

 **Parish of Putney | St Mary's Putney**

St. Mary's AGM



21st April 2024

**ANNUAL REPORTS
on the life of
St Mary's Church Putney
(post AGM)**

2023 - 2024

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St. Mary's Church, 21st April 2024

AGENDA

- Introductory Prayers
- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of 23rd April 2023
- Elections of:
 - a) 1 Churchwarden for 1 year
 - b) 2 District Churchwardens for 1 year
 - c) 1 PCC member to be elected for a 3-year term
 - d) 3 DCC members to be elected for a 3-year term
 - e) 2 District Wardens for 1 year
 - f) 1 vacancy for Deanery Synod Representative
- Appointment of new DCC secretary
- Appointment of Sides-men and Sides-women
- Presentation of the Church Finances
- Church Reports
- AOB

APCM Meeting: Wednesday 22nd May 2024.

Minutes of St Mary's AGM 23rd April 2023 on the life of St. Mary's Church Putney

Meeting commenced at 11.45am with introductory prayers.

Present The Reverend John Whittaker (Chair), Wardens, DCC secretary and members of the Parish. Thankful remembrance of those who have died in the year. Rob Walmsley, Margaret Yearsley, Ivo Forde.

Apologies for absence Mark Leadley, Richard Quesnel, Amber Raine, Nikki Cornfield, Ben Harrison.

Minutes of AGM 8th May 2022 There were no matters arising.

Minutes approved Proposed by Linda O'Riordan. Seconded by Helena Whittaker. Approved unanimously.

Matters Arising There were no matters arising.

Elections:

a) Election of 1 Churchwarden (One year) Andrew Grocott (proposed and seconded). There were no other nominations and Andrew was duly elected.

b) Election of 2 District Churchwardens (One year) Two District Wardens were nominated: John thanked Christiaan de Lange for his service.

Linda O’Riordan (proposed by Andrew Grocott and seconded by Richard Holman) and Karen Todd (proposed by Linda O’Riordan and seconded by Suzanna Grocott). There were no other nominations and both were duly elected.

c) Election of 2 Assistant District Wardens (One year) One Assistant District Warden was nominated Christiana Vitali (proposed by Suzanna Grocott and seconded by Andrew Grocott) and there is one vacancy. There were no other nominations.

d) Election of 4 Deanery Synod representative (3 years) Alex Lowe (proposed by Adrian Weed and seconded by Charles Roberts), Neil Vass (proposed by Charles Lindsell and seconded by Angela Attah), Richard Holman (proposed by Celia Blake and seconded by Isobel Vass) There were no other nominations and the 3 were duly elected. There is one vacancy.

e) Election of 1 PCC member (3 years) There was one member to be elected to the Parochial Church Council. Charles Roberts (proposed by Andrew Weed and seconded by Alex Lowe) There were no other nominations, and he was duly elected.

f) Election of 3 DCC members (3 years) and 1 DCC member (2 years) and 1 DCC member for 1 year arising from vacancy as Karen Todd becomes warden There was 3 DCC Member to be elected (3 years) and 1 DCC member (2 years) Sam Smith (proposed by Neil Vass and seconded by Beth Willis) Jeff Dale (proposed by D Buckner and seconded by J Hudson), Ben Harrison (proposed by Suzanna Grocott and seconded by Andrew Grocott), Angela Attah (proposed by Sam Smith and seconded by Karen Todd), and Annette Watson (proposed and seconded) respectively were elected. There were no other nominations and he was duly elected.

Appointment of Sidespeople Andrew Grocott thanked people. The list of names can be found on page 16 of the 2022-23 report. Proposer: Andrew Grocott, Seconded: Isabel Vass. Unanimously approved.

Presentation of the Church Finances Andrew Sternberg (Treasurer) provided highlights from his report, thanking people for the appeal last year and the increased giving throughout this very difficult year. Still challenges post-pandemic for giving have moved out of Putney. Hole of £28,000 last year. Energy costs challenged as two-year contract has expired so will increase by £24,000. Personnel cost is £40,000. Lettings have increased to £50,000 more than pre-pandemic levels. People’s gifts are a true blessing but want to use them for something significant not the deficit. Ambition to set how much net zero would cost by the end of this year. The Reverend Whittaker thanked Andrew Sternberg warmly for his highly competent handling of the accounts and very clear presentation. Approval of the Accounts were proposed by Andrew Sternberg, seconded by Linda O’Riordan and unanimously approved.

CHURCH REPORTS

Electoral role report Angela Holman advised that this is under revision closing this evening. Numbers ratified at the APCM meeting on 10th May.

Richard Holman Giving Regular giving for the whole parish by standing order or through the Parish Giving Scheme fell by £3K (1%) because new donors were outnumbered by those who stopped giving – see the table below. However loose plate collections almost doubled to £31K. Gift Aid tax increased by £4K as a result of greater use of yellow envelopes and the continuing recovery of plate collections.

Number of donors	St Mary's	All Saints'	Total
At 01.01.22	186	114	300
New	17	13	30
Ceased	(36)	(16)	(52)
At 31.12.22	167	111	278
Increased	33	8	41
Reduced	8	6	14

Although the Parish has multiple sources of revenues we still rely on the church congregations for almost two-thirds of the total. We know that many people are feeling the impact of the sharp rise in the cost of living and we are hugely appreciative of the commitment of our many donors. However, it is clear that we need to be adding steadily to the number of donors, as well as asking those who give to consider prayerfully regular increases to offset the now significant impact of inflation.

Richard Quesnel, Director of Music The report was taken as read.

Parish Curate's report The report was taken as read.

Church Warden's report Andrew Grocott commented about the year. Cost of living crisis – utility costs re best energy supplier for net zero. But a lot of companies collapsed. Government subsidies put into place. Internet now been upgraded and ready for when we upgrade the streaming. Increased people serving at Caritas. . Andrew thanked everybody especially John, Helena, Jane and Daniel for everything having been involved nearly 10 years in being a warden and deputy warden. Rev'd John Whittaker congratulated the splendid team of Wardens. And added a huge welcome to Helena and her ministry at St Mary's.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals Confirmations, admissions to communion, weddings and funerals were as reported.

Buildings and Maintenance Architect has retired. At the APCM particular thank you to Alan. The report was taken as read.

Community Activities in the Brewer Building and St Mary's Church The report was taken as read.

Safeguarding Report Solid Safeguarding team. Need to establish procedures for when John is on sabbatical. The report was taken as read.

Children in the Parish John commented that this was proving very successful – with children and youth. John massive thanks to Nikki, Helena, Jane and the Sunday School and Crèche teams. The report was taken as read.

Parish Action The report on Parish Action were taken as read.

Pastoral Care Group The report on the Pastoral Care Group was taken as read.

Supper Circle The report was taken as read.

Social Activities Feels good to be having more social activities such as bingo which is accessible to all incomes. Thanks to Ted for heading up the Burns night. The report was taken as read.

Flowers The report was taken as read.

Bell Ringing The report was taken as read.

Servers The report was taken as read. Warm thanks is offered to all who are involved.

Chalice Assistants The list was confirmed.

St. Mary's Church of England school The report was taken as read.

Putney Debates The report was taken as read.

Parish Magazine Good to see this being produced regularly. The report was taken as read.

Social Media The report was taken as read.

Theology in the Pub The report was taken as read.

Youth & Family Assistant The report was taken as read.

Curate's Report The report was taken as read.

Rector's Charge 2022 John said it is a huge privilege to serve you and to be part of this family of God. The report was taken as read.

AOB The meeting closed with the Grace at 12.28pm

List of DCC members 2023 - 2024

Rev'd Jane Andrews, Angela Attah, Mike Bull, Nikki Cornfield, Jeff Dale, Dawen Gao, Andrew Grocott, Ben Harrison, Richard Holman, Alex Lowe, Linda O'Riordan, Sam Smith, Andrew Sternberg, Karen Todd, Rev'd Daniel Trott, Annette Watson, Rev'd Helena Whittaker, Rev'd John Whittaker, Katia Willoughby.

Secretary's report of the DCC proceedings

This year I believe has been a year of growth for the DCC in that our meetings have been more interactive and engaging. One of the additions is that John introduced a discussion topic to the agenda from November last year. In November it was a discussion about the

Israel Palestine conflict, in January the Post Office vs Mr Bates, and in March a discussion about the church links to slavery. These interactive discussions have added more colour to the sessions and have enabled DCC members to get to know each other better.

Where the church services were concerned, again there were many new initiatives including the Study Groups as well as more variety in the format of the Parish Eucharist at 10am.

