



The Parish of St Mary's Long Ditton

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

12th May 2024

Registered Charity
Number 1128898

Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 12 May 2024
AGENDA

1. Opening Prayers
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of last year's Annual Meeting held on 21 May 2023 and of the Special Meeting held on 30 July 2023
4. Matters arising from the Minutes
5. Report on changes in Electoral Roll since last year's Annual Meeting and a report on the numbers entered on that Roll
6. Annual Report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and the activities of the Parish generally
7. The presentation to the Parochial Church Council of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2023, which have been independently examined
8. Report on Stewardship
9. Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church
10. Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
11. Report on the proceedings of Churches Together in the Dittons
12. Report on Safeguarding
13. Report regarding Music
14. Report regarding Children's Activities
15. Report regarding Community Engagement
16. Report regarding Eco Church
17. Report regarding Long Ditton St Mary's Junior School
18. Appointment of Tellers
19. Election of Parochial Church Council Members
20. Appointment of an independent examiner
21. Election of Emly Deanery Synod representatives
22. Rector's Remarks
23. Any Other Business
24. Closing Prayers

ST MARY'S CHURCH, LONG DITTON

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

25 May 2022

MINUTES

1. Opening Prayers

The Chairman opened the meeting with prayers.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Julia Watts, Cat Smith, Tessa Vallings, Janet Critchley, Pauline Law, Jill Rogers, Katherine Lankey, Florence Caley, John Fleetwood.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 April 2022 and 23 October 2022 were accepted as a true record of the meetings and unanimously **approved** by those present.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5. Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll report presented by Janet Critchley, the Electoral Roll Officer, was accepted. It was noted that there were 112 names on the Roll, an increase on the previous year.

6. Annual Report of the PCC

The report on the proceedings of the PCC over the past year, presented by the Hon PCC Secretary, Penny Fussell, was noted. The key concerns of the past year had been safeguarding (policies, training and procedures), the parish fundraising programme, events and outreach, and a communications strategy. It was noted that the Community Hall Manager and Parish Secretary (Jo Lee) had been replaced by Mandy Ali and that Robert Woolley had been appointed organist.

7. Financial Statement

The Rector advised that the financial statements of the year ended 31 December 2021 had yet to be independently examined. A Special PCM therefore would be held in due course to examine and agree the accounts.

8. Stewardship

The Rector advised that the Stewardship Report at the Special PCM.

9. Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church

The report by the Churchwardens was accepted and Sue Rider and Robert Hancock were thanked for their work and care of the church, churchyard and Community Hall. It was noted that the Quinquennial inspection recently had been undertaken. Any recommendations would be brought to the PCC during the next year for attention.

- 10. Deanery Synod**

The report presented by Chris Howard (St Mary's Deanery Synod representative) on the proceedings of the Emly Deanery Synod was noted.
- 11. Churches Together in the Dittons**

The report by Cathy Doyle, CTD representative, on the proceedings of the CTD was noted.
- 12. Safeguarding**

A report presented by Cat Smith, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, was noted. It was noted that with Cat's diligence and guidance the PCC was on top of the requirements laid out in the Diocesan Parish Dashboard. This online tool enabled each parish to maintain a record of safeguarding issues, facilitated an audit of actions and policies and produces actions plans.
- 13. Music**

A report, presented by Julia Bowyer, Choir Director, was noted. The choir and organists were thanked for their dedication and hard work in providing a range of inspiring music at a high standard as an integral part of worship at St Mary's.
- 14. Children's Activities**

A report, presented by Christine Satkunanayagam was noted. All activities were continuing with a good number of attendees.
- 15. Community Engagement**

A report by Diana Jemmett, a Pastoral Assistant, on community engagement was noted. Principal engagement was through the *Lychgate* magazine, Babes'n'Tots, Friendship Lunches, the programme of BookBox and MusicBox events, the Easter Craft Fair, Pet Service and the Long Ditton Lights Up!
- 16. Eco Church**

A report by Fay Tiplady, St Mary's Eco Champion, was noted. The assistance of pupils from Surbiton High School and members of the 1st Long Ditton Guide group in caring for the churchyard was highlighted, and the invaluable work of Peter and Judith Topp in their regular churchyard tidy-up mornings was warmly thanked.
- 17. Long Ditton St Mary's Church of England Junior School**

A report by Sarah Martin, Headteacher, was noted. Highlights of the year were a very positive Ofsted inspection and a closer working relationship with Long Ditton Infants School with whom LDSM had formed a 'soft federation'.
- 18. Appointment of Tellers**

No tellers were appointed.
- 19. Election of Parochial Church Council members**

There were no nominations.
- 20. Appointment of an independent examiner**

It was unanimously agreed that Martin Perrin be re-appointed as the independent examiner. Martin was thanked for all his help and guidance to Sarah Carvalho during her first year in office as Hon Treasurer.

