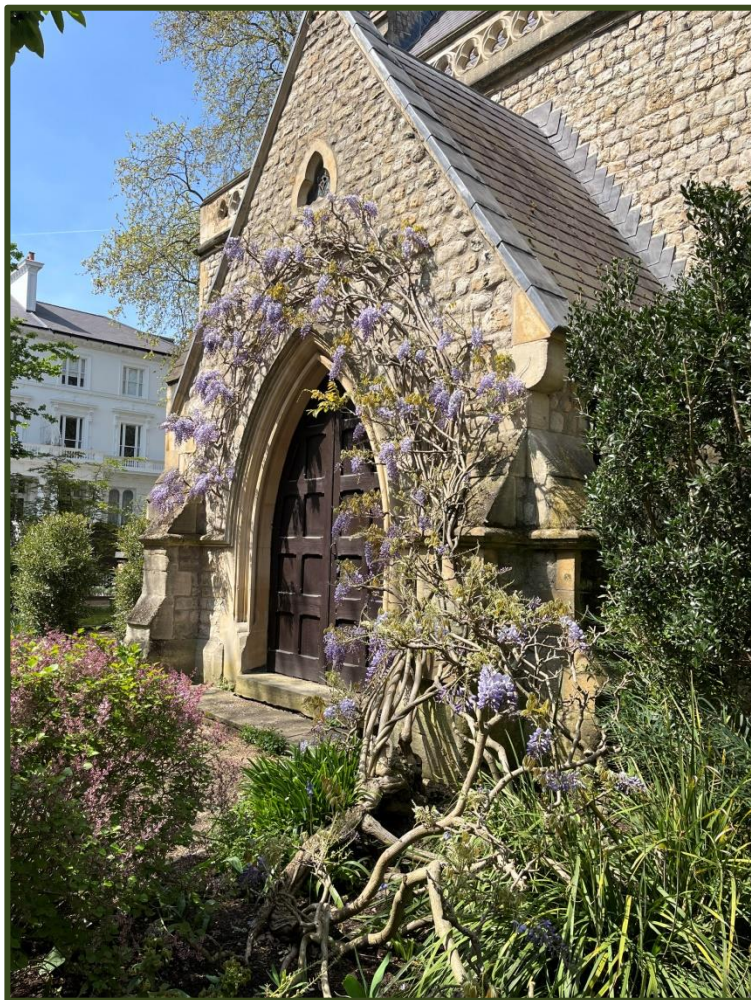


St Mary The Boltons



*Rooted * Open * Reaching Out*

Annual Parish Review 2023

Table of Contents

Vicar’s Introduction	3
I. Statutory Reports for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting	6
Numbers on the Electoral Roll	6
Annual Report of the Working of the PCC.....	6
Fabric.....	8
II. Annual Parish Review Reports	13
Time to Remember / Milestones	21
Deanery Synod Report	22
Music	23
Safeguarding.....	27
Sunday School	29
Verger’s Report.....	31
The Prayer Network.....	32
The Clarion.....	32
Flowers	33
Hospitality and Social Life.....	33
Sacristy.....	34
Website.....	34
Reading Volunteers at St Cuthbert with St Matthias School.....	35
Charity Committee.....	36
Gift Aid	38
Wills, Trusts and Legacies	39

Vicar's Introduction

I hope you will find the Annual Review for 2023 as encouraging as I do. It begins as always with the Statutory Reports to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, which give us data and information, like numbers of members on the Electoral Roll, the workings of the PCC, and the state of our buildings and inventory. The rest of the Review will tell a richer story of our life together: our activities both in church and beyond; our welcome and our outreach, our worship and our work, all reflecting those important words of our strapline, Rooted, Open and Reaching Out.

All of this is what one might call 'input' – what has gone into the work and mission of St Mary's – which we do indeed celebrate and give thanks for. What we must now look at in the coming year and beyond is the 'output', asking what the outcome is of what we have achieved in 2023.

We have striven to be a church that is more inclusive and welcoming of all who might come through our doors, regardless of background, gender, ethnicity, or sexuality. We've pledged our willingness to bless same sex couples, as allowed by the Church of England, and offering a safe and welcoming place for all. We've decided to make our building more accessible as we make changes to the entrance of the church. We have recommitted ourselves to aiming for Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2030. None of these decisions has been made quickly or easily, but with a lot of wide-ranging discussion (and some disagreement) in the PCC and consultation with the wider congregation over the course of months in some cases. Now we must work to bring these plans to fruition.

We responded to the challenge of the diocesan ambition to 'grow younger' through a new parent and baby group, and the very

successful Little Lamb Sunday School. We know we need more volunteers to take a lead - appropriately recruited and trained –and to help these initiatives thrive. We recognise that, for many families, their church affiliation is one call among many on their time and energy. We also know that we need to work to refresh our church, and to engage the commitment of our members to its life and work. This is a top priority for the coming year.

We are blessed to have been relatively well supported financially, even during the Pandemic when rental income disappeared. However, regular stewardship giving has remained static or decreased over time. We have recovered our rental income, which increases with inflation each year, but casual lettings and hall fees should be re-evaluated this year. We are also aware that by the end of 2025, income from the communications masts will decrease substantially, and so we will need to work to find other sources of regular income. We therefore need to give priority to a campaign that not only refreshes the church's ministry, but also encourages our members to be more regular and more generous in their financial support.

2024 will be a time of challenge for St Mary's in many ways – to grow in number and in depth, to find a way to sustain what we do, to look beyond our building and congregation to share the love of God in Jesus Christ, faithful to those values of faithfulness, openness and service for all in our parish. I hope that you will be encouraged to join this endeavour with us.

I want to end with my hearty thanks to all those who work so hard in our church, the lay staff and volunteers, the PCC and our Churchwardens. And to those faithful people who come along week by week, pray for us and join in our life together.

Jenny Welsh

Vicar



I. Statutory Reports for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Numbers on the Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll presented at the 2023 APCM stands at 129 (63 Resident, 66 Non-Resident).