The DCC has tried to look towards our mission and how we can fulfil it more effectively.

After 5 years as DCC secretary, I feel it is my time to stand down having had a very fulfilling and interesting experience. I would like to thank everybody especially Rev'd John for their collaboration and support.

Samantha Smith, Secretary

St Mary's Church Electoral Roll

The Church Electoral Roll for St Mary's Church, which is a list of people entitled to be elected to the PCC/DCC, to vote at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting and at the Annual General Meeting of the congregation of St Mary's, currently stands at 295.

We are required to revise the roll every year, removing the names of people who have moved away or who no longer habitually attend who live outside the Parish, ('habitually' taken to mean 'at least monthly') adding new people or updating contact details. **The revision will take place from April 14^h and closes on May 12.th During this period members of the congregation are invited to confirm their details we hold on the Parish Directory and current Church Electoral Roll and inform the Electoral Roll Officer of any changes to their address or contact details during the past 2 years. Please also inform the Electoral Roll Officer if they wish to be removed or if they wish to be included.** The list can be viewed every Sunday in church or contact the Electoral Roll Officer by email electoral.roll.officer@parishofputney.co.uk The numbers will be ratified at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 22nd May 2024

Angela Holman, Electoral Roll Officer

Financial Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

Year ended 31 December 2023				
St Mary's Church, Putney	Actual Difference		2022	
Income Statement for AGM	£'000	£'000	£'000	NOTES
Giving				
Direct Giving	173.6	(9.7)	183.3	Substantially lower than budget and stewardship campaign - but a number of generous donors left Putney
Collection - loose plate	15.3	2.3	12.9	
Investments				
Property	22.3	(3.4)	25.7	
Other Investments	10.3	4.2	6.2	
Brewer Building Rent	10.6	0.5	10.1	
Other income				
Donations - incl Brewer Trust	24.0	0.8	23.3	
Lettings	53.0	2.0	51.0	Post lock down lettings income has seen substantial improvement and is now c£13k per quarter
Fees	6.9	1.7	5.2	7 weddings in 2023
Other	(0.7)	(0.2)	(0.5)	Parish magazine deficit and bank fees
TOTAL INCOME	315.4	(1.8)	317.2	
Ministry Expenses				
Curate accommodation	(0.7)	8.2	(8.8)	Substantial reduction in 2023
Pastoral Assistant Expenses	-	2.1	(2.1)	
	(2.8)	3.1	(5.8)	Diocesan support for John's wider work
Personnel Costs - incl Stewarding	(62.7)	(5.3)	(57.4)	Salary increase and additional stewarding
Teaching costs	(0.9)	0.1	(1.0)	
Power costs	(28.5)	(6.3)	(22.1)	EDF electricity billing not accurate. New energy contract much lower.
Repairs and Maintenance	(12.8)	1.5	(14.3)	Specific £7,500 reserve to be created - see below
Other Church Costs - incl security system	(14.9)	(4.0)	(10.9)	Includes £2k of "non-cash" depreciation.
Parish Office				
Telephone and internet	(1.3)	3.1	(4.4)	
IT and software licences	(2.0)	(0.7)	(1.3)	
Photocopying and stationery	(3.1)	1.3	(4.4)	
Governance and insurance	(7.1)	1.3	(8.4)	
TOTAL EXPENSES	(136.7)	4.2	(141.0)	
OPERATING SURPLUS BEFORE PLEDGE	178.7	2.5	176.2	
Parish Support Pledge	(190.1)	11.2	(201.3)	Reduced by £11k to £190k for 2023.
OPERATING DEFICIT	(11.5)	13.6	(25.1)	
Transfer to designated fund for repairs and maintenance	(7.5)	(7.5)	-	Set aside to cover drainage costs in 2024.
Transfer from general reserve - before one off income	(19.0)	6.1	(25.1)	Underlying financial performance
LEGACY INCOME	64.5	64.5	-	
TOTAL SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	45.5	76.7	(25.1)	

Giving

Direct giving is down on last year and substantially lower than pre-Pandemic giving. Many of our more generous members of the congregation have moved on and we have not replenished the giving to cover the resulting shortfalls. Loose plate giving has returned to pre-Pandemic levels, however, you can see that this makes up a small proportion of the giving. Stewardship is continually under review.

Other income

Much of the shortfall has been made up by other income: including better returns on investments following the financial turbulence of 2022 in the aftermath of the Ukraine. Lettings income continues to increase and in 2024 we will focus on improving rates from the more transactional commercial customers whilst maintaining a first class service for the more pastoral partnership customers. Fees improved with more weddings. The property income is slightly down due to higher expenses on one property and tenants vacating the other at relatively short notice.

Ministry expenses

These have fallen substantially year on year and in line with the budget with the Diocese covering the Pioneer Curates accommodation costs. As part of John's wider work for the

Diocese, the Diocese has agreed to make a contribution to cover John's expenses and the Diocese has extended this support to 2024.

Personnel costs

These have increased due to pay rises and additional stewarding costs for the increased letting.

Power costs

Power costs have risen substantially year on year. However, the increase was not as big as feared when we prepared the budget due to more Government support being available during the 2022/23 winter and energy costs falling substantially by October 2023 when we renewed the main electricity contract.

Repairs and maintenance costs

These are substantially lower than both prior years and budget. However, we know that there are significant problems with the drainage system that will probably require major investment in 2024. For this reason, we have set aside £7,500 and creating a designated reserve to specifically cover part of these costs. Repairs and maintenance cost are typically in the region of £15 - £20,000 per annum and 2023 was then anomaly rather than the norm.

Church expenses

These cover several items including water rates, cleaning, flowers, candles, laundry and music licences as well as depreciation on the recently installed security system and improved audio-visual equipment.

Parish office costs

As onerous historical contracts have expired, we have taken the opportunity to focus on internet connectivity and strip back on high cost telephone systems which are redundant in this world of mobile phones and emails. Governance costs have been reduced following the change in Independent Examiner.

Parish Support Pledge

This was decreased as agreed with the Diocese in late 2022. St Mary's contribution to the Diocese was maintained throughout the Pandemic and the recent high inflation environment but we couldn't sustain this commitment in light of higher energy costs.

Overall Result

The statutory result before legacy income is a deficit of £11.5k but this was driven by the significant underspend on repairs and maintenance which is not sustainable on for an Church of this size, age and usage. Therefore we are setting up a £7,500 designated fund to cover the prospective repairs and maintenance costs for 2024 and beyond.

And finally we received a one-off legacy income which will be contributed to reserves but the DCC is keen to use this legacy constructively – starting with the new chairs with arm-rests.

Andrew Sternberg, St Mary's Treasurer.

Report on Giving

		Donations	Baptisms	Tax recovery	Total
		£	£	£	£
Year -					173,647
2023		136,853	2,200	34,594	
Year -					183,316
2022		146,554	2,250	34,512	
Movement	£	(9,701)	(50)	82	(9,669)
	%	(6.6%)	(2.2%)	0.2%	(5.3%)

	People	£ per month	£ Average	£ per year
Started	10	670	67	8,040
Increased	25	360	14	4,326
Reduced	2	(75)	(37)	(900)
Ceased	(17)	(1,160)	(68)	(13,920)
	(7)	(205)		(2,554)
Note: Figures include Gift Aid where relevant				

The number of people giving regularly fell by 7 to 158 in 2023, having been 201 at the end of 2020. Much of the 5.3% fall in total regular giving in 2023 was the result of donors dropping out during 2022, when the number of people contributing fell by 19 and annual income went down by £13,718. Fortunately, the rate of loss slowed in 2023 but it is now urgently necessary to increase the number of regular donors and to ask all regular members of our congregation to consider whether they can increase the level of their giving. Loose plate collections, which include those made using the yellow envelopes, increased by £2.4K (18.5%) to £15.3K. This is one of the reasons why tax recoveries did not fall in 2023.

Richard Holman, 15 April 2024

Report from Church Wardens 2023

In last year's Wardens' Report, I spent a good deal of time reflecting on the energy cost increases following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Whilst the Government subsidy through the winter of 2022/23 proved to be helpful, the long-term impact on the finances of St. Mary's will continue for some time to come.

There is a danger in writing this report to refer to activity in St. Mary's, only to remember that it took place this year rather than in 2023! There is one particular initiative which has recently been held, but I am glad to say it did start last year, and that is Study Space.