21. Rector's Remarks

The Rector thanked all those who gave their time and experience in the myriad of roles and activities throughout the year. However, public facing or behind the scenes, the work of all was greatly appreciated and invaluable together enabling St Mary's church in its worship and ministry within the parish.

22. Any Other Business

The Rector invited Peter Topp to give a verbal report on the fire risk assessment outlining the background to the assessment and procedures to follow in the case of a fire.

23. Vote of thanks

On behalf of the APCM, Robert Hancock thanked the Rector and the Curate for their dedication and commitment to St Mary's.

24. Closing Prayers

The Rector closed the meeting with prayers.

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Chairman

ST MARY'S CHURCH, LONG DITTON
Special Parochial Church Meeting
30 July 2023

MINUTES

36 adults present

1. Opening Prayers

The Chairman opened the meeting with prayers.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Bob Hancock and Ann Leeson.

3. Stewardship Report

The Hon Treasurer, Sarah Carvalho, presented the Stewardship report for 2022. It was noted that the overall number of donors had remained the same and that the total Stewardship income had increased from £78,525 in 2021 to £103,068 in 2022. Sarah commented that the SumUp was more frequently used as a new machine had been installed at the back of Church.

All donors were warmly thanked for their generosity.

4. Financial Statement

The Hon Treasurer presented the financial statement and accounts for the church for the year ending 31st December 2022.

After consideration the meeting unanimously accepted the statement and accounts as presented.

5. The Rector thanked the Hon Treasurer for her careful administration of the church's finances. He also thanked Martin Perrin for his independent examination of the accounts.

6. Closing Prayers

The Rector closed the meeting with prayers.

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Chairman

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

The last revision of the Electoral Roll took place in April 2023 when there were 112 names on the roll.

At this revision, we have reviewed all additions to the roll since then and have also considered whether any names should no longer be included.

I can, therefore, report that as at 16 April 2024, the numbers on the roll have increased by six to 118. We have welcomed eight new applicants, but, sadly, two previous members have passed away during the course of the year.

Under the Church Representation Rules, a new Electoral Roll has to be prepared every six years and this will next take place in 2025.

Being on the Electoral Roll gives you the opportunity to take a greater part in church life and to vote at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. It has been a pleasure to hold the roll of Electoral Roll Officer for the last few years and many thanks to Lucy Wintle for agreeing to take this over following my house move to Bookham. She will be pleased to provide further information about the Electoral Roll should this be of interest.

Janet Critchley
Electoral Roll Officer

REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Vision: *Following Christ, Serving You*

The Vision of St Mary's Church means that we prioritise:

- (i) helping those around us discover faith in Jesus Christ;
- (ii) developing and strengthening our links in the community;
- (iii) engaging a new generation with the good news of the Gospel; and
- (iv) deepening our discipleship and spirituality.

A ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The general functions of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of the Parish of St Mary's are set out in the Parochial Church Council Measure and The Church Representation Rules. It is the duty of the Rector and the PCC to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish. The PCC works in co-operation with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Additionally, the PCC is required to consider and discuss matters concerning the Church of England or any other matter of religious or public interest, but not the declaration of the doctrine of the Church. The Charities Act also enjoins all charities to demonstrate that their aims are for the public benefit. Accordingly, the PCC has had regard, where relevant, to the public benefit guidance issued by the Charity Commission in carrying out its activities, as described below.

The PCC is responsible for the maintenance and repair of St Mary's Church building (which is Grade 2 listed) and situated in a conservation area at the junction of Church Road, Rectory Lane and Woodstock Lane North (OS grid reference TQ173659). The PCC is registered with the Charity Commission Number 1128898. The correspondence address for St Mary's Church is: The Rectory, 5 Church Meadow, Long Ditton, Surrey KT6 5EP or The Parish Office, St Mary's Community Hall, Church Road, Long Ditton Surrey KT6 5HH.