Applications to join the roll can be made throughout the year. To be eligible a person must be over 16 years of age and baptised. They should also either live in the parish or have worshipped at the church regularly for at least six months, and should be a member of the Church of England or a church in communion with it, or a member of good standing of a Church not in communion with the Church of England which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity where those members are also prepared to declare themselves to be members of the Church of England. Application forms are available at the back of the church. Only people currently on the roll are eligible to vote at the APCM.

Fiona Parsons

Electoral Roll Officer

Annual Report of the Working of the PCC

During the course of 2023 the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Mary's met for six formal meetings. These meetings are held in the Church Hall on Wednesday evenings and are led by Revd Jenny Welsh, with assistance from Jane Ellard in the Parish Office in preparing and circulating the paperwork.

The PCC consists of 10 members, including the Wardens, who are elected annually at the meeting of parishioners, two lay

representatives to the Deanery Synod, and six other elected members of the congregation who serve a three-year term.

Much of the work of the PCC concerns the day to day running of St Mary's, and the Council is responsible for ensuring best practice in the areas of Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Financial Management and achieving our Net Zero Carbon aims. The Committee also "signs off" important proposals made by other church committees, for example the adopting of our chosen charities as recommended by the Charities Committee.

During the course of 2023 a lot of the PCC's time was spent in discussion on the proposed redevelopment of the West End of church. This major programme of works will involve insulation of the offices, a more welcoming entrance and provision of permanent wheelchair access. At the time of writing the PCC is still in discussion about the best plans for this scheme, but rest assured that the Council is mindful of the importance of taking this project forward in a timely manner in order to future proof our building.

At the APCM the PCC will thank outgoing committee members and welcome new ones. If you have any questions or comments about the workings of the PCC, or indeed would consider sitting on the Council, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Joanna Hackett
PCC Secretary



From the Archives: Discoveries when sorting the hall loft

Report on Fabric, Goods and Ornaments

In striving to maintain a church its furnishings in good condition we have to recognise that we are guardians of the building only for a time. We do not own it like our homes but hold the heritage that we have received in trust for future generations. In doing this we are helped or hindered by a raft of rules and regulations. Discharging our responsibilities requires constant care and attention to details as well as the courage to face up to bigger projects.

In 2023 the Parochial Church Council was faced with both issues – a big project at the west end of church to make more space, and to improve the insulation in and around the main door and the two offices and in the children’s room was further complicated by the need to upgrade the ramp access at the west end to meet Equality Act standards. Working out the details of the ramp access has involved much discussion and the design stage had not been completed at the year end. This project will affect both current users and future generations not only through the physical changes that alternative access and improved insulation involves, but also by taking us further along the pathway to becoming a net zero carbon church we hope it will benefit future generations as well. We are fortunate indeed that the project is expected to be funded largely through the Bacon Foundation grants received in prior years.



Externally at the west end of church further work was needed to prevent water ingress into the gallery stairwell.

Investigations into why earlier repairs had not worked to stop this damp also revealed that the stonework above the stairwell roof needed attention. The necessary repairs were finally put in hand in September, but soon hit problems.

Firstly, on a Friday night there was a heavy rain and wind storm and a significant leak

occurred in the area where the masons had been working, but they returned early on the Saturday morning to make a temporary repair, thereby ensuring there was no overlap with the Autumn Fair which took place later on that day. Secondly, about this time, as old cement pointing and the loose and rough parts on the lime stone were being removed (so-called 'defrassing') it became apparent that 13 stones needed to be completely replaced, not merely repointed with lime mortar (see photo above). Work stopped while the new stones were procured and dressed. The external walls of the church are faced with Kentish Ragstone. While this stone was once widely quarried in Kent, only one supplier now remains, and so our order had to take its turn in the queue, and the work was finally completed in December.



Gas Connections

Work on the west wall was not the only project that took a long time in 2023.

The temporary repairs following gas leaks at the south east end of hall took many weeks to be fully repaired. This involved replacing

the steel connections which had started to corrode in some places or had corroded because of blocked drains in other places. Replacement PVC connections were made at the junction with the mains in the meter box at the east railings, east end of the hall where the gas pipe enters the hall, and at the north side of the vestry. As part of this work the contractor discovered that there was no gas mains isolator tap for the Hall flat at any point in the gas line, so a new emergency shut off valve was installed.

While working on the gas connections the contractor also serviced all the gas boilers at church (main church, vestry, hall and flat) and provided relevant certificates.

Corbel Lights

Inside church the corbel lighting (illuminating the apostles' heads) was out of use for many weeks and the cause of the constant flickering was finally determined to be a faulty LED driver. As the old driver was still under warranty the hardware was replaced at no cost, though the PCC had to bear the labour costs.

Gutters

The gutters round church and church hall were cleaned twice during the year. In the spring clean, 25 bags of rubbish were removed, so this is a worthwhile preventative exercise. The reports received indicate that while the gutters are in a good state of repair there are some broken slates on both the church and hall roofs. These will need attention this year.



Organ The Fabric Committee received a report from an independent organ consultant on the state of the organ, and assessing the alternative proposals already received from organ builders J.W. Walker & Sons Ltd. This confirmed that some short term remedial works are needed, both to maintain it in working order and to provide safe access to the higher parts of the instrument. The report also concluded that the time has come for a more substantial



programme of work to ensure the long term health of the instrument. This is a nettle that will need to be grasped in 2024.

Church Hall After considerable expenditure in 2022 on maintenance, in 2023 only routine repairs were needed. It must be recorded however that refurbishment of the kitchen will be needed in the near future.

