrow Park estate (privately owned housing) in the 1980s and more development since. The population in 2011 was 8,036 which will have risen since then. It currently has five schools within the parish, as well as two doctor's surgeries, and a smattering of shops and businesses.

All this makes the post of Rector of Merrow a strategic appointment for the Diocese of Guildford. We are seeking a priest who is able to celebrate the ancient foundation of this church and nurture its saints, but also help to grow the presence, influence and effectiveness of the church in these new parts of the parish - where there are so many families and young people. The relationship with Merrow Church of England Infant School is strong and this needs to be developed - as do some other partnerships in the parish.

Unlike many of the other Anglican churches in Guildford, which have a strong tradition of one kind or another, St John's seeks to be a parish church, including all. Its Sunday worship is

primarily eucharistic, with an emphasis on high quality preaching and simplicity - encapsulated in the beautifully reordered east end of the building. The parish is well resourced with very committed churchwardens, an outstanding children and families worker, and paid administrator. The church building is in good order and the superb parish centre is a much-used local facility. Despite some challenging years, it remains financially secure.

If, having read this profile, you feel like you'd value an informal conversation, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Paul Davies
Archdeacon of Surrey



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Welcome

Churchwardens letter



Welcoming a new Rector is an exciting event at any time in a church's life. Just now, as we emerge from the constraints placed on us by the Covid pandemic, we are seeing signs of new growth in many areas of our church life, all ripe for development under the inspiration and care which a new incumbent can bring to bear.

We are praying for someone who will nurture our personal faith; grow our sense of discipleship; develop our

worship within our tradition to engage all our church family; encourage our diverse and inclusive church family so each person feels valued; and engage actively with the wider community of Merrow in all its aspects.

Recently reviewed and updated, our vision and values are central to the day to day life of the church and the new PCC teams at St John's. As a result, our new Rector will have the opportunity to build on these foundations as we move forward into the next phase of our growth and spiritual journey.

In putting this profile together we have explored all aspects of our parish life. We have tried to describe our parish, church and congregation and highlight our aspirations for the future together with a flavour of St John's. We pray this will help to give you a balanced overview and enable you to reflect on our vision of where God is taking us and whether you are the person God is calling to lead us forward.

Vacancy prayer

Dear Lord,

As this parish seeks a new Rector, guide those who are involved in the process and give them vision. Help us, as a congregation to support and encourage them and each other as we continue to serve you.

We ask that you will help us to support each other in faith and love as we wait for a new Rector to lead us. Please guide both those who are seeking the right person for us, and those who are seeking the right place for their ministry so your kingdom may be nurtured in Merrow.

We thank you for all those who will look after our spiritual needs during this time and ask that you will continue to sustain them as they minister to us.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Our next Rector - Who are we looking and praying for?

We believe that God is guiding us to search for a Rector who will;

- Be centred on the eucharist and communicate through worship, including music and other types of worship appealing to all age groups.
- Continue to develop our confidence in our own spiritual journeys through teaching, prayer, and preaching.
- Bring an experience of situations and understanding of the needs of the wider community and how to relate these to the vision of growing our church.
- Understand the spiritual needs of all ages and embrace pastoral care.
- Bring a leadership style with good communication skills, that enables, energises, encourages and empowers us through the ability to team build using all the skills available; be they leadership, spiritual or practical.
- Bring love, humour, humanity, humility and approachability to the role.
- Help us to grow and nurture our fledgling activities and initiatives.



Voices from the congregation

As part of the process of compiling the Parish Profile we canvassed the electoral roll for their views on what they would like from our new Rector. These are some of their summarised thoughts:



What we can offer

- A parish where we are already on a journey of transformation from a declining congregation to growth
- An engaged and committed PCC who play an active role in the day-to-day life at St John's .
- Support from the Church Wardens and Deputy - Carole, Peter and Jane
- Support from the PCC
- Support from the verger - Helen
- A broad range of established community links, including with local schools
- Encouragement of personal spiritual development
- A growing youth congregation
- An enthusiastic and very warm welcome!
- Respect for wellbeing and family life



- A strong administrative team to support you with the day-to-day running at St John's
- Retired clergy - Diana, Tim, Margaret
- Lay preachers - Robert and Hannah
- Accommodation in the form of a 5 bedroom rectory, close by or alternative if too large



A welcoming and mixed age congregation

Neither high Anglo-Catholic nor low Evangelical, our congregation is formed by a diverse range of Christian experience and centred in a deep connection to Eucharist based worship within the bounds of liberal/central catholic tradition.

However, we are open to, and welcome, new experiences of worship, such as Taizé style services, intergenerational worship, and meditation and compline appropriate to our tradition.

We have three main weekly services at 8.00 am and 10.00 am on Sundays and 10.30 am on Wednesday mornings each attracting their own types of worshippers. The 8.00 am congregation on Sunday are a small group, of about 25, who are faithful adherents to the Book of Common Prayer and who enjoy talking over coffee after the service.



Those who attend the 10.00 am service on Sundays, around 65, are equally loyal to Common Worship with hymns and the Gloria and Agnus Dei sung and join in fellowship over coffee after the service.