PCC Membership:

Members of the PCC are appointed in accordance with the Church Representation Rules or co-opted by the PCC during the year. The following served as members of the PCC in 2023/24:

Incumbent	The Revd Dr Kuhan Satkunanayagam	Ex officio
Curate	The Revd Professor Alison Baverstock	Ex officio (from July 2021)
Churchwardens	Robert Hancock	Ex officio
	Susan Rider	Ex officio
Honorary Officers	Sarah Carvalho – Honorary Treasurer	
	Penny Fussell – Honorary Secretary	Co-opted Member of PCC
Deanery Synod Representatives	Chris Howard	Ex officio
Elected Members of the Council	Timothy Rennie	Retires 2024
	Sue Le Roux	Retires 2024
	Joanne Hall	Retires 2024
	Diana Jemmett	Retires 2025
	Catherine Smith	Retires 2025
	Sarah Carvalho	Retires 2025

Sarah Spence
Ann Leeson

Retires 2025
Retires 2025

PCC Advisers

Bankers Barclays Bank plc, Barclays Business Centre, 6 Clarence Street,
Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT1 1NY
Buildings The PCC currently employs John Bailey as its architect
Independent Examiner Mr Martin Perrin MA, FCA, Chartered FCSI

Sub-Committees

The PCC operates through a number of sub-committees which meet at agreed times during the year and then report to the PCC:

- (i) ***Standing Committee.*** This is the only committee required by law. It has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC. The Standing Committee elected by the PCC for the year comprises the Rector, the Churchwardens, the Honorary Treasurer, the Honorary Secretary and Diana Jemmett (an elected Deanery Synod Representative and therefore ex officio member of the PCC).
- (ii) ***Community Hall.*** This committee is responsible for the maintenance and management of St Mary's Community Hall for use by the parish and local community. The committee works to maintain proper budgetary control whilst ensuring external funding requirements are met and health and safety matters comply with current legislation. Appropriate licensing laws and insurance cover is maintained.
- (iii) ***Social Team.*** This team aims to co-ordinate a regular programme of social events and to provide support for any special or fund-raising events.

Churchyard, buildings, health and safety

The Rector and Churchwardens continue to liaise with Elmbridge Borough Council to ensure the grounds are kept safe and presentable. Rob's Garden Services are employed to undertake 'gardening' tasks particularly in the Garden of Rest. The Rector and Churchwardens are also responsible for oversight of the maintenance and development of the buildings and churchyard structures (old mortuary, Garden of Rest walls, stone tablets etc.), as well as any relevant legislation relating to the building, staff, and visitors' and volunteers' health and safety. They are supported in these responsibilities by several volunteers from the church community.

Safeguarding

The PCC considers that it has, to the best of its knowledge, taken all reasonable steps to comply with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have due regard to House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

General Data Protection Regulation

The PCC, to the best of its knowledge, considers that all reasonable steps have, and continue to be taken to comply with the GDPR that came into effect in May 2018. A data audit was conducted, and a Privacy Notice published.

B REVIEW OF PCC PROCEEDINGS OVER THE PAST YEAR

The following report is provided by the Hon Secretary

The PCC met on six occasions during the past year with the following being the primary focus points:

- i. The Parish Funding Programme - to maintain momentum in seeking to increase church income from both within the immediate church community and the wider parish using varying communication methods and fundraising events and initiatives, whilst being mindful of expressing an appreciation to donors for their support. There has been a welcome incremental growth in the church's income but the PCC is acutely aware of the need to continue to be proactive including post-events contact with new people to encourage regular rather than ad hoc giving. The PCC continues to be painfully aware that the future financial viability is paramount enable St Mary's to maintain the fabric of the church and churchyard, to fulfil the church's mission and service through the provision of worship and social activities, to build and strengthen the role of the church within the parish.
- ii. Safeguarding – to maintain a high standard of procedures and adherence to Diocesan policies.
- iii. The maintenance of the church, churchyard and Community Hall – through the offices of the churchwardens, the several recommendations issuing from the Quinquennial Report have been attended to as well as other issues that have arisen including the electrification of the organ and consequential repairs to the organ and the shed housing the organ blower. A combination of church volunteers and contractors provided by Elmbridge Borough Council ensure that the churchyard is cared for, maintaining its beauty, an open space enjoyed by many.
- iv. Risk assessments and safety – the annual review of the important fire risk and health & safety assessments

A major project which the PCC oversaw was the refurbishment of the WCs and the redecoration of the main hall in Community Hall. Led by the indefatigable and dedicated Ann Leeson, this was a super example of a carefully planned and budgeted project funded by donations and grants. Its success has noticeably improved the Community Hall's facilities for all users. Next is planned the refurbishment of the Hall's kitchen, a vital provision for the many social activities and events held by the church and Hall users. The PCC greatly values the Community Hall not only as a communal space for its own activities but also as a means for positive outreach to the wider community and as a source of income.

