



St. John the Evangelist Merrow

Annual Report 2026

Our Vision is to be:

**A place for the whole community to know God's love,
grow in faith and live in hope.**

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 the 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.

Welcome to the 2025-2026 APCM report for St John's Merrow.

This year our focus has been on Discipleship and Vocation and we have spent the year trying to improve the way we disciple the community of Merrow alongside our own personal vocations. This has included hearing the faith stories of many of you who sit in the pews, in particular the brave people who came up to the lectern at occasional Sunday services to share their faith journey with us. It had wonderful results, with discussions about faith growing throughout our Sunday congregants. We have ended the year stronger in our sense of discipleship and calling, both as individuals and as a church. Looking ahead, with a new Church of England Primary School hopefully starting in September 2027, our focus on discipleship has enabled us to think about ways we can connect with the new primary school and how we can grow disciples through our work with the new school.

We continue to see a growth in questioning and seeking amongst the young people in Merrow, thanks to the skill and professionalism of our youth worker, Georgie Gregson. Sandra Rayner has enabled our office to work seamlessly and all of our outside communication improvements, driven by her, have been noticed by the wider parish. Our Centre manager, Barry Dickinson, continues to be a welcoming presence to all who come through the doors of our church centre and his skills at hiring out the centre are so vital for church finances.

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. Jane will retire from her Churchwarden duties today. We cannot thank her enough for her tireless contribution to the leadership of our church. Her determination, drive and enthusiasm to see St. John's flourish has been so vital in the past three years and I wish to place in writing my sincere thanks for all she has done. With Jane has come Gordon, her husband, who has also dived into church life over the past couple of years. I am pleased to say that they will both be carrying on in some way and are not leaving us entirely! Our deputy churchwarden Michael Eagle will replace Jane. We have also appointed three people to be the new 'Churchwarden Support Team' – Martin Thompson, Richard Burtonwood and Helen Chambers. We look forward to their support in the coming year.

Thanks in writing must also go to our excellent treasurer Lindsay Dobson, Nick Bond for organising this report, Helen Chambers for keeping the daily liturgical life of the church running and Rosanne Bond for guarding our safety as Parish Safeguarding Officer. Tricia Tappin steps down as PCC Secretary today. She has been a constant at all PCC meetings that I have chaired, sitting next to me and keeping the meetings on time and up to date. Without her we would not be where we are today and I would like to add my thanks in writing to Tricia too.

Above all, a church cannot be alive without people – all of you. St. John’s wouldn’t be the warm, joyous, affectionate and generous place that it is without your presence. 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 as we look to the future and see what God has in store for us in the coming year.

With good wishes,

Tim

CHURCHWARDENS’ REPORT – APCM May 2026

We started our Churchwarden’s report at last year’s APCM by saying...

‘Wow! What a year!

Well, this past year has been DOUBLE wow!!

- We have EVEN MORE and many new faces at our services which is wonderful.
- We have EVEN MORE activities and events to welcome our Merrow and wider community to.
- We have an EVEN BIGGER group of wonderful volunteers helping us with our wide range of St John’s activities and events.

We have a very supportive and robust staff team, who work tirelessly to keep the wheels in motion, and everyone informed about what is happening.

- We are addressing some of the big infrastructure ‘elephant tasks’ like replacing our Centre roof and church sound system.

At the centre of everything we do are two very wonderful people – Tim leads us and looks after us all, seamlessly juggling his meetings, visits, services, planning, and caring. He does all this whilst being a Dad to Henry and husband to Alexandra, and managing everything involved in family life.

Georgie's 'to-do list' is epic! Her organisational skills immense – not only organising her own work but helping others too. Her energy and enthusiasm, as with Tim, is endless! She most definitely has a following!

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 that we currently offer. And in particular, we would like to mention the people who do the 'difficult jobs' in the parish: Rosanne helping us to ensure that we are complying with our safeguarding at St John's (DBS checks, safeguarding training records, policies, lots and lots of chasing!); David Mulvey, helping us with our health & safety requirements and producing many of our risk assessments; Gordon, Peter, Gerald and David who monitor and maintain our infrastructure (a tile comes loose in church, the toilet floods in the Centre, the Christmas lights need to be set up); Alison, who magically turns our dirty tea towels in the kitchen into the most beautifully clean, pressed replacements without anyone ever knowing how this happens! Our brass cleaners, linen team, church cleaning team, churchyard team, catering team, service teams (including our clergy, lay readers, vergers, sidespeople, servers, intercessors, flower arrangers, bell ringers, choir, coffee team, (and special thanks to Micky, our organist). Our Parish Magazine guest editors.

