



# ***St. John the Evangelist Merrow***

***Annual Report 2023***

**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.**

### **Welcome to the Annual Report for the Parish of Merrow 2023.**

#### **Annual Report 2023-2024.**

Welcome to the Annual Report for St. John the Evangelist, Merrow. I hope that this report gives you a good overview of the life of our parish. The activities listed in this report are those we are required to produce but there are many activities not listed in this report and should you wish to know more then please do be in touch. I hope that you will find this report about the life of St. John's interesting and can't thank Nick Bond enough for putting it together.

I write this at the beginning of my sixth month as Rector of Merrow. Thank you so much for welcoming Alexandra, Henry (and Mary the dog) and me into the life of St. John's. God's call for us to come and minister here was a strong one and we feel blessed to be surrounded by such a lovely, friendly and fun group of people in this wonderful corner of God's world.

I have many people to thank for making our arrival so smooth but I wish to especially thank Peter Tappin and Carole Burtonwood, the two churchwardens during the interregnum, along with deputy churchwardens Jane Farquharson and Cathy Thompson, Treasurer Lindsay Dobson, retired clergy Diana Matthews and Margaret Dean, Verger Helen Chambers and Lay Preacher Robert Avis. They handed St. John's to me in an excellent condition and have been a really helpful support to me during my first six months. I'm also not the newest member of the team now and it's been great to welcome our new Youth and Families Worker, Georgie Gregson, into the life of the St. John's, joining Harry and Barry as part of the staff team here.

As we look back over the past year we can see signs of God's grace. This report shows how the people of St. John's have come together in worship and service, in times of joy and sorrow and at the great festivals of the Church. We have welcomed new members of the Church through baptism, celebrated marriages, commended the dead

and comforted the grieving at funerals, as well as losing from our number in particular Diana Butcher, Jim Styles and The Rev'd Tim Dean.

Although we look back we also want to look forward to the year ahead. I'm excited about all that we will do to further God's kingdom in Merrow, so that we can continue to become a place of welcome for everyone in Merrow, living out the idea of being 'your church here for you' that I mentioned in my first Sermon on my first Sunday.

All that has been achieved and all that lies before us we entrust to the Lord and ask his strength and grace in what is to come. In all our endeavours may the Lord bless us and may St John the Evangelist and all the saints of God pray for us.

With every good wish,

**Tim**

**The Rev'd Tim Clifford Hill – Rector of Merrow.**

### **Churchwardens report 2023**

2023 was another challenging year for St John's. Turbulent economic times and escalating gas and electricity prices added to the job of continuing to run the Church and Centre effectively, during the year of vacancy, for our congregation and the wider Merrow community. During this time many services were conducted by our loyal and dedicated retired clergy including Margaret and Tim Dean and Diana Matthews and we are so grateful to them, our Verger Helen Chambers and our Lay Preacher, Robert Avis for enabling us to continue with our regular communion and so many other additional services.

The Churchwardens; Carole Burtonwood, Peter Tappin and deputy Churchwarden, Jane Farquharson met weekly on Tuesday mornings and after this with Hannah Harvey our Youthworker, Lindsay Dobson our Treasurer, Helen Chambers our Verger, Harry Talboys our Parish Administrator and Cathy Thompson to ensure continuity of services and events.

Last summer Carole Burtonwood stood down as Churchwarden, having extended her term. We are extremely grateful to her for her extended tenure as she has so much experience and knowledge. It is said that you only know what to do as a churchwarden once you finish your term!! At the extraordinary meeting held for this purpose Jane Farquharson stepped up as Churchwarden. Cathy Thompson had taken on the role of deputy Churchwarden at the last APCM. The continuity of having a deputy Churchwarden is invaluable.

The Standing Committee which used to be called the Finance and General Purposes Committee also met every other month and this included Cathy Thompson alongside the Churchwardens and Treasurer.

The Ministry Team, originally set up in 2021 consisted of Margaret and Tim Dean, Diana Matthews, Robert Avis, Hannah Harvey, Helen Chambers and the Churchwardens, and met to plan services for 4 months ahead. This ensured that we had cover for regular Sunday and Wednesday services, and enabled us to identify where we required additional clergy cover whilst we were in vacancy. We also had to find clergy to take weddings, funerals and baptisms.