Leo Fraser-Mackenzie

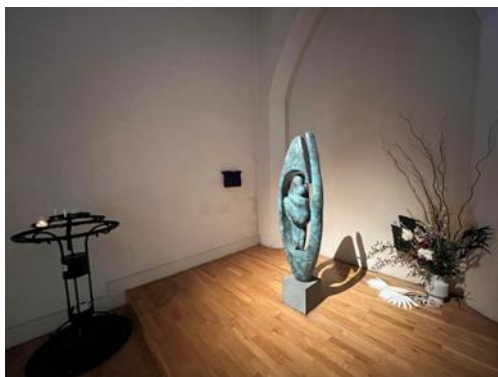
(Photos from Hanslip & co / Michael Garber, William McVicker & Ian Howe of IPH Solutions)

Report on Goods and Ornaments

If there is work to be done on the fabric of the church and the organ, and in the hall kitchen, it is good to be able to report that the goods and ornaments in church are mostly in good condition. Items in the Treasury are cleaned regularly and some of the items, mainly chalices, are taken out and used in worship services. The full inventory of plate and other items was checked in March. All items were found to be present, and a new item was added – The “St Mary’s Boltons Choir Challenge Cup”. This two handled pewter cup, apparently last awarded in 1881, was found in the hall loft when it was being cleared before insulation was installed in December 2022. It is now on display in the cabinet in the south transept.

Leo Fraser-Mackenzie & Candice Lee

Churchwardens



II. Annual Parish Review Reports

The PCC report of the Activities of the Parish

Statement of Purpose

St Mary's is a church working within the ethics and ethos of the Church of England, and the aim of the PCC, in cooperation with the incumbent, is to promote the whole mission of the church pastoral, evangelistic and social and ecumenical. The PCC is also responsible for the upkeep of the church of St Mary The Boltons, a grade 2 listed building.

The priorities of our common endeavour as the Body of Christ at St Mary's are reflected in our parish strapline Rooted in Faith, Open in thought and Reaching Out in service.

Rooted: Our life, our ministry, and our worship together are grounded in our belief in a God who is loving, abundantly generous, and merciful. We are also rooted in our church building, where our common life is lived out in worship and prayer, activity and service; where local people can find peace to reflect and pray, where children are baptised, couples married and the mourning can bury their loved ones, and where all are welcomed into our fellowship.

St Mary's is rooted in our parish, the local area which we serve. Local schools visit for concerts, assemblies, and to discover the church's history, art and architecture. Local institutions are welcome to hold events, Christmas concerts and meetings. Local people enjoy our garden as a place of quiet and beauty.

Open: St Mary's is an open church: we try to be open to the movement of God's Spirit in our world. We are an inclusive church, welcoming everyone, regardless of background, gender, ethnicity, or

sexuality, so that all may encounter the love of the God revealed in Jesus Christ. The doors are open every day for anyone to come in to pray, reflect, rest, seek solace, find hope.

Reaching Out: Christ commands us to love God with our whole being, and our neighbour as ourselves. Worship of the God who loves us leads us to love his world. St Mary's is committed to giving to local and international charities, through our Charitable Pot; to supporting local foodbanks; visiting local nursing homes; supporting and attending to vulnerable people who come to the church for help.

The Activities and Achievements described in the following section describe in more detail how these priorities worked out in practice in 2023. In planning and undertaking these activities the trustees confirm they have had regard to the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

The PCC Safeguarding Policy was agreed by the Trustees in June 2023, in accordance with that of the Church of England.

Activities and Achievements

Membership on the parochial Electoral Roll increased from 129 to 141 between 2023 and April 2024.

Worship and prayer in 2023

Sunday services continued as in previous years with our principal Sunday morning services regularly enhanced by music led by Choral Scholars and/or our Come and Sing voluntary choir. After much deliberation by the PCC, we were pleased to restore the practice of the 'common cup' at the Eucharist, a decision welcomed by the congregation.

Numbers attending Sunday worship remained at about the same level as in 2022.

Occasional offices included: 18 baptisms, and one thanksgiving for the birth of a child; three weddings, and one blessing of a civil marriage; 5 funerals, 2 memorials and 3 interments of ashes. 6 candidates (including 2 adults) were confirmed by the Bishop of Kensington, who also received one adult into the Church of England.

The Coronation of HRH King Charles was celebrated in church with a service of prayers on the evening before the Coronation service, and a Choral Eucharist the day after, followed by a hugely popular community bring and share picnic in the church gardens.

Major festivals like Easter and Christmas followed the same pattern as in 2022. Holy Week included a series of meditations on Zoom; a renewed Way of the Cross service for children and families on Good Friday, and the Vigil for Holy Saturday in the late afternoon. Easter Day services were well attended, and were followed by refreshments in the church garden in the warm spring sunshine.



Christmas Carol services included two raising money for outside charities, and a very successful Nine Lessons and Carols where the collection was taken for our own Charity Pot.

Morning and Evening Prayer were said daily on weekdays in church by the Vicar and lay staff, occasionally joined by visitors.

The church was open daily from 8am – 6pm. The church gardens were open daily throughout the year.

Nurture

The Little Lambs Sunday School for preschool and primary aged children was expanded to twice-monthly in term time, with growing numbers of children (and parents accompanying pre-schoolers) involved. Two leaders run each session, having been appropriately trained and DBS cleared. These sessions introduce the children to popular Bible stories, songs and prayers to the children, with age appropriate activities. Parents are encouraged to join in and take seriously their role in teaching their children the Christian faith.

The midweek 'Sunday School on Wednesday' provided preparation of three primary aged children

for Confirmation; another teenager was prepared separately. Three adults also took part in a series of weekday sessions in church. Two were confirmed, and the third received into the Church of



England. Sadly, after the summer holidays it proved impossible to continue providing Sunday School on Wednesday, as children moved up to secondary school. It was put on hold for the time being.

Lent and Advent discussion groups ran as usual. In Lent we met for discussion on Wednesday mornings at a member's home, using the Bishop of Kensington's book *Failure*. For Advent, on Sundays after the main service, we engaged in a discussion based on the Church of England's *Living in Love and Faith Report*, with a view to making prayers and blessings for same sex couples available in church. Night Prayers were said on Zoom during the weeks of both Lent and Advent.

Engagement and mission

Monthly visits to the local nursing home continued, involving a small team of lay people and the Vicar. We also share visits to a second nursing home nearby with a neighbouring church.

Christmas Carol services were provided in each place.

