

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST WATERINGBURY



**REPORTS FOR THE
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

30TH MAY 2023

A Message from your Churchwardens

We are pleased to provide this booklet, comprising our Annual Reports, in advance of our Annual Parochial Church Meeting on **Tuesday 30th May at 7.30pm** here in Wateringbury Church.

Please try to read the reports as this will save us a great deal of time at the meeting and allow for a more meaningful discussion to take place on issues which warrant more of our attention.

If you have any queries or comments to make there will be ample opportunity during the evening.

We hope that once you have finished reading this report you will be very impressed by all that is taking place and we hope it will provide you with some real food for thought! It may prompt that question "Is there anything I could be doing for my Church?"

There is such a great deal happening within our church life and we trust that you will continue to pray for each other as we serve Christ in all that we do!

Peter Bond & Liz Gummer

Churchwardens

Parish Church of St John the Baptist Wateringbury

**Minutes of the Vestry Meeting of the Parish of St John the Baptist
held on Tuesday 17 May 2022**

1. Prayers

The Meeting opened with prayers.

WELCOME

Revd Gary Townsend, Priest in Charge and Chair of the PCC welcomed all and thanked them for joining the virtual meeting.

2. Presentation of Notice convening the Meeting

Gary confirmed that the appropriate notices had been posted at the correct time.

3. Minutes of the Vestry Meeting of 11 May 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as an accurate record, and were signed by Gary Townsend.

4. Election of Churchwardens

Written nomination forms for the office of Churchwarden had been received as follows:-

Peter Bond proposed by Sheena Stewart, seconded by Eddie Scarlin.

Liz Gummer proposed by Sheena Stewart, seconded by Jan Pursey.

Gary confirmed as there were no other candidates, Peter Bond and Liz Gummer were duly re-elected as Churchwardens. Peter is giving notice that he intends this to be his last year and it would be great if someone stepped forward to work with him during the year to take over this time next year. Gary thanked them both for all they have done over the last year. They've given immense encouragement to Revd Gary, and he thanked them for standing again.

The Vestry meeting was then closed.

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting for the Parish of St John the Baptist Watringbury held on Tuesday 17 May 2022

1. Presentation of Notice convening the Meeting

Revd Gary Townsend opened the meeting and confirmed the appropriate notices had been posted before the meeting at the correct time.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Barry & Hilary Fisher, Ted and Jane Bates, Alastair and Christine Byron and Jane Hambly.

3. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of 11 May 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting had been checked by the PCC and issues arising had been addressed by the PCC over the year. The minutes were taken as an accurate record and were signed by Gary Townsend. There were no matters arising.

4. Submission of Electoral Roll

Sheena Stewart read Hilary Fisher's report in her absence. She reported that there are 76 persons on the Electoral Roll and last year the roll was 74. Four new people have joined the roll this year and two persons have been removed from the roll having moved from the parish and no longer attending St John the Baptist church. Gary thanked Hilary for all her work with the Electoral Roll. He confirmed there would be no change to the number of lay members to the PCC as nine are currently allowed.

He explained that it's necessary to know the numbers before the PCC elections take place, hence the order on the agenda.

5. Annual Reports:

Churchwardens – No questions. Thanks were given from the floor to both Peter and Liz for all their hard work.

PCC - Gary introduced the PCC report and explained that we have to have a statement in the report that we are complying with the Safeguarding requirements.

Building Committee –There were no questions and Liz was thanked for her report.

Members: Liz Gummer
Gordon Self
Christine Byron
Eddie Scarlin
David Merry
Mike Witts

Worship & Mission – Thanks to Barry for his report.

Members: Barry Fisher
Becky Bowie
Alastair Byron
Ros Diment
Hilary Fisher
Susan Levett
Kate Millar
Joy Searle
Pauline Welch
Ruth Dunn

Pastoral – No questions

Members: Joy Searle
Christine Byron
Edna Craig
Gillian Sessions
Pauline Welch
Alice English

Deanery Synod – No questions

Lay Reps: Barry Fisher
Alastair Byron
Co-opted Sheena Stewart Secretary
Co-opted Suzanne Rowlinson Treasurer

Mothers Union - No questions

Prayer Chain – Thanks to Jan for her report.