The weekly Wednesday service is held in The Merrow Hall and attended by a very faithful band of people comprising some Sunday regulars together with older members of the community . We average 25 people and it lasts half an hour and follows Common Worship including a hymn and short homily. The singing has to be heard to be believed!!

Our monthly Sing a New Song gathering has a regular following of those who enjoy singing. This

informal service was introduced as an opportunity for the wider congregation to learn new hymns following a change of hymn book and is much appreciated.

We have 147 people on our electoral roll and mostly live within the parish. Since the employment of our Youth Worker, and particularly since the end of lockdown, we are now seeing more families attending our All Age service on the first Sunday of the month, and active engagement with Messy Church.



Our vision - Where we want to go

Vision statement and values

During a series of away days in 2022 the PCC took a fresh in-depth look at our Vision and Values. This generated prayerful discussions and careful consideration of our strengths, areas where we can improve, our priorities and aspirations. We feel God has placed the vision and values in our hearts and God is guiding us along this path. Whilst we have a long way to go, we hope that our new Rector will feel a calling to embrace our vision and hopes for our future development.

Our Vision is to be:

A CARING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY,
HERE FOR EVERYONE

(1 John 4:19: We love because God loved us)

Helping to support our vision we also updated our current values, to be:

1. Relevant

A supporting church for the big and the small things in life
Mathew 28 20b: Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

2. Approachable

We are always here for situations and questions silly or important
Mathew 7:7-8: Ask and you will receive; seek, and you will find; Knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks will receive, and anyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to

those who knock.

3. Caring

Where there is a need we try to do something
Mathew 25:40: I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!

4. Welcoming

A church where you can come as you are, be yourself and feel at home
Romans 15:7: Accept one another, then, for the glory of God, as Christ has accepted you

5. Authentic

We believe in the value of worship, rooted in God's unconditional love
Ephesians 5:8b-9: So live like children who belong to the light. Light brings every kind of goodness, right living, and truth

Our Ministry and Mission - Our Vision and Values in action

Services

Regular Worship

Sunday	8.00 am Holy Communion BCP 10.00 am Holy communion CW
1 st Sunday of the month	All Age Worship - usually service of the word 6.00 pm Sing a New Song
2 nd and 4 th Sunday	Spokes (Youth worship)
3 rd Sunday	Shining Lights (Sunday School)
Tuesday	9.00 am Morning Prayer
Wednesday	10.30 am Holy Communion CW
Friday	5.00 pm Evening Prayer
Saturday (every two months)	Messy church

Seasonal Worship

Christmas	
Sunday before Christmas	A community carol service with readings and carols
Week before Christmas	An informal carol service for the uniformed organisations A service for the Longest Night
Christmas Eve	Crib and Christingle service Midnight Mass
Christmas Day	Holy Communion BCP All Age Christmas Worship with Communion
Lent	
Ash Wednesday	Holy Communion and Imposition of Ashes - 2 services
Holy Week:	A range of services that have included meditation and compline; Stations of the Cross; Last Words; Voices of Holy Week
Maundy Thursday	Last Supper with washing of feet, followed by the vigil
Good Friday	Journey to the Cross - all age service Service of the final hour
Holy Saturday	The Service of the Light and The Vigil
Easter Sunday	8.00 am Holy Communion BCP 10.00 am CW All Age

Services (Remembrance service)



Worship with The Clandons

We continue to grow our relationship with Rev. Barnaby Perkins at Clandon, our next door parish, with cooperation on youth work and joint services on 5th Sunday of the month. We also enjoy a warm relationship with our local Methodist and Catholic churches.

Discipleship, Courses and House Groups

Over recent years we have run many courses from Lent Lunches to the Pilgrim Course which have been well received. A Zoom Bible course was exceptionally well attended during the pandemic, and during 2022 a new Life Group was set up at the request of our Confirmation Prep group, who were excited to continue their faith journey together, meeting monthly.

This group is an addition to our two existing house groups, which are both well established. One meets weekly in the afternoons, the other monthly in

the evenings. Both meet in private houses and have approximately 10 members with regular attendances of 6 or so people. Membership is well established although in both cases new members have joined since covid measures were relaxed.

There is also a small group who originally attended a mindfulness course together and meet on a Monday at 1.15 for a silent meditation lasting about 30 minutes.

Youth, Children & Families Work

Our Youth Worker joined us in May 2020 and created a lot of outreach opportunities for families and teens to get involved from across the Parish. Messy Church in a Bag, DIY Pancake Parties and the infamous Christmas Elf Visits with the Real Advent Calendars helped us reach more families across the Parish than we had done previously.



Coupled with weekly online assemblies at our local school and, when allowed, outside campfires with our local teens Covid helped to kickstart our Youth and Children's Work in an imaginative and effective way.

As we emerged into a new normal we saw the creation of our new regular pattern of Youth and Children's work with opportunities for many different ages and stages to get involved. We are working towards a Youth and Children's programme that creates space for everyone in 3 different ways; Space to feel welcome and enjoy God's Love, Space to Encounter God, and Space to Engage with the world and our Church Family through participation and service.

