



St. John the Evangelist Merrow

Annual Report 2025

Our Vision is to be:

A Caring Christian Community, here for everyone.

St. John's Church is the Parish Church of Merrow. It is part of the Diocese of Guildford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Parish Office, 222 Epsom Road, Guildford GU4 7AA. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St John's was registered with Charity Commission in January 2008. Officially called The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Merrow, its registration number is 1127555.

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Review of the Year.

APCM Report 2024-2025

This year our focus has been on Community and Fundraising. We have sought to build the profile of St. John's both within the church community and the wider Merrow community. As you will see from the report, this focus has achieved some good results – both financially and relationally. Our congregation is growing, our finances are growing and our reputation within Merrow is growing too.

In his book *The Way of Christ-likeness*, the late bishop Michael Perham wrote that “people will know that there is something of Christ in you if there is a warmth, a joy, a natural affection, an impulsive generosity breaking out in all your human relationships.” St. John's is a place that can rightly claim to be all of those things and our focus this year has enabled us to show it.

This year has also seen a growth in the relationships with our church school and all the young people in Merrow, which is down to the skill and professionalism of our youth worker, Georgie Gregson. We have welcomed a new Parish Administrator, Sandra Rayner, who has brought her efficient and proactive mind to our office environment. As ever, our centre manager, Barry Dickinson, is a welcoming presence to all who come through the doors of our church centre.

As with any church, it takes a vast army of people, volunteers and paid staff, to make a church run smoothly. I would like to thank in writing our churchwardens Cathy Thompson and Jane Farquharson, our new deputy churchwarden Michael Eagle, our excellent treasurer Lindsay Dobson, Nick Bond and Tricia Tappin who act as secretaries to the PCC, Helen Chambers for keeping the daily liturgical life of the church running and Rosanne Bond for guarding our safety as Parish Safeguarding Officer. Without them, and all of our volunteers (who are growing in number) St. John's wouldn't be the warm, joyous, affectionate and generous place that it is. Thank you so much to you all!

I hope you enjoy reading this report and I look forward to working with everyone involved in the life of our church to see what God has in store for us in the future.

With good wishes,

Tim

Churchwardens report 2024

Well what a fantastic year 2024 was, in the life of our church, St John's!

Tim, our Rector and Georgie our youth worker have now both completed over a year with us. It feels as though they have been here much longer, because of all that they have achieved. An enormous thank you to them both for their enthusiasm, energy, and inspiration. When we have thanked Georgie during the year for things that she has organised, she says that she could not do it without the volunteer support, but she gives everyone that enthusiasm and stimulation to volunteer!

During the year we have enjoyed;

- In January a Christingle service
- In February a Barn dance
- In March Palm Sunday, with a live Donkey and the Easter services.
- May saw the patronal festival followed by brunch
- June saw a wonderful Rectory fete and the launch of the Young People's Ministry Fund
- In July we had our first pet service, with some unusual pets, and Friends of St John's organised a concert by our very own Damian.
- August saw the Holiday club-desert detectives. Do join in this year's if you can, it was such fun!
- In September the Backpacks were blessed ready for a new school year and Sandra took up the post of Parish Administrator. We formally welcome her and thank her for her hard work, and attention to detail to keep us all on track!
- During October we enjoyed the wonderful concert given by our own Alexandra, accompanied by Henry. We also had our harvest lunch, a bring and buy and the launch of Women in Fellowship.
- In November we held our remembrance service, so well supported by the local Scouts, our All Saints service and a very successful Friends of St John's quiz night.
- December rounded off the year with the Advent Fair, thank you Gerald, the amazing Carols in the pub and the wonderful Christmas services.

With sadness we had the passing of some of our dear congregation; Tim Dean, Jim Styles, David Welbourn, Mike Newell, Barbara Lawrence, Jenny Shales and Tony Neale. They and others will be greatly missed.

The Churchwardens have had their monthly meetings, as well as meeting regularly with the rest of the team.

The main work of a Warden is to support our incumbent, so the focus of our meetings is to make sure that we work through the monthly responsibilities, such as keeping records up to date and ensuring that the centre and church are looked after and running efficiently.

We are also involved in recruitment and staff reviews.

During 2024 we have focussed on the church heating and sound system, care of the church yard, risk assessments and fire procedures as well as safeguarding.

