

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

St. Mary's ACM



27th April 2025

**ANNUAL REPORTS
on the life of
St Mary's Church Putney**

2024 - 2025

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Annual Church Meeting (ACM) Agenda

- Introductory Prayers
- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of 21st April 2024
- Elections of:
 - a) Propose 1 Churchwarden for election at the APCM 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
- Re-appointment of DCC secretary and treasurer
- Appointment of Sides-men and Sides-women
- Presentation of the Church Finances
- Church Reports
- AOB

APCM Meeting: Wednesday 14th May 2025.

Minutes of ACM, 21st April 2024 and matters arising

Meeting commenced at 11.36am with introductory prayers.

Present: The Rev'd John Whittaker (Chair), Wardens, DCC secretary and members of the Parish.

Thankful remembrance of those who have died in the year: Pat Shipley, Cherry Stewart

Apologies for absence: Jeff Dale, Mark Leadley, Alex Lowe, Tom Willoughby, Jane Andrews

Minutes of AGM 23rd April 2023: There were no matters arising apart that Annette Watson did give her apologies, Suzanne not Suzanna Grocott

Minutes approved: Proposed by Alexis Chapman, Seconded by Suzanne Grocott, Approved unanimously.

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising

Elections:

a) **Election of 1 Churchwarden (One year):** Andrew Grocott (Alexis Chapman proposed and Linda O'Riordan seconded). There were no other nominations and he was duly elected.

b) **Election of 2 District Churchwardens (One year):** Two District Wardens were nominated:

- Karen Todd (proposed by Linda O'Riordan and seconded by Antonia Wainman)
- Linda O'Riordan (proposed by Karen Todd and seconded by Antonia Wainman).

There were no other nominations and both were duly elected.

c) Election of 1 PCC member (3 years): There was one member to be elected to the Parochial Church Council. Tom Willoughby (proposed by Andrew Grocott and seconded by Linda O’Riordan). There were no other nominations and he was duly elected.

d) Election of 3 DCC members (3 years): Nikki Cornfield (proposed by Andrew Grocott and seconded by Linda O’Riordan), Annette Watson (proposed by Sarah Tyler and seconded by Sam Smith), Sarah Tylor (proposed by Annett Watson and seconded by Sam Smith). There were no other nominations and they were duly elected.

e) Election of 2 Assistant District Wardens (1 year): There are still 2 vacancies

f) One vacancy for Deanery Candidate: Joshua Yelland (proposed by Ben Harrison, seconded by Peter Quesnel) Duly elected.

g) DCC secretary Sam Smith standing down after 5 years, Katia Willoughby taking over

Appointment of Sidespeople: Andrew Grocott thanked people. The list of names can be found on page 20 of the 2023-24 report. Proposer: Andrew Grocott, Seconded: Angela Holman. Unanimously approved.

Presentation of the Church Finances: Andrew Sternberg (Treasurer) provided highlights from his report. This time last year had a deficit of £20k, and energy contract had to be renewed, and witnessing a steady decline of direct giving (which has continued this year). To address this went to the Diocese and agreed a substantial lowering of our contribution of £12-13k. Direct giving went down by 5.3% and will be looked at again, Loose plate varies but now back up to where we were pre-pandemic. Not the answer to the solution.

Investments: property lower because of one of the tenants left and one of the properties went down. Investment in stock market better than last year.

Income: lettings increased, fees bumper year for weddings (seven), slight deficit on Parish magazine, ban fees increased slightly.

Ministry expenses: done due to Jane largely funded by the diocese, and a grant for John’s expenses extended for 2024. Personal costs gone up because of inflationary increased of base salaries – and additional stewardship costs.

Power costs: gone up but lower than forecasted. 2 reasons – new contract when renewed energy costs had gone down, and that EDF given us too much support on the government support scheme.

Repairs and Maintenance: we didn’t spend much on the church maintenance – reflecting this will put down £7.5k for next year as drainage and plumbing will need to be done in 2024

Overall: total expenditure lower than last year. Deficit now £19k.

Finally had substantial legacy in 2023 from 3 parishioners from their estates: Eileen Larkin, The Tuppens, Caroline Blenkinsopp.

Questions:

1. Can we keep track of people leaving the parish to think about St Mary’s in their will? We do try and indicate this.

2. Are the solar panels included in the costs? Come from essential funds in the capital account (including depreciation over a number of years) therefore not in these numbers.

3. How do you account for random amounts of money? Come in as 'other income' unless ear-marked for something like music.

4. Interesting that cash donations and general giving increasing – how do we turn that into regular giving? Easiest way to move onto planned giving.

Rev'd John suggested that we all should update our wills if necessary.

Rev'd John 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 Andrew Grocott and unanimously approved.

CHURCH REPORTS

Electoral role report: Angela Holman advised that this is under revision closing on 5th May. Numbers ratified at the APCM meeting.

Giving: Plan taking place to review giving and to run a low-key legacy program. See report

DCC Secretary: 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 and thanked all church wardens. Been looking at building maintenance as it gets older (e.g. drainage) Good to do preventative work as a regular process. Andrew thanked everybody especially Rev'd John, Rev'd Helena, Rev'd Jane and Rev'd Richard Truss, Rev'd Daniel and Sharon for everything. Finally have a dedicated Wi-Fi for this meeting. Rev'd John congratulated the splendid team of Wardens.

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

Buildings and Maintenance: The report was taken as read.

Community Activities in the Brewer Building and St Mary's Church The report was taken as read. Thank you to Berni who has ended his role, recruiting deadline this Monday and interviews will take place a week later.

Safeguarding Report Thank you to Libbit Osbourne who is standing down and Jacynth Bennett who is coming on board. The report was taken as read.

Children in the Parish Brand new initiative of baby massage. Rev'd John thanked Ellen, Sunday school continues well as well as crèche. Godly play has expanded to offer schools in the week. Play group continues to be run by Helen Daniels. Luke has been deployed to our parish and shared some highlights (see page 36 for more details). Lent YMIC event was impressive – 79 young people. Luke thanked people for this year. Rev'd John commented further on YMIC and that we have put in a bid for a substantial project over 7 years. Asked everybody to pray for this – should know in the next couple of months. The report was taken as read.

Parish Action: Massive thank you to everybody involved. The report on Parish Action were taken as read.

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

20s and 30s report: Josh delivered this report of 20-30s of people. Looking to attract new members. The report was taken as read.

Social Activities: 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. Pleased to have recruited 10 new acolytes. Warm thanks are offered to all who are involved.

Chalice Assistants: The list was confirmed.

Director of Music Thank you for the church to support two professional musicians. Thanks to the loyalty of the adult choir and they have really developed in ability over the last few years, stressing the highlight last July with a Bach's Cantata. Junior choir is difficult to increase numbers, Richard Quesnel has done some workshops at the local schools. Last week first rehearsal at St Mary's school- added extra level of safeguarding and engagement. Optimistic that year 3 children will join next year. The report was taken as read. Sarah Tyler on behalf of the choir thanked Richard for all his support.

St. Mary's Church of England school: The report was taken as read. Note that Paula Greenwood has joined the chairs of governors.

Putney Debates: No report submitted.

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

Social Media: The report was taken as read.

Repair Café: Charlie Lindsell talked about the monthly meeting and also the weekly repair of the church. The report was taken as read.