We recently had our Parish Development meeting with the Diocese, and Victoria from the diocese was rather stunned that we have at least 29 groups on offer in our Opportunities Booklet!!

A big thank you to all our rota co-ordinators, especially to Richard Burtonwood for managing the sidespeople rota for all our services, (and the many other tasks that he undertakes), Some of the major developments and highlights in the life of St John's during 2025 were;

- Our ever popular special services - Christingle Service in January, Candlemas Service in February (when we bring a candle to have blessed), Mothering Sunday service in March, Palm Sunday service with Sam the donkey in April, Patronal Festival in May, Gift Day service in June (with our YPMF presentation), Pet Service in September, Harvest Festival in October, our first full-immersion baptism, a first Communion service, Safeguarding Sunday service, and All Souls Service all in November, and a bumper Christmas programme of services in December.
- The introduction of a new financial system, which required a huge amount of extra work for Lindsay, our Treasurer, (thank you so much Lindsay) but which offers us streamlined processes, greater financial control and much improved reporting. The new system replaces a number of our previous outdated and disconnected systems.
- Another very enjoyable Barn Dance in February which was a fantastic community event and raised important funds for our supported charities
- The announcement in February that we have a Net Zero Champion for St John's, Gordon Farquharson, who is endeavouring to reduce our financial outgoings by

introducing money saving eco-friendly changes as well as helping us to ensure that we are making eco-friendly choices for the future where possible.

- Our first and a fabulous Pancake Party in March, attended by many of our local school children and their families, as well as regulars at our Glow toddler group, youth café, green team and Sparks. This was followed by 2 wonderful Lent lunches.
- As a PCC, we revisited our St John's Vision & Values statement.
- Sharing in the celebrations of John Martin's 100th birthday (March), and Robert & Gwenneth Avis's 60th wedding anniversary (July).
- We held two Bring & Buy Sales in 2025 in aid of our Young Peoples' Ministry Fund.
- Our pilgrimage to Winchester Cathedral, and David Hunt's amazing 62 mile walk to the cathedral in aid of our Young Peoples' Ministry Fund.

2025 was a very exciting year in the life of St John's - we hope that you are all enjoying your experiences at St John's.

In 2025, with sadness, we had the passing of some of our dear congregation; Mae Pink and Dick Pyper. They and others will be greatly missed.

Churchwardens have held regular meetings with the Rector and Treasurer in Standing Committee meetings every month, with the Rector, Treasurer and Staff Team every month, with the PCC every two months. The Churchwardens' role is to support our incumbent, so the focus of our meetings is to make sure that we work through the monthly responsibilities, such as compliance, keeping records up to date and ensuring that the Centre and church are looked after and running efficiently. During 2025 we have been looking closely at requirements for replacing the 20-year-old church sound system, improving our churchyard upkeep, reviewing our fire risk assessments and procedures, changing our DBS provider as part of our safeguarding procedures.

We mentioned earlier in this report about our wonderfully supportive staff team – we are so blessed to have Sandra and Barry at the helm in the parish office, fielding the many enquiries and helping those who need a helping hand. Thank you both hugely for all you do for St John's.

We would like to say thank you to people retiring from their roles at this APCM: Joe Bullock from the PCC – he has served for 8 years, thank you Joe. David Hunt from the PCC – thank you David in particular, for leading the Infrastructure team, and maintaining our IT over the years.

A final thought...There are a few people who are ready to pass over their roles to others, if possible, now, and we are keen for them to feel that they can do this. The roles we would like to fill are: Flower Arranging Co-ordinator (the team is already established), PCC Minutes taker (recently advertised), Server Co-ordinator (the team is already established), additional Guest Editors for our Parish Magazine, and a volunteer to co-ordinate our volunteers!! Please do come and chat with us if you would like to know more.

And finally, a warm welcome to all our newcomers or 'fairly new' comers...in your new roles. We are excited to have you onboard and look forward to working with you.

Thank you again to you all for everything you do to make things possible at St John's. Please rest assured that we know there is still a lot to do and we are not complacent! We work hard to carry out our responsibilities and ensure that things run smoothly.

Your Churchwardens, Cathy Thompson and Jane Farquharson.