We would like to give a big thank you to those who provided cover for the Parish Office over last summer, before Sandra started with us.

St John's Centre, under Barry's direction, is now well occupied for most of the week and Saturdays. We have a regular booking from Italia Conti and the NHS which has meant that, financially, it has held its own.

Thank you to Micky who has played for services, weddings, funerals and baptisms throughout the year.

Edward, our talented young organist has gone off to University in Warwick. And we are delighted to welcome Isabella who plays at the family service each month.

The Standing Committee meets each month and consists of the Churchwardens, Rector and Treasurer. An enormous thank you goes to our Treasurer, Lindsay. She works so hard to manage our finances, and at the end of 2024 started to set up a new system for bill and expense paying. This has initially taken up a lot of her time, but we hope that once it is up and running, it will help to reduce her workload and enable the team to share responsibilities.

A special thank you to the core team of Tim, Georgie, Diana, Margaret, Lindsay, Helen, Barry, Sandra and Rosanne for your leadership, dedication and resilience, as well as the hard work.

We would also like to thank all of you for contributing to the life of St Johns in so many ways with your attendance and volunteering. Without you all we could not provide the wonderful opportunities we currently offer:

Baby basics, Bell ringing, Brass cleaning, Choir, Fetes, Church cleaning, Church linen, Churchyard maintenance, Coffee rota, Flowers in church, Food Bank, Friends of St Johns, Glow Toddlers, Holiday club, House groups, Men in Fellowship, Inter church (formally known as Messy Church!), Open the Book, Parish magazine editing, PCC, Readers/intercessors, Servers, Sidespeople, Sparks, Website, Women in Fellowship, Wednesday Coffee club, Youth Café.....

That's amazing, a massive thank you to you all.

Cathy Thompson and Jane Farquharson

The Churchwardens

Churchwarden's Property and Land Fabric report 2023-2024

The Annual Churchwarden's Inspections of the church, Centre and churchyard were undertaken and whilst no significant defects were found, there are numerous maintenance issues that were identified, several of which are ongoing from last year including the Centre roof, the Churchyard flint walls and Church porch roof.

The Centre roof is the subject of ongoing debate and investigation for a suitable replacement covering with redesigned water gulleys that will also accommodate the future installation of Solar panels.

The damaged flint wall on the corner of Trodds Lane was the subject of an insurance claim. Once this was settled we were able to take advantage of Trodds Lane being closed for repairs to the Horse and Groom Pub, to get the wall repaired.

The Church porch roof repointing is to be done by volunteers. Inside, once the damp in the walls is sorted, it will be redecorated to expose the Norman arch and protect the oak door.

There are still minor issues with the lighting in the Centre main hall but they have mainly been addressed. Thank you to Peter Tappin for shinning up a ladder to change lighting track fittings and replace bulbs.

Lighting in the Church has also been improved, florescent bulbs being replaced with LED whilst retaining the Victorian fittings and the reordered lighting control system.

The internal high level illumination of the stained glass windows during the winter months continued for 2024.

We are monitoring the heating in Church as there are still slight vagaries with the programming which has made it very expensive to reach a comfortable temperature for Sunday services. Work is ongoing.

The church property register continues to be updated with photographs added of all relevant items including furniture, artefacts and silver. We are very grateful to Carole Burtonwood for all her hard work to get this in a digital form.

Churchyard maintenance continued with regular volunteer working groups organised by Stuart Inkster. We have reduced areas of wild grass and flowers to hopefully provide a better balance with the rest of the more closely mown areas.

Cathy Thompson and Jane Farquharson

The Churchwardens

Safeguarding Report for 2025 APCM

We all have a duty of care to ensure the well-being of the vulnerable in our church community. It is so important that everyone has an opportunity to develop their faith in a safe and secure environment whilst experiencing fellowship and friendship. If you have any concerns, however small, please have a chat with Tim, Georgie or myself as soon as possible.