Youth & Family Assistant: The report was taken as read. All Age service groups taken on by Rev'd Helena

Ordinand's Report: Sharon Hunt highlighted some of her report. The report was taken as read.

Pioneer Curate's Report: The report was taken as read.

Rector's Charge 2023: Rev'd John gave this in the 10am service sermon.

AOB: The meeting closed with the Grace at 12.48pm

List of DCC members 2024 - 2025

Angela Attah, Mike Bull, Nikki Cornfield, Jeff Dale, Andrew Grocott, Benjamin Harrison, Richard Holman, Alex Lowe, Linda O'Riordan, Samantha Smith, Andrew Sternberg, Karen Todd, Sarah Kay Tyler, Annette Watson, Rev'd Helena Whittaker, Rev'd John Whittaker, Katia Willoughby

Secretary's report of the DCC proceedings

This year the trend of growth for the DCC has been maintained with interactive and engaging meetings. John has continued to include discussion topics in the DCC agendas and this year we have covered topics such as Wholeness and Healing prayer, Taize services and an 'Away Day' longer DCC session hosted by Archdeacon John Kiddle to discuss the decrease in primary school Foundation Place applications over recent years. These interactive discussions have generated some lively discussion, deep thought and enabled DCC members to get to know each other better. The DCC has tried to look towards our mission and how we can fulfil it more effectively. **Katia Willoughby, Secretary**

Electoral Roll, 2025 - 2031

This year the Church Electoral Roll has to be completely renewed. Between 31st March - 29th April all people on the previous Church Electoral Roll have been informed of such and each person has been invited to complete a new form if they wished to be included on the new roll. By joining the Parish Church Electoral Roll, you gain the right to elect deputy churchwardens (district wardens), DCC & PCC members at the Annual Church Meeting. To be on the Church Electoral Roll, please complete a new form that has been emailed to you via ChurchSuite or complete a new form that can be found in each church. In order to be able to vote at this year's ACM, please register by Tuesday 29th April. You can register later but will not be able to vote or be included in this year's Annual Parochial Church Meeting statistics. The new Parish Electoral Roll will be ratified at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 14th May 2025. Any new forms received after the closing date, will be added to the Electoral Roll after the APCM. **Angela Holman, Electoral Roll Officer.**

Financial Report

Year ended 31 December 2024				
St Mary's Church, Putney	Total	Difference	2023	NOTES
Income Statement for St Mary's AGM	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Giving				
Direct Giving - including tax recoveries	182.9	9.3	173.6	Includes one-off £10k gift
Collection - loose plate	18.7	3.0	15.7	Loose plate, e-collections and envelopes
Investments				
Property	15.7	(6.6)	22.3	Refurbishment of Hayward Gardens
Other Investments	12.5	1.5	11.0	
Brewer Building Rent	10.6	0.0	10.6	
Other income				
Donations - incl Brewer Trust	28.2	4.1	24.0	
Lettings	50.8	(1.0)	51.8	
Fees	7.3	0.4	6.9	Principally weddings
Other	(0.7)	0.0	(0.7)	Parish magazine and net interest income
TOTAL INCOME	326.0	10.7	315.3	
Ministry Expenses				
Curate accommodation	(0.5)	0.1	(0.7)	
Expenses	(6.3)	(1.7)	(4.6)	
Personnel Costs - incl Stewarding	(61.4)	1.4	(62.7)	
Teaching costs	(1.8)	(0.9)	(0.9)	
Power costs	(16.9)	12.9	(29.8)	Release £9k provisions brought forward
Repairs and Maintenance	(12.1)	1.2	(13.3)	Actual spend lower much than budget.
Other Church Costs - incl security system	(14.2)	0.7	(14.9)	Includes depreciation charges
Parish Office				
Telephone and internet	(4.7)	(3.4)	(1.3)	Increased internet costs
IT and software licences	(2.1)	(0.1)	(2.0)	
Photocopying and stationery	(3.5)	(0.5)	(3.1)	
Governance and insurance	(7.7)	(0.7)	(7.1)	
TOTAL EXPENSES	(131.3)	9.1	(140.4)	
OPERATING SURPLUS BEFORE PARISH SUPPORT FUND	194.7	19.8	174.9	
Parish Support Fund	(166.8)	23.3	(190.1)	Reduced share of the Parish Support Fund
OPERATING SURPLUS / DEFICIT	27.9	43.2	(15.2)	
Exceptional item - Legacy income - including interest	116.6	52.2	64.5	
TOTAL SURPLUS	144.6	95.3	49.2	

Overall

After several challenging years during and in the immediate aftermath of the Pandemic, I am very pleased to report that we returned a surplus of £144,600 in 2024. This was mainly due to exceptional one-off legacy income of £116,600. But before this legacy, St Mary's returned a healthy surplus of £27,900. Why the dramatic turnaround on last year's deficit of £15,200? The main factors to highlight are:

- *Reduction in the Parish Support Fund.* Given the repeated recent deficits, for 2023-2025 the Parish of Putney agreed a step-plan reduction in the support provided to the wider Diocese of Southwark. Furthermore, internally the Parish revisited the split of Parish Support Fund between All Saints and St Mary's – resulting in a reduction in St Mary's share. This will continue through 2025;
- *Electricity costs.* There was a one-off £9,000 improvement following the end of a major electricity contract and reconciliation of the final account with agreement of all historical charges and Government support dating back to 2022/23.
- Direct giving boosted by a one-off £10,000 gift. Before this, direct giving remained flat year-on-year.

With the Parish Support Fund now reduced to a sustainable level and substantial legacy income, we are looking at potential future investments in Mission and solar panels to reduce St Mary's power costs and carbon footprint.

In 2024, we made further capital investments in audio visual equipment and chairs with arm rests. These items do not appear in the Income Statement above but have been funded by recent legacy income. The cost of these investments will be spread forward over the next seven years – an estimate of their useful lives.

Income

Giving

Direct giving is substantially higher than last year, but this is solely due to a one-off £10,000 gift. Stripping this out, direct giving has remained flat year-on-year. We continue to see some of the more generous members leave the Parish and though we are building the giving base, the income per giver has fallen. Stewardship is addressed elsewhere in this report, and we shall return to this later in the year. Loose plate has fully recovered to pre-Pandemic levels, with "e-plate" giving increasingly important.

Other income

2024 property income was lower due to planned refurbishment and consequent loss of income at one of the Parish's three properties. Other investments have performed better than 2023 and the budget.

Letting income continues to thrive and we are aiming to improve the "quality" of the lettings by focussing on higher fees from commercial organisations and ensuring we continue to provide space for community focussed groups.

Expenses

Ministry expenses and personnel costs

These have remained broadly unchanged from last year. However, following the departure of the previous caretaker we had an extended vacancy whilst we recruited and trained our new Operations Director.

Power costs

Power costs have fallen substantially year on year. This is due to:

- Lower rates. All contracts were renewed in 2024 (and locked in until 2026) at lower rates;
- One-off income of £9,000 following the cessation and final reconciliation of a main electricity supply contract. There were historical invoicing errors dating back to the 2022/23 Government Support scheme.

Repairs and maintenance costs

Although broadly in line with 2023, these are lower than budget and historical norms. The £7,500 designated reserve established in 2023 has been carried forward into 2025. Currently, there are no major repairs and maintenance concerns, but a building of this size, character, usage and age is very expensive to run and therefore it is appropriate to retain the reserve and budget for increased costs in 2025.