Choir – no questions

Sundays Cool and Messy Church – The new name for Sundays Cool is Messy Church on Sunday.
Thanks to Ruth for her report.

Wateringbury School – Thanks to Goff and Gail for their report

Flowers – no questions

Holy Dusters – Thanks for the report and no questions

Bell Ringers – no questions

Fairtrade – Thanks from Ros Diment for all our support. Alice English thanked Ros for organising the Fairtrade stall.

Coffee, craft and chat – no questions

Weekly Newsletter – No questions. Thanks were given to Christine and Eddie for producing this.

Anna Chaplaincy – no questions

DBS & Safeguarding – Thanks to Debbie for her report.

Suzanne Rowlinson asked if a report from the Youth Group might be included next year, and it was agreed. Kate Millar felt the Easter Services worked well in the benefice and quite a few went to West Peckham from Watlingtonbury on Good Friday. It was well received. Gary said it worked well for him, but some were unhappy that there wasn't a service in their church. Gary was disappointed that no-one went to the Churches in Malling initiative in West Malling and will review this for next year.

Suzanne enjoyed the Taizé service on Maundy Thursday at Mereworth run by Bob and Becky Bowie. Kate found the Thursday evening vigil services very peaceful.

Sheena asked Gary why he was still Priest in Charge and had asked Revd Wil North about this. She understood it was on legal grounds because Gary's licensing service was via Zoom and not face to face. Gary believes Wil North would like it made up to Rector as soon as possible. Bishop Jonathan takes up his role in September so this should help. Debbie Bond suggested there must be other vicars in the same position.

Alice English asked why Gary doesn't write in the Record magazine. He confirmed that he does usually but he missed last month. He also writes in the Kings Hill directory sharing with Mark Montgomery. He thanked everyone for their support and encouragement over the last year and has really enjoyed being in the congregation for Matins, Morning Praise and All Age Worship.

6. Presentation of Audited Accounts for the Financial Year ended 31 December 2021

Jane Hambly was unable to attend the meeting and so her report was provided by Peter Bond.

Last year our income was £38,171 compared to £38,062 in 2020, so a very slight increase, but our expenditure was £41,741 compared to £21,067 in 2020. This resulted in a deficit of £3,570 for 2021.

Our total reserves as at the 31 December 2021 were £91,954.37, this consists of £65,688.46 in unrestricted funds, £9,000 in unrestricted designated funds (towards the cost of a cabin for Church Meeting room), and £17,285.91 in restricted designated funds.

Our main income is generated from the generous Covenants we receive each month together with weekly collections and fund raising. One wedding took place last year. We are grateful to those of you who have organised fund raising events or activities, however small, in what has been another difficult year.

My thanks go to Gordon Self for his hard work during the year as Gift Aid Secretary and in submitting our annual tax refund claim. Thanks also to Suzanne Rowlinson for her agreement to be the PCC's Independent Examiner.

Thanks also to Church Wardens Peter Bond and Liz Gummer and all members of the PCC for their help and support during 2021.

The budget and accounts have been approved by the PCC.

Peter drew everyone's attention to the Reserve Policy as well as the budgeted deficit of £5,567 this year which is not ideal. The PCC has set up a group to look at covenants and fundraising and Peter personally would like to see the re-forming of the Events Committee. Suzanne would like to hand over the Auditor's role.

Alice English asked where the pot of money was that was referred to at the PCC meeting. Peter explained that Unrestricted Funds have no specific aim yet. £65,688.46 is in unrestricted funds, £9,000 in unrestricted designated funds (towards the cost of a cabin for Church Meeting room), and £17,285.91 in restricted designated funds. However, we are living beyond our means and can't sustain this deficit and also emergencies crop up. There is £15k in the budget for the AV upgrades but the cost will be significantly more.