We have been blessed to have Edward, a talented young organist and student at Charterhouse School to play for us at our All Age Services, and Damien, another very talented young organ scholar who uses our church organ for practice and occasionally plays for services.

In August Hannah Harvey moved on to pastures new, commencing clergy college in Birmingham. We wish her and her partner Kate, all the best in this exciting new phase of their life.

St John's Centre, under Barry's direction, is now well occupied for most of the week and Saturdays have a regular booking from Italia Conti. This has meant that, financially, it has held its own, allowing us to carry out some renovating for two weeks last summer.

During this time we had a significant clear-out in the Centre, and reorganised the archives and records.

In June, and in collaboration with the War Graves Commission, a plaque was put on the corner of the Centre to acknowledge the presence of war graves in our graveyard.

The key activity in 2023 was of course the recruitment process involved in finding our next rector at St John's. This started with the very considerable amount of work in producing the Parish Profile, which was a significant and very successful piece of work.

Following advertising, we had applications from three promising candidates and the two-day interview process began on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023 with an informal meeting with Churchwardens and then accompanied visits to The Church, Rectory, Centre and Merrow Infant School where each applicant carried out a brief activity with the children. Day two on the 19<sup>th</sup> then saw the formal interviews with Bishop Andrew, other clergy and Churchwardens.

The unanimous decision was made and we were delighted to offer Tim Clifford Hill the position of Rector and as we now fast forward, the rest, as they say is history! We were very pleased to arrange for all remedial works, including some redecoration at The Rectory to be completed quickly so Tim, Alexandra and Henry ( and Mary!) could move in ahead of Henry's first day at Merrow Infant School, and commuting from Cranleigh each day to Merrow was avoided!

Tim's Licensing and Institution Service was a joyful event on 10<sup>th</sup> October in a packed church accompanied by some wonderful, enthusiastic singing of hymns and followed by a happy, social gathering in The Centre.

Tim, Alexandra, Henry and Mary are now an integral and very happy part of our life at St John's and we are blessed to have them in our midst. We pray with thanks that God has called them to join our flourishing church community and we continue to pray for them as they settle in at St John's.

Following the appointment of Tim as Rector, we were delighted to appoint Georgie Gregson as our Youthworker in late 2023. She has joined us with fresh ideas and enthusiasm which has resulted in the number of children attending church regularly, on a Sunday, as well as the Mother and Toddler session on a Monday, increasing greatly. Her work involves much contact with the local schools, which has enhanced our relationship with them.

We warmly welcome Tim and family and now Georgie, and what an asset they have already been for those last months of 2023, and into 2024.

**Peter Tappin and Jane Farquharson**

## **Churchwarden's Property and Land Fabric report 2022-2023**

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 roof of the Centre, the flint walls and the porch roof.

The Quinquennial Inspection which was carried out in June 2023, included some of these items and has helped to determine longer term objectives and priorities. A new Parish Architect was appointed in 2022 to carry this out, who is Adam Heike of Nye Saunders Chartered Architects in Godalming.

We have replaced the timber handrail at the Trodds Lane entrance to the church yard.

The damaged flint wall on the corner of Trodds Lane was the subject of an insurance claim which is nearing a settlement and commencement of work.

A number of improvements to the Centre have been made. During a two week shut down last summer; the floors of both halls were sanded and sealed, walls painted, curtains replaced, flooring and windows in the seminar room replaced and new blinds installed. This has freshened and updated the Centre. There are still minor issues with the lighting in the main hall. The Centre roof is the subject of ongoing debate and investigation for a replacement covering with redesigned water gulleys that will also be suitable for the future installation of Solar panels.

An air source heat pump was installed in the Merrow Hall. Following a water leak between the boiler and the ceiling heaters in the hall, it was decided that this was the least disruptive more cost-effective solution and would be a start to St John's carbon reduction initiative.

The car park lines were repainted, and the parking spaces slightly enlarged to facilitate easier parking.

Following an earlier tree survey significant tree work was carried out to the large lime trees adjoining the car park.

The five yearly fixed wiring check was carried out for the church in early 2022.

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.

The internal high level illumination of the stained glass windows during the winter months continued for 2023.

We are monitoring the heating in church as there are still slight vagaries with the programming. The lighting in the church is under review.