Church expenses

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

Parish office costs

The biggest cost now is internet connectivity required to support the audio-visual equipment and the Parish office in the modern world. The phone system has been reduced to bare basics as we move over to mobile phones and emails.

Governance costs include insurance and the costs of the Independent Examiner.

Parish Support Fund

The has fallen in line with the agreed upon reduction in the Parish's financial commitment to the Diocese and a rebalancing of St Mary's share within the Parish.

Overall Result

The result before legacy income is a surplus of £27,900. Stripping out the one-off gains on settlement of the electricity contract and direct giving, St Mary's returned a small surplus. Looking forward, provided we increase underlying direct giving the 2025 budget indicates that St Mary's will return a modest surplus in 2025.

Andrew Sternberg, St Mary's Treasurer.

Report on Giving

	Donations	Baptisms	Tax recovery	Total
	£	£	£	£
Year - 2024	132,457	2,900	34,872	170,229
Year - 2023	136,853	2,200	34,594	173,647
Movement £	(4,396)	700	278	(3,418)
%	(3.2%)	31.8%	0.8%	(2.0%)

	People	£ per month	£ Average	£ per year
Started	6	220	37	2,640
Increased	22	164	7	1,968
Reduced	-	-	-	-
Ceased	(12)	(449)	(38)	(5,388)
	(6)	(65)		(780)
Note: Figures exclude Gift Aid.				

The number of people giving regularly fell by 6 to 152 in 2024, which represents a drop of 49 over the last four years. There was no predominant reason for the cessations, which were due to deaths, people leaving the Parish or just stopping attending St Mary's. We were fortunate in receiving a substantial one-off memorial gift, which meant that the total of regular and non-regular giving was up on 2023 by £4,434 at £145,981, while Gift Aid tax was £2,903 higher at £37,497. Despite healthy attendance at services, the number of regular donors continues to decline, albeit more slowly than in the previous few years. It's essential that we increase the number of regular givers and if you would like information of how to arrange that, please contact me on treasurer@parishofputney.co.uk I would also ask all our current regular donors to consider whether they can increase the level of their giving. Loose plate collections, which include those made using the yellow envelopes, increased by £3.0K (19%) to £18.7K. This is one of the reasons why tax recoveries rose marginally, despite the fall in regular donations. **Richard Holman, 18 April 2025**

Report from Church Wardens

This report presents a public opportunity to express thanks on behalf of the congregation to several people, whose contribution sometimes might be taken for granted and the natural place to start is our Clergy. Lead by Rev'd John, the team of Rev'd Daniel, Rev'd Helena and not forgetting Rev'd Jane Andrews have provided thoughtful preaching over a wide range of issues. They have been ably supported by Rev'd Canon Richard Truss, Sharon Hunt, Richard Holman along with the guest preachers to St. Mary's. We have all benefitted from all their time and insight.

The Wardens' Team has been a little diminished during the year. Cristiana Vitale moved out of the Parish which left a core of Karen Todd, Linda O'Riordan and me. Ideally, there should

always be two of the Wardens' Team on duty at each Sunday service. I am grateful for Paul Donnelly who has willingly stepped up when required, particularly over the summer period. St. Mary's is used from 9am until 9pm, and sometimes later, and seven days a week. It would not be possible to ensure that all the Church, and this includes the various rooms, were available when required if we did not have a person dedicated to doing so. It has been a pleasure to welcome Clare Harbin as Church Operations Manager. Clare has made a wonderful start at St. Mary's with her enthusiasm and positive attitude. She has revamped the way in which the Church's rooms are hired which has not only increased revenue, but equally importantly struck a more appropriate balance between the commercial and spiritual activity at St. Mary's. Clare has been the driver behind the monthly Taizé service and St. Mary's will benefit from her presence.

Aside from the regular services, St. Mary's provides a sacred space for life's key moments. I would like to reflect on a wedding and a funeral at which I was present. The wedding took place in August and perhaps it is fortunate that St. Mary's isn't one of those picturesque country parish churches where there are one hour "slots" for each ceremony. This was set for 1pm and at 1.20pm the guests were still arriving. The bride arrived after 2pm along with a team of four for the wedding video and two still photographers. It is to the great credit of the organist on the day, Callum Anderson, that he has the repertoire and stamina to play what became almost three hours. It was a barmy summer's day, and the organ loft gets very warm. The bride's family was from West Africa and there were glorious colours and music once the service got underway. The bride had processed through the café rather than through the Tower and we had to inform her that the font could not be relocated for the day. The funeral was a time when St. Mary's was as full as I have ever seen it, save for Remembrance Sunday. Here, St. Mary's was able to demonstrate the potential of the investment made in the Audio-Visual system. Understandably, not all those who wished to attend were able to do so, but by using the Audio-Visual system they were able to do so remotely. The system was also used to meet the request of the bereaved family as the coffin made its way out of the Church to the sounds of *"All Ways Look on the Bright Side of Life"*. The family complimented St. Mary's on the quality of the streaming with more than 50 people able to feel involved on-line.

Having set out how the numerous ways the Church and those involved in it enriches our lives, there is one area which is a concern. So much of this richness comes from those who volunteer at St. Mary's often in multiple roles. Active participation is part of what it means to part of St. Mary's. I warmly encourage everyone, whether long-standing members of the congregation or newcomers, to prayerfully consider where they might serve. Even small commitments make a big difference. Wishing you all the very best. **Andrew Grocott**

Baptisms, Admission to Holy Communion, Confirmations, Weddings and Funerals

We have had steady enquiries for these services:

Baptisms: we performed 27 baptisms in 2024; 23 children/babies and 4 adults.

Admission of the Baptised to Communion: The ABC course took place in December 2024 and January 2025, with 22 children from Year 3 to Year 5 across the Parish participating. They were admitted to communion on Sunday 2nd February at both churches. A total of 14 children were admitted at St Mary's: Alana, Alonzo, Arabella, Charlie, Eleanor, Flora, Florence, Harrison, Hugo, James, Nina, Oscar, Sophia, and Teddy. Congratulations to them all! We continue to pray for them and their families as they grow in faith and deepen their connection as members of our church family. At the end of each course, we take time as a team to reflect on the experience and identify areas for improvement. The Parish of Putney has been running this course for over 20 years, and it has evolved over time to better serve the needs of our children and families.

Confirmations: we prepared 1 member of St Mary's for confirmation at a service at All Saints', Putney in April 2024 and then 7 further members at this church in November

Banns of Marriage: 28 couples had their banns read at St Mary's.

Weddings: We performed 4 weddings in 2024.

Funerals: we held two funerals in St Mary's; three funerals at St Mary's followed by committals at crematoriums; seven crematorium committals and two memorial services.

Antonia Wainman (Records Clerk), Nikki Cornfield and Julie Craig

Buildings and Maintenance Committee

The Building Committee met formally on two occasions in 2024, in addition to several meetings held on site by members of the committee with contractors.