The next thing is to present the plans to the congregation. Any improvements we make to the building should help to bring people in, leading to more money hopefully. Suzanne asked if the £9k would remain for the hut or be reallocated to the AV upgrades. It was confirmed that the need for the hut is no longer there as the numbers in Sundays Cool and Secondary Division are not meeting. Gary confirmed it would be reallocated to the AV project.

Messy Church will benefit greatly with the AV and the older ones have the Youth Service at Mereworth. Gary has applied for a grant from the Diocese for Youth Ministry. Thanks were given to Peter Bond for presenting the report, and thanks to Jane for her work as treasurer.

6a. Election of independent Financial Examiner for the current year

Suzanne Rowlinson has agreed to examine the accounts in 2022 for the last time and all were happy with this. This was proposed by Debbie Bond, seconded by Kate Millar and all were in favour. Gary thanked her for taking them on.

7. Elections to Parochial Church Council

PCC members are elected for a three-year term and the process of rolling re-elections meant that Kate Millar is stepping down for re-election. A form has been completed with Sheena Stewart proposing her re-election, Suzanne Rowlinson seconding this and all were in favour. Kate is duly re-elected.

Gary explained that the laity should be re-elected every year and we should revert to this as the usual way. PCC members would need to get forms completed every year (this is in the Church Representation Rules).

The PCC members are:

Revd Gary Townsend	Priest in Charge and PCC Chair
Barry Fisher	Lay Minister, PCC Vice-Chair and Deanery Synod Lay Chair
Liz Gummer	Churchwarden
Peter Bond	Churchwarden
Jane Hambly	Treasurer
Sheena Stewart	Secretary
Alastair Byron	Deanery Synod Rep
Christine Byron	
Gordon Self	
Alice English	
David Merry	

Mike Witts
Kate Millar
Eddie Scarlin

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

8. Questions from the Floor

Nil

9. Date of 1st PCC Meeting

The first PCC meeting of the new parochial year will be on Tuesday 12 July 2022.

10. Date of 2023 APCM

The date was set for 16 May 2023

Thanks were given to everyone for attending and to Sheena for taking the minutes. The meeting ended with the Grace.

ANNUAL REPORTS

2023 APCM

Vicar's Report –

Palm Sunday 2021 marked the beginning of live services at SJB and slowly since then restrictions have been lifting. They are not all gone yet but we are getting there.

From November 2021 until the present, I've been working a service pattern across the benefice that has freed me up to attend all the different types of service at SJB. I have enjoyed very much being able to come and be led in worship for Matins/Morning Prayer and the All-Age Services.

The monthly service at Meadowview Court has grown a little and we are now up to 6 residents who join us. They are not always all present for every service, but I would say they are regular members of the group and there are 2 that are there every time. So that is growing. My thanks go to the ladies from the church who attend this with me, and we do miss Pauline.

I'm sure you will agree with me that SJB continues to be well served by many gifted and dedicated people. I am sure you will want to join with me in thanking them for all they have been doing and continue to do.

Looking back at my last report I can say that we still need to discern how to build relations with Mereworth and West Peckham and learn how to work together. I think there has been some movement in this direction though in that my Mid-week benefice Communion service for the benefice is regularly supported by Barry and Hilary who plays the organ for us. So it is that the mid-week HC is the only regular service at Mereworth where there is an organist. The service hasn't taken off quite as I'd hoped, and I'd like to encourage more of you that are free to do so to attend these services. I think building up a vibrant midweek time of worship and fellowship will be quite an eye-opener for some of the Mereworth residents and it may just be we can draw in some non-believers and get them on the way to full conversion to Christ.

It has been wonderful to see Messy Church in action and I very much enjoy coming along and playing a small part in it. Ruth and her team do a great job and Messy Church is our 'Sunday School' and, in fact, the only ministry of this sort for children and families within the benefice. The other great ministry we have amongst children is with the school and it's been good to see relations there are continuing to be built.