The Second Half Club continued through the year with the familiar pattern of exercise sessions and refreshments offered each Friday. The club is supported by a member of the congregation who welcomes and serves those who attend. These sessions provide a warm and welcoming space to enhance greater physical and mental wellbeing in older people.

A new Parent and Baby group was launched at the end of 2023 by one of our members, meeting once a month. Participants are invited via local parents' networks as well as through our own publicity. In these early stages, the sessions are places where parents meet over coffee, while the babies play or sleep. It is hoped to include toddlers in the group in the near future, and provide an opportunity for learning more about the Christian faith as well.

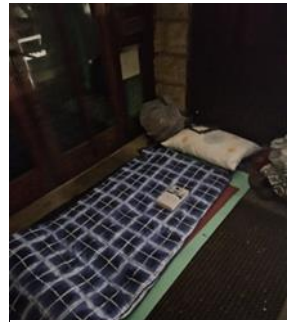
The church space continued being used by local private schools for concerts, presentations, and the occasional religious assembly. Sadly the one state primary school in the parish decided in September that, because of the numbers of children being withdrawn from assemblies in church, it is no longer practical for the school to come to church for whole school assemblies. Year groups continue to access the church as a place where RE and Art curricula may be enhanced.

During Advent we hosted two Charity Carol Services generating funds for their causes. For the third time, we shared an outdoor

Community Christmas Carols event with the next door parish of St Luke's, Redcliffe Square, bringing together more than 400 local people to sing carols and enjoy hospitality sponsored by a local business.

Collections of foodstuffs for the local food banks and homeless charity continued throughout the year, with volunteers transporting donations to the relevant sites. Donations were sustained both by members of the congregation and neighbours, and have been more necessary as the cost of living crisis becomes more and more severe. A substantial Harvest collection of foodstuffs from both the church and school were also given to the local foodbanks. A special campaign called Twelve Days of Christmas invited donations of food to support households during the Christmas holidays when foodbanks were not open.

The church gardens continue to be a place of respite and refreshment for local people to enjoy, and can be hired for use by private parties and community groups. Some new benches were placed in the garden by local families in memory of loved ones, and these are used daily by local visitors.



The Vicar and Verger once again participated in the 'Sleep Out' for Glass Door Homeless Charity

The annual Church Fair was held in September using the whole church building complex and grounds. The funds raised were for the charities supported through the church's Charitable Pot.

We launched a newly designed website, which can be updated easily from our parish office, and we are now using social media, including A Church Near You for greater visibility online.

Hospitality and Welcome

St Mary's offers welcome to all who come to church, regardless of age, ethnicity, religious background, gender or sexuality. We strive to be fully accessible using large print material, a hearing loop, and ramped entrance as well as accessible toilet facilities. We continued to publish a monthly newsletter and provide electronic and hard copies via email and postal services. The major works planned for the west end include upgrading the access for wheelchair users.

The church has remained open for individual prayer and meditation daily. The Vicar works from an office in church and is available to visitors or those seeking prayer or counsel. The Office is open daily from 9am – 5pm.

All volunteers working among children and vulnerable adults have had DBS checks and been appropriately trained according to our Safeguarding policy. The Trustees affirm that safeguarding is the responsibility of all members of the church, and are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all those who are vulnerable (children, young people and vulnerable adults).

Longer term goals

The hall and kitchen will also be refurbished, and a move from gas to electric heating and cooking is planned. A substantial refurbishment and repair of the church organ is to be undertaken, with funds specifically raised for this purpose. St Mary's will hold a new general Stewardship Campaign, incorporated into a broader campaign for a renewal of our church's work and ministry to grow the congregation both numerically and spiritually.

From the registers: the year in numbers

	Notes	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Communions							
Easter		100	104	106	0	119	94
Christmas Midnight		63	90	50	50	70	81
Christmas morning		111	92	96	60	78	44
Attendance							
Easter		184	185	145	0	178	178
Christmas		422	436	250	170	433	427
Sunday Average Attendance (over 16 years)		78	82	74	60	80	81
Average Sunday Attendance (all ages)		90	94	83	67	87	93
Occasional offices							
Baptisms		18	18	13	10	10	21
Confirmations		6	3	2	0	1	10
Weddings		3	18	6	3	5	5
Blessing of Marriage after a Civil Ceremony		1	0	0	0	1	0
Funerals		6	13	15	12	15	11
Memorial Services		2	2	1	0	2	4
Burial of Ashes		3	2	1	1	7	

Time to Remember / Milestones

Restoration of the 'common cup' at each Eucharist, after the end of the COVID pandemic.

Margarete Geier was honoured to receive the King's Maundy Purse at York Minster – now on display in the Treasury in the South Transept.



We celebrated the Coronation of King Charles, with special services and a parish community bring and share picnic.

The Vicar was honoured to be installed at St Paul's Cathedral as Prebendary of Mora (an honorary Canon) with many people from the congregation in attendance for the service. She continues as Area Dean of Chelsea until September 2024. She also continues serving on the Chaplaincy team at St Mellitus Theological College.

We presented 7 candidates (adults and children) for baptism and confirmation by the new Bishop of Kensington, the Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson on the occasion of her first visit to St Mary's.



Sheila Gibbs marked her 60th anniversary attending St Mary's, and shared her celebration with us, over champagne after the 10.30am Eucharist

Hilda Cain celebrated her 95th birthday with us, with a special cake after church, and a surprise appearance of 4 of our older teenagers who Hilda has known all their lives.



Two very longstanding members of the congregation died in 2023 – Doreen Santanna and Boo Simpson. Both are remembered in the Book of Remembrance, and will be remembered in church on the anniversary of their deaths.

New members joined our church, including 16 children who were baptised in 2023, while we were sad to say farewell to others, including the Wallvoord family who moved back to the US at the end of the year.