It goes without saying that the people make St Mary's and the PCC is most grateful to all those who volunteer their time and money to support and further the work, worship and mission of the church in its various and several formats. The PCC, in particular through its work on safeguarding, continued to uphold the need that volunteers are properly trained. The PCC is mindful that much of the work falls on a small number of volunteers and is committed in the next year, to encourage more to volunteer not only to spread the load but also to help encourage engagement and participation in the life of the church. For example, a dedicated core group of volunteer's man the AV system at the 10.15am Sunday Service thus enabling this service to be shared online. There is an aspiration to extend this provision to other services especially

funerals and weddings. However, this is challenging owing to the small number of those trained to operate the AV system.

The PCC wishes to extend its thanks to Mandy Ali who has so expertly taken on the role of Parish Administrator providing support to the Rector and church, and brilliantly managing, and developing, the Community Hall. The PCC also expresses its sincere thanks to those who have bequeathed legacies to St Mary's which have been especially appreciated at this time of financial strictures.

A happy development of the past year, which the PCC has been pleased to support, has been the formalisation of the federation between Long Ditton St Mary's Church of England (Aided) Junior School and Long Ditton Infant & Nursery School. Originating in a friendly association, the formal federation will enable the development of the excellent working relationships developed between the schools bringing budgetary, management, standards and staffing benefits to both schools. The Christian emphasis would be retained with the PCC retaining the right to nominate governors.

At the end of the year, the PCC undertook an exercise to review the communities with whom it reaches and engages and the methods/activities by which it does so. Whilst no glaring gaps or inadequacies were identified, it was agreed that it would be meaningful to keep this under review to prevent the ill-use of valuable resources, to optimise effectiveness and most importantly, to ensure a committed and meaningful engagement was maintained with all associates, friends and church members. Under the leadership of the Rector, the PCC also continues to support new initiatives to further mission, learning and personal support and development. One example of this was the creation of a Kintsugi Wellbeing Hope Group providing mental health support. The Kintsugi Hope charity seeks through these groups, using a series of structured content, to help participants to learn self-management tools and techniques to help them in times of feeling overwhelmed or isolated.

**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF LONG DITTON SURREY
(ST. MARY'S CHURCH LONG DITTON)**

**ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31ST DECEMBER 2023**

**REGISTERED WITH THE CHARITY COMMISSION
NUMBER: 1128898**

To follow

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Donations to the PCC are made through the following channels:

- Planned giving via Standing Order with or without Gift Aid
- One-off giving via the blue envelopes in church with Gift Aid
- The collection plate – falls under the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS)
- The Sum Up contactless payment machine with or without Gift Aid and GASDS

In 2023 we also received a number of one-off donations in relation to the Community Hall refurbishment.

The number of planned givers via Standing Order are as follows:

Total number: 100

Total Donations: £69,227

Total with Gift Aid: £62,915

Gift Aid: £15,729

CAF: £1,260

Of the 100 who gave in the year, 6 were one-off donations, 16 were new in the year and 2 appear to have ceased. This is very encouraging and hopefully will continue.

One-off Giving

Total number: 181

Total Donations: £5,551

Gift Aid: £1,388

Gave once: 136 £1,980

Between 2 and 11: 37 £1,932

12 or more: 8 £1,636

Collection Plate £8,076

Sum Up

Total number: 465

Total donations: £7,300

Gift Aid: 18 £1,285

Under the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme, we can claim for up to £8,000 of donations without a completed gift aid form. In our case this is from the collection plate and Sum Up contactless payment machine

Community Hall Refurbishment

A total of £1,975 was received in cheques of which we can claim £456 in Gift Aid.

Other

Other donations which were not planned or subject to Gift Aid in the year amounted to £9,000 and included £7,500 in memory of Ros Tennent RIP and £600 from the Long Ditton Village Fair. These are not eligible for Gift Aid.

With continued gratitude to all those who give so very generously.