Pre-Primary Opportunities

We run a weekly Baby and Toddler group which we have continued through many of the school holidays to ensure that support is around when other places close their doors. This group has gone from strength to strength and are regularly reaching our upper limit (around 20 adults)! Each week we explore a story through craft, song and reading



a book together. All our stories have a message and alternate each week between bible stories and fiction. We are also currently exploring how we can start to build mission into this group with seasonal opportunities to Encounter God with a possibility of developing Tots Praise.



Primary Opportunities

Our Youth worker has led activities in the Children's Corner in Church in our 10am Service throughout the Term exploring different ways we can meet with and learn about God.

During the holidays the area remains open for self-led crafts and activities which helps our children and families be a part of our whole worshipping community.

On a 3rd Sunday we leave the Service and head over to the Centre for our Shining Lights Group where we do specific Child Focused unpacking of the theme or story of the day then we ensure we are back with the Church Family to share communion/ blessings together.

We also have our monthly Green Team made up of 7 committed members who serve our wider Church Family by maintaining the Church yard, working on our Eco-Church tasks and discovering how we best care for God's Creation. They also spend time working on

ways to share wisdom and ideas to wider members of our congregation and parish. From Advent decorations in Church, to posters about letting go of unnecessary things in Autumn,

their passion for making this world a better place is extraordinary!



Youth Opportunities

Youth Café is our brand new community Youth Group. We meet weekly in the centre for games, activities, tuck shop & toasties and is a new opportunity to create a space in our parish that offers a safe, fun and welcoming space to hang out and chat to each other. Our Goal for 2023 is to find a way of sharing a Christian message during the session.

Spokes is our Youth Discipleship Group where we gather for games, exploring the bible, prayer and food! One joy of our Group is in our 'time out with God' slot where we spend at least 10 minutes quietly with music or prayer, Bible reading or Encountering God in a creative way. All of our group engage differently but it is a pure joy to see them grow in communication with God. Whilst we seldom see our 10 regular teens on a Sunday morning this group loves to wrestle with the Bible stories and often find unique ways to retell them!



Family Opportunities

Our monthly All Age service has been in a transitional year as we have developed a new way to create intergenerational worship. This Service of the word is loved and appreciated by all ages and stages at St Johns with many of our older congregation joining in with actions, activities, quizzes and more!



A particular highlight is the emerging child led worship as we engage more and more families with



children who are happy to help take part in the Service. This service is an evolving part of our worship but is a joy to follow God's creativity and diversity in worship as we go.

Messy Church has been a harder family offering to re-engage after Covid. The team met to re-evaluate last year and have worked hard at creating a fun, lively, faith centred Messy Church this year. As a result



we are seeing more faces month on month and we are really excited about what God's got in store for us as a Messy Team! We also try to listen to the needs of our families and respond when able, running things like Parentalk or exploring the bible with Parents.

Seasonal Opportunities



As our Youth Children and Families work has been focused on Mission and growing our numbers a lot of our work is also done in seasonal spaces to Enjoy God's Love from Pumpkin Parties, to Christmas Celebrations and regular campfires with young people. We try to intersperse our Messy Months with a

Seasonal Activity to engage different ages and stages. The most successful of which has been the Summer Fun sessions where we are seeing a transition from Summer Fun to Messy Church and then a few have transitioned over to our All Age service occasionally.

Schools Work

As St. Johns enjoys a very close relationship with our local C of E infant school. We are thrilled to be in weekly for assemblies and welcome the school into our Church for important services throughout the year. We also help with RE or other areas of School life where we can be helpful.

We are also nurturing good links with our local junior school.

We have an Open the Book team which has just started occasional performances at school assemblies.

Seasonally we also run Prayer Spaces in our Church for both our local Infant and Junior school to attend. It has been so well received that children are asking for another one soon!



Schools work

Our schools are very important to us at St Johns and the new Rector will be a very important part of our Schools Ministry. The Children love to know about our Church and that we care about them.

We asked them what they love about our engagement with each other:

I remember that we sing songs when Hannah does assemblies. Hannah talks to us about being kind and showing compassion - it helps us to know that if we are kind to someone, they will be kind back. Amelia - (Year 2)

When we visited the church we saw the big cross. Arthur (Year 2)

We heard about sharing in the Bible. Rosina (Reception)

On Tuesday we walked to St. John's Church to learn all about it. We looked at lots of old things, saw the font, saw writing on the wall and stained glass windows. Hannah spoke to us about the church and we learned lots! Outside we saw some graves - one had a massive headstone! Noah and Seb. (Year 3)

Last year we went to St John's for prayer spaces. Rev. Rona and Hannah taught us about praying and how to breathe to make sure our minds are clear.

It was a relaxed and calm session and I have used those strategies to help me calm when I have felt stressed. Ethan (Year 6)



Life Events

Life Events are a key part of church life at St Johns the Evangelist. This is where we invite a wider community to join in the fellowship of the church.