The Youth Service is doing well but needs to grow. Caroline and Symon Chalk with a small team of helpers do a great job and, again, it would be good to have more people from across the benefice join us on Sunday evenings to support our efforts to grow a ministry within the benefice amongst older children and teenagers.

Led by David Merry the PCC has done some great work on carrying forward the audio-visual system project. I think this will give us facilities at the church which will help greatly with Messy Church, Occasional Offices, All Age Services as well as create the opportunities for exploring different uses for the building.

I think there is much to be encouraged about and I am thankful to our Heavenly Father for all that I see being done here in our parish.

Gary Townsend.

Churchwardens

The past year has seemed much more like normal, with a return (almost) to our usual pattern and running of services. We have been blessed to be ably led by Gary, supported by Sharon, and it is so encouraging to see our congregation numbers stable, and in some areas, like Messy Church, growing. We are very grateful to Gary for all that he does with and for us, and we are also supported by a wonderful church family. It was a joy to host Gary's Installation and Induction Service here in February on behalf of the whole Benefice.

Special thanks are due to Barry for leading so many of our services, and to Hilary for another great year of playing the organ, and to both of them for leading the choir, whose contribution to our worship is immeasurable.

There are so many people who contribute so much to our church life, but among those for special mention are Becky, Kate and Ruth for our All-Age services, and we continue to miss Pauline from so many aspects of church life. Ruth has done wonders with Messy Church, aided by Gary and Eddie, and a whole team of helpers. Sundays Cool has developed into Messy Church on Sunday, and we are grateful to those team members who enable the running of this once a month. It is also encouraging to see the weekly benefice 'Refresh' service at Mereworth evolving and finding its place in the benefice mission.

The PCC has met regularly, mostly in person, but through the winter months via Zoom to save on heating costs. We are indeed fortunate to have a group of enthusiastic church members willing to give of their time and talents to grow God's kingdom here in Watlington, and we would like to thank them all. We are very sorry to see Sheena step down as PCC Secretary after well over 20 years of remarkable service, and the whole church owes her a huge debt of gratitude. She will be a hard act to follow.

Closer links with the school have been formed and continue to develop through the children's art exhibition in the church, their involvement in the design of various Christmas cards, and our provision of breakfast items. Thank you to all involved in this important aspect of church life. The coffee and crafters mornings are very well attended and much appreciated, and we thank Gillian especially, and all her helpers for continuing to build up this lovely social outreach. Gary holds regular services now at Meadow View Court, and there is also a craft group, more details of which can be found in Alice English's Anna Chaplaincy Report.

Back at church, thank you very much to Debbie for her hard work in running Fun with Faith again this Easter, and for all those who helped out.

We are so fortunate to have Debbie as our Parish Safeguarding Officer, and would like to thank her warmly for all her commitment and hard work in carrying out this valuable and important role. We also want to thank Clare, our Administrator, for all her hard work, and for taking on the role of Lead Recruiter, ensuring we comply with all the legal safeguarding requirements, such as DBS checks. We are blessed with so many people who take on the various roles such as vergers, intercessors, readers, sound system operators, sidespeople, servers, and chalice assistants who all contribute to the smooth running of our services. We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the bellringers, the church cleaners, the people who make and serve refreshments, the flower arrangers, and all the other acts of service which just seem to happen thanks to those who give up their time, and without whom our church life would be very much the poorer.

Thank you to Jane, our Treasurer, for all her hard work mainly behind the scenes. Thank you also to those who organise and run our fund-raising events, Jan Pursey for the Christmas Bazaar and the plant

sale, to Bijou Nursery for their support throughout the year, Jonathan Overell and all his crew in the production of “Cement, the Musical”.

We are very fortunate that the Parish Council continues to tend the church grounds, for which we are grateful, but special mention should be made of David Merry who quietly and regularly carries on with garden maintenance, and we would also like to thank the Wateringbury cubs and leaders for their care of the “grave gardens”. Thank you also to all those who regularly turn up at the biannual work parties in spring and autumn.