One of the goals of St. Mary's, along with any number of churches, is how to be relevant to the 14-18 age group. The church offers a number of programs to engage with this demographic and I would suggest that Study Space was the most practical. It was a delight

to see the young people of Putney come into the church and prepare for their examinations. I felt there was a noticeable difference between the Easter sessions and those during the Whitsun half-term. The Whitsun sessions being closer to the examinations were more studious and there was a discernible increase in concentration.

I cannot thank Rev'd Jane Andrews and her team of volunteers too much for their time, cakes and knitting without which Study Space would not have been the success it was.

In last year's report, I mentioned that St. Mary's installed high quality fibre internet. One of the benefits of this investment is to take advantage of the Audio-Visual system which was introduced last year. It is fair to say that there is a little way to go before it is fully functioning, but on the test broadcasts it has worked well, and this was only possible with the fibre. One of those tests was at the Christmas Day service when a member of those attending was asked what they would like to hear after the service. They chose Ding Dong Merrily On High, only for the choir to sing that as we left. Never let be said that St. Mary's doesn't listen to its congregation.

This is also my opportunity thank the Warden Team and the Clergy. During the year, the Warden Team of Linda O'Riordan, Cristiana Vitale and Karen Todd have worked well together in ensuing that from a practical point of view, the services have run smoothly and have dealt with the often unusual incidents that can occur. One of these was to accept a child's bicycle, brought in by someone rather large than the bicycle was intended for and another to handle a complaint that an advertising board on Church Square should not be there. Finally, to thank the Clergy Team of Rev'ds John, Daniel, Helena and Jane. They each bring an individuality which comes through their sermons, and they complement each other wonderfully. We are very lucky to have them. This was particularly so during John's sabbatical when the Team was augmented by Rev'd Richard Truss and a series of vicars from local churches.

Andrew Grocott

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

We have had steady enquiries for these services:

- Banns of Marriage: 28 couples had their banns read at St Mary's.
- We performed 7 weddings in 2023.
- Baptisms: we performed 18 baptisms in 2023: 16 children/babies and 2 adults.
- Confirmations: we prepared 2 members of St Mary's for confirmation at a service at Holy Trinity, Roehampton in May and then 3 further members St Mary's, Wimbledon in November
- Funerals: we held one funeral in St Mary's; two funerals at St Mary's followed by committals at crematoriums; six crematorium committals and two memorial services.

Antonia Wainman (Records Clerk) and Julie Craig

Buildings and Maintenance Committee

Although the Building Committee only met formally on two occasions in 2023 there was a considerable level of activity during the year.

- Alan Pates has been the church architect for almost 15 years. He designed and managed the construction of the Brewer Building in 2006. Alan retired in 2023 and we have appointed Aya Kihara Paul of Richard Griffiths Architects, a firm that specialise in heritage work and particularly churches, as his replacement.
- Six proposals were received for the installation of photo-voltaic cells (solar panels) on the church roof. They were all reviewed by Hugo Chandler, a member of the congregation who runs an energy conservation business. He whittled them down to two and we are now in advanced discussions with both. We hope that the project will go ahead during the summer, but it will require planning permission so timing may be out of our hands.
- Energy costs have continued to cause concern and Andrew Grocott has devoted many hours to unscrambling the bills we receive. During 2024 we will be trying to find ways to reduce consumption by gathering detailed data on which areas of the church and Brewer Building complex are using most power.
- Andrew has also done heroic work in badgering BT into putting a fibre cable into the church to improve the previously very patchy phone and internet signal.
- A new, more sophisticated audio-visual system has been installed. Many thanks to those of our members who contributed to the cost. We still need to train a team of operators so that we can offer remote viewing of services, weddings, funerals, etc.
- In addition to routine maintenance we have dealt with:
 - Replacement of one of the boilers to ensure an adequate supply of hot water,
 - Regular drainage problems, due to the limited capacity of the system and the high level of usage of the buildings,
 - Roof repairs, the need for which was identified in the 2022 Quinquennial survey. This was preventative work to remove a significant risk of water ingress in the future.

No working parties were held during 2023 but we would like to build a list of volunteers who would be willing to give two or three hours a couple of times a year to carry out the simpler maintenance tasks, such as high level cleaning, gutter clearance and brass polishing. Please let us know if you would be interested in putting your name on that list.

Recently Berni Griffiths, our Premises Manager for [12?] years, left Putney and we are now recruiting for his replacement. Berni grew our commercial revenue very strongly, as well as being the 'face' of St Mary's for many people. In 2023 lettings income exceeded £150,000, including our two long term tenants, Busy Bees Nursery School and Putney Pantry. We are very grateful for Berni's considerable contribution to the life of the Parish.

Richard Holman (Chair)

Community Activities in the Brewer Building and St. Mary's church

In addition to the regular Church Services, Weddings & Baptisms, our buildings are also used by a variety of independent community groups including various wellbeing, education, art and dance classes plus once again we were a 'Hub Venue' for the Wandsworth Arts Fringe Festival. The Church space is also occasionally used for hosting larger events such as various fund-raising charity concerts, Boat Race Day, Vintage Vera Furniture Kilo Sales, local

council meetings and political gatherings, hustings, consultation, and planning presentations.

Whilst the Putney Pantry provides a catering hub for all our activities in and around the Church and Brewer Building, they also host our monthly meetings of the local 'Women's Institute' and weekly sessions with our own 'Theology in the Pantry' group.

'Busy Bees By The Bridge' Nursery School continue to operate at the back of the building and in the riverside garden.

The 'Boiler Room Studio' is a fully functioning rehearsal space hosting regular Drum Lessons and sessions under the Stewardship of Theo Buckingham. The second recording studio 'Studio Blak' runs in the back of the Sunday School Arch behind the Boxing Gym with recording, mixing and mastering sessions produced by Mikie Blak of the Groove Warriors. Mark Buckingham, also of the Groove Warriors continues to offer sax and piano lessons in his isolated studio space built in the same chamber underneath the bridge.

The Storage Arch continues as a workshop for our Repair Café and will be used by the Wandsworth Art Fringe Festival.

St Mary's Church, the Brewer Building and Manual Room are open all day and into the night, seven days a week and whilst we are making extensive use of these excellent facilities for the benefit of the congregation and the wider community, our objective remains to keep St Mary's Church open to *all* visitors for peaceful prayer and reflection.

Thanks to all our support team and stewards who help keep this complex operation running smoothly to provide such a variety of opportunities for the local community.

The position of Buildings Manager is vacant. If you are interested details of the position can be found on our website or feel free to chat with Rev'd John.

Safeguarding: Adults and Children

Safeguarding continues as a priority, under-pinning church life at St Mary's. It requires the commitment and vigilance of the vicar and appointed officers to respond promptly to any concerns or requests for consideration about risks. We are grateful to the team at All Saints' who are readily available when matters affect both churches. We are fortunate to have excellent background support from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team who have advised us on some occasions. Their experience has been valuable in more complex matters. We will be sad to lose Libbit Osbourne, in April as she moves on to worship at St Mark's supporting her son Edward in the choir there. Libbit's calm wisdom in her role as Children's Safeguarding Officer and her support within the team has been hugely appreciated. We hope that a successor will be appointed in the very near future.

Isobel Vass

CHILDREN IN THE PARISH

Baby Massage

The Baby Massage ministry has got off to a very good start in the Godly Play Room. Although an ideal number of six mothers and babies was intended I had in fact eight mothers and one father attend the course. On the last week I received very positive feedback. They agreed that the babies had settled well as a result of the massage skills they acquired and sleeping, colic, constipation and teething strategies were very helpful in calming their infants.. They unanimously agreed that prior joining the group they had felt isolated and Baby Massage gave them an opportunity to meet and enjoy the company of other mothers. They felt able to discuss and compare infant issues with each other. They were saddened that the fifth week would be the last week of the course but they would continue the coffee mornings that developed as a result of the course. The only criticism they did make that they found Godley Play room cold although all agreed it was a perfect location as indeed holding the course on Wednesday mornings.

Ellen Ley

Sunday School

We continue to run three Sunday School groups at St. Mary's church for children from age 3 upwards, 6 times a term. Each session is based on a bible story, with age appropriate songs, games, stories, reflection, prayer and craft activities. The older children follow the church lectionary, drawing out themes such as trusting God when we don't understand; while the younger children follow a simpler course, which has included exploring the Creation and thinking about our families. In addition, we have continued with a session of Godly Play per term for the two older children's groups (Junior Youth Group (Y4+) and the Y1-3 group); and for the first time successfully introduced a session of Godly Play for our youngest Preschool/Reception group. Our heartfelt thanks go to Paula Greenwood, our fully trained Godly Play teacher, for leading all of our Godly Play Sunday School sessions for us.