Baptisms

We welcome the baptism of all ages, infant and adult. We have an active baptism visiting team who provide pastoral support both at the time of the baptism and also keep in touch with our baptism families over the next few years, making sure they are encouraged to attend our regular

services. Our baptisms are mainly held in private services although we are happy to make it part of our general Sunday service. In 2022 we have performed around 15 baptisms.



Life Events

Weddings

We welcome all those who wish to be married in our beautiful church, assuming they have a qualifying connection with the Church. We invite all couples to attend the reading of their banns. For those who are being married in our church, our Rector will have regular meetings with the couple to ensure the service is a special day, meeting their pastoral needs. For Away Banns couples, they are encouraged to come to a service and meet the Rector. All couples have been offered a life union course, an interactive group that allows the couples to consider their relationships in a safe and caring space. We have three weddings booked for 2023, which is the pre pandemic average.

Many of our couples will look to have their children baptised as their family grows. We also recently confirmed one of our grooms, as their

relationship with our Church and Christ grew from their initial engagement as a wedding couple.

Funerals

Pastoral support of the recently bereaved is a key part of our funeral process. Our Churchyard closed for burials and interments at the end of last year as it is full, and so we can only accept interments where a relation has already been interred in a plot. However, we still have a number of funerals and interments, mainly of our current or previous congregation. We make sure we get back in touch with the next of kin on the anniversary of death, a process we do for around the next three years at least. We also invite all bereaved to our annual All Souls Service. We have strong relationships with our local funeral directors and we support a number of services at Guildford Crematorium. In 2021 we held 26 services across church and crematorium and in 2022 we have held 18 services to end November.

Confirmation

The last deanery confirmation service was held here at St. John's. At that service 4 adult members of our congregation were confirmed. Many of our regular congregation attended to show our support of our confirmands.



Welcome Warm Spaces

At St Johns we are always searching for new ways to serve our Community and with a rising cost of living crisis in 2022 we have opened up our Centre foyer 4 days a week to welcome anyone who needs a warm space for whatever reason. Creating places where people feel welcome is also an important part of who we are and so we also offer hot drinks alongside our Warm Space.

Baby Basics Guildford—at St Johns

Earlier than some other churches we opened our doors in June 2021 as a result of some re-imagining work we did over COVID. We looked at different ways that we could be using our Church and Centre and it became apparent that Baby Basics was a need that we could help with.

Our Youth Worker is project lead and oversees the operation with a growing number of Volunteers to

“Baby—
basics”



help sort, wash, iron, fold and pack the gifts to new parents and their babies. In the last 18 months a total of 113 gifts have been made, 85 of which have been during 2022.

This work has enabled non-Church going parishioners to re-engage with us and start to see St. Johns in a different light. Despite the ongoing cost of living crisis people are continuing to give generously, which is an incredible testament to how important it is to our community.

Charities we support

We also actively support and raise funds for 3 charities, aiming to give an annually agreed amount of our income to them. Our local charity is Foodwise; our national charity is Christians Against Poverty and our international charity Compassion, where we major on giving support to the work in Haiti. A number of parishioners sponsor Haitian children.

In addition we support Besom, at Christmas and Combat Stress with a collection on Remembrance Sunday.

Supporting Ukraine

The invasion of Ukraine sent shock waves across the world. Our local community were deeply troubled by the conflict and wanted to do anything they could to help. Working with a local charity sending humanitarian aid directly into Kyiv, St John's became the local hub for donations and support.

The Ukraine flag was raised next to the Union Jack and acted as a beacon of our support. Our pews became donation areas and hundreds of people entered St John's church to volunteer and to bring donations. Children donated their teddies and wrote messages of support (kindly translated by a Ukrainian lady who happened to be passing by), local students brought tins of food every week and many people knitted warm blankets.

This was a true example of 'For Christ and Community' in action.



Supporting Ukraine

Local school children sent Easter eggs and messages of hope



University of Surrey Cheerleading team brought donations every week



"I felt a deep sense of hopelessness about the terrible conflict, but St John's church provided a safe place where I felt valued and could play a small part in helping those affected by the war."

Volunteer

"We express our sincere gratitude to St John's church, Merrow for providing so much humanitarian aid in the form of food, clothing and medical supplies. Thank you for being such caring people."

Our partner charity delivering aid into Ukraine

Supporting our local community – North Guildford Food Bank

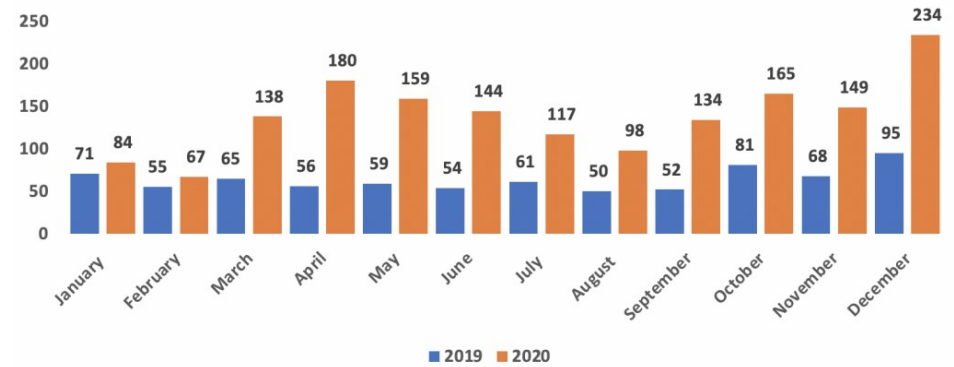
During the covid lock downs of 2020 it became apparent that more people were shopping online and therefore not visiting our nearest Sainsbury store in Burpham, where the local collection point for the North Guildford Food Bank is located. It was also realised that there was no collection point in Merrow at all.