Sarah Carvalho

Honorary Stewardship Treasurer

CHURCHWARDENS' FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS REPORT

Regular hiring of the Community Hall and outside functions in the church have continued to increase during 2023. It has been necessary for the central heating to remain at a lower temperature during the winter months as energy prices remain high; this has had no adverse effect on services or other events.

Maintenance work, to keep the buildings well maintained and to comply with our building insurance, has continued throughout the year. An inspection by the insurers' risk assessment team required us to ensure that ladders for working at height are regularly maintained and inspected with a log made of the checks; this has been undertaken. Other routine maintenance inspections include the roof and vestry fire alarm, hall alarm, boilers, portable electrical appliances, lightning conductor and fire extinguishers and defibrillator. The organ and pianos are tuned, the organ blower and humidifier serviced. The gutters are cleared regularly to avoid water leaking into the church and prevent the build-up of leaf mould.

The church organ has undergone considerable refurbishment to improve performance. This work is planned to finish in early March 2024.

The Quinquennial Report in March identified several areas requiring action over the next 12 months. These were repairs to the north and south aisle roof, pointing and masonry repairs to the west front and south aisle stonework, and masonry repairs to the old mortuary and the Garden of Rest. These have been carried out. Repairs to the Community Hall toilets and Hall generally were also noted.

Thanks to the sterling work of Ann Leeson funding for a raft of refurbishment work to the Community Hall was obtained which has meant redecoration of the main hall, upgrade of the toilets and a new dishwasher.

The main drain from the Community Hall has continued to caused blockage problems. It has been cleared professionally. However, the duct exposed under the second drain cover is fractured and new ducting will be installed in early 2024.

All checks and inspections in the Health and Safety Policy are being carried out with the help of Peter Topp. The annual check on memorials in the churchyard has resulted in those requiring attention being stabilised, none requiring the attention of the stonemason.

The cutting of grass, pollarding of trees and removal of leaves is the responsibility of Elmbridge Borough Council. We have experienced difficulty in getting the grass and leaves cleared on a regular basis. After a visit from Elmbridge Council members, they have ensured their contractors carry out the work according to contract. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the aesthetics of the churchyard. Peter Topp continues to lead his Saturday working party doing general tidying up; Paul Fagan and Don Anderson trim the trees and hedges which are our responsibility. The church is responsible for the Garden of Rest maintenance and we engage a gardener to keep this area tidy. Surbiton High School pupils also spend a day with us in the summer, generally tidying up and planting flowers in selected places.

This report has been presented to and agreed by the PCC prior to the APCM

Robert Hancock & Susan Rider
Churchwardens

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

Our March synod meeting looked at how we can best partner with our local councils. We were joined by Ray Lee, Strategic Director for Elmbridge Borough Council, who helped us think through some of the opportunities that the churches in our deanery have to work with our local council in order to better serve our local communities.

For the June meeting we had Richard Lloyd, Head of the Diocesan Mission Enabler Team, talking about the Parish Needs Process and how small groups can be effective in growing us in discipleship.

The October meeting was via Zoom with David Senior, Diocesan Mission Enabler for stewardship and evangelism, who talked about how parishes have used stewardship campaigns to improve church finances.

Chris Howard
Deanery Synod representative

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN THE DITTONS (CTD) REPORT

Churches Together in the Dittons consists of clergy and lay representatives from the following churches in the Ditton area:

All Saints' (C of E) - Weston Green
Christopher's (C of E) - Hinchley Wood
St Nicholas (C of E) - Thames Ditton
Our Lady of Lourdes (Roman Catholic) - Hampton Way
St Marys (C of E) - Long Ditton.

The group usually meets 4/5 times a year to plan the various ecumenical activities and services.

During 2023 we were able to join again together in fellowship:

- **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** and a **joint service** held at St Christopher's Hinchley Wood.
- **Good Friday** - several churches joined together at Giggs Hill Green for an outdoor service of Witness and hot cross buns!
- **Prayer Tent and Plant crèche** at the Annual Dittons Scout Fair on Giggs Hill Green.
- **St Luke's Tide Healing Service** at St Nicholas's Thames Ditton

CTD continues to strive to show to the wider community that we are all committed in embracing our similarities rather than being concerned with the differences. This is done by celebrating and worshipping together and you are very welcome to join us at any service or event.

THE CT PRAYER- Lord God, we thank you for calling us into the company of those who trust in Christ and seek to obey His Will. May Your Spirit guide and strengthen us in mission and service to Your World, for we are strangers no longer but pilgrims together on the way to Your Kingdom. Amen.