We welcomed about 70 children to Sunday School over the last year, plus extra visitors including children from baptism parties and from All Saints' on Palm Sunday. Attendance each week varies, with an average of 26 children a week over the last 6 months, which is slightly down from last year.

We currently have 19 Sunday School leaders, two less than at April 2023. Six teachers and helpers have stepped down this year, and we thank them for their many years of dedication and service. We are fortunate to have 4 new Sunday School teachers volunteer over the past year, and have also been lucky to have five teenage volunteers helping out with our younger groups as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award activities. Despite this our Sunday School leaders headcount is down and we do need more adult volunteers for our Sunday School team.

We are incredibly grateful to all of our talented Sunday School team, for their time, commitment, enthusiasm and their never-ending adaptability to respond to last minute requests for help. They do a fantastic job and without them Sunday School wouldn't be

possible. Thanks also go to Adrian Weed for tirelessly compiling the Sunday School team rotas; to Linda O’Riordan and Jane Andrews for brilliantly running our new Sunday School teacher training at short notice; and to Julie Craig for all her cheerful help with the admin, including mail outs, Sunday School registers and making sure that we all keep up to date with our safeguarding checks and training.

Please consider whether volunteering for Sunday School might be a role for you and contact any of the Clergy, Nikki Cornfield, or me at hannahking.2@btinternet.com if you are interested in finding out more about joining the team. We would love to hear from you.

Hannah King, April 2024

St Mary’s Sunday Creche

We run a crèche every Sunday throughout the year for children aged 1-3 in the Parish. The crèche runs during the Sunday 10am Eucharist service and is designed to give parents/carers a chance to enjoy this service without interruption from the children in their care. We have a team of 6 volunteers who fill in a rota on a quarterly basis. All of them are DBS/CRB checked and help for 3 or more Sunday sessions per quarter. We rota 3 volunteers per session but often just 2 volunteers run the session. For child protection reasons we never run the crèche with only 1 volunteer present. The crèche is run in the Clergy office (John’s office) upstairs behind the lift and can easily accommodate demand for space. During the time children spend in the crèche, they engage with volunteers, eat simple (allergy free) snacks, play with toys stored in the Cromwell Room, read books and take part in a short religious service of a prayer and a children’s hymn. In 2023 we had 27 families on the register and an average of six children attending each of the Sunday morning crèche sessions.

Tara and I would like to thank all those that have supported us in running the creche, especially Julie Craig in the office and Rev’d John Whittaker as well as our team of very understanding volunteers.

Godly Play

The Godly Play has come alive again!

We have used Godly Play on numerous occasions for our mid-service groups and are looking forward to increasing the number of sessions in the Sunday School format. Thank you to Paula Greenwood for leading the Sunday School session this year and to Hannah King for scheduling us in!

It has also been a delight to welcome St Mary’s School back to our Godly Play room again this year! Years 1-6 visit the church once each year and the children (and the teachers!) absolutely love it. I feel very privileged to spend this time with all the children at the school.

A very big thank you to Amanda Bishop at school who liaises with the teachers on our behalf, and also to Tina Thomas who taught at St Mary’s school for many many years who helps me during the sessions.

Godly Play has also brought Brandlehow School into our church for the second year running – they enjoyed it so much last year, they came again – and we’re hoping to keep it up for the years to come! Their Year 2 classes visit us as part of their PSHE Belonging topic. It was wonderful to have Sharon onboard this year as while I ran a Godly Play session (The Baptism Story), she ran a wonderful session downstairs showing the children around the church, showing them how different parts of the church created a sense of belonging. The feedback we got was wonderful!

We are very privileged to have the Godly Playroom at St Mary’s and the word is spreading again that it’s well stocked! We have had a number of requests to visit the room from other churches and have lent a couple of stories to other parishes for them to use with their congregations. It’s lovely to see such energy behind Godly Play as it is a wonderful method. If you would like to find out more about becoming a trained Godly Play teacher, please contact Nikki. This requires a 3-day training run by the Godly Play Foundation, which is very worth it and fulfilling. It would be wonderful to build on our existing micro team of Paula and I!

Nikki Cornfield

St. Mary’s Tuesday Play group

Tuesday’s Baby and Toddler Playgroup continues to welcome a happy bunch of parents, grandparents, nannies and carers who regularly attend each Tuesday morning with their children. It’s a joyous environment and numbers have increased to around 25 adults who are made to feel very welcome with their little ones. Babies and toddlers enjoy a time of playing, crafting, colouring and singing songs with Mousy, the Church Mouse puppet. The group is based in the Lancaster Room on Tuesday mornings between 10-11am during term time so do pop in and join us for a coffee and chat. We ask for a voluntary £3 donation. If you’d like to help out and serve the drinks and feel able to commit some time on a Tuesday morning, please speak to Helen Daniels c/o the office.

Helen Daniels

Youth Group

2022 saw the re-birth of our parish youth group for children in year 6 and year 7 and it has been going strong ever since! We now have 36 children signed up and we run sessions twice a month. We took part in the Glass Door SleepOut on 6 October and raised £2135 (beating last year’s record of £1748). We’ve had a Gingerbread House making competition, with wonderful prizes; Indoor Adventure Golf; Hang Out sessions; a Popcorn, Pictures & Pyjama Party; Table tennis fun; a bake off; VR Gaming; Escape Rooms etc. It has been wonderful for me to have YMIC youth worker, Luke join our team. It’s been great to have someone to bounce ideas off and have someone with such energy and enthusiasm for youth group around! The youth ask Luke for ideas of what to do, and then ask me if its allowed!! Just call me “mum”! Thanks too to Josh Yelland who supports us at some of the events.

In addition to the 2 per month youth groups, our Year 7’s, along with some of the youth who attend Camino (see Jane’s report), have attended events run by Youth Ministry in

Communion (YMIC). These events have been a great success, and the children love them. See report by Luke for more details on YMIC.

There is so much scope and promise in the Youth Group and we would love to get more people involved in this ministry. If anyone is interested in joining our leadership team, please contact Nikki. You're more than welcome to come along and see what we do and be inspired to take part!! Likewise, if there are any children in Year 6 or 7 who would like to take part, please do get in touch.

If you would like information about or get involved with any of our children or youth work, please do get in touch. It's an incredibly rewarding part of ministry and I would highly recommend it! **Nikki Cornfield**

Parish Action 2023 (and Scrubbery)

Parish Action has gone from strength to strength in 2023, re-establishing itself within the Parish of Putney and striving to coordinate and further the work of the Parish in these areas of the Church of England [Marks of Mission](#):

- TEND - To respond to human need by loving service.
- TRANSFORM - To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.
- TREASURE - To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Parish Action does this is by focusing on a small number of 'mission partners', charitable organisations, and mobilising members of the congregation and wider community to support these mission partners through fundraising, volunteering, and raising awareness. Parish Action also coordinates the Parish's response to the Bishop's Lent Call and the Christmas Charities.

Parish Action is run by the Parish Action Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) constituted in accordance with Rule M32 of the Church Representation Rules (2020).

In 2023 our Mission partners were:

- **Glass Door Homeless Charity** – giving shelter and supporting the homeless of London.
- **Regenerate London** – supporting local young people and creating opportunities for them to thrive.
- **Wandsworth Foodbank at the Yard**– supporting the local community with emergency food, advice and support for those going through financial hardship.
- **Charlie Waller Trust** – supporting the education of mental health in young people.
- **Christian Aid** – supporting developing nations and challenging poverty.

Parish action raised £12,644 in 2023 for our Mission Partners.

The Christmas Charities we supported were the Archbishop's Joint Appeal for Gaza, Palestine, and Israel, and the Wandsworth Prison Welfare Trust.

In 2023 Parish Action said goodbye to Wandsworth Citizens, who we sadly did not have the manpower to commit to their project. We wish them luck with the future endeavours.

A huge thank you to all the people within the Parish who arranged events and supported our Mission Partners. Thanks to your efforts as we raised money whilst enjoying a splendid Burns Night, an exciting evening of Bingo, the splash of the Car Wash, a lovely picnic with entertainment at the Parish Festival, wine tasting from around the world, the chill of a sleepout and a great firework display.

Further thanks to all the people who both donate food and our steadfast team who take the food to the Foodbank.

Special thanks also to the volunteers on the Parish Action Committee and our Mission Partner parish representatives who have worked so hard supporting the Mission Partner charities and organising events - Suzanne Grocott, Charlie Rennick, Heidi Wales, Eve Bradshaw, Sarah Brearly, Clemancy Gordon-Martin and Sarah Thomas, and of course, our clergy, without whom none of this would be possible - Rev'd. John Whittaker, Rev'd. Daniel Trott, Rev'd. Jane Andrews and Rev'd. Helena Whittaker.