We put collection crates in the church porch, as soon as we were able to open the church, and each week, on a rota system, members of our local community transport the many donated goods to the sorting and distribution point on the other side of Guildford.

By November 2022 4035 people had been provided with food bags and by the end of 2022 £50,000 will have been given for fuel pre-payment top ups.

www.northguildfordfoodbank.co.uk

North Guildford Foodbank food parcels distributed comparison 2019 & 2020



Governance - including staff, PCC, Leadership Team and Standing Committee

- Our employed staff are Hannah our full time Youth Worker, Harry our Parish Administrator and Barry our Centre Manager, who both work part time and are based in the office in the St Johns Centre.
- We have two Church wardens, Carole and Peter, and a deputy, Jane. They work very much as a team in supporting the Rector. The Church wardens usually serve a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 6, their periods of office being staggered to enhance continuity.
- We also have a very active voluntary Verger, Helen.
- The Leadership team comprises the Rector, Churchwardens and Deputy, the Youth Worker and the treasurer.
- The standing committee comprises, the Rector, Churchwardens and Deputy, the treasurer and a PCC member.

Hannah



Diana



Margaret and Tim



Harry



Barry



St John's PCC



PCC and new PCC Teams

The PCC comprises 15 members including the Rector, Churchwardens and Deputy and our Youth worker as an ex officio member. Two members of the PCC are members of the Deanery Synod and one is a Foundation Governor at Merrow Infant School.

The role of the PCC teams that help to support our vision and values are summarised in the table.



NAME OF TEAM	REMIT
Spirituality and Worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer and worship, including special events and life events • Music • Courses and nurture (including pastoral communications with parishioners, Bible reading fellowship) • Liaison with rota groups: readings, linen, brass, bell ringing, choir, church cleaning, flowers, servers, sidespersons
Community Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church and Centre outreach projects • Foodbank • Wednesday Coffee Morning & other events for wider fellowship • Liaison with Friends of St John's and Men's Fellowship
Young people and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, Youth, Families events/activities: Babies & Toddlers Group, Messy Church, Open the Book, Spokes, Children's Corner • Mission & Strategy for growing younger • Baby Basics • Matrix, Transforming Lives for Good (TLG) link • School links • External Youth Groups (eg. Scouts & Guides)
Stewardship and Giving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewardship for Church, including giving and legacies • Support for charities, local, national and international which includes fundraising • Direction and Strategy of fundraising (including Centre)
Operations and Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Church & Centre expenditure • Buildings and churchyard maintenance • Running of the Centre • Churchyard Maintenance • Technology including Churchdesk (back end, data management)
Communications and Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front end Churchdesk content • All Communications and Marketing: Website, Parish Magazine, Weekly Newsletter, Social Media, Press • The new Parish Administrator will take on more of this role

Music at St John's

St John's has a William Hill organ which was completely re-furbished two years ago and is now a fine instrument for leading worship and for recitals. Our church has been loyally served over many years by two long-standing organists, one of whom also leads the choir, the other having recently stepped back for health reasons. We are extremely fortunate to have the help of a young organist from Charterhouse School who plays once a month on our All Age service Sundays.

St John's is proud of its choral tradition and although the choir is now much smaller and more limited, it is very loyal in its Sunday service. In the Eucharist we sing sections of the St Thomas Mass by David Thorne and in 2018 changed to a new hymnbook: *A&M Hymns and Songs for refreshing worship*. As this contains much new material, a



monthly session on a Sunday evening called 'Sing a New Song' has proved popular for anyone who enjoys singing and wants to explore the new hymnbook.

An exciting new initiative was launched in Sept 22 with the appointment of a music graduate (for a few hours a week) to engage with local schools to create a youth

choir based at St John's for 11-18 year olds. This will take time to gather momentum, but we decided on this proactive step to broaden our links with schools, fill our beautiful church with young voices and encourage more families through our doors.

We have recently held Folk concerts and a Rhythm and Blues concert in the church, which provided some wonderful fellowship and a useful source of income.



Opportunities and challenges;

Our Christian response and legacy dealing with Covid

Like many Churches the last few years at St John's has been grappling with the dominating impact of the Pandemic and subsequent challenges of 'unlocking.'