- The main focus throughout the year has been on the plan to mount a solar panel array on the roofs of the church and the Brewer Building. Due to the lightweight construction of the roof of the Brewer Building we were concerned that it might not take the weight of the panels, so we instructed structural engineers to carry out a survey. Subsequently our architect discovered a hatch in the Lancaster Room kitchen that allowed us to inspect a significant part of the underside of the roof.
- Following a further meeting with Treadlighter, the specialist firm that we have commissioned to install the panels, we are now confident that they can safely be fitted to the roof of the Brewer Building, and both the flat and pitched roofs on the south side of the church.
- The Parish Architect has been instructed to prepare planning applications for submission to both Wandsworth Council and the Diocesan Advisory Committee, which has to approve all permanent changes to church structures.
- Although utility costs have dropped sharply compared with 2023, we would still like to find ways of reducing consumption of both electricity and gas, so we have been in discussion with Green Wing Energy Solutions about the installation of a monitoring system.
- During the year an extensive amount of time was invested in ensuring the drainage under the Church was accessible. This was only partly successful as, due to several years of not being opened, three of the five access panels could not be opened. This was despite the use of equipment that could sustain three tons of pressure. The other two

provided comfort that the drains were flowing, but consideration will need to be given as to how these panels might be accessed.

- Having obtained comfort of the drainage under the Church, during the summer there was a major spillage from the main drains. This was caused by a one-way valve becoming jammed closed under the forecourt from baby wipes and the like. Another example of maintenance which had been neglected and which is now on the programme of work.
- A project has commenced whereby the information in connection to the Church facilities, utilities and maintenance is held in a secure location in the cloud. Access is restricted to those who will require it and being held in the cloud rather than an individual's computer will lead for improved continuity.

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 participate in working parties 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. **Richard Holman (Chair) and Andrew Grocott (Churchwarden)**

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

Outside of our regular church services, baptisms, funerals, and weddings, the Church and the Brewer Building are used extensively by independent community groups each week who run classes focused on fitness, wellbeing, education, and the arts. In conjunction with the artists who took over our arch and riverside garden, we were recognised as “*Best Venue*” for the Wandsworth Arts Fringe Festival in 2024. “*One-off bookings*” in both spaces include concerts, Vintage Vera Kilo sales, local council meetings, AGMs, dinner parties, event receptions, and children's birthday parties.

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 *Cafe Theology* in the Putney Pantry. *Busy Bees By The Bridge* Nursery School continue to operate at the back of the Brewer Building and in the riverside garden. They graciously allow *Narcotics Anonymous* and *Japonica Singers* groups to use their space after hours.

Drum London run by Theo Buckingham operates full time in the Boiler Room Studio under the church. Within the back of the Fitness Arch under the bridge, we have two studios running full time: Mark Buckingham, director of multiple music ensembles, continues to offer sax, clarinet, and flute lessons in one and Mikie Blak continues to operate his recording studio *Studio Blak* in the other.

The Storage Arch continues as a workshop for our Repair Café year-round and will be used by the Wandsworth Art Fringe Festival in June. Car Crash Productions will utilise both arches, the Riverside Garden, and the Roof Terrace for this summer's festival.

In August of 2025, Clare Harbin took on the role as Church Operations Director. Since then, the booking process has been streamlined to a site called *Hallmaster* which has developed transparency of the diary and ease of use for those regular bookers as well as those interested in “one-off” bookings such as concerts or parties.

Our long-time evening and weekend steward Tim Berber died in December of 2024. After a period of transition, we have now hired a team of four stewards to cover our evening and weekend bookings. Many thanks to these stewards as well as our cleaning staff and support team who help to keep this complex operation running smoothly.

Though regular and “one-off” bookings make use of St Mary’s Church, the Brewer Building, and the Manual Room, our objective remains to keep St Mary’s Church open to *all* visitors for peaceful prayer and reflection year-round. **Clare Harbin**

Safeguarding: Adults and Children

Safeguarding continues to be a high priority in St Mary’s. All clergy and volunteers are checked using the Disclosure and Barring Service and must undertake safeguarding training. We extend our thanks to Jacynth Bennett, who stepped into the role as Children’s Safeguarding Officer for a few months before becoming a School Governor. Happily, Rob Wilson has taken over and has responded well to the challenges of the role.

We are fortunate in having good communication between members of the two Safeguarding Teams across the parish which comprises four officers, Rev’ds Daniel and John. The officers between them have a range of relevant experience which informs our approach to any situation that arises.

When necessary, we meet face to face, although any concern about risk, or a report about an incident is shared quickly and confidentially to pre-empt a further escalation of a difficulty.

We are backed by a strong team of advisors in the Diocesan Safeguarding Team who provide us with clear advice for complex or more serious problems.

All issues of concern, no matter how small, are accepted and recorded.

Recently we were required to conduct an audit of our knowledge and procedures. We are mindful that the security of our record keeping, albeit pretty good, could be improved and we are endeavouring to do this with a parish wide IT system. **Isobel Vass and Rob Wilson**

CHILDREN IN THE PARISH

Sunday School

Sunday School at St. Mary’s Church continues to run across three groups for children aged 3 and up, meeting 6–7 times each term. Every session is rooted in a Bible story and includes age-appropriate songs, games, storytelling, discussion, prayer, and craft. We aim to create a

safe, welcoming, space for children to grow in and explore their faith, in a way that is engaging, reflective, and fun.

Our older children follow the church lectionary, exploring themes such as “*Choosing God, Choosing Wisdom*”—encouraging them to reflect on the decisions they make and how God guides us. The younger group follows a simpler programme, learning about Jesus as a teacher and healer, and meeting Old Testament figures like Noah and Joshua. Each group also enjoys a Godly Play session each term—led by Paula Greenwood, whose gentle and thoughtful teaching is greatly appreciated.

Over the past year around 70 children attended Sunday School, with an average weekly attendance of 23, slightly down from last year. We are hugely grateful to our talented team of 22 leaders and helpers, whose energy, flexibility, and dedication make Sunday School possible. We thank three teachers who stepped down this year and warmly welcome four new volunteers and two returning teachers. We also appreciated support from a teenage volunteer as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award. Special thanks also go to: Adrian Weed for sending out the rotas; Linda O’Riordan for co-leading new teacher training; and Julie Craig for administrative support and safeguarding coordination. If you’re interested in joining our rewarding Sunday School team, please contact Rev’d John Whittaker or me at hannahking.2@btinternet.com to find out more. **Hannah King**

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 2024 we had 12 surnames on the register, 73 children attended over 26 sessions making an average of 2.8 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. **Tara Langley and Sarah Ashwell.**

Godly Play

Godly Play continues to inspire and engage children at St Mary’s and beyond! It forms part of our Sunday School sessions, the ABC course, various mid-service groups, and even special visits from local schools during their school days. A big thank you to Paula Greenwood for leading the Sunday School sessions, and to Hannah King for ensuring everything runs

smoothly with scheduling! Each year, Years 1-6 from St Mary's School visit the church for Godly Play, and the experience is always met with excitement and enthusiasm from both the children and their teachers. I feel privileged to spend this special time with all the children at the school. Many thanks to Amanda Bishop for her support in liaising with the teachers, and to Tina Thomas, who has taught at St Mary's for many years and graciously helps me with these sessions. This year, Godly Play also welcomed Brandlehow School for the third consecutive year! Their Year 2 classes visit as part of their PSHE Belonging topic. I led a Godly Play session (The Baptism Story), while John hosted an engaging church tour, showing the children how various parts of the church foster a sense of belonging. The feedback from both the children and teachers was overwhelmingly positive! We are incredibly fortunate to have the Godly Play room at St Mary's, and word is spreading about its excellent resources. We've received several requests from other churches to visit the room and have even lent stories to other parishes for their congregations. It's wonderful to see the growing enthusiasm for this amazing method. If you're interested in becoming a trained Godly Play teacher, I would love to hear from you! The training consists of a fulfilling 3-day course run by the Godly Play Foundation, and it would be fantastic to expand our small team with dedicated individuals. If you're interested, please get in touch with me for more details. **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 Mousey, the Church Mouse puppet. The group is based in the Lancaster Room on Tuesday mornings between 10-11am during term time so pop in and join us for a coffee and chat. We ask for a voluntary £4 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