With this in mind in 2024 I have

- Produced a written report to be considered at each PCC meeting
- Submitted 18 DBS (criminal record checks) applications as part of the safer recruitment process. Many related to those who volunteered to help at the very successful Holiday Club held in August
- Held regular meetings with Georgie as youthworker to discuss safeguarding matters
- Ensured that all postholders have completed the relevant safeguarding training issuing reminders, when necessary
- Checked that risk assessments on activities attended by vulnerable people have been approved by the PCC

- Maintained the parish online safeguarding dashboard tool which lists all safeguarding actions to be addressed
- Updated posters on display in the Church and Centre to ensure the contact details of helplines are clearly visible with the assistance of our Parish Administrator, Sandra Rayner. Contact details for the Rector and Parish Safeguarding Officer have been given greater prominence. Separate cards have been produced for our homeless friends who visit from time to time.
- Sought advice and support from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team when necessary
- Checked the First Aid boxes and wheelchairs in the church and the Centre at regular intervals throughout the year and reported any incidents to the churchwardens.

Appropriate records continue to be maintained by Georgie our youthworker and also by the leaders of the Wednesday Coffee Club to ensure that activities involving vulnerable people are run safely. All sensitive information is held securely.

Safeguarding Sunday was marked in November. Going forward the PCC has started to consider the way in which we promote a healthy and safe church culture and look at ways in which we could build on our existing strengths. It is very important that we talk about safeguarding openly on other occasions not just once a year.

Rosanne Bond Parish Safeguarding Officer

PCC report for APCM 2025

The PCC meets bi-monthly. During the year the PCC has discussed and decided upon, amongst other things, Finance and the introduction of a new system to track expenses, Youth Ministry and its funding, Parish Safeguarding, upkeep and maintenance of the Church and Centre, hospitality and music events, the focus for the fund-raising activities of Friends of St John's, the changing priorities of the various teams within the PCC, Gift Day planning, raising awareness of legacy planning, appointment of a School Governor, development of a H&S policy, development of a Social Media policy, a review of Utilities contracts, and churchyard upkeep and closure. With Tim now fully settled into his role we are very grateful to have his leadership to guide the PCC in serving our church family and wider community.

I would like to thank all members of the PCC for their hard work and time dedicated to running St John's Church smoothly, and special thanks are due to our Churchwardens Jane and Cathy who, together with Michael as their deputy, take on the additional responsibilities and duties that go with that position, for the benefit of us all. I would also like to pay tribute to Helen and Peter, who are both retiring from the PCC this year. Helen has served on the PCC, as Churchwarden and as a PCC member, for at least the last eight years, and as one of our Deanery Synod representatives for the last three years, always bringing her quiet, calm wisdom and expertise which has been highly valued during that period. While she will no longer be a PCC member, we are very glad that Helen will continue to play a key role as part of the Community team. Peter has also been on the PCC for several years, including his term as Churchwarden until last year's APCM, and although he is stepping down from the PCC he will continue to support the team looking after Infrastructure with his customary enthusiasm, energy and commitment. On behalf of the PCC I would like to thank them both very much for their service, dedication and hard work.

While I look after the Minutes and Agendas for the PCC meetings, I would like to say how grateful I am to Nick for continuing to take on the task of preparing the Reports for the APCM.

Being a PCC member brings an informative and interesting insight into some of the 'behind-the-scenes' workings of our church. It gives the opportunity to become involved in shaping our plans and visions, and we share the benefits of new connections and fellowship. We look forward to welcoming new members to the PCC team, working together with a shared sense of energy, purpose, vision and fun during the coming year.

Tricia Tappin, April 2025

Electoral roll

During 2024 one person joined the Electoral Roll and sadly six members of our church family died leaving 137 on the Electoral Roll at the end of the year.

Being on the electoral roll is a really good way to become more involved and show commitment to the community of St John's. It allows people to have more say and

take a full part in and vote at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) and to be able to join the PCC or sides persons rota if they so wish.

If you are thinking of joining and want to know more please contact me, Carole Burtonwood at carole.burtonwood@saintjohns.org.uk

Carole Burtonwood

Electoral Roll Officer

Financial Review

As a Charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales our accounts have to be presented in a prescribed format. There are differences with accounts required for other organisations as most of our income is received from donors, who, in many cases give monies to be used for specific purposes.

A full set of accounts is available; this review will only touch on salient points and is intended as a brief summary of our financial position. Whilst our Accounts are presented in a unified format, internally we deal with matters separately between Church and Centre.