As we were forced out of Church buildings we rallied with a creative approach to being at home with 'St. Johns @ Home' which later became part of a strapline as we emerged from lockdown: St Johns on line, in Church and in print. As a community focused church, we worked hard to ensure that we were not leaving anyone out of being able to access church at home. In practice we held Zoom services, recorded YouTube Services (with hymns to sing along with) morning and evening prayer on Facebook live, a Retreat at Home



course and online Children's Corner. We also sought to include as many parishioners as possible and spread some much-needed joy with Coffee

Club Mug deliveries, Pentecost Birthday Cake deliveries and Messy Church Doorstep Bags amongst other activities. We have continued some of these new ways of being Church; for example, livestreaming the 10am and other important services, on our Facebook page which are still very much appreciated by some members of our congregation.

We also used the 'opening up' time as an opportunity to re-imagine how we can use our spaces. We created a new look 'St. Johns Room' in the Centre, used for Church business meetings and Youth sessions. We re-invented our Children's Corner in church and with our Youth Worker worked on making it more welcoming and versatile. Likewise, we created new storage space for the Baby Basics Guildford operation.

Our Christian response and legacy dealing with Covid

Although our committed team worked tirelessly to ensure that we were able to minister to our parishioners and community engaging in outreach throughout the pandemic, we also suffered a decline in Church attendance as we re-opened. This has, like many other Churches, left our volunteer teams depleted and many busy people are even busier.

We are fortunate to have a small committed band of volunteers who seek to ensure that our services, courses, groups, and youth work remain safely supported. However, a volunteer recruitment drive will need to be part of the steps ahead. One particular area we would love to redevelop once more is the Pastoral Care Team allowing us another way to minister to our parishioners and members who are struggling in the wider community.

During 2022 we sought to find ways to attract new members to God's love and also to re-engage with committed members who we saw less of and trying to grow our congregation once more.

There is still work to be done and the PCC and Leadership Team met to discern our Vision and Values post pandemic to renew our focus for this evolving journey of being a 'Caring Christian Community; here for everyone'. We are looking forward to our new Rector helping us to build upon this work, to follow God's plan for our parish and develop the opportunities Covid offered us.



St John's Bakeoff!



Pastoral and Parish Care

Safeguarding

Safeguarding runs like a thread through the life of St John's.

The PCC is aware that it is ultimately responsible for safeguarding although this is delegated to the Incumbent and the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO). Members receive a written report from our experienced PSO at every meeting and, when appropriate, she will attend the meeting in person.

She works closely with the Incumbent and Youth worker. All safeguarding issues are dealt with in line with Diocesan and Church of England procedures.



Pastoral Care

Although there is much informal and ad hoc pastoral care, following our emergence from Covid our

challenge is to re-energise the Pastoral Teams and the community needs to be built upon.

Fellowship and Community

Coffee club

The weekly coffee morning takes place in the Centre foyer at the same time each week and following the Wednesday morning service. The social element is as important to some attenders as the spiritual. An in house "taxi service" helps make this a great welcoming gathering open to everyone.

Bellringing

St John's has a peal of 6 bells cast in 1897, rung from the ringing chamber accessed from the bottom of the tower.

The longest-standing members of our enthusiastic bellringing team learnt to ring about 12 years ago. We have a band of around 12 ringers, which currently includes absolute



beginners whom we are in the process of teaching. A very sociable group and arranging several get-togethers throughout the year we are always pleased to welcome members of the community to 'climb the spiral staircase' to see what we do, especially if they would like to learn to ring.

We ring for service on Sundays, weddings and some funerals, for Remembrance

and St George's day and to mark a range of other national celebrations and commemorations.



Fellowship and Community

Men's Fellowship

The Fellowship came into being in 2019. The basis of the Fellowship is Christian, but persons of any or no faith are welcomed, to socialise, network and discuss issues of interest.

The programmes blend the serious and the light hearted in a contrasting series of events which follow a threefold pattern involving:

- occasional breakfast meetings addressed by interesting speakers on their faith (not necessarily Christian), their careers or their life experiences. These have included Christians in business, an Imam on Islam and Christians and Climate change.

- Walks in the Surrey countryside with time for reflection and a pub lunch.
- Visits to places of interest which have included a Cathedral and a brewery.



Christmas and Summer Fairs

These two annual events draw large crowds from both church and the wider community and are occasions to meet and make friends and have some fun while raising significant funds for the church and the charities we support

Local schools participate in both, providing maypole dancers at the Summer Fair and carol singers for the Christmas Fair. The Summer Fair has traditionally been held in the Rectory garden with stalls offering everything from plants for the garden to Pimms, a bouncy castle for the kids, and sizzling burgers.

The Christmas Fair is held in the centre with a variety of stalls including mulled wine, refreshments, a BBQ and produce and goods to buy or win.



The Friends of St John's

The Friends of St John's is an independent charity, established in 2020 for all those who are interested in supporting the preservation, essential repair, restoration, and maintenance of the Grade II listed church building and its surrounding churchyard.

Individuals, often from outside the congregation community, are encouraged to become a Friend of St John's and support our work through events and other fund raising to help to ensure the future of



the church both as a place of public worship and for its charm and historical interest in the village.

Recent projects that the friends have supported are the Bell Tower ringing chamber acoustic work, church window stone-work repair and William Hill organ restoration. The reconstruction of Merrow's war memorial following the 2022 storms was fully funded by Friends of St John's and Guildford Borough Council.