It's been another vibrant year for our Youth Group, with 38 children from Year 6 and Year 7 signed up, and it's always great to see some of our Year 8s join in as well! We run sessions twice a month during term time, with between 10 and 20 children attending each session. Some sessions are themed events, such as Opening Parties, Duckpin Bowling, Cookie and VR Parties, Pancake Party before Shrove Tuesday, and Challenge Days. Other sessions are our Hang Out Sundays, where we gather for a variety of activities, including Table Tennis (with a leaderboard!), basketball hoop, craft, board games, and more. We share meals together, pray, and enjoy each other's company. It's been amazing to see so many of the children feel welcome and at home in this space, and to watch our secondary school-aged youth continue to be excited to come. A huge thank you to Luke Carson, who is my right-hand man when it comes to Youth Group. He's far cooler than I am and is exceptional with

the youth! Thanks also to Josh Yelland and Clare Harbin, who join us when they can – they're also WAY cooler than me and a fantastic addition to the sessions!

In addition to our bi-monthly Youth Group sessions, our Year 7s, along with some of the youth from Camino, have had the opportunity to attend events run by Youth Ministry in Communion (YMIC). For more details on Camino and YMIC, check out Luke's report.

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**

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 often older Secondary School 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 around 8 young people each week. This year we have had 2 new recruits as the group continues to flourish. 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 run by myself, but supported greatly by our volunteer leaders and clergy. Each week presents something different and is a great time for all involved. We are always looking to grow our volunteer team so please be in touch if that would interest you! **Luke Carson**

Study Space

For the third year Study Space opened in St Mary's Church for a week over the Easter break. We welcomed 46 students aged 14-18 years from 16 local schools; the average daily attendance was 26 students. Once again, the students appreciated having a structured quiet space to prepare for their forthcoming exams. The Parish provided admin support, the space, heating, lighting and free WiFi, and a grant was obtained from the Miles Trust with added donations from members of the parish which funded Maths, Physics and Chemistry tutors, stationery, cakes and pizzas. 20 volunteers from the parish donated their time to help safeguard the students, 5 made cakes and a member of the Study Space team provided over 10 hours of Religious Studies tuition at no extra cost. Waitrose donated fruit, drinks and biscuits, and a member of the parish again designed and produced a banner, posters and leaflets free of charge. As before, the Study Space will run for a second week during the May half-term holiday. **Sarah Tyler and Tina Thomas**

Parish Action 2024

Parish Action is the outward facing component of our Parish, encouraging the church to engage in local and global social issues through fundraising, lobbying and direct action. The aim is to help improve the lives of those in greatest need and ensure all people are treated equally and inclusively. We do this by focusing on a limited set of charities to optimise our help to these organisations and the work they do. Our small Parish Action Committee ensure we have good governance within Parish Action, whilst planning and delivering fundraising, and promoting the work of our charity partners within the Parish. Our wider body of church charity representatives carry out the work on the ground.

Our fundraising is integrated into the church calendar:

- In Epiphany and Ordinary Time: Winter we supported Charlie Waller, who work with schools, colleges and youth groups to try and prevent suicide in young people, with a wonderful Burn's Night Supper and
- In Easter to Ascension we held a delicious cake sale and a shiny charity car wash in support of Christian Aid, helping the poorest in the world lift themselves out of poverty, offering them a better future
- In Ordinary Time: Summer we held our Parish Festival in support of Regenerate, who helps young people in Roehampton by running youth groups and supporting them to find work.
- In Ordinary Time: Autumn to Advent we supported the homeless through Glassdoor with a fabulous firework display.

Throughout the year we have supported the Wandsworth Foodbank, The Yard in Roehampton, including providing gift card for Christmas presents for the children of families that use the Foodbank. In addition to the gift cards Parish Action helped support the Churches' designated Christmas Charities, and supported an enjoyable Bingo Night held in March at St Mary's Church, in aid of all the Parish Action charities. Parish Action also ran a cake sale on Boat Race Day on behalf of the Parish for The Bishop's Lent Call.

We raised over £10,500 in 2024 for our five charity partners.

Many thanks to everyone who has made our Parish's fundraising so successful, and all those who lobby to make our world a more inclusive and equal world to live in.

Special thanks to our committee members and church representatives:

Charity	Parish Action Committee Members* and Church Reps
Charlie Waller	Suzanne Grocott* (SM) and Sarah Brearly (SM/AS)
Christian Aid	Michelle Penn* (AS) + vacancy for one rep
Regenerate	Alice Malcolm Green* (AS) + vacancy for one rep
Glass Door	Clemancy Gordon-Martin (AS) and Sarah Thomas (AS)
The Yard Foodbank	Heidi Wales* (SM) and Eve Bradshaw (AS)
	Treasurer – Charlie Rennick * (SM)

Michelle Penn, Parish Action Chair

The Scrubbery

This year marks a significant milestone for The Scrubbery — our fifth birthday. Since our founding, we have sewn, stitched, shipped, and shared aid across communities both locally and internationally, initially for COVID-19 relief, and now in support of those affected by the war in Ukraine. With the collective energy of our volunteers, donors, and partners, the Scrubbery continues to expand its reach and respond with compassion and action to every call for help.

Key Accomplishments

Aid Production and Distribution Over our 5 years, we have produced and delivered: 25,000+ scrub garments; 11,246 masks; 7,418 scrub hats; 2,300 wellbeing bags; 5,164 laundry or Foodbank bags; 613 trench candles; 2,274 knitted garments and blankets; 25+ camouflage nets; Thousands of other handmade items including headbands, procedure gowns, pyjamas, and story sacks

We organized shipments containing: NHS-donated medical goods valued at £2.5 million; Hundreds of scrubs, hats, medicines, blankets, and toys; Equipment from Noah's Ark Hospice, including hospital beds and an incubator; Storybooks to the Fumba Town Library in Zanzibar

Ukraine Support Help for Ukraine is our principal activity at present. With the help of volunteers and partners like Medical Lifelines Ukraine, Pickups for Peace, and Embrace Me, we: delivered over a dozen aid shipments to hospitals, battalions, and children's homes; supplied trench candles, generators, warm clothing, adapted garments, and camouflage nets; built new relationships with Ukrainian MPs and humanitarian charities to ensure secure, needs-based delivery

Adapted Clothing Initiative: responding to requests from Lviv and Kharkiv hospitals, we began production of specially adapted clothing for injured patients, including: velcro-seamed boxer shorts; oversized cast socks; bedsocks from fleece; repurposed T-shirts and trousers

Dress a Girl Around the World: this partnership produced over 100 dresses and 90 cotton briefs for orphanages in Ukraine, using surplus fabric in vibrant patterns.