Jenny Welsh,
Vicar

Deanery Synod Report

During the course of 2023 the Chelsea Deanery Synod met four times: at St Simon Zelotes, St Mary The Boltons, Chelsea Old Church and HTB Queen's Gate. This Deanery covers a lively area of London with diverse congregations and worship styles and is made up of nine parishes and several hospital and school chaplaincies. Praying for sister Deanery churches is an important part of our parish prayer ministry and this is greatly assisted when we have regular meaningful conversations with all parts of the Deanery.

At present the Area Dean of Chelsea is our own Revd Jenny Welsh and the Synod Secretary is our PCC Secretary, Joanna Hackett. The Area Dean, assisted by her Parish Manager, arranges high quality speakers to present to Deanery Synod on a range of relevant subjects throughout the year. Usual attendance is between 30 and 40 and minutes are always circulated after Deanery meetings for the benefit of those who were unable to attend. During the course of the past year Chelsea Deanery Synod has welcomed speakers on the themes of:

Refugees – If and how they are welcomed to individual churches and how can we ensure they are welcomed warmly and appropriately. It was heart-warming to learn of the initiatives, from free meals to English lessons, which are currently taking place across this Deanery.

Growing Younger – What this means in reality for today’s Church when children and parents have many other demands on their time and interests. It was disconcerting to learn that if a church has six or more regular attendees aged under 18, then it is in the top 10% of “younger” churches nationally.

Racial Justice – A lively discussion around how parishes can work towards making their churches as multiracial as the neighbourhoods which they serve. It was agreed that the clergy has done well in recent years in multiracial representation, but this is not always replicated in laity roles.

It is the responsibility of an Area Dean to convene the synod on a regular basis, and as well as the above meetings the Deanery also thoroughly enjoyed a purely social evening hosted in the lovely grounds of Chelsea Old Church last summer. If you would like any further information on the workings of Chelsea Deanery Synod, please speak to either of our current representatives; Margarete Geier and myself.

Joanna Hackett

Chelsea Deanery Synod Secretary

Music

The year began with a month-long mini-sabbatical for me, during which the music was entrusted to the more-than-capable hands of Clíodna Shanahan, who did a sterling job by all accounts - thanks so

much, Clíodna! And thanks also to the other regular deputies, Charlie Andrews and Makoto James for keeping the show on the road so well at other points during the year.

The volunteer choir had an excellent year, with ten or so full-blooded performances on the first Sundays, much appreciated by the congregation. In tandem with that, the choral scholar scheme continues to thrive, albeit recruiting and retaining a full cohort of four has proven trickier than ever.

In the Academic year 2022-3, we continued to enjoy the voices of choral scholars Charlotte Kennedy and Louisa Kataria, and were sorry to bid them a fond farewell in July. We congratulate Louisa on her appointment as choral scholar at St Martin in the Fields, and we are proud when scholars are able to go on to prestigious appointments, fortified by their St Mary's experiences as with Kate Lowe to



Choral Scholars Charlotte Kennedy & Louisa Kataria with Jenny on their last Sunday with us.

Guildford, and Louisa Stuart-Smith to Trinity, Cambridge in previous years. We are of course delighted former scholars keep in touch with us at St Mary's, and I know all scholars past and present have been hugely grateful when a familiar face or two from St Mary's has popped up in their recital audiences in other places. We were joined in September by Alexandra Francis, an RCM Masters student, and Sebastian Tsang, a Mathematician from Imperial (and former St Paul's chorister). We found ourselves unable to find a tenor, and Joseph Guillon, our bass, found the pressures of final year work at Imperial too onerous to combine with the scholarship and had to bow out at

Christmas. We've been grateful to those singers who helped us out during this time, notably tenor John Beaumont, who has covered many services for us.

Holy Week and Easter services are always special at St Mary's, and the pattern for Good Friday varies from year to year - we were thrilled in 2023 to have Danae Eleni and Jacki Connell give a fabulous rendition of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* on Good Friday, and the octet delivered a splendid '*Sparrow Mass*' for Easter Sunday - now a St Mary's tradition. September marked a special birthday for me. Thanks to Jenny and the PCC for allowing me to mark this with a choral evensong with a choir of friends, and a small celebration afterwards - and thanks to those who attended or helped with the occasion. (See Katrina's article in a previous *Clarion* about this and the 'other' September evensong, when I took my school choir to Southwark Cathedral).

There were some twenty special services requiring music in 2023 included one memorial service, one thanksgiving for a child, four funerals, three weddings, and two by now regular 'external' carol services (Susan Metcalfe, and Glass Door). I'm grateful to the team of visiting singers and organists who helped create such wonderful music for those occasions.

In June, Choral Scholar Charlotte Kennedy gave a recital for us after the Sunday service, entitled *Dear Friend: Words and Music as a Gift*, offering a selection of music around the theme of gifts including music from Debussy, Mozart and Copland.

The big issue of the year which I have left till last is the organ. We have commissioned a report from expert organ adviser William McVicker on the state of our organ. The headlines of that report are:

- the organ is historically significant and worthy of preservation - as an example of the neoclassical trend in British organ building, perhaps most famously exemplified at the Royal Festival Hall, Brompton Oratory, and most locally of all at the Servite Priory on Fulham Rd.

- the instrument is in need of a thorough tuning and regulating (regulating meaning checking all the notes of a particular stop make the same kind of sound, and at the same volume) - this is a painstaking and time-consuming job; a smaller amount of similar work is needed to address some unevenness and rattling at the console. (A previous quiz question about how many pipes the organ had rather stumped people - the answer is over 1600 - the Albert Hall famously has 9999, by way of comparison!)

- part of the reason this has got out of hand is the difficulty of access to the top half of the organ, which has become particularly dirty and neglected - any works will need to bring access in line with 2024 health and safety standards and expectations.

- there is also the need to re-leather the individual components under each pipe which have begun to leak - some of these get patched up on tuning visits, but rather like a roof with crumbling tiles, this is only likely to deteriorate and become more costly to address over time. This is perhaps the more substantial, and in a way 'least glamorous', part of the project but the most important in terms of the long-term upkeep of the instrument.

I have already have several conversations with folks keen to understand more, and shown them these issues at close hand, and would be happy to do so again for interested parties.