Cathy Doyle
CTD representative

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

We moved into the third year of the Diocesan Parish Dashboard, an online tool to assist each parish to maintain a record of all safeguarding issues and it automatically keeps us up to date with local and national changes in safeguarding requirements. The safeguarding audit is also contained in the dashboard. The dashboard also produces action plans and these are discussed at PCC meetings and are used to inform all safeguarding decisions.

We have developed role descriptions for key roles, to increase the transparency over what a volunteer is required to do, and what support is available from the church.

Thank you to everyone involved in activities for adults and children for your hard work and for your commitment to the safeguarding, nurture and care of everyone in our community.

Of course, safeguarding goes beyond a DBS check or attending training, and it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that St Mary's is a safe place for all.

More safeguarding information is available at:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual>

Anybody who would like to give information or make disclosures about church-related abuse is asked to contact Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Jackie Broadfoot:
jackie.broadfoot@cofeguildford.org.uk 07918 559387

If anyone has any questions about safeguarding, or is made aware of any specific concerns please contact me or the Rector.

Cat Smith
Parish Safeguarding Officer

MUSIC REPORT

St Mary's Church choir continued to enjoy leading the worship at St Mary's, with Julia Bowyer as Music Director, organist Robert Woolley and Cat Smith looking after our admin, safeguarding and music library.

We were sad to say goodbye to the Hamilton family in the spring but pleased to welcome new juniors and adult singers throughout the year.

We marked the King's coronation with a special anthem in May, enjoyed continuing the important tradition of choral evensongs and sang a range of anthems during morning services, baptisms and weddings.

We welcomed Ped's friends for the June evensong as a special birthday celebration and the Christmas services were a wonderful way to end the year after much hard work and dedication.

Members of the choir sang at the RSCM Festival Evensong at Winchester Cathedral in October.

Our junior choristers grew in confidence and achieved various levels of RSCM Voice for Life awards –congratulations to them all.

Julia Bowyer
Choir Director

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES REPORT

Sunday Club continues to run twice a month on the second and fourth Sundays. The sessions are pitched at those aged 4-7, with younger children allowed to attend if a parent accompanies them. Huge thank you to Julia Watts who prepares the material for each session with great care, always finding activities which the children will enjoy. Our aim is to teach the younger children about the love of God through songs, stories and activities and in addition for the older children to reflect and connect the bible teachings to their daily life.

We do have children's provision for those aged 7 and over via the Junior Choir, and then for those aged 10 and over at the monthly Pizza Night sessions at the Rectory. Most of the young people do not come to Sunday services but appreciate the opportunity to explore aspects of faith in a fun and safe environment.

We welcome support in any form with ideas to expand or deliver lessons in an interesting manner, volunteering to help in Sunday Club and above all prayers for wisdom for us to guide the next generation in the rightful path and for more young people to come to church to know God's love.

Christine Satkunanayagam

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

St Mary's organises a range of activities to support and engage with the community of Long Ditton.

We publish the **Lychgate magazine** every other month and deliver it to all the households in the Parish. The Lychgate includes articles about community and church activities and is funded by advertising from local businesses.

Babes and Tots sessions on a Friday morning during term-time provide a mixture of soft play, dressing up, puzzles, craft, and, of course, the outside area is a great attraction. After juice/water and biscuits for the little ones and tea, 'real' coffee and biscuits for the grown-ups – we clear away and enjoy 25 minutes of singing action songs, and enjoying musical instruments. We use the opportunities to spread the Christian message by singing a grace before refreshments, giving an Easter gift and Christmas book and inform and invite families to events and services throughout the year.

Friendship Lunches are held on the first Friday of the month. We welcome diners from all parts of the Parish and have the capacity to welcome more so, if you know of anyone who may care to join us as a diner or helper, please let us know. This is a welcome opportunity for people to meet and share fellowship over a hot lunch. As always, grateful thanks must be extended to our very loyal, ever cheerful and extremely hard-working team of meal planners, cooks, shoppers, drivers, helpers and washers up.

BookBox events – masterminded by our amazing curate Alison Baverstock, we have built a solid programme of monthly community events centred around shared-reading, on the basis that offering common ground with our wider parish would build relationships and encourage them to get involved with us. We advertise these events on our website, within our newsletters – and within wider local and regional media, which seem ready to share stories about what is going on. Our January BookBox is a Burns Night Supper with a live piper and poetry reading. Huge thanks as ever to our talented social team for providing refreshments at all the BookBox events.