Community Projects and Partnerships Oasis Academy: the Scrubbery is kindly housed at the Oasis Academy, Putney and we are grateful for their generosity in allowing this. We take an active part in the school community as well as our regular aid activities: supported Oasis Academy with the Eco Reading Challenge, book donations, and costume-making; partnered with Putney High School to enhance reading and sustainability education; helped develop a Nurture Room at the Academy; run a very popular Sewing Club; continue to maintain and support the library, including reading sessions and Book Clubs; promoted peace through the Peace Crane Project linking students in London and Lviv

Wellbeing Bags: delivered hundreds of wellbeing bags to junior doctors and healthcare professionals filled with treats and handwritten notes.

Volunteer Engagement Volunteers supported us by knitting, sewing, delivering, and running emergency shipments. Special thanks to our dedicated regulars.

Challenges and Logistics We faced significant storage and shipping issues due to changing school regulations and high costs but adapted through flexible volunteer networks.

Events & Fundraising: Sing Swell Choir Concert raised £1,000; Merivale Prints Fundraiser £1,118; Rosie's conference talks fostered new partnerships and awareness

In Memoriam Remembering Kathy Dawes, a loyal supporter and talented sewer. She will be missed dearly.

Thank You to every volunteer, donor, and supporter: thank you for making The Scrubbery's work possible. **Christopher Taylor-Davies, Secretary**

Pastoral Care Group

St Mary's remains committed to pastoral support of all congregants from Sunday worship, Caritas and the Wednesday lunchtime group.

Information comes generally to the clergy, both directly and indirectly about people who are bereaved, unwell or experiencing difficulties. In the main it is the clergy who then visit or meet those who wish to discuss issues or simply have someone travel along the road with them at a time of pain, to alleviate loneliness and despair. However, there are other befrienders who maintain a habit of staying in touch and being the friendly listener.

The Senior Social Club at All Saints' is a wonderful, regular resource for people across the parish who are less able to socialise. They enjoy a cup of coffee or tea with cake and an informal chat around the table with several others and we are indebted to the devoted team who offer this weekly support.

Individuals who are supported by the clergy or volunteers can expect confidentiality regarding their circumstances. However, there are occasions when pastoral issues become safeguarding concerns. A referral to a professional agency with experience of particular issues may be appropriate, but only with permission from the recipient of care.

We are clear that anyone offering pastoral care, under the auspices of the parish, must be fully aware of safeguarding guidelines. Meeting places, for example, are all subject to these guidelines so that potential misunderstandings are averted. Similarly, it is important to understand where the boundary lies between befriending and offering more professional support, even though some may e.g. have a professional background e.g. in law or Social Work. For this reason, pastoral care is discussed within a core team of clergy and safeguarding officers on a regular basis so that we keep to our guiding principles. **Isobel Vass**

20s and 30s Group

After a successful launch of the Twenties and Thirties group in 2024, we have continued to grow in community and fellowship with the young adults in our parish.

We meet monthly for events and try to share a meal, have a more focused religious event, and have a public outing throughout the year. Past events have included a Christmas cookie exchange, bring and shares, a Taizé prayer, and a museum visit. We are looking forward to

the warmer weather with a springtime BBQ, some outdoor hikes and swimming, as well as our inaugural annual retreat in August.

St Mary's shares its Twenties and Thirties group with All Saints', as part of the Parish of Putney – we loved attending the evensong All Saints' choir sang in November and we hope to continue to grow our numbers from All Saints for our monthly events.

We are looking positively towards the future and pray the community we build continues to flourish. Many thanks to all who have hosted, helped, and been enthusiastic partakers of our group. **Clare Harbin**

TAIZÉ

The start of 2025 has brought our new monthly Taizé-style service to the third Friday of the month at 6pm. We have had three services thus far and have averaged 9 people per service, many of whom do not regularly attend St Mary's Church and represent a wide range of ages. Each service is followed by a meal and fellowship. Our community of Taizé goers, prayer intercession writers, and meal providers continues to grow. Please join us!

Clare Harbin

Social Activities

2024 was a fantastic year for the social life of our church community. Not only did we expand and solidify our team, with the addition of a graphic designer who volunteered his time we decided to up the ante on our communications and distributed printed flyers with St. Mary's fridge magnets to the congregation over a series of Sundays, so that everybody went home with an eye-catching flyer to put on their fridge. Our aim was to collate all our future events into one handy place and therefore reduce the pre-event panic of selling tickets and increase attendance by giving people plenty of notice about future events.

The Parish Picnic under dynamic new management was well-organised and successful and St. Mary's now have well defined roles to fulfil and provided a huge amount of hand-on and organisational support. We also invested in new glasses and tablecloths and our own electronic bingo machine and have honed the organisation of our equipment into well-organised boxes in the library, which are easily accessible to anybody who is involved in running an event of some kind.

These were put to excellent use in our wonderful gatherings such as our annual Patronal Festival with bouncy castle, DJ and catering in September. The wine tasting gathered momentum and this year's theme was English Wines, and the decorations and typical English picnic fayre we put on for guests created a wonderful atmosphere. Despite last minute concerns about numbers, our Family Bingo night smashed the previous year with 105 tickets sold, and this continues to be a highlight of our calendar. Rev'd Jane's farewell drinks in October was also a very special occasion. Safari Supper was back and was thoroughly enjoyed by all, with many requests for a re-run in 2025.

It was a very successful and joyful year and once of consolidation for the Events team. Building on our success and with an eye in the future, there will be a refocus on next year's events to keep everything fresh and exciting. As always, 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 designing and making the Christmas and Easter scenes and organising the 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 via the church office. **Sofia Paleologo**

Bell Ringing

Ringling has continued to develop at Putney throughout 2024. We have managed to retain several of our recruits who came to us in 2023 as part of *Ring For The King* (R4TK) initiative and our practise nights have been regularly added to by visitors from other towers, which has increased the range and complexity what we are able to ring, and for which we are extremely grateful. As the skills of our less experienced ringers develop, more experienced ringers have been very generous with their time, patience and skill to allow others to develop their ringling.

In June the church allowed us to take over the 6pm Caritas service one Sunday to allow a celebration of the bells of Putney and to give thanks for the efforts of the dedicated band of ringers. The Tower Captain, Paula Greenwood, was kindly allowed to use the sermon slot to give some history of ringling to an otherwise unaware congregation and talk about how intrinsic the sound of bells is to worship and life in Britain.

In the autumn a Putney resident and amateur filmmaker made a short film of ringling in Putney that we are allowed to show on our Facebook page – for all those interested this is the link: <https://youtu.be/EgGMKsf-UdI?si=o6n41BzoiHc9IDPj>

Throughout the year the band has been teasing each other on WhatsApp with sending images and film of bells from different places they have been to on trips away, to see if others can identify them. There have also been theatre trips together (did you see the production at Hampstead Theatre in the late autumn called *Bellringers?*), and support of colleagues singing in Christmas concerts. The Putney band are 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. **Paula Greenwood**

Sidespersons and Welcomers' Report

St. Mary's is an inclusive church which are easy words to write, but there is more to it than that. St. Mary's is also a welcoming church, and it sits with everyone to be welcoming, even if they tend to sit in the same part of the church at each service. Indeed, that may reinforce the welcome as one will get to know those members of the congregation that do the same. The first person one meets at the morning services will a member of the Sidespersons/Welcomers' Team. The term reflects both the practical and the cordial aspects of the role. Sidepersons refer to the functions during the service such as the collection and guiding the congregation during the Eucharist. The Welcoming is as important as all members of the congregation, both regular and occasional, should feel at home. Being greeted by the Team with a joyful disposition and enthusiasm goes a long way to achieving this goal. I am therefore grateful for the Team and the dedicated way they have made those attending feel both included and welcome.