I conclude as I always do with huge thanks for the appreciation shown by the congregation, PCC and Vicar here for the music. I am so blessed to work in such a supportive community.

John Ward

Director of Music / Organist

Safeguarding

The Church Safeguarding Officer (CSO) is a PCC appointment required of all parishes in England and Wales and is charged with working to ensure and promote the wellbeing of both young people and vulnerable adults. A hard copy of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook is available via the Parish Office or you can visit www.safeguarding.london.anglican.org if you are interested in finding out more information from the Diocese.

Clair Gordon is in her seventh year as appointed CSO. Clair works alongside Joanna Hackett who is the Parish Evidence Checker who in this role carries out the DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks on all persons in a role that brings them into contact with anyone who could be at risk. This now includes members of the PCC. Rosie Meckiff is a member of the PCC who can also be contacted with any Safeguarding queries and Jane Ellard, who runs the Parish Office, is back-up for DBS checking.

Group activities are thriving, including Sunday School twice a month in term time, a monthly Baby Group, a mid-week school (until the summer), confirmation classes and Second Half Club. All group leaders have an up-to-date DBS and both leaders and helpers will be

asked to sign up to the Diocesan Code of Conduct on safeguarding good practice via the Volunteer Agreement Form.

St Mary's is now all signed up and a part of the new Diocese Safeguarding Hub and we continue to populate this platform, with PCC approval. The PCC have reviewed the PCC Safeguarding Policy Statement and The Parish Safeguarding Info Poster were updated and placed up in the entrance to Church. There have been no safeguarding concerns in the last 12 months. The next PCC Safeguarding review will be in September 2024.

Fiona Parsons still holds the role of Champion for Vulnerable Adults with Chris & Katie Fowkes who continue as Children's Champions for St Mary's. Many thanks to the three of them for their continued work in these important roles within our Community.

The vulnerable adults' policy from the Diocese is also available and provides helpful guidance for members of St Mary's who are in contact with vulnerable adults in an informal manner.

It is considered best practice for all members of the PCC to have a DBS check every three years (as opposed to five previously) and this process is ongoing to ensure everyone is up to date.

Online training for all those involved with children, young people and vulnerable adults is recommended by the Diocese including; Church Safeguarding Officers, PCC members, licensed lay ministers, children's champions and those working with any vulnerable group (children, young people or vulnerable adults). This is ongoing to ensure everyone is up to date.

The PCC have complied with the duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding.

Please contact the Safeguarding Officer if you require further information.

Clair Gordon

Church Safeguarding Officer

Sunday School

St Mary's Sunday School 'Little Lambs' has been running for a year and a half, after being reopened just in time for the nativity play in 2022. Prior to this there had been a break of over two years - prompted by the pandemic in 2020 - and the previous cohort of Little Lambs were little no longer. The initial focus was to keep children around preschool and lower primary age engaged and involved with the church; however the Sunday School has adapted to include all children at St Mary's. Younger children are also welcome and do often attend, usually accompanying their siblings.

Since reopening, Little Lambs has attracted a growing group of regular children during the 10:30am service. We often have a group of between ten to fifteen children, with ages spanning anywhere from a few months (preschoolers accompanied by an adult) to 12 years old. The children greatly enjoy the activities, which include a bible story, song, prayer and related craft. When the weather permits we take our Sunday School sessions outside into the church garden, such as during the Harvest Thanksgiving service, and later this year we are planning a summer party. We have made peg dolls and coats for the story of Joseph, paper plate Noah's arks, flag bunting for the tower of Babel and many others. Examples of these

are often on display in the children's room at the back of the church.

With the kind support of Clair Gordon and Chris Fowkes we were able to put on another wonderful nativity play in 2023, with an impressive 24 children taking part. With the older children keen to narrate we had our youngest Mary and Joseph, which led to a memorable production!



After a drive during 2023 to encourage more Sunday School volunteers we were able to increase our term time only sessions from once a month to the first and third Sunday of the month. We would dearly like to expand this provision. In future we would like to run Sunday School on every Sunday bar one during term time. We believe that it is important that the children occasionally experience a full service. We would also like to modify the provision to include teaching for the older children as the current lessons are aimed at the younger primary cohort. However, we are struggling to find lead volunteers to help with this expansion and so Sunday School will remain as it is for now. It's worth noting all current volunteers have their own young children, which comes with its own limitations! We would therefore love to have others join us on our supportive Sunday School team – it is a very rewarding experience to spend the morning with a room full of youthful energy. You will be supported by another volunteer during the session and be back in church in time for communion. Please do consider if you are able to help, even with a minimum commitment of four sessions per year. Full DBS checks, training and resources are provided.

For more information on St Mary's Sunday School, or if you would like to volunteer, please

email sundayschool@stmarytheboltons.org.uk or contact Rosie on 07905 245652 or Candice on 07898 970379.

Rosie Meckiff-Mengel & Candice Lee

Verger's Report

Firstly, a huge thank you to all who volunteer throughout the week and on Sundays to enable things to run smoothly here. Early 2023 saw the demolition (aided by Jane Ellard, the Parish Manager, with a crowbar) of our truly rotten garden shed to be replaced just before Easter with a brand-new shed. Our new church heating system

continues to be very efficient, bringing the church up to temperature in about half the time of the old system. Significant stonework repairs took place in Autumn and early Winter to the west end of the church. Bookings for parties have largely returned to pre-Covid levels.

Paint Pots nurseries and creative classes continue to be our main hirer throughout the week with a busy

schedule of evening community bookings. Thank you to Sunday Akande our early morning hall cleaner for all he does. Notable bookings in church included a recital for Ukraine, as well as local primary school events. Our gardens continue to be much appreciated by the local community; with thanks to Louisa Allan and her team for their regular maintenance visits.

Dave Ireton

Verger and Caretaker



The Prayer Network

The Prayer Network is an important part of our corporate life. All requests for prayer are sent as quickly as possible to the Prayer Network people by email. A monthly Bulletin, with all the updates incorporated, is distributed to everyone also by email. Fourteen present and former parishioners constitute the Network. About 40 people are prayed for by the Prayer Network people, but this number fluctuates.