A warm welcome to Alice Malcolm Green, who is joining the Parish Action committee in 2024.

Michelle Penn, Parish Action Chair

The Scrubbery

The Scrubbery was founded in 2020 to help make scrubs and other medical items before pivoting to support Ukraine after the outbreak of war in 2022. The Scrubbery's commitment extends beyond mere donations, focusing on strategic collaborations and logistical prowess to maximise our impact. Notable efforts last year include:

Driving a van full of aid to Lviv where the van, donated by eNet in Ireland, was handed to Ukrainian military for use in medical evacuations. The aid was distributed to local organisations by our logistical partners in Lviv. While in Ukraine Rosie, Olga and Margaret spent time visiting hospitals and clinics to understand exactly how we can best assist them. Coordinating with various partners to facilitate cost-free shipping of medical supplies worth £2.5 million, sourced by us from NHS trusts in ten articulated lorries.

Making 550 sets of scrubs for St. Nicholas Children's Hospital in Lviv, a major effort for the sewing volunteers.

Constructing camouflage nets from repurposed fabric offcuts, including organising corporate net making days to spread awareness.

Collaborating with the community to bolster support for Ukraine through fundraisers, a gala dinner, concert and charity auctions, whilst continuing to organise collection and delivery of medical supplies, rehabilitation equipment, toys, hand knitted clothing and blankets. A highlight was securing a £3000 early reading scheme for the new school room in St. Nicholas Children's Hospital.

Meeting with our MP, Fleur Anderson and Nataliya Pipa, the People's Deputy of the Verkhovna Rada for the 115th constituency, Sychiv district, part of the Lychakiv district of Lviv, to work out improved ways of delivering and distributing aid.

As well as supporting Ukraine in these and other initiatives, the Scrubbery has also been involved in local community work, such as:

Collecting unsold baked goods from local Gail's bakeries and distributing to various charities, foodbanks, community kitchens, refugee centres, the school and other organisations, within our parish and deanery.

Fostering sustainability by repurposing resources, such as foil blankets from the London Marathon, for soldier first aid kits and promoting eco-friendly initiatives.

Throughout 2023 a colossal amount of work by Rosie and her volunteers went into establishing a school library at the Oasis Academy, Putney, who very kindly host the Scrubbery on their premises. Over 8,000 books were accessioned and written up and an empty room transformed into an amazing space for the children with hand-made cushions and posters. Meanwhile a local charity, The Men's Shed, made extraordinary kinder boxes, a returns box and a book trolley for the library from upcycled shelves and timber. The library was opened by local author, Michael Foreman, and continues to benefit from Scrubbery volunteers running sessions daily.

The Scrubbery run an extremely popular sewing club at the Oasis Academy each term.

Continued support for local hospitals via wellbeing bags, drain bags and other assorted items. The most recent supporting a Survive and Thrive day at King's College for Paediatric doctors.

Throughout the year we have received awards from Ukrainian organisations marking their grateful receipt of items, as well as local recognition from community organisations, and of course, our MP, Fleur Anderson, who is a stalwart supporter. Olga was awarded the Cross of Freedom in Ukraine for her efforts supporting Ukraine through the Scrubbery.

Many, many thanks to all the wonderful volunteers and donors who give so much time and effort to the Scrubbery. Through strategic collaborations, logistical acumen, and unwavering dedication, The Scrubbery continues to demonstrate the transformative power of collective action and compassion in times of crisis.

Christopher Taylor-Davies, Secretary. The Scrubbery

Pastoral Care Group

The congregation at St Mary's reflects the local population including many who are thriving. However, we include families who are facing substantial challenges, single people who have moved to London with few connections, those who have not felt included elsewhere and those who have been bereaved.

The Parish offers a variety of services and groups which aim to be inclusive and foster new friendships, e.g. The Senior Social group at All Saints on Monday mornings welcomes our older members from both churches.

Separately, the clergy and pastoral team respond to individual needs for those who are unable to come to the church by meeting elsewhere or visiting at home. In this way we hope to extend kindness, friendship and support in facing challenges.

We are all aware that sadness can affect us at any time and that befriending can do much to mitigate feelings of loneliness and despair.

The invitation therefore remains open for people to contact the clergy or church office if they have concerns about any member.

Isobel Vass

20s and 30s Group

It has been a successful first year for the twenties and thirties group - with the support and encouragement of clergy, we have been able to get things going bit by bit. Whilst the church does a lot for families and the elderly, there is a need for something for younger adults who have yet to settle down for family life, or are enjoying the hustle and bustle that London (and indeed Putney) offers! St Mary's shares its twenties and thirties Group with All Saints', as part of the Parish of Putney - we all get on wonderfully well.

Events have included dinners, pub quizzes, attendance at church events, and celebrating St Patrick's Day at Southwark Cathedral. If you read between the lines, you might notice a theme emerging!

We hope our group will continue to attract younger adults who want to partake in the life of our church. We further hope and pray our roster of social and spiritual events will continue into the future. My thanks to all those members of our group, and especially our clergy, for their goodwill, encouragement and enthusiasm - it is appreciated beyond words.

Josh Yelland

Social Activities

The Events Team continues to put on events to bring the community together. 2023 saw us introduce two fantastic new events, which were extremely popular and successful in our goal of bringing together new friends and old and providing fun new ways for our community to keep engaging with each other and to grow.

The first of these was our Bingo Mingle night, held in Church and packed to capacity. The evening saw young, teens and older members laughing and chatting and dancing together, and was very cost and labour effective to put on and clear away - as well as raising money for Parish Action charities.

The second new event was our ambitious Safari Supper, championed by John. It initially seemed like a feat to pull off in terms of logistics, but ever-determined we decided to go ahead despite of the initial low take up -only to find that we were booked up! We would like to extend a huge thank you to the Hollmans for hosting us all at the beginning, and to all of our host homes and participants. We plan to do a Summer Safari in 2024, due to popular demand to keep things in our events calendar new and fun. Our Winter Wine Tasting proved a great success and its reputation is growing as a fun night out for adults.

2023 saw us renew our collaboration with All Saints to put on the Parish Picnic, rebranded as the Parish Festival and scaled down on the children's inflatables but scaled up on the inter-generational entertainment, which culminated in a giant tug of war.

After the summer break we looked forward to gathering together again for our Patronal Festival in September in our beautiful riverside grounds, and enjoyed chatting and catching up with each other with food and refreshments and our resident DJ. It's fair to say that a great time was had by all. The focus continues to be on community building and welcoming with the occasional support for Parish Action Fund-raising events. **Amber Raine**

Flowers

We are a small group and new members are most welcome; no prior knowledge is needed and instruction is available. I would like to thank Mike Bull for planning and making the Christmas and Easter decorations together with Ellen, Carrie and I. We will continue to provide arrangements in memory of loved ones on request. If you would like to sponsor one of our Sunday pedestals, or join the team please contact me: spaleologo@btinternet.com

Sofia Paleologo

Bell Ringing

Ringling continued with vigour at Putney throughout 2023. The year began with some new recruits as part of the "Ring for the King" initiative. In fact, we had far too many recruits to cope with although inevitably some fell by the wayside. We have retained however (and this appears to be a very good "attrition rate" compared to some other local towers) Fran, Herbie, Justine and Evie (Anne and Peter Tuppen's granddaughter). Evie regrettably had to go on a Duke of Edinburgh expedition over the Coronation weekend and so missed all the excitement, but we had lots of ringers on the big day and all were able to claim that they had rung as part of the celebrations. We had a bit of a tea party in the belfry afterwards where the teenager in our midst demolished considerable quantities of food and the rest of us tried to keep up with him!

In July Michael Uphill kindly organised a super outing to four towers in Kent – at one the bells were hung anti-clockwise which caused a considerable amount of confusion and hilarity - in almost all towers, including Putney, the bells are hung in descending pitch and increasing weight CLOCKWISE.

Sadly, in early September cancer finally claimed one of the big characters of our band, Gordon Gibb. He had fought the disease bravely for many years and we were very pleased to be able to have a local band to ring a quarter peal in his honour and memory (see photo).



In the autumn Michael Uphill went “on loan” to start up a new band at Holy Trinity Roehampton church. This has taken up a lot of his time and the new ringers have certainly benefitted from his skill and expertise. Meanwhile the R4TK ringers have started ringing methods and progressing their skills beautifully – indeed congregation members may have noticed that we are now able to ring 8 most Sunday mornings thanks to the whole bands growing confidence and enthusiasm.