In 2024 the **morning** team has been:

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, Dylan Davenport.* I suggest that the role is an ideal introduction to becoming more involved in how St. Mary's operates, and new volunteers are always welcome. I work with the Team on a rota for an 8 or 9 week period, mindful of the school terms. During this period, no one would be "on duty" more than twice and not on successive Sundays. Training is "on the job" and the time involved 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.

The Caritas service at 6pm is a key part of what St. Mary's has to offer. Very different to the 10am service, being more reflective and serving a contrasting congregation profile, it provides a distinctive setting for Worship. It is to its credit that the regular members of the Caritas congregation have embraced the welcoming concept. There is now a larger team that greets at the **Caritas** service, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their time and dedication. That **team** consists of: *Susan Stopforth, Christopher Garnett, Caroline Kerr, Matthew Parish.* If you are a regular at the Caritas service and would like to join the team, please let me know. My contact details for joining either of these two key components of the St. Mary's family are e-mail grocott.andrew@gmail.com and 07831 332 588. **Andrew Grocott**

Caritas

The regular Welcomers at 6 pm Caritas at the moment are Christopher Garnett, Susan Stopforth, Matthew Parrish and Caroline Kerr assisted by Alison Price. 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. **Susan Stopforth**

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. **Julie Craig**

Servers

Antonia Wainman continues to manage the Serving Rota. Currently the serving team consists of 26 servers: 7 adults and 19 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. Caritas no longer seems to attract child servers. **Antonia Wainman**

Chalice Assistants

We have three assistants serving as part of the 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. One highlight of the year was the opportunity to perform carols at the Half Moon Pub and at the London Rowing Club and we look forward to next Christmas for repeat invitations! Thanks to generous support from the church and choir members, we have also been able to purchase some new anthologies to replace the very tired and well-loved editions that have been in the library for decades!

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. Our repertoire has expanded to include a difficult and exciting Easter anthem by Malcolm Archer and more complex pieces by Mozart and Handel.

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 come and sing events to perform Verdi Requiem, Handel's Messiah, Mozart Requiem and, as part of the Barnes Music Festival, Purcell's opera Dido and Aeneas. 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 also included more music by Samuel Coleridge Taylor, Elizabeth Coxhead and Amy Beach in our repertoire as part of our ongoing commitment to performing works by historically under-represented composers.

Since relocating weekly rehearsals to St Mary's School, the Junior Choir numbers have been gradually and steadily rising; 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 has its own branded polo shirt for public performance - huge thanks to Sharon and Nicky for organising this!

The choir prepares repertoire of its own and frequently joins forces with the adult choir to prepare and enjoy more challenging repertoire and sing for major church festivals. Sharon and volunteer parents took the choir on their first trip to City of London School in March to hear 150 children perform in a programme of choral and orchestral music under Richard's baton - this was an exciting and inspirational experience and we hope to organise termly trips to concerts. **Richard Quesnel (Director of Music) & Callum Anderson (Assistant 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.

Church links with St Mary's school remain strong - services are regularly held at St Mary's Church or John, Helena and Jane are welcomed into the school for collective worship. By example:

- Two KS2 Eucharist services are held at St. Mary's Church, led by the Parish Team every term
- The school holds annual celebration services in the Church every year e.g. Harvest, Nativity and Mothering Sunday Services
- Children in KS2 visit the Church for Godly Play sessions throughout the year. The Head Teacher would especially like to thank Nikki Cornfield and Tina Thomas for making these sessions possible.

The school would also like to thank the patrons of St Mary's church for sponsoring the "Understanding Christianity" Big Frieze. The school is delighted with it - it will adorn the upper school hallway prominently displaying the Big Story of God and the Bible for pupil's reference during RE and Collective Worship.

St Mary's has embarked on their ambitious redevelopment of their playground with Phase II on the horizon which will see an outside classroom built alongside a sensory area with artificial grass, planters and mini beast hotel.

Finally, noteworthy changes to the school and governing board include new governors Phil Lyons and Melinda Allison joining the Board, now ably being clerked by Annette Watson.

With heartfelt thanks to Ms Cheryl Payne (Headteacher), the Senior Leadership Team and teaching staff. **Linda O'Riordan**

Faith Group at St Mary's Church School

The Faith Group continues to support the school in refining its approach both to collective worship and religious education, mindful of the approaching assessment by the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). It continues to thoughtfully reflect on how to nurture the spiritual lives of students whilst remaining inclusive of **all**. **Phil Pyke**

Putney Debates

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

Parish Magazine

The Parish of Putney has had a parish magazine for over 100 years. It has always been popular and eagerly read by people in the parish and outside it. Today, as in the past, the magazine always has plenty to talk about.

The name *Bridge & Common* celebrates the locations of both churches. It communicates the churches' individuality and their togetherness. The magazine is published approximately every two months.

Editor Miriam Boursiquot, graphic designer Paul Donnelly, interviewer Madeleine Neave and others, with invaluable input from Richard Holman, keep *Bridge & Common* in great shape.

There are regular articles by members of the clergy, an engaging interview 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.

The team managed to publish two issues in 2024 and is planning to publish four in 2025. We would like to thank our advertisers who enable the magazine to be enjoyed free. We would welcome new advertisers as Allan Fuller, the estate agent, no longer advertises with us,

The current issue has a joyful article by Rev'd Hayley Argles-Grant, rector of the Falklands Islands, who was church warden at St Mary's some years ago. There is an interview with Rev'd Kieron Rowley, our new associate priest, an introduction to our new curate, Sharon

Hunt, and a short history of something very familiar, Putney Bridge. 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

Formerly *Theology in the Pub*, *Cafe Theology* now meets for a sociable glass of wine in Putney Pantry after closing time on Monday evenings. It has a loyal following along with others who come more occasionally. A typical turnout is around twelve with one or two on zoom. Most are non-churchgoers, of all ages, who are interested in the peculiar claims of religion. Each week the discussion is led by someone who volunteers to research a subject to give some focus. The perspective is mainly Christian, but Islam has also been under examination. This year we have wrestled with *Who was Jesus?*, *The Satanic Verses*, *Calvinism*, *Psalms*, *Atonement*, *Guilt*, *Pride*, *Envy*, *Ramadan*, *The Koran* as well as subjects in the news such as Palestine, Climate Change as the new religion, Welby's resignation, and Pope Francis. I advertise in all Putney churches and on noticeboards locally. If anyone has an idea for a good discussion and would like to introduce it, please get in touch. Jenifer Norris 07772 512907. **Jenifer Norris**

Repair Café at St Mary's

We have been going for three years now. Business at our monthly sessions continues to be steady at around 30 customers, donating an average net amount after expenses of £280. As from the outset, our goal has been to a) serve the local community b) save repairable items from landfill and c) build a team of volunteers with shared interests. Some volunteers have left but more have appeared. There is one who travels all the way up from Croydon. Our repair skill sets include: electrical, sewing, clocks, carpentry and blade sharpening. We all throw themselves into the task with vigour and good humour; supported with cups of tea and finishing with a light lunch. The Workshop in the storage arch. We operate on Tuesdays from 11am to 4pm. We do various repair and maintenance jobs around the church e.g. mending chairs, fixing bannisters etc. The core team comprises myself and Mike Trussell. Others, who attend when they can, include Neil Vass, Joel Milner etc. There is scope for expansion if more people can be found willing to work in damp conditions! **Charlie Lindsell**

Youth and Family Minister

2024 has been a year of deepening engagement in our Youth & Family Ministry at St Mary's. We have established a consistent rhythm in our children's ministry, allowing families and children to feel more at home in worship environments. Getting to know our

families and children in these settings has been a key focus, and this has strengthened our sense of community and belonging.