Thank you to Christine for another year of newsletter production, and to Eddie for filling in when Christine is absent. It is such an important form of communication and keeps folk in touch with events at SJB especially when they cannot attend services.

If we have missed anyone out to whom we owe thanks, we apologise.

2023 promises to be an exciting year as we look forward to the installation of the audio visual equipment that will allow us to enhance services and offer up new possibilities within our worship and wider activities. This is the culmination of several years’ work, started by Richard Dunn and latterly taken over by a small but able team including David Merry and Mike Witts and we thank them for their time and effort in realising this project.

It has been a privilege to serve as churchwardens for another year.

Peter Bond and Liz Gummer

A personal note from Liz:

With Peter preparing to step down from the role of churchwarden, I would just like to express my gratitude to him for always being a pleasure to work with, for his unfailing kindness and good humour, even when the latter was severely tested! He has been supported of course by Debbie, and I would also like to thank her for her major contributions behind the scenes. We are all blessed by having them both, and I am sure I speak for everyone when I say THANK YOU and wish them every blessing in the future.

PCC report to APCM 2023

Wateringbury PCC numbers: 14 this year including ex-officio members and the appointed treasurer. During the year we have discussed various important aspects of church life including:

- Coronavirus and safe easing of restrictions
- Fund raising
- Working with Mereworth and West Peckham in the benefice
- Church finances and budget
- Proposed audio-visual upgrades
- Youth activities
- Working with Wateringbury School
- Mission and Outreach

- Safeguarding

This is the first year since 2020 where church life hasn't been dominated by the Covid pandemic. The last few restrictions are gradually being eased with a return to using the chalice at communion this Easter for those who wish to. PCC meetings are now back to normal with face-to-face meetings except for November and January where we met on Zoom to help with keeping heating costs under control.

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops'; guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults) in having due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

Sheena Stewart
PCC Secretary

Buildings Committee Report

Several members of the Buildings Committee have been heavily involved in taking forward the Audio Visual Project this year, and David Merry is writing a separate report within this section. Aside from the A/V project, there has not been much new activity, but we are delighted to have a very smart new roadside noticeboard, thanks to Cliff Hickmott for his skill, and to Mike Witts for making the arrangements. Cliff has also done some interior work, removing one pew in preparation for the new control desk under the organ gallery, and a couple of other minor items. There have been the usual maintenance issues, servicing of equipment, PAT testing, lightning protection inspection, fire extinguishers, emptying the septic tank, and replacement of some items e.g., wiring to vestry alarm, and a manhole cover. At the time of writing improvements to our water supply – in particular that to the vestry – are being actively pursued. I am grateful to all committee members for their support, input and assistance.

Liz Gummer
30th March 2023

A/V installation – progress

Likening our journey through the procurement process to a 10,000 metre athletics event. I believe that we have just crossed the line and the bell has rung indicating the start of the final lap. Since last year's APCM, the following steps have been taken and achieved:

- Application for Faculty submitted to the Diocese. Thanks are due to Liz for her hard work on this.
- Peter and David attended a meeting with The Friends of Wateringbury Church, at which The Friends pledged to cover the cost of the projector at £7,000.
- Liz was advised, on 26th January 2023, that the faculty had been granted.
- An information sheet was produced and made available to the congregation outlining the larger pieces of equipment contained in the installation, with an invitation for members of the congregation to adopt and sponsor these.

- The selected contractor was asked to review and update their quotation as a year had passed since their original submission. We were delighted to see that the increase was minimal.
- The pew has been removed to make way for the control desk. This is now available for sale by sealed bid auction, which closes at midday on 14th April.
- We believe a cost-effective solution has been found for the Wi-Fi connection.
- Liz, Mike, and David have written applications to four grant awarding charities seeking assistance with the funding of the scheme. We are unlikely to hear from any of these organisations until possibly June, and for one, we might have to wait until November.
- Donations to scheme are trickling in. Some items of kit have been sponsored, and we are also receiving donations from the congregation, by way of the yellow envelopes, and also by bank transfer.
- We have studied at the calendar and, taking into account the various activities that take place during the year, not least of which is the Year 6 leavers service on 20th July, the AV sub-committee considers that the installation commences on 24th July. The likely time that the installation will take being 1 week. This proposal has been put to the contractor and we await their response.
- We have asked Rostrum Community Fund for £750 to sponsor the service leader display screen
- We are hoping to achieve at least £200 from the sale of the pew.