In December the Surrey Association of Church Bellringers did an “advent calendar” of ringing from different towers on their Facebook page. Our efforts were displayed for anyone interested to see and hear on 14th December.

We have had regular support from many ringers of other local towers, for which we are extremely thankful. Their attendance makes it much easier for all to progress in a supportive environment, and more experienced ringers have been very generous with their time, patience and skill to allow others to develop their ringing. The Putney band is happy, cohesive and very supportive of each other and we are all very proud to be part of the St Mary’s family of ringers. And of course there is always room for more...

Paula Greenwood

Sidespersons and Welcomers’ Report

In a recent Sermon, Richard Holman raised the question of why people come to church. I imagine that we all appreciate the opportunity to worship together, and I suggest that becoming involved in the activities of St. Mary’s is a natural extension to that communal worship. The Sidespersons who have played a part in welcoming you on a regular basis are shown here. It is inevitable natural part of the life of St. Mary’s that people move away and this list of 15 has shown a net loss of 2 on the year.

Sidespersons: Alison Guest, Claudia Colombo, Neal Vass, Kate Umney, Evelyn Dorkel, John Blake, Kate Gibson, Katie Bishop, Robert Wilson, Maya Lojoo, Sarah Thomas, Ben Barker, Richard Spencer, Yanina Maldonado.

This role presents an opportunity to meet the congregation of St. Mary’s and I am sure we all appreciate the time the group devotes. That time does not represent a significant addition to that of regular attendees. In the case of a 10am service, arrival would be at around 9.40am and leaving at 11.20am. I prepare the rota over an 8- or 9-week period, with the School Holidays being a factor in setting that time frame. During this time frame, no one will be asked to be “on duty” more than twice and not on successive weekends. In order to achieve this, I ask each of the team for 3 of 4 Sundays they could make over that period. This is becoming harder to achieve as the size of the team has reduced. I would encourage anyone who is looking to become involved in the activity of St. Mary’s to consider joining the Sidespersons’ Team. The training is uncomplicated, and children are more than welcome. There is a WhatsApp Group which is used when changes to the rota are required. If you are interested then please contact me on grocott.andrew@gmail.com, 07831 332 588 or on WhatsApp.

Andrew Grocott 4th April 2024

Caritas

The regular Welcomers at 6 pm Caritas at the moment are Christopher Garnett and Susan Stopforth assisted by Alison Price, which means we really could do with two additional people to volunteer for the rota. The setting and ambience for Caritas is peaceful and reflective, with plenty of time and opportunity to greet and include newcomers and for making time for those who are less mobile, less frequent in their attendance or in need of a moment to talk. If you are comfortable also with arriving at 5.30pm to prepare the service books, with circulating the collection plate, ringing the bell at the right moment, ushering to communion and remembering to count and put the collection in the safe, then this is the ideal role and responsibility for you. If you can offer one Sunday evening a month, as and when you are available, that would be perfect, and thank you.

Susan Stopforth, March 2024

Wednesday Service

We have a small but regular Wednesday lunchtime congregation of about 12. The clergy team rotate and then join the group for lunch in The Putney Pantry afterwards.

Servers

Antonia Wainman continues to manage the Serving Rota. Currently the serving team consists of 29 servers: 8 adults and 21 children. The majority of children are aged between 8-11, across Years 4-7. Servers act as acolytes and crucifers, serving at morning and evening worship, and work hard to enable the worship of the attending congregation. We are struggling to provide child servers at caritas. We are delighted however, that Nikki Cornfield has managed to recruit at least 10 new child acolytes

Antonia Wainman, March 2023

Chalice Assistants

We now have three, rather than the four assistants serving in pre-Covid times, as part of the serving team at 10am service. Some worshippers receive bread only, some take bread and wine, affectively all participate fully in the Eucharistic feast. During communion there is gluten free bread and alcohol-free wine which are available for communicants who are unable to consume alcohol and/or gluten out of medical necessity. Please inform those administering communion and they will assist.

Julie Craig

Music

It has been another wonderful year of music at St Mary's, with our Junior and Adult choirs continuing to support our worship on a weekly basis, singing for regular Sunday morning Eucharists, occasional Sunday Caritas services and for all the major feasts and festivals. Choir collaborations continue to flourish: The adult choir collaborated with All Saints' Putney for a joint Evensong and sang with All Saints Putney and Fulham for Palm Sunday. We also accepted a repeat invitation to sing Evensong at St Mary's Battersea last summer. We were delighted to be part of the Parish of Putney festival and our combined choirs were invited to join forces with All Saints and the Treble Makers for a musical celebration.,

Our adult choir numbers remain healthy and we have been fortunate to welcome new members throughout the year: as the standard of the choir continues to develop we are able to approach more challenging repertoire and, as a result, do now ask new members to have some greater proficiency in reading musical notation.

Several of our adult singers are developing their skills by regular participation in concerts and events organised by other choirs and partners. It is a source of pride that St Mary's Choir is represented in Hammersmith and Fulham Choral Society, 1885 Singers and Chelsea Arts Club Choir. Some of our members sang in 150th anniversary events at All Saints, performances with London Handel Festival as well as in a 24 hour performance of Mozart's Requiem with Pimlico Music Foundation and Rodolfus Choir. Two of our singers are also actively involved in operatic projects, either through Porcupine productions, or the opera course at Morley College. All in all this is proof of how the adult Choir is strengthening and developing. We have been able to consider new repertoire that has stretched us healthily including music by contemporary composers, and music by William Byrd as part of the 400th anniversary celebrations of his death. We have also included more music by Samuel Coleridge Taylor in our repertoire as part of our ongoing commitment to performing works by historically under-represented composers.

However, the musical highlight of the year was undoubtedly the performance of a Bach cantata (BWV4) with professional baroque string players as part of a Sunday morning liturgy in July - this is the first time that St Mary's Church Choir has performed music of this level of difficulty and they rose to the challenge admirably. We have built on these musical foundations to develop more 17th and 18th century repertoire, which works particularly well with our wonderful Marcussen organ. Callum Anderson is himself a specialist in baroque music and he organised a recital by James Johnstone, professor at the Royal Academy of Music and one of Europe's foremost performers in this style. We have also hosted other recitals (piano trio, cello and piano duet) at the 11:30am slot on Sundays and hope to develop this programme in future.

St Mary's Junior Choir numbers remain lower than we would hope, but the children and their families are very committed and always attend Sunday services and performances. We are very grateful to these families for their dedication and commitment throughout the year - the standard has really continued to improve this year. The choir gave its first concert last July and raised money for Christian Aid; this was a brilliant showcase for the Junior Choir who have made real progress this year, preparing repertoire of their own and frequently joining forces with the upper voices of the adult choir to prepare and enjoy more challenging repertoire and sing for major church festivals. The choir has been promoted by a banner on the bridge and has run taster sessions; in March this year Richard Quesnel led year 3 and year 4 singing workshops at St Mary's school. The Junior Choir is now relocating to St Mary's school for its weekly rehearsal which will be earlier (5pm start) and we hope that this will reinvigorate interest in the choir and encourage greater uptake.

Richard Quesnel (Director of Music)

Report from St. Mary's CE Primary School

St Mary's continues to be a school of choice for the local community. It's a testament to the quality and longevity of the teaching staff, the enthusiasm of parents and the positive attitude of pupils. Sustainability is a key focus and like many schools at the moment, there's close monitoring of costs.

St Mary's has embarked on their ambitious redevelopment of their playground with Phase I having been completed in August 2023 (having raised a third of their c£300K target). This included a trim trail area and 2 netball/activity areas. Substantial fund-raising continues with a notable "cycling Everest" event on 9th February and a forthcoming fundraising Ball 11 May 2024. St Mary's needs £100K to give the go ahead for Phase II which will see an outside classroom built alongside a sensory area with artificial grass, planters and mini beast hotel. Raising the necessary funds drives the go ahead for this work.

Head teacher, Cheryl Payne was invited to take on a Consultant Head Teacher role at St Michaels for 2 days a week for the Spring and Summer terms. The school and the governing board have been hugely supportive of this opportunity – not only for Ms Payne personally, but for the school to broaden perspectives.

Finally, noteworthy changes to the school and governing board include Judith Kennedy and Natasha Hume stepping down as Co-Chairs. They steered the ship for many years including through COVID and the last Ofsted inspection, and we offer our heartfelt thanks for their time, passion and leadership under their stewardship. Paula Greenwood has taken on the Chair of Governors role and we are delighted for having such an experienced individual in the primary education sector to take up the reigns.