Eco church

As part of our journey towards becoming a Carbon Zero church, we were pleased to have achieved the Bronze Eco Church Award in 2019. The award scheme covers the diverse areas of Worship and Teaching, Buildings, Land, Community/Global Engagement and Lifestyle. We manage our churchyard to encourage biodiversity for wildlife whilst also being a place of calm for those visiting that is cared with respect for people, flora and fauna. We have planted 36 trees as part of the late Queen's Jubilee Initiative.

Our Buildings and Churchyard

The Church

A magnificent Grade II listed church in the village of Merrow, a church has stood on this site for over eight centuries and has played a vital part in the history of the village. The Church is well-maintained and is normally open to all visitors daily.

The interior was transformed by our "Enlightening God's Space" project in 2012.

Key elements of the project include providing a flexible open space adaptable to different forms of worship and creating an established area for families and young children.

Considerable elements of the original, period architectural detail remain including the vaulted roof with structural timber beams, original, stone mullioned, stained glass windows, stone arches and large supporting columns. We have recently installed a wireless network for live streaming of services.



The Churchyard



The well-maintained Churchyard is closed for burials and the interment of ashes. The village War Memorial is situated in the churchyard and was re-dedicated on Remembrance Day 2022 after reconstruction following to storm damage. Our 'Green Team' youth group is actively involved in the 'Living Churchyard' project, which provides sanctuary for species whose living space has been cut back, by allowing some of the areas richest in wildflowers to bloom and self-seed.



The St John's Centre

The two storey Centre, built in 2002 provides an attractive and quality setting for church and community activities and the Parish Office. Multi-functional rooms plus a large reception area and kitchen have proved to be a popular venue for hire. Regular users include St John's Pre-school and a Performing Arts institution as well as a variety of local support groups and classes. The running and maintenance costs are largely funded by letting income.

The Rectory

The Rectory was built in the 1930's and is about 215 metres from the church. It has 5 good sized bedrooms, a bathroom and separate shower room with an additional WC. On the ground floor, there is a sitting room, dining room, a large office, a cloakroom, kitchen/breakfast room, utility room and pantry. A large front drive gives parking for several cars. Double glazing was installed about 10 years ago, and there is gas central heating. The garden is about 0.7 acres, mainly to grass, trees and shrubs and facing south-westerly. The Rectory is within walking distance of local shops and schools, bus services including the Park and Ride service.

Prior to occupation, the Diocese will complete any necessary repairs and the Parish will arrange redecoration as necessary. Considerable work was completed in 2018 to make the house a very comfortable home.



Finance

Overall, St John's is thankful to be in a healthy financial position with a significant amount of capital reserves. At the point of writing the Church has funds of over £700,000 in our reserves, excluding the valuation of our Church Centre. These funds are held in a mix of cash and CCLA investment trusts

£128,000 of this capital is held in a general unrestricted fund and is used for the day-to-day expenses of the Church.

We have several restricted funds relating to a variety of specific requests but the main fund of £92,000 relates to providing maintenance of the Church Fabric. This was a living legacy from a parishioner. Total restricted funds total £118,000

The remainder of our capital is in a

set of designated funds. The Churchwardens, PCC and Rector decided to sell our curate's house in 2020 and the proceeds of this sale (£404,000) has been placed in a mission fund which is expected to support a future curate's housing needs but will give us a more flexible approach to support the parish vision over the medium and long term.

The church has historically always paid its Parish Share. In the last few years this has been met by our regular giving. However, as we lose some of our elderly parishioners and as our parish share increases this has become more difficult to balance. On a positive note, we have benefitted from several generous parishioners, which has resulted in large one-off giving, allowing us to balance our books.

We also have the benefit of a substantial Church Centre which brings in an income of around £60,000 a year.

The finance team consists of two volunteers, a Treasurer and a Planned Giving and Gift Aid officer.

Our Youth worker role has been in place since May 2020. The salary and associated costs are directly funded by a trust (Downs Road Trust) and so has no impact on our church finances. This funding will disappear in the middle of 2024, once the fund is exhausted. The last 2.5 years has shown great growth in the area of our Youth, Children and Family group which can be shown as a direct result of having a full time resource. To continue with the pastoral work the church will need to consider how we can fund this work into the future. 2023 will need to contain key activities to resolve this issue.

Finance

Income Themes

	2021	2022
Regular Giving	£71,972	£63,801
One Off Giving	£14,357	£38,184
Gift Aid	£20,812	£16,310
Fundraising	£4,201	£15,806
Centre Lettings	£27,930	£51,906
Grants and other income	£59,591	£58,651
TOTAL INCOME	£198,863	£244,658

Expenditure Themes

	2021	2022
Parish Share	£88,357	£91,038
Outward Giving	£4,178	£12,228
Church Running Costs	£24,570	£41,938
Centre Running Costs	£19,597	£34,648
Staff Costs	£38,763	£46,580
Other Costs	£3,966	£1,441
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£179,431	£227,873

A full copy of the Church audited accounts is available on Charity Commission website, <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk> (Charity 1127555)

Appendix 1

Merrow Church of England Infant School



The school offers a warm and caring environment to nurture young children, encourage their independence and foster resilience

as they grow and develop. The school aims to equip the children with the skills to be motivated and confident learners. As a Church of England school, Christian and British values form the core ethos.