Film Fridays – held in the Community Hall every two months. A chance for members of the community to gather to watch a film and chat afterwards over tea and cake. Many thanks to Joanne Hall for co-ordinating and Don Anderson for tech support.

Parish Quiz – we have experimented with having two quizzes a year in Long Ditton Village Hall on the basis of BYO picnic. This has worked really well and thanks as ever to the Watts family for the setting the questions, our quizmaster Ped, Don for AV and our amazing social team.

Pet Service – in July we had a very successful Pet Blessing Service with worship led by our wonderful choir. Local professional photographer, Darren Salanson, kindly took photos of pets being blessed for a donation to St Mary's.

MusicBox – in May the church was packed out to hear two local bands, Heaven's Lieutenants and Land of Leaves. In July we had a concert by the choir and orchestra of St Teresa's Effingham led by their head of music and our former organist, Caroline Yalden. Huge thanks to Chris Howard for masterminding these events.

Long Ditton Lights Up! held for the first time on a Sunday evening to mark the start of the Christmas season and aiming to involve the whole community. Around 500 people attend and enjoy a raffle, tombola, BBQ, hot drinks and carol singing and of course, a countdown to the tree lights being switched on. A few years ago, St Mary's handed overall responsibility for the running of the event to Friends committee of our village schools but we continued to be actively involved in the planning beforehand and also had a strong presence during the evening not least of all in running the Raffle. We used the opportunity to hand out attractive postcards with information on the Christmas services, and these were very well received.

Diana Jemmett
Pastoral Assistant

ECO CHURCH REPORT

We continue to mark Creation tide in September/October each year. Our hymns throughout the year celebrate God's creation and our intercessions regularly includes prayers for environmental issues.

Our churchyard is a haven for birds and animals with bird and hedgehog boxes and a bug hotel. Every Spring uncovers a full and glorious blanket of daffodils, crocuses, bluebells and other planting which helps maintain biodiversity.

Again this year, pupils from Surbiton High School came and volunteered their time spending time cleaning graves, clearing away a huge bramble hedge.

Peter and Judith Topp continue to do regular churchyard tidy-up mornings and we are very appreciative for all their efforts and all the others who come to keep our churchyard looking beautiful.

Special thanks to Paul Fagan and Don Anderson for their continued hard work and care in looking after our churchyard – it really is noticeable that our churchyard is a well-loved space.

The old run-down section of our Bible Garden plot is benefitting from Paul Fagan's hard work in removing deep well-established weeds - length of many of the tap roots are six inches deep. This work will provide 1st Long Ditton Guides and associated Rainbows, Brownies and Rangers units to revisit planting, an improved Bible Garden plot, with more plant species rich enough to attract a greater variety of insects and wildlife.

Our Babes and Tots leaders and Church Stewards maintain a biodiverse productive area next to the church and Bridal Lawn, and we look forward to roses, sunflowers and a wide range of insect and bee friendly planting.

Our churchyard continues to be well used with benches around the church often occupied with those seeking rest and contemplation.

Fay Tiplady
Eco Champion

LONG DITTON ST MARY'S JUNIOR SCHOOL REPORT

At Long Ditton St Mary's Church of England Junior School, we are proud to be the faith school serving the local community. The children enjoy our link with St Mary's and have visited the church to celebrate Harvest, Christmas, Easter and the end of the school year as well as to enrich their RE learning and share project work with the local community.

This school year has been a busy one for us eagerly anticipating a graded Ofsted inspection to highlight the continued hard work and dedication of our staff and governors alongside the support of our community.

Our close working relationship with Long Ditton Infants as a 'soft federation' has worked very well and from September 2024 this will become a 'hard federation' with the aim of providing an excellent education for all of the children in Long Ditton.

2023 saw the adoption of a new RE scheme of work from the Diocese of Guildford, supplemented by units of work from the '**Understanding Christianity**' resource, which allows the children to build up a picture and understanding of the Bible through a thread of themes that the children return to each year.

Each year we undertake two pause days – an Easter Pause Day and a Pentecost Pause Day. Children have RE books that move up the school with them and each class has a reflective journal to record class discussions and reflections on learning, deeper thinking from our whole school collective worship and pupil lead worship.

Sarah Martin
Headteacher



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