With heartfelt thanks to Ms Cheryl Payne (Headteacher), the Senior Leadership Team and whole staff community. We appreciate you - not just in your teaching but by preparing our children for the road ahead.

Linda O'Riordan and Paula Greenwood

Faith Group at St Mary's Church School

The Faith Group continues to thoughtfully review the schools Collective Worship Plans and preparations for assessment by the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). It recently discussed the exciting potential to create a new bespoke Religious Education curriculum for the school, considering how best to prepare pupils for the variety of worldviews they will encounter as they grow up whilst maintaining a distinct Christian foundation.

Phil Pyke

Putney Debates

There were no debates this year. **Sue Rolfe**

Parish Magazine, Bridge & Common

The parish magazine 'Bridge & Common' was launched in its present form at the end of 2019. The Parish has had a magazine for over 100 years. It has always been popular and eagerly read by people in the parish and outside it.

'Bridge & Common' is a clever tribute to the locations of both churches. The name communicates the churches' individuality and their togetherness. The magazine is published every two months. It carries advertising so it is FREE.

Editor Miriam Boursiquot, graphic designer Will Fazackerley, interviewer Madeleine Neave and others keep 'Bridge & Common' in great shape. The team, with Richard Holman and I acting in an advisory capacity, find interesting and relevant things to report about the Parish of Putney.

There are regular articles by members of the clergy, an engaging interview carried out by Madeleine and articles about whatever is going on in the parish. We are very grateful to the team for maintaining Bridge & Common's valued place in the life of the Parish of Putney.

Last year's editions had articles about Revd John Whittaker's cycling pilgrimage around England's cathedrals, Revd Laura Luz's epic marathon and the Scrubbery's vital aid to Ukraine. Plus interesting interviews with Luke Carson, Jeff Dale and Jill McGivering.

The current issue has an article about the 150th anniversary of All Saints' Church, a fascinating interview with Graham Shaw and a mention of the curious external staircase that once adorned St Mary's. And there's more. Look out for the latest 'Bridge & Common' at St Mary's and All Saints'.

Paul Donnelly

Social Media

The Parish continues to maintain a presence on social media with the aim of improving awareness and increasing attendance for events across the parish.

Follow us on **Twitter: @StMarysPutney**

Rev'd John Whittaker **@PutneyPriest**

Café Theology

Cafe Theology meets in Putney Pantry after closing time on Monday evenings. Turnout has improved nicely with around 12 people each meeting, many who are not churchgoers but are simply interested in the peculiar claims of religion. Topics have included the resurrection of the body, the Synod and gay marriage, why God needs skin in the game, should the Archbishop give his blessing to Eid, anointing the King, the art of preaching, has God become more humane, the new Puritans, the problem with human rights, antisemitism, agape and other Greek words which are lost in translation, ascetism and why American Evangelicals love Trump and many other knotty questions. The discussion is led by someone who volunteers to research a topic to give it some focus. People come in the spirit of enquiry, and good humour, helped by bottles of wine. I advertise in all the churches in Putney and on noticeboards locally. The highest turnout was for the one occasion we had

an expert speaker, a psychiatrist giving his perspective on theology. So if anyone would like give a talk to Cafe Theology on any topic vaguely related to religion please get in touch.

Jenifer Norris

Repair Café at St Mary’s

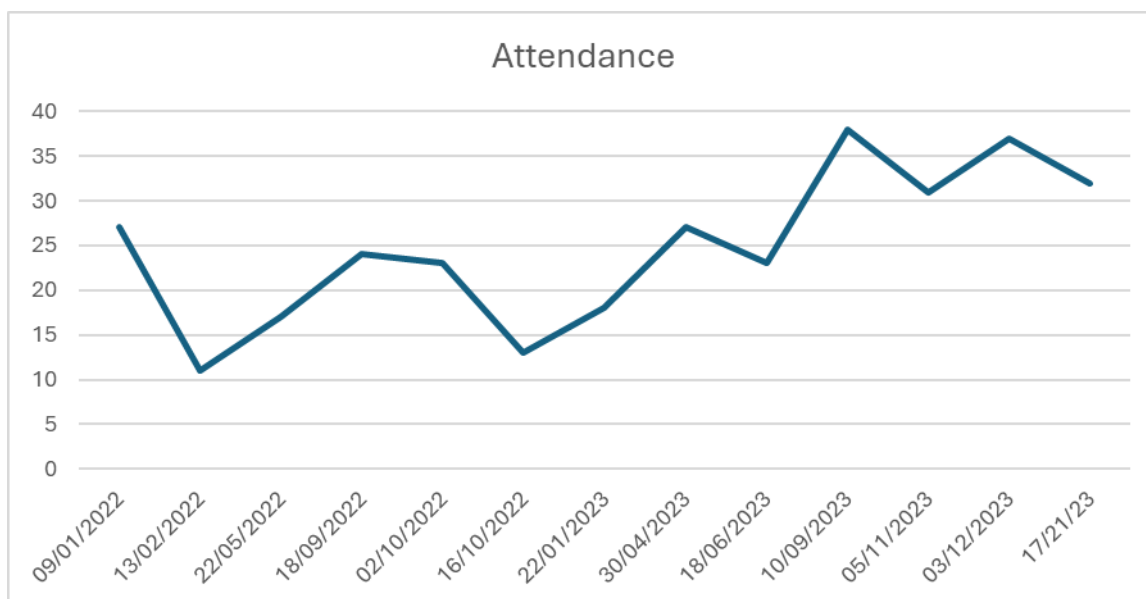
Business has been steady at around 30 customers per session, contributing an average net amount after expenses of £150. As from the outset, our goal has been to a) serve the local community b) save from landfill, items that might otherwise be discarded and c) build a team of volunteers with shared interests. The number of volunteers has increased. We now have around 20 men and women who all throw themselves into the task with vigour and good humour; supported with cups of tea and finishing with a light lunch. We have one volunteer who suffers from dementia. He used to be a DIY fanatic but has lost the ability to do complex tasks, So instead he and his wife polish the church's silver and brassware. His face is a picture of happiness while he is working as it gives him a sense of being valued. Having the use of the cellar under Putney High Street is a definite advantage over other Repair Cafés as we can store tools and spare parts. We can also do some of the bulky repairs in there.

The Workshop operates from the arch cellar on Tuesdays from 11am to 4pm. We do various repair and maintenance jobs around the church e.g. mending chairs, repointing brickwork etc. The core team comprises myself and Mike Trussell. Others, who attend when they can, include Neil Vass, Tim Hill, Greg Brougham, Ben Buck etc. There is scope for expansion if more people can be found willing to work in damp conditions!

Charlie Lindsell

Youth and Family Minister

2023 saw another year of increased child attendance at St Mary’s. Whilst the Church Suite records (see graph below) aren’t entirely accurate as we do rely on parents to register their children, late comers may not be counted etc, the general feeling of an increase is reflected.



[*Please note that above 17/21/23 should read 17/12/23]

We continue with our “mixed-mode” approach to our children’s ministry, a mix of Parish Eucharists with Sunday School, All Age Eucharists, Parish Eucharists with mid-Service Groups and Parish Eucharist Only Sundays. A very big thank you to Tom Willoughby and his team for creating quarterly flyers with the schedule of worship. These flyers are designed to be put on a fridge so families can easily see what provisions there are each week. The flyers are distributed at church and each child as St Mary’s School gets a copy too. Feedback has been very good, they are helping families plan and create a rhythm in their worshipping practice.

It has also been wonderful to have more and more children get involved in different aspects of the services, including pre-service prep (we sometimes have craft activities that need preparing etc), Intercessions (families have done these together which is very special) and helping during the Eucharistic Prayer (speaking parts, carrying the bread or wine to the altar, helping with the collection and carrying the plates to the altar for a blessing and ringing the bell). If anyone would like to get involved or would like to offer feedback / suggestions on these services, please do contact Nikki or John.

All Age Service Planning Team – We have had some wonderful All Age services and mid service groups this year. But they do take quite a lot of planning, which couldn’t be done without our wonderful All Age Service planning team. A very big thank you to Kate Bolton, Simon Kam Cheong, and Heidi Wales for working with John, Helena, Sharon and myself in this creative worship process, coming up with ideas and delivering these services. We are so looking forward to having Charlie Renwick join the team. We have noticed a very different level of engagement by the children in these services which we believe is largely due to the new “rug and cushion” approach. We believe it creates a good focal point for the children and provides an environment that they are used to from school. If anyone would like to join this team, do contact Nikki or John. We truly would like to make these services ALL Age so all adults are welcome.