Churchyard maintenance continued with regular volunteer working groups organised by Diana Butcher until the end of the year, and we all mourn her untimely death. We have reduced areas of wild grass and flowers to hopefully provide a better balance with the rest of the more closely mown areas.

## **The Churchwardens**

### **Safeguarding Report.**

The safeguarding of all vulnerable people has continued to underpin the life and work at St John's.

The PCC is aware that it is ultimately accountable for safeguarding. As Parish Safeguarding Officer, I have submitted a written report to each PCC meeting and attended in person, when required.

Alongside my report the PCC received a safeguarding action plan which details actions which need to be addressed. At the end of last year 97% of the actions had been addressed. Thank you to all those who helped St John's reach this target. We have now moved on to an online Safeguarding Hub which enables users to input further information, for example job descriptions, risk assessments.

Safeguarding policies have been reviewed and are on display on parish notice boards and on the St John's website. Also on display are posters providing helpline phone numbers. These can be found in the church and in the Centre. The safeguarding section on the website remains in a prominent position.

Pastoral care meetings were reintroduced as a means of trying to ensure that we are offering support to those who need it. As Parish Safeguarding Officer I have continued to remain in contact with the Rector and the Youth worker.

Criminal record checks (DBS) were processed during the year, as required. Postholders have been advised of the safeguarding training which they need to complete in line with their role.



Safeguarding issues have been addressed in line with Diocesan procedures. Advice and support have been sought from the Diocese, when necessary. Referrals to outside agencies have been made, when necessary.

Whilst all the above measures are important we need to ensure that it doesn't just remain as paperwork in a filing cabinet or online. We all have a responsibility to try and keep people safe. As a parishioner if you ever have any safeguarding concerns then please contact the Rector or Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible without investigating matters for yourself. We might be able to find the right help for that person.

**Rosanne Bond Parish Safeguarding Officer**

## **PCC**

The PCC meets bi-monthly. During the year the PCC has discussed and decided upon, amongst other things, Finance, the appointment of our new Youthworker Georgie, Youth Ministry and its funding, Parish Safeguarding, Centre strategy and refurbishment, hospitality and music events, the 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 Trustee for FoStJ, appointment of a School Governor, Clergy cover for Services, development of a H&S policy, a review of Utilities contracts, churchyard upkeep and, of course, the recruitment, appointment and welcoming of our new Rector Tim and his family. We are wholeheartedly delighted that Tim is here to lead us in our worship and guide the PCC in serving our church family and wider community of Merrow.

Before Tim's Induction in October, the challenges of the 12 months of Interregnum were carried in large part by the Churchwardens, and I would like to thank them once again for shouldering this increased workload for the benefit of us all and pay tribute to the PCC for the support shown throughout this period. I would also like to thank Kate, who is retiring from the PCC this year, for her service over the last three years, and Carole, who continued in her post as Churchwarden until Tim's appointment was made. I am very grateful to her for her efficiency, dedication, hard work and steadying expertise during this period.

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**

**PCC Secretary.**

### **Electoral roll**

Since the APCM in 2023 two people have joined the electoral roll and sadly five of our longstanding members have died leaving the current number on the roll at 142.

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](mailto: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.

For most of this year, the Church was in interregnum, with a new rector not in place in October 2023. We also lost our Youthworker in August 2023, as she decided to train to become a vicar herself. However, thanks to the hard work of the Churchwardens, the church continued to fully service our community. What was impacted was our ability to find the time and resources to continue with our major fundraising events which impacted our income.

### 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 2022. Our planned giving rose slightly on last year, but without a rector it was difficult to run another Stewardship Campaign and so our 'one off donations' amount dipped sharply from 2022. A lack of fundraising also impacted our income. Luckily, we had a good year with our investments which raised over 19K. Overall, our income dropped by just over £20K.

### Church Income

Planned Giving	£ 69,916	(£ 63,801)
Collections and other giving	£ 17,241	(£ 35,999 )
Other receipts and tax	£ 18,159	(£ 21,580 )
Legacies and other income	£ 5,590	(£ 18,780)
Grants	£ 36,000	(£ 36,725)
Receipts from Church Activities	£ 9,107	(£ 6,544)
Magazine Receipts	£ 3,956	(£ 3,706 )
Dividends and Interest	£ 19,382	(£ 13,704)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£179,351</b>	<b>(£200,209)</b>

The two Grants received were:

- £35,000 grant from the Down Road Trust, used to support the employment of our youth worker. Obviously as our Youthworker left in August, some of this grant will provide support for the new Youthworker who started in January 2024.
- £1,000 payment from the Diocese to help with our fuel bills.