The current financial position is as follows:

Video installation (incl. recording/ streaming)	£ 40,265
Audio upgrade	£ 10,700
Total	<u>£ 50,965</u>
Current fundraising	
PCC allocated funding	£ 20,000.
FOWC donation	£ 7,000
Donations in memoriam	£ 3,378
Sponsorship of big ticket items (incl. Gift Aid)	£ 5,100
Miscellaneous giving (incl. Gift Aid) as at 19/3	£ 750
Total	<u>£ 36,228</u>
Unsecured anticipated donations	£ 950
Current shortfall on visual installation	<u>£ 3,087</u>
Potential shortfall on total scheme	<u>£ 13,787</u>

The PCC has undertaken to proceed with the visual solution at a current cost of £ 40,265, by drawing on reserves, if necessary. The above figures do not take into account any assistance that may result from the grant applications. Donations are continuing to be made on a weekly basis, and the above figures do not include any made from 26th March onwards.

I thank all of my coconspirators on the AV subcommittee for all they have done to bring this home.

David Merry
29th March 2023

Worship and Mission Group

Worship and Mission Group Report to APCM 16th May 2023

The group has kept under review arrangements for special services. In particular it was agreed that the Crib Service (curtailed by Covid) be reinstated. It was well attended by a number of families. A sad aspect to reflect on was that Edna Craig (Pastoral Assistant) and Pauline Welch (Evangelist) who assisted in leading the service had died. Their invaluable contribution to the whole of the church's life is greatly missed. Alice Scarlin stepped in to fill the gap.

The PCC approved the group's recommendation that this year's Nativity take place at the Messy Church meeting to be held on Saturday 2nd December 2023 followed by the usual tea.

Alastair Byron organised a very successful 6 session Lent Course entitled 'Sycamore', supported by Rev. Gary and Barry Fisher. The course was ecumenical in outlook and led by a Catholic priest, Fr Stephen Wang.

Rev Gary had not yet led a Remembrance Day service using the current service leaflet and would do so at this years' service.

It was noted that a West Peckham PCC member had volunteered to co-ordinate a Benefice wide Alpha Course, meeting in West Peckham village hall.

It was agreed that the Group revise the format of the All Age (Family) Worship service.

Barry Fisher

Pastoral Team Report for 2023 APCM

We were sad to lose two members of our team last year. Edna our licensed Pastoral Assistant and leader for many years and Pauline our Evangelist. We miss them both, giving thanks for all the work they did over the years.

We continue to visit and support people in the village whenever possible. We much appreciate the help given by members of the congregation, the community and to those who let us know of people who may appreciate a phone call or visit from the team.

Meadowview

We continue to support Rev Gary at the monthly communion services at Meadow Court, getting to know the residents while enjoying tea and coffee after the service.

Harvest Festival

Following our annual Harvest Festival, we organised the distribution of harvest gifts within the parish to show those who are unwell or lonely that they are in our thoughts and prayers. We tried to spend time with each recipient since many are struggling with illness and the problems of advancing years rather than economic need. Most of the tinned goods were taken to aid the work of Maidstone Homeless Care. We appreciate the generous gifts from the School Harvest Celebrations held in church.

Parish Christmas Card

We facilitated the 2022 Christmas card which detailed all Christmas Services in the benefice and thank the Rostrum village magazine distributors for circulating the cards to each house with the December magazine. In 2022 the card illustrations were produced by the children of our school. We thank Mike Witts and Rev Gary for liaising with the school to judge the winning entries. Illustrations not chosen for the Parish card were used to produce the Big Christmas Card which invites members of the church family to sign the card and make a donation to the year's chosen charity rather than send individual cards.