Collaborations with St Mary’s School – We continue to build strong ties with St Mary’s school with the aim creating a welcoming community for all. We continue to send “pack” invitations for Mothering Sunday and Christingle as well as Christmas cards to each child in the school. It was so lovely to see so many “school families” join us creating Christingles at the Christingle service and bunches of daffodils at the Mothering Sunday service, and at Christmas time. A massive thank you too to everyone from the congregation who helped us prepare the Christingle and Mothering Sunday packs – it is so lovely to be able to do these tasks at the same time as spending time together.

Admission of the Baptised to Communion Course – The ABC course took place in December 2023 / January 2024. 33 children (ranging from Year 3 to Year 6) across the Parish took part and were admitted to communion on Sunday 4th February at both churches. 20 children were admitted at St Mary’s; Amelie, Cecilia, Celine, Charlotte, Ebe, Edward, Ethan, Giorgia, Jess, Izzy, Jasper, Libero, Mabel, Máximo, Nell, Ollie, Oscar, Ralph, Ralph and Sophia. A big congratulations to them all! We continue to pray for them and their

families as their journey with faith and deepen their connections as members of our church family.

Nikki Cornfield

YMIC Ministry

Since joining Putney parish in late August I have been fortunate to have been involved in the many youth groups and events that I will outline in the following. My placement here is founded upon the parishes inclusion in the YMIC project, in which I am split between 3 churches, this provides support with the current running of youth work, building upon the strong foundation already in place. This allows quite an increase in capacity to run youth projects. I have been involved in the following groups:

Camino 'Camino' is our group for teenagers who wish to talk and think about what faith means to them at their stage in life. This group runs for Secondary aged young people and tends to surround more mature discussions around religion, politics, climate and much more (there is a real passion for cheese toasties). This group runs weekly (during term time) and averages numbers of around 8 young people each week. There is a great companionship between the young people which encourages people to attend that may not be heavily involved with the Church at present. Currently, Camino is ran by Rev'd Jane Andrews and I but supported greatly by our volunteer leaders and clergy. Each week presents something different and is a great time for all involved.

Youth Group Youth Group runs for those in school years 6/7 and is an important provision in the transition of youth not only into the church but also their movement from primary to secondary school. It is vital for young people to have the space to be themselves which youth group provides with a range of activities including baking, puzzle rooms, crazy golf and crafts. This is a well-attended group with over 20 young people registered for the group. This is a more traditional youth group and aims to bridge the gap between the community and Church for these young people, essentially getting them in the door. This used to run monthly but has now increased to bi-weekly since the Christmas period. Currently, Youth Group is ran by Nikki and I with help from volunteers.

YMIC There have been many exiting YMIC events, including the mini-YMIC Christmas party (25 young people attending) and the latest YMIC lent event aptly named 'Could you be tempted' with both of these being hosted at St Mary's. These events combine young people across Churches with around 80 young people attending and participating in Taizé style service at the Lent event. Having so many young people gathered alongside members of the congregation was a truly beautiful service to witness, with those gathered stating the same. We can often all feel isolated in our faith, to have events like this diminish this for all those involved. The bank robbery escape



experience was certainly one to help get people through the door. Last year there were 3 major YMIC events which will be the same this year also. We also will be running a Youth Camp during October half-term.

If you would like to get involved with any of the youth work or find out more please do contact Jane.Andrews@parishofputney.co.uk, nikki.cornfield@parishofputney.co.uk or me at luke@ymic-london.org. We would love to hear from you and hope to expand our youth provision in the coming year!

Luke Carson

Training Ordinand

I joined the Parish of Putney as an Ordinand (training for ordained ministry) on a 2-year placement last October. When recommended for training, ordinands in the diocese of Southwark are required to leave their usual place of worship to join a new worshipping community, usually one that is a different tradition to their 'sending' church.

From the outset I have been made to feel welcome and at home and part of the life and worship of St Mary's. Over the last 6 months it has been important for me to get to know people and to build relationships. I have sought to understand more about the parish and to learn about the ministry and mission of the church, including its rich history. I am particularly embracing a more sacramental and liturgical style of worship.

As I inhabit the role of being an ordinand and the ministry I am being called to, I have been given lots of opportunity to serve and I am included in many aspects of ministry, mission, and pastoral care. Including being part of the serving team, leading morning prayer, preaching, assisting at baptisms and funerals, attending the play group, delivering schools sessions amongst others areas.

Thank you to everyone for all the encouragement I have received and especially to Rev'd John, as my ministerial facilitator, overseeing this part of my formation, who so willingly offers his time and wisdom.

I look forward to continuing to serve the parish of Putney in the coming months.

Sharon Hunt Ordinand

Pioneer curate's report

I am reaching the end of my third year as a curate and so this is likely to be the last time I report to you in this way. I was ordained priest in September 2022 and have spent the subsequent 18 months growing into the role.

I adore presiding at the Eucharist and value the difference between the contexts where I do this. Services at All Saints have lightness of touch about the liturgy which is both grounding and uplifting; St Mary's has a generous openness. It took me a while to appreciate the poetry of the 8.30am service – there are a *lot* of words to say – but I now enjoy speaking these time-honoured phrases. With its calmness and loyal congregation, this has become one of my favourite places to preach. Similarly, I love the end-of-the-day calm of Caritas and the people I meet there.

But, being a priest is about more than the Eucharist and I have also been growing as a pastor. As I have become more embedded in our congregations and communities I have been invited into deeper conversations. I have discovered that I am a skilled listener and (I hope!) I know when to speak and when to stay silent. Walking alongside some of you in the joys and struggles of life is extraordinary for me. I don't wish to sound morbid, but I have particularly valued being with people who are encountering death both those who are dying and those who mourn. I can't quite believe that I have been invited into such a precious ministry.

As I prepare to move on from Putney (at some point in the next year) I will take with me an extraordinary breadth and depth of experience for which I am grateful to John, to Daniel, to the ministerial and operational teams and to you.

These are some of my projects...

Study Space is running for two weeks again this year welcoming school students to St Mary's to revise for their summer exams. At the time of writing we have completed two days and have welcomed over 30 young people on each day, a 30% increase over the same point last year. We have a strong team involved and we are in a good position to continue this project next year whether or not I am here.

Camino is a weekly gathering of teenagers where we explore life, faith, craft and toasties. Some of us joined the Vigil at All Saints on Easter Eve before staying overnight in the church. Toasted marshmallows taste best when cooked over the Easter fire. There are 9 loyal members of the group aged between 13 and 17. We hope that some of the older Youth Group members will join us in the autumn. I am gradually handing over leadership of this group to Luke, our YMIC youth worker.

Mount Court, semi-sheltered housing across the road from St Mary's, hosts a regular church gathering. A group of us meet there once a month or so to share worship, conversation and cake. I am borne up by the knowledge that they pray for me and my ministry.

Rev'd Jane Andrews, Pioneer Curate

Team Rector's Charge

John spent some time thanking the many people who do so much work supporting the mission and ministry of St Mary's. The gospel passage of the day (I am the good shepherd) was used as a springboard into reflecting on our call as a church to emulate the example of Christ the Good Shepherd in how we live out being 'the body of Christ' in this place. The Anglican Communion's Five Marks of mission can be used to help us think about the different strands to our living out being a good shepherd to our people and community:

1. **Tell** the good news: Our weekly services are a place of 'telling' the good news through our worship, prayer, community, welcome, inclusion, engaging with scripture and eucharistic feast. From 2022 to 2023 the average number of adults and

children attending our two services increased by 3% from 136 to 140. The increase at festival times was more pronounced, 9% at Christmas and 14% at Easter.

2. **Teach** the faith and nurture a new generation: Pleased 22 children started to receive communion and 5 people were confirmed. A lot of attention on youth work and good adult lifelong learning at Bible study and Lent Group.
3. **Tend** to human need through loving service: using the church for overnight accommodation for people who are homeless continues. In the last couple of years three new initiatives have started: Repair Cafe, Study Space and Baby Massage. Starting on Friday 26 April: Street Angels.
4. **Transform** unjust structures: clergy and members campaigned for equal marriage, whether different sex or same sex relationships, in the Church of England. Partner with Christian Aid re global justice.
5. **Treasure** the integrity of creation: Energy audit booked in. Solar Panel project on the cusp of approving contractor.

We continue to seek God's grace and the activity of the Holy Spirit to inspire, encourage and sustain us in our vocation.