**During the year the total income for the Church was £179,351 which is a decrease on last year of year of £20,858**

**There were no new legacies in 2023.**

### Church Expenditure

Church Expenses map very close to 2022, with a small increase of £1,123.

Costs of generating voluntary income	£ 1,682	(£ 2,755)
Grants and Charitable Giving	£ 12,578	(£ 12,228)
Direct Costs of Church Activity	£170,815	(£170,998)
Church Management and Administration	£ 4,373	(£ 4,498)
Governance Costs	£ 4,569	(£ 2,415)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£194,017</b>	<b>(£192,894)</b>

The Parish Share was, by far, the largest item of Expenditure at £92,435 (£91,038). This must be paid even when we have no rector, as was the case for the first 10 months of the year. Also, we had the costs relating to bringing in a new rector and rectory bills during the interregnum which amounted to over £8,025.

Other key elements of the expenses included our churchyard upkeep. These doubled to £3,261 due to the need for some urgent maintenance to dangerous trees. The churchyard is now full and as such the responsibility for this type of work in the future will fall to Guildford Borough Council.

Also, this year we had a Quinquennial inspection which added over £2k to our governance costs and will probably mean some greater expense on the Church fabric in 2024, although the report did not raise any significant issues.

Our charitable giving has increased slightly this year, even though our income dropped. We are still supporting our three main charities (Foodwise, CAP, Compassion UK), who were given £8000 in total, as well as gifts to the Bishops Fund. The remainder

of the giving was provided by the Grant Legacy Fund income from which was agreed several gifts to parish members.

**Despite this increase in expenditure, we have, through our effort on income generation, managed to show a very small positive balance of £7,315.**

### **The Church Centre**

The sole source of income for the Centre is from the hire of the facilities. During 2023, the usage of our centre increased significantly including the NHS running their diabetic clinic in Merrow Hall 3 days per week. Also, users for events such as birthday parties is doing well, with bookings most weekends.

Overall operational costs for running the Centre have also increased with the Centre being open all year. Key areas of increase were the cost of cleaning, as our previous Cleaner left us in 2021 as well as a doubling of our utility bills (from £5.3k to nearly £12k). As well as this staff costs have been attributed across Church and Centre this year in a more accurate way.

During the year the total income was                   £78,507       (£51,907)

The costs of running the Centre we were           £74,140       (£45,007 )

(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 £5,367.**

The expense figures include the centre maintenance work undertaken during the summer closedown. The work included decoration of Main Hall and Merrow Hall as well as new curtains, floor re-sanding in both halls, new heating system in Merrow Hall and finally a new carpet and new windows in the Seminar Rooms. The total of this work came to £30,822. Some of this cost was offset with an insurance claim of £5,286 (which appears as Centre Income above.) However, with this level of investment it is heartening that we still managed to show a small profit on the centre.

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 2023 were £4,716.

## 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 which means that we do not have to touch our reserves to keep our church running.

However, this takes careful management and every year we do not expect to achieve it. This year our budget predicted a shortfall of £16k.

However, a few key elements meant we managed to avoid hitting our reserves.

These included:

- A reduction in our utility bills as the year continued.
- Loss of our Youthworker means we retained more of our income from the Down Road Trust. This will be used to help with employment of our new Youthworker in 2024.
- Better than expected centre lettings which meant the expense on the refurbishment did not deliver the shortfall expected.
- Better than expected dividends as interest rates grew during the year.

At the end of 2023 our CLCLA investments were valued at £340,725. This is still below our end 2021 figures of £352,511 but have risen by nearly £30k since 2022. This is on top of the £20k dividends that the assets generated into our funds during 2023.

**It is also worth stressing that the investments account for less than 50% of our total reserves which come to £695,122 – this excludes the value of the Centre. Therefore, we are holding £354,397 in cash reserves.**

Breakdown of our reserves by fund can be seen in the full accounts on Page 13, if required.

**Lindsay Dobson – Treasurer.**