Posada

This year the figures of Mary and Joseph rotated around the Benefice spending a week in each parish. We took the figures to housebound people in the village spending time with the people involved which was very much appreciated. The figures were returned to our church on Christmas Eve.

Cribs and Angels

We held a day of quiet reflection amidst the busy Christmas rush, displaying various cribs and angels. We also displayed all the entries for the Parish Christmas Card from the school which were amazing. People came and were spending as much time as they wanted enjoying music, tea or coffee and angel cakes. We thank the church family and Rev Gary for their practical and prayerful support of SJB's pastoral care. Christine Byron, Alice English, Joy Searle and Gillian Sessions

Deanery Synod

The Synod meets 3 times a year giving parish representatives opportunities to share experiences and initiatives in Ministry and Mission.

Barry Fisher and Alastair Byron are our current representatives. Alastair is resigning this year and our thanks go to him for his long-standing service on the Synod. The vacancy created needs to be filled by election at this APCM. The commitment involved (3 meetings a year) is not huge and it's an opportunity to widen one's horizon. Please speak to Alastair, Barry, or Sheena (Deanery Secretary) to find out more. The Deanery Mission and Ministry Plan continues to come to fruition. The new Benefice of Kent Downs and Malling has been created which combines West Malling, Offham, Leybourne, Birling, Ryarsh, Addington and Trottiscliffe. A Team Rector, Rev Canon Dr Helen Burn has been appointed who has served 6 years at St Justus Church Rochester. Rev David Green (currently Rector of West Malling with Offham) has been appointed Team Vicar and the curate (currently under his supervision) continues in the new arrangement.

At the Synod's request the newly appointed Archdeacon Ven Sharon Copestake gave an address on her role in the 21st century which she sees as pastoral and legal. If an incumbent upsets their parishioners she gets involved as the Bishop's representative. She's involved in Faculties for changes to the church's fabric and is a member of the Diocesan Advisory Council which deals with Faculty Applications. She's also involved in arrangements for filling clergy vacancies.

The Synod was also addressed by Rev Jane Winter, the Diocesan lead on Lay Ministry training and formation. A number of short courses are available - Hearing and Speaking God's word; Caring Concerns; Caring for the environment; Prayer Pack; Healing and wholeness; and Spirituality.

An 18-month course has been introduced leading to the award of the Bishop's Certificate authorising the holder to lead and preach at services.

Barry Fisher Lay Co - Chairman Malling Deanery Synod

Mother's Union

East Malling Area Branch of Mothers' Union

Our branch, which is part of Tonbridge Archdeaconry and Rochester Diocese, currently has 14 members and has members from East Malling, Wateringbury and Larkfield. Sadly, two of our members from Wateringbury died in 2022, namely Pauline Welch and Edna Craig, who will be greatly missed.

We have been:

- Collecting rucksacks for Rochester Prisoners leaving prison as an Outreach Project
- Making blankets for an orphanage in Tanzania
- Crocheting blankets for Orpington Hospital for premature babies
- Collecting toiletries for Strood Women's Refuge
- Placing orders with MU enterprises, the Mothers' Union catalogue, of cards and gifts

And we continue to support the work of Mothers' Union around the world with daily midday prayers.
2022

- Jan New Year lunch at the Red Start pub in Barming.
- Feb Tea and cake at "Where Memories Meet" in Wateringbury
- Mar Reflection service in St John the Baptist Church, led by Barry & Hilary Fisher
- Apr Afternoon tea at Liz Allen's house with a Flower Quiz and MU greetings cards
- May Visit to Brookside for afternoon tea.
- July Strawberry Tea fund raiser at Audrey Allen's house
- Oct Derek Carpenter led us in an Afternoon of Poetry through the Churches' Year
- Nov Guided tour of Tudeley Church followed by a pub lunch.
- Dec Gathering at Liz Allen's house.