2024 gave us a full year with our new rector. We were also joined by our new Youthworker at the beginning of the church year. The other change of personnel was our new Parish Administrator. Our new team has brought a wave of enthusiasm and spiritual optimism to our parish which has borne fruit in our financial position.

The Church

Once again it is to be emphasised that the Church is almost entirely dependent on the generous and continuing support of our congregation. The figures below in parenthesis are for 2023.

As can be seen, our income rose by £53k from our 2023 figures, a huge achievement. This was in main due to a stewardship call to our congregation to raise £150k over 5 years to pay for our youthworker which has raised around £41k in the first year.

This became critical this year when the Down Road Trust funds, which previously paid for our youthworker, were depleted. This can be seen in the large reduction in our grant payments, which in 2024 were mainly for our Baby Basics charity engagement as well as any grants for church fabric maintenance.

Church Income

Planned Giving	£ 72,072	(£ 69,616)
Collections and other giving	£ 56,158	(£17,241)
Other receipts and tax	£ 25,615	(£18,159)
Legacies and other income	£ 29,720	(£ 5,590)
Grants	£ 9,412	(£ 36,000)
Receipts from Church Activities	£ 8,605	(£ 9,107)
Magazine Receipts	£ 4,076	(£ 3,956)
Dividends and Interest	£ 26,694	(£ 19,382)
Total Income	£232,352	(£179,351)

During the year the total income for the Church was £232,352 which is an increase on last year of £53,001.

A legacy of £5000 was received in 2024 , with a request that it be used for Youth Ministry.

Church Expenditure

Church Expenses have remained constant with a small increase of £4,032. This, in a background of rising inflation should be seen as a success of management of finances by the PCC.

Costs of generating voluntary income	£ 5,042	(£ 1,682)
Grants and Charitable Giving	£ 8,055	(£12,578)
Direct Costs of Church Activity	£177,726	(£170,815)
Church Management and Administration	£ 5,284	(£ 4,373)
Governance Costs	£ 1,942	(£ 4,569)
Total Expenditure	£198,049	(£194,017)

The Parish Share was, by far, the largest item of Expenditure at £96,157 (£92,435). The increase was larger than previous years and in 2025 will top £100,000

Due to the decision to focus on raising 'internal' funds for our youthworker role, we did see a small drop in funds raised/donated to other charities.

Despite this increase in expenditure, we have, through our effort on income generation, managed to show a very small positive balance of £34,303 although it is worth pointing out that without the stewardship campaign for the youthworker we would be in deficit.

The Church Centre

The sole source of income for the Centre is from the hire of the facilities. During 2024, the usage of our centre has remained reasonably static, with our income running slightly below that of 2023.

Overall operational costs for running the Centre have decreased substantially in 2024 as a far smaller amount was spent on refurbishment of the centre facilities.

During the year the total income was	£71,671	(£78,507)
The costs of running the Centre we were	£55,048	(£74,140)

(Deprecation is excluded in the figure above to show the more accurate yearly cost of running the centre).

So overall, we managed to maintain a positive balance on our centre finances of £16,623

It is worth noting that the running of the office (e.g., stationery, phone, photocopier) is allocated as a centre expenditure, so it is important to note that without the centre these costs would have to be allocated to the church breakdown. These costs in 2024 were £3,506.

Reserves and Cash

Church Reserves are still very healthy which give us some comfort for the future of our church finances. Every year we manage to match our expenditure to our income means that we do not have to touch our reserves to keep our church running. In 2024 we had budgeted to show an £11k deficit. At the time, this did not include any budget for the Youth Ministry Fund as we did not have a particular view. Obviously

the £41k that was raised meant that we were always going to finish the year with a positive return.

On top of this we were helped by better than budgeted investment returns. Also, we achieved more general fundraising through running more events which we have assumed will continue in 2025.

However, as we move into 2025 it is worth mentioning that key areas such as staff salaries have increased due to longer hours being required. Alongside this many of our maintenance and contractual costs have had to increase due to inflation. Our current deficit for 2025 shows at around £26k – this is without any assumptions on Youth Ministry Fund gifts.

At the end of 2024 our CLCLA investments were valued at £348,064 and our cash reserves came to £410,096 giving us a total of liquid capital of around £750k

Breakdown of our reserves by fund can be seen in the full accounts, if required.

Lindsay Dobson – Treasurer.