The school has been in the village since the early 1900's and has a mixed, 6 class structure (2 classes per year) teaching 4 - 7-year-old children from the Merrow and greater Guildford area. The number on roll is currently 145 children, below its maximum capacity of 180 children.

The school is Voluntary Controlled and works in close cooperation with Guildford Diocese Board of Education.

Known as the Merrow Schools Federation, our School federated with Bushy Hill Junior School in October 2022 to improve its long-term sustainability and maximise educational and financial benefits across both establishments.

As a result, there is just one Executive Headteacher, Mrs. Louisa Dormer (previous Headteacher of Bushy Hill) across both schools and Mrs. Emma Hooper is Deputy Headteacher at Merrow (previously the acting-headteacher).

There is a single governing body of 12 members across the federation, including 3 Church Foundation Governors, who are custodians of Christian distinctiveness in Merrow. This includes the ex-officio Rector of St. John's Church along with 2 governors appointed by the Diocese and PCC. The new Chair of Governors is Mr. David Wright.

At the last Ofsted Inspection, Merrow was awarded an "Outstanding" performance and are expecting another inspection later, in this academic year.

The school benefits from a highly committed and professional team of teachers and support staff who strive to improve the experience and educational standards for all its students.

Official DfE information can be found on at [Merrow CofE Controlled Infant School - GOV.UK \(get-information-schools.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-information-schools.service.gov.uk)



Appendix 2

Merrow Demographics



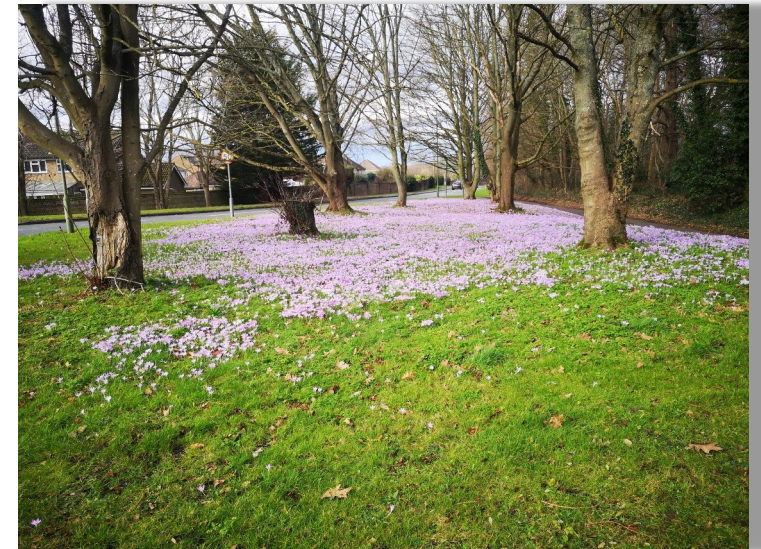
St. John the Evangelist Church, Merrow lies within the Diocese of Guildford and the Guildford Deanery. Situated 3 miles to the east of Guildford town centre, Merrow straddles the busy A246 along the foot of the North Downs. It is bounded to the north by the Guildford to Effingham Junction railway line, to the east by Clandon Park and, to the south, the North Downs and the network of footpaths leading into the Surrey Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Merrow is a popular village with a population numbering over 9000. There is a significant middle to older age population with 46% of people being aged 45 or over. However, many families move to the area to take advantage of the excellent schools, both state and private, and the nearby countryside.

There are good transport links to both London and the neighbouring county town of Guildford with its large shopping centre, entertainment, and sporting facilities. The area is relatively affluent with many owning their own homes either outright or with a mortgage, however there are some areas of less social mobility.

According to recent records approximately 80% of residents are UK born with over 60% having a Christian faith. Professional, managerial, and senior level posts account for just over 50% of the workforce.

(see data next page)



MERROW Data as at January 2022

Parish number of occupied households	3,696		
Area (square miles)	2.4		
Population density (people per square mile)	3,804	% Other religion	0.3
% aged 0-4	5.7	% No religion	25.8
% aged 5-17	18.1	% Religion not stated	7.5
% aged 18-29	11.3	Parish population (2018 update)	9,674
% aged 30-44	19.0	Parish Code	170091
% aged 45-64	28.0	Parish local name	Merrow
% aged 65 and over	18.0	Parish legal name	Merrow
% White ethnicity	90.8	Benefice	Merrow
% Asian ethnicity	5.64	Benefice ID	17/090 J
% Black ethnicity	0.6	Deanery	GUILDFORD
% Mixed ethnicity	1.8	Deanery ID	17105
% Other ethnicity	1.2	Archdeaconry	SURREY
% Christian	62.3	Archdeaconry ID	171
% Buddhist	0.6	Diocese	Guildford
% Hindu	1.3	Diocese ID	17
% Jewish	0.2	Rural/Urban classification	Urban