Special Note from Cathy:

As Jane retires from her role as Churchwarden at this APCM, I would like to take the opportunity to thank her very much for all she has done for St John's over the past 3 years as Churchwarden, but also previously as Deputy Churchwarden for a year. I have really enjoyed working with her and admire her dedication, hard work, attention to detail and great organisational skills.

I wish Michael luck as he steps up from Deputy Churchwarden to Churchwarden to replace Jane, and I look forward to working with him.

Cathy Thompson.

Churchwarden's Property and Land Fabric report 2025

The Annual Churchwarden's Inspections of the church, Centre and churchyard were undertaken and whilst no significant defects were found, there are as always numerous maintenance issues identified, the Church porch roof being one.

This is still an ongoing project that Friends of St Johns are kindly helping us to fund – for which we are very grateful. The roof needs repointing and inside, once the damp in the walls is sorted, it will be redecorated to expose the Norman arch and protect the oak door. The Infrastructure team have this in hand.

The Centre roof has been replaced. 20 years is usually about the lifespan of a flat roof but it is hoped that the drainage has been improved as part of the work. The seminar room and Georgie's office were redecorated to remove the stains from water ingress.

The flint walls surrounding the church yard need constant upkeep, which Barry has sorted over the year, as well as overhauling the locks on the glass doors of the church.

Gordon, Peter Tappin and Gerald have been working to finally resolve the issues of the lights in the main hall. Thank you to Peter and Gerald for shinning up ladders, and Gordon for setting up a test rig to resolve these issues.

The foyer has been tidied up and repainted, making it a welcoming space. The introduction of acoustic panels, thank you to Gerald, have reduced the noise volume significantly. We have also bought some new lighter chairs for the foyer.

Lighting in the Church continues to be improved, fluorescent bulbs being replaced with LED whilst retaining the Victorian fittings and the reordered lighting control system.

The Church organ has been tuned and had emergency work done to keep it working. There is work needed to mend the ceiling above the organ, which is gradually falling down with lumps of plaster dropping. Again the infrastructure team have this in hand.

The internal high level illumination of the stained glass windows during the winter months continued for 2025.

We hope that we have got a grip of the heating programme in Church making sure that the church reaches a comfortable temperature for Sunday services, whilst not heating unnecessarily. It is still being monitored.

The church property register continues to be updated with photographs added of all relevant items including furniture, artefacts and silver. Carole Burtonwood did such a great job getting this in a digital form that our lives have been made much easier.

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 and removed waste bins that were being filled with discarded items from the grave yard and beyond.

The new notice board outside the Centre has increased our opportunity for letting the community know about life at St John's.

Your Churchwardens, Cathy Thompson and Jane Farquharson.

Safeguarding Report for 2026.

The role of a Parish Safeguarding Officer has increased considerably over the past few years. I am delighted to announce that Susan Harrington has been appointed to share the job with me which will be a great help.

Following a data breach at APCS (the organisation which used to process our Disclosure and Barring Service applications) we were only able to process urgent

applications for several months. This meant that at the end of 2025 we had a backlog of around 30 applications. A new provider was appointed in December.

This data breach potentially affected 4 applicants in the parish. Support was put in place by the Church of England to detect possible misuse of their personal data.

In July the parish was notified that the training requirements for volunteers working with vulnerable groups had been reviewed which meant that each person had to complete 3 modules. Nearly everyone complied with this requirement but sadly we lost a Coffee Club driver who refused to complete the required training.

The PCC has been reminded of its safeguarding responsibilities by the Charity Commission. However, we all have a duty of care to ensure the wellbeing of vulnerable groups within our church community. Pastoral care meetings have taken place every few months and a home visiting team is in the process of being set up.

If you have any concerns, however small, please have a chat with Tim, Georgie or a Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

With this in mind in 2025 I have

- Produced a written report to be considered at each PCC meeting
- Held regular meetings with Georgie as youth worker 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 churchwardens on behalf of 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.
- 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.

Rosanne Bond Parish Safeguarding Officer.

PCC report for 2026

The PCC meets bi-monthly. During the year the PCC has discussed and decided upon, amongst other things, a review of our Vision & Values, Youth Ministry, Finance, Parish Safeguarding policies and protocols, 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, Legacy and Gift Sunday planning, research and planning for a new AV system to improve the sound and vision experience in our services, development of a Social Media policy, and churchyard upkeep. We are very grateful to have Tim's leadership to guide the PCC in serving our church family and wider community.