Most requests and updates come from the people of the Network itself or the Parish Office. It is important that changes or progress are also noted and passed on, as this keeps the prayers and intercessions relevant, and the intercessors interested. The intercessors use the list entirely as it suits them, not according to any particular instructions or pattern.

Verena Tschudin

The Clarion

The parish magazine, *The Clarion*, is available in Church usually on the last Sunday before the next month; we have double issues for July/August and December/January.

The purpose of *The Clarion* is to inform, educate, stimulate, and occasionally amuse readers and a good mix of all these is the aim. Reports of events and items of interest relating to the parish, often also items from the Diocesan Newsletter, and adverts for events, are the aim. Apart from three issues of only 8 pages, all other issues in 2023 were 12 pages in length.

The Clarion is the parish 'voice' and to make as many people's voices as possible heard, everyone is encouraged to send material, of whatever kind, ideally by email, either to the Parish Office, or to my email address, no longer than 500 words and possibly with some illustration. Items regarding the Readings at services, notices of planned events when available, the names of people whose Year's Mind occurs during the month, and the Parish Directory, are the main reasons for having a parish magazine.

Hard copies are available in church and in the porch throughout the relevant month, and emails of the magazine's PDF are sent to everyone on the parish database.

The Parish Administrator does all the collating and outlay of the magazine's texts and very many thanks are due to her for this essential work.

Verena Tschudin
Clarion Editor

Flowers

Katrina and I are always grateful when people donate to have flowers for all our services in church, for special occasions – celebrations, commemorations, and for special events, including funerals, memorial services, baptisms and weddings.

Margarete Geier



Hospitality and Social Life

We are very glad to have continued with our bring and share lunches including special celebrations on 4 -5 different occasions with wine and canapes.

A reception was held in Church after a funeral for a longstanding member of the Parish. Coffee after our Sunday services could not take place without the help of our volunteers who do it Sunday after Sunday. A big, big thank you to everybody, who is always willing to help.

Margarete Geier
Social Secretary



A coffee morning for Macmillan
Cancer Support in October

Sacristy

The sacristy work is mostly preparing for all our worship (communions, looking after vestments, silver and linen). As reported in the past, the vestments are getting very old and worn. We should be thinking of replacing one or two.

Margarete Geier
Sacristan

Website

Towards the end of 2022, we were able to launch our new and updated website, and in the course of 2023 to continue adjusting it as we got used to what it offered.

With many thanks to Lexi Martel and the team at Akros designs, we are now pleased to have a website which is more user-friendly – and crucially, much more straightforward to edit from the Parish Office, so that it is easier to keep up to date.

Jane Ellard, Parish Manager

Reading Volunteers at St Cuthbert with St Matthias School

During the last 12 months a small group of volunteers have continued at St Cuthbert with St Matthias School at Earls Court. We listen to the children reading on a one-to-one basis. It is very rewarding for the volunteers. It is a privilege to assist not only with their reading but encouraging them to love books.

I give below quotes from two volunteers.

“The children are from many different countries with varying personalities and the most interesting ones are the children who ask questions and are curious. Very occasionally a child brings a book which especially interests them, I remember one child bringing a book of poems written by children which was intriguing”

“Well, we could write about Santa...”

Unfortunately, at the end of the winter term Santa was indisposed. One of our longstanding volunteers was approached by two giggling members of staff who begged him to stand in as Santa. John donned a very synthetic red and white costume with tickly beard and entered Santa’s grotto. He was assisted by two beautiful elves, the Year 2 teacher and her assistant. Santa enjoyed handing out goodies and having his photo taken with many of the children. Most of them didn’t recognise him, but some gave him a long hard stare and said, ‘It’s you, John, isn’t it?’”



Regretfully we have been a smaller group recently because of health problems with some of our volunteers.

I do hope that some more people will feel able to volunteer – do talk to me about it. I am at St Mary's most Sundays or you can contact me by phone or e-mail. The parish office has my details.
Sheila Gibbs

Charity Committee

St Mary The Boltons' Charity Committee members met at least four times this year and include The Reverend Prebendary Jenny Welsh, Philip Bedford-Smith, Alex Irvine-Fortescue, Alex Burtt and Caroline Jackson, the latter two Co-Chairing the Committee since the beginning of 2024. The Committee is looking to increase its membership by the end of the year to assist with charity selection and communication, along with fund raising events.

Substantial funds were raised from a successful Lent Appeal, Cake Sale, Autumn Fair, and various Christmas Services. Due to the 'lockdown' periods during Covid, charities supported in 2022 were rolled over for another year. The following charities were supported:

- **USPG's PARTNER IN MISSION, MALAWI**, a principal international charity currently with one year's final support (note: USPG works in partnership with local churches around the world and, over the past few years, we have supported a project in Malawi which aims to reduce poverty in four specific rural communities by helping tackle food insecurity in the region);
- **LEARN TO LOVE TO READ**, a principal two-year local charity providing reading skills for disadvantaged children;
- **LYRA IN AFRICA**, an international charity with one final year of support, which provides education and income opportunities for girls and women in Tanzania;

- **BEACON HOUSE – EVOLVE**, a one-year local charity selected for assistance in its work to provide sixteen single homeless young people with varying housing, education, job training and mental health support;
- **PAUL'S CANCER SUPPORT**, a local charity, which helped anyone affected by cancer, and originally chosen for one year support. Since the charity has now ceased operations, the donations allocated for distribution to the charity from 2023 will now be shared with Beacon House & Lyra, two fellow smaller above-mentioned charities. Exceptionally, the charity committee has agreed to reserve £500 from this re-distribution for the establishment of an Emergency Fund.

The 2023 Charitable Pot stands at £14,300. Please see the note on page 19 of the accounts for details of the distribution from the 2023 charitable pot.