We continue with our “mixed-mode” approach to children’s ministry, offering a combination of Parish Eucharists with Sunday School, All-Age Eucharists, Parish Eucharists with mid-Service Groups, and Parish Eucharist Only Sundays. A huge thank you, once again, to Tom Willoughby and his team for their effort in creating quarterly flyers detailing the worship schedule. These flyers, distributed both at church and through St Mary’s School, help families plan ahead and establish a regular rhythm of worship.

Another key highlight has been the increasing involvement of children in various aspects of the service. The children continue to participate in leading Intercessions and actively engaging in the Eucharistic Prayer by carrying the bread or wine to the altar, helping with the collection, and even ringing the bell. These opportunities help children build confidence in their faith and create a meaningful experience of worship.

We continue to encourage increased engagement of children during All-Age Eucharists and Parish Eucharists with mid-Service Groups services. The introduction of the "rug and cushion" approach last year has made a significant difference, creating a familiar and comfortable focal point that mirrors their learning environment at school.

We are also making a conscious effort to involve the children more fully in the Eucharist by encouraging them to come up to the Dais, genuflect, and actively participate. This is not just something they observe - it is something they are a part of. They belong.

Children’s Attendance Check-In System: In 2025, we are introducing an online check-in system to improve safeguarding and record-keeping for our children’s ministry. This ensures we have an accurate record of attendance and helps families who need to track participation for school applications. If you or your children are not yet signed up to ChurchSuite yet, we encourage you to do so. Please ask a member of the Welcome Team for assistance.

As always, we welcome feedback and suggestions on how we can continue to nurture our children’s ministry. If you or your child would like to get involved, please do reach out to Nikki or Rev’d John. Thank you to everyone who continues to support and participate in our Youth & Family Ministry. Your involvement is what makes this ministry thrive!

All Age Service Planning Team – This year, we have been blessed with some truly wonderful All Age services and mid-service groups. These special gatherings require a great deal of planning, and we are incredibly grateful for the dedication of our fantastic All Age Service Planning Team. A heartfelt thank you to Kate Bolton, Simon Kam Cheong, Helena Wilson, Charlie Renwick and Heidi Wales for their creativity and commitment, working alongside John, Helena, Sharon, and myself to bring these services to life. If anyone would like to join this team, please do get in touch with Nikki or John. We truly want these to be All Age services, and we warmly welcome adults who would like to be involved.

Collaborations with St Mary's School - We are delighted to continue strengthening our relationship with St. Mary's School, working towards creating a warm and welcoming community for all. As part of this ongoing effort, we regularly send out "pack" invitations for events such as Mothering Sunday and Christingle, as well as Christmas cards to every child at the school.

It was truly heartwarming to see so many school families join us for the Christingle service, where we created Christingles together, and for the Mothering Sunday service, where we crafted bunches of daffodils. These moments of shared community are very special.

A huge thank you to everyone in the congregation who helped prepare the Christingle and Mothering Sunday packs. It's such a joy to be able to work together on these tasks while also spending quality time together. **Nikki Cornfield**

YMIC Ministry

There have been many exiting YMIC London events the last year. Alongside the launch of the NEW YMIC Southwark initiative. In October, we had our YMIC SW launch event at St Mary's and were joined by around 120 young people from all areas of London for Laser Tag, discussions and a reflective service with the Archbishop. Following that, we swiftly had an October residential with around 40 young people with many of those attending being from Putney Parish. In Spring, we hosted our last joint event with YMIC London and we look forward to welcoming Rev'd Kieron Rowley the new director of YMIC SW, who will be in place for our first fully independent summer event! Having so many young people gathered is such a blessing. We can often all feel isolated in our faith, to have events like this diminish this for all those involved. If you would like to be involved in any of the following projects, contact Luke.carson@parishofputney.co.uk **Luke Carson**

Training Ordinand

I am now in the second year of my 2-year full-time ordained ministry training. Ordination training is about ministerial formation, and includes study, hands on experience through placements and learning how to inhabit the call to ordained ministry, by simply '*being*.' A call to ministry is about much more than just function, it is about character, practice, and the rhythms of life that feeds us.

Training non-residentially, I am studying, Theology, Mission, and Ministry, at St Augustine's Theological College. Context-based training means bringing the learning to life as it is applied to the context of a placement. I am enjoying joining the dots of my learning through the many different experiences that I am having here whilst on placement in the parish of Putney. Including, preparing, and leading services, being alongside Richard and the Junior Choir, leading morning prayer, offering pastoral support and serving at the altar. All my training is enveloped in the need to develop the habit of regular reflective practice, particularly in contextual environments. I am grateful to Rev'd John, as we spend time in reflective practice.

As I continue to inhabit the role of ordinand and the ministry to which I am being called, I continue to pray and discern God's will. Thank you to everyone for your continued prayers and encouragement in this season of my formational journey. **Sharon Hunt Ordinand**

Team Rector's Charge

Lots to review and reflect on and a delight to read pack of reports expressing so much about life of church. Massive thank you to the many people who serve so well. Will comment on three areas.

Church has a vocation to be the Body of Christ in this place. To live out worship, community, service and sharing the good news with others. Two sacraments given to us to help with this vocation are Baptism and Eucharist.

In 2024, 2 people were baptised, 14 primary school aged children started to receive communion and 8 members were confirmed.

Numbers of people receiving communion. Concern that still less people receiving communion than in 2019 after massive Covid drop in 2020 and then slow growth in each of the 4 subsequent years: 21, 22, 23, 24.

Hopeful signs in big festivals. Number receiving communion at Christmas saw large increases in 23 and 24 and returned to 2019 level in 2024. Easter still below 2019, but two years of increases: Number of people receiving communion at Easter: 2023 136, 2024 167, 2025 197

Strong engagement with vocation to pass our faith onto the next generation. We have 9 leaders and about 35 other volunteers helping with Tuesday Toddlers, Creche, Sunday School, All Age worship, Youth, Camino, Junior choir, Serving team.

Good culture of service expressed in parish Action, The Scrubbery, Glassdoor, Study Space, Repair Café and pastoral care by many.

Looking forward to 2025/2026.

First service with prayer for healing and wholeness due on May 18.

First community hub meeting for users of buildings due on June 27.

Plan to recruit a parish assistant.

Rev'd Kieron Rowley joins us on May 8 and will lead YMIC: Youth Ministry in Communion.

We review with thankfulness and look forward aware of challenges and full of expectant hope.

Revd John Whittaker