I would like to thank every member of the PCC for their hard work, commitment 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, have carried out their roles for the benefit of us all. Jane is coming to the end of her term as Churchwarden, but she is remaining on the PCC and we will be in safe hands as she passes the baton to Cathy and Michael. Jane's practical, hands-on, pragmatic approach has been a great asset during her time as Churchwarden, and we are very grateful that the PCC will continue to benefit from her tireless energy and experience. I would also like to pay tribute to Joe and David, who are both retiring from the PCC this year. Joe has served on the PCC since 2018, and his ability to assimilate and process data will be missed as will his deadpan delivery of puns and one-liners. David joined the PCC in 2021 and his energy and expertise have been of particular support on IT and Infrastructure issues, especially so during the Interregnum. 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 2026

Electoral Roll

2025 saw significant activity for the electoral Roll with many people new to our church family joining the Roll.

Every six years every parish must prepare a completely new roll where every person who wishes to have his or her name entered on the new Roll, whether it is entered on the present Roll or not, is requested to apply for enrolment. This six year revision was carried out in the early part of 2025.

During 2025 32 people joined the Electoral Roll and 23 left the roll because they had died, moved away, did not wish to renew or did not reply after being contacted for the revision of the roll. There were a few adjustments outside the revision leaving 132 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 sidespersons 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 must 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 summary of our financial position. Whilst our Accounts are presented in a unified format, internally we deal with matters separately between Church and Centre.

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 2024

Church Income

Planned Giving	£ 87,798	(£ 72,072)
Collections and other giving	£ 26,752	(£ 56,138)
Other receipts and tax	£ 25,061	(£ 25,615)
Legacies	£ 21,500	(£ 5,000)
Other receipts (fundraising)	£ 17,022	(£ 24,720)
Grants	£ 0	(£ 9,412)
Receipts from Church Activities	£ 3,773	(£ 8,605)
Magazine Receipts	£ 3,608	(£ 4,076)
Dividends and Interest	£ 25,528	(£ 26,694)
Total Income	£211,042	(£232,332)

During the year the total income for the Church was £211,042 which is a decrease on last year of £21,290. However, given the economic restraints during 2025, this can be seen as testimony to our congregation. One real positive note during 2025 is the large increase in our planned giving number, which supports the recognition of our growing church community.

Legacies of £21,500 were received in 2025, with £20,000 being gifted for Youth Ministry and the continued employment of our Youth Worker.

Church Expenditure

Church Expenses have remained constant with a small increase of £6,672 on 2024. 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	£ 6,507	(£ 5,042)
Grants and Charitable Giving	£ 10,966	(£ 8,055)
Direct Costs of Church Activity	£ 180,475	(£ 177,726)

Church Management and Administration	£ 4,793	(£ 5,284)
Governance Costs	£ 1,980	(£ 1,942)
Total Expenditure	£204,721	(£198,049)

The Parish Share was, by far, the largest item of Expenditure at £101,781 (£96,157).

With an increase in expenditure as well as a drop in income, we have still appeared, on a Church only perspective, to show a small positive balance in 2025.

The Church Centre

The sole source of income for the Centre is from the hire of the facilities. During 2025, the usage of our Centre has remained reasonably static, with our income running slightly below that of 2024.

During the year the total income was £71,243 (£71,671)

The costs of running the Centre we were £79,345 (£55,048)
(Deprecation is excluded in the figure above to show the more accurate yearly cost of running the Centre).

During 2025, the centre roof required significant work following a couple of years of increasing maintenance due to its poor condition. The roof was completely overhauled at a cost of £21,564

So, although our overspend on 2025 income was £24,297, the operational element of the expenditure was only £57,781 and was therefore only a small increase on 2024 costs. Our Centre fund was able to source this overspend. Operationally the centre foyer chairs have been replaced and further decorating has been done.

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 2025 were £7,018 (2024: £3,506), This large increase was due to the 3 year purchase of our computer system, which will save us money in the next couple of years.

Reserves and Cash

Church Reserves are still very healthy which give us some comfort for the future of our church finances.

At the end of 2025 our CLCLA investments were valued at £344,149 – a small drop on 2024 but considering the volatility of the markets during 2025, this should be seen as a positive outcome from our low risk strategy. Our cash reserves came to £401,872 giving us a total of liquid capital of around £745k.

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

Lindsay Dobson – Treasurer.