2024 Charity Support:

In 2024, we will raise money for the following five charities:

- **USPG's PARTNER IN MISSION, DELHI BROTHERHOOD SOCIETY WOMEN'S HELPLINE:**
This principal international charity will receive our support for one year for its helpline to assist the needs of abused women in Northern India. It provides an identifiable and clear need for assistance and links us with the Anglican Council of India;
- **LEARN TO LOVE TO READ:** continuing support;
- **THROUGH THE ROOF:** The charity is a non-profit entity, selected for one year's support which delivers wheelchairs to people in third world countries, giving mobility to the disabled and transforming their lives in terms of potentially better health, social and education outcomes;

- **BEACON HOUSE:** continuing support;
- **EARL'S COURT YOUTH CLUB (ECYC):** It is proposed that this local charity should receive one year's support, with the possibility of becoming the principal local non-profit organisation with a future two years of support. ECYC works with young people aiming to provide a safe and welcoming environment for those aged 9 to 19 years (and up to the age of 25 with a disability) in order to promote personal, social and educational development.

SUMMARY: The Charity Committee is pleased to report that 2023 was a successful year for donations into the Charitable Pot and is looking for another promising year in 2024. The Committee recognises the hard work and generosity of St Mary The Boltons' volunteers and donors, including parishioners and local residents, who have contributed to the successful support of local and international charities over the years and we thank one and all for their valuable time and efforts.

Alex Burtt

on behalf of the Charity Committee

Gift Aid

In the tax year ending 5 April 2023 we received £22,405 from HMRC for Gift Aid. Every year this makes a valuable contribution to our total income, and I would like to thank all those for whom we hold a Gift Aid Declaration and have been able to reclaim an extra 25% on your donations.

In recent months we have started to encourage church members to give through the Parish Giving Scheme. More information is available on this scheme on leaflets available at the back of church, or please speak to the Treasurer or the Parish Office. Gift aid on donations

made through the scheme will be collected by the PGS each month on behalf of St Mary's, but in other respects the amounts we claim will be exactly the same. I will continue to reclaim tax on all other donations that are paid directly into the St Mary's bank account.

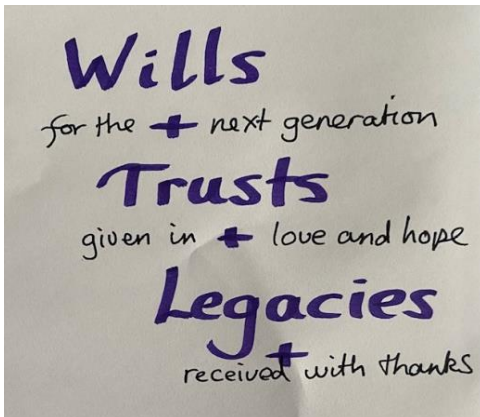
Amounts claimed on loose collections under the Small Donations Scheme will also continue as up to now.

Gift Aid Declaration forms will continue to be available from me or from the Church Office, and may be completed either manually or electronically.

Philip Bedford Smith
Gift Aid Secretary

Wills, Trusts and Legacies

Why is it that Legacies come with a frisson of excitement, but Wills and Trusts tend to be put away and left in the too difficult to contemplate basket? Yet they fall into the same category as many other everyday things in our lives. Like the utilities which we depend



on in our homes, it is better not to ignore them until it is too late. Rather, like utilities it is better to keep them well serviced and up to date. Then they can fulfil the purpose for which they were designed. Wills and Trusts can be used to channel assets and resources to where the person making the will or creating the

trust really wants them to go. Gifts in will and trusts are made for the next generation. They are made with love and in hope. Like the

utilities that we use at home, legacies will be received with thanks, and they can make a lasting effect.

Did you know that St Mary's has an established Legacy Policy? This sets out the way in which we will use general legacies to make a difference to the life and mission of the church rather than to pay routine running costs. If you have a specific wish please do not hesitate to get in touch to discuss how you might wish your legacy to be used.

Legacy statistics over the last 10 years

- In how many years did we receive a legacy: 3, 5 or 6?
- What was the 10 year total value of legacies? £33,500, £55,399, or £65,000?
- Did you know that the climate friendly and energy efficient LED lighting in church was funded through a legacy?

(answers on the inside back cover)

The PCC is the managing trustee of three long term trusts. Two benefit St Mary's directly, while the benefit from the third is indirect only. Brief details of these trust funds follow.

Redcliffe Gardens Trust was established in 1910 and originally owned No 11 Redcliffe Gardens, which was to operate as church hall and provide accommodation for assistant clergy or church staff. But with considerable foresight the purposes of the trust were widely drawn and the Trust provided significant funding for the last major refurbishment of the church in Y2000. In recent years income has been retained and it is good to able to report that the total assets of the trust at the end of 2023 (cash and marketable investments) were valued at £508,913. Some of this is held as

permanent capital but some is available for spending, and the PCC has previously committed to using some of the available funds to achieve our Net Zero Carbon targets. In view of the size of the trust separate financial accounts have been prepared and a treasurer's report is contained in those accounts.

St Peter's Trust was created in 1926 and the income from the endowment is available for paying the clergy, or maintaining the building, ornaments or paying for the choir. In 2023 income arising from the fund, some £1,192 was paid to the PCC to assist with these expenses.

Louisa Wilson Legacy is the result of a gift in the Will of Louisa M Wilson who died in 1947 and left to the church her leasehold property in The Little Boltons. This was sold in the 1950s and the proceeds have been invested in the Church of England Investment Fund since 1957. Income for many years has been retained by the Diocese of London, as custodian trustee, and has been paid into the Diocesan Stipends Fund on the grounds that this is the best way to meet the original purpose of the legacy. At the end of 2023 the value of this fund was £74,643.

Hon Treasurer

Leo Fraser-Mackenzie

Answers to the Questions on p40 – We have received a legacy in 6 out of the last 10 years, and the total received over ten years was £55,399. The odd figure is explained by the fact that one generous legacy was for a percentage of the residue of the estate.

The PCC of St Mary with St Peter & St Jude, West Brompton,
is a Registered Charity, No 1133073
www.stmarytheboltons.org.uk
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