My thanks go to all our members for renewing their subscriptions and for keeping the branch active. We hope to be able to return to more regular meetings later in the year.

Frances Selman (Branch Contact/Secretary)

Cc: Liz Allen (Treasurer)

Audrey Allen (Committee Member)

Prayer Chain

The Prayer Chain sadly lost two of our most loved members in 2022: Pauline and Edna, both of whom were true children of God and fervent in prayer. We miss them both.

We now have 41 Prayer Warriors, but new ones are always welcome! Should you feel that The Lord is guiding you towards the very worthwhile service of prayer, please don't hesitate. Praying for others really is serving the Lord when it is often the only way to be of help; those we pray for are so often uplifted by the simple fact of knowing that others are holding them in prayer, and it is never wasted, God answers all prayers if not always as we want Him to.

In 2022 we had 71 Requests for Prayers, and several updates; some joyful, others less so. He is in charge and we should remember that. And remember that prayers are never wasted, each one is heard, God has His plan.

Jan Pursey 2023.

Choir

We were all greatly saddened at the death after a period of illness, of one of our members, Evangelist Pauline Welch earlier in the year.

Alison Bentley asked to join and has been made welcome. Our oldest member Frank Underdown celebrated his 90th birthday on Christmas Eve and we had an enjoyable lunch for him in January at the North Pole pub.

Enjoyment in our singing is the watchword for both our practices and helping to lead worship Sunday by Sunday including at St Lawrence, Mereworth and St Dunstan, West Peckham, as required.

In accordance with the PCC's decision the choir has reinstated processing if a hymn is the first event in a service. (This practice had stopped during Covid restrictions). We're always on the lookout for new members so have a word with Barry and Hilary Fisher if you're interested in sharing with our singing.

Barry and Hilary Fisher

Messy Church and Messy Church on Sunday

In January this year Messy Church celebrated its fifth birthday with the customary party! Messy Church is like a parallel group which meets on the first Saturday of the month for two hours in the afternoon. Over the last year we have been delighted to have Rev'd Gary with us teaching us songs accompanied by his guitar and I am enormously grateful to all our wonderful helpers: Gillian, Cathy Miller, Alice English, Eddie, Ros and Joy. We have Rachel as a young helper and recently Angharad too.

Despite so many helpers and parents there too we are kept busy with singing action songs, telling Bible stories, prayers and making things all wrapped up with tea at the end. Numbers vary although some families are very regular, however, most families have other commitments which interrupt regular attendance. We are just delighted to see whoever can come.

This year we are working through the different stages of Jesus' life. The idea of Messy Church is that it isn't get more families into regular services and certainly this has played out in trying to find enough children to participate in the traditional Nativity so this year we intend to turn it on its head and have it in Messy Church and invite the congregation to come and see, and share mince pies with us on the first Saturday in December. Put it in your diaries.

During Covid Sunday's Cool folded and afterwards it was difficult to resurrect but we have changed the name to Messy Church on Sunday and with fewer helpers just runs once a month with four girls on the second Sunday during communions. Ros, Debbie, Suzanne and myself take it in turns in pairs as required to lead. Definitely successful but we would welcome more children!

Ruth Dunn

Wateringbury School

Wateringbury CE Primary School Report – 2023

Learning, Growing, Achieving – Our Journey Together with God

Our school's core purpose of Learning, Growing and Achieving continues to be tested! However, since my report to you in 2022, it is flourishing under the guidance of our Headteacher - Debbie Johnson.

Debbie took over the Headteacher role at a time when the school faced extreme external challenges from the Covid 19 pandemic as well as some significant internal challenges following the previous headteachers retirement. I am pleased to report that those challenges have been met head-on by Debbie and her team with foundations laid to allow the school to adapt and grow.

Debbie can be seen greeting pupils and parents at the start of each school day welcoming them into school with a smile and a brief chat. Recent parent feedback of the work in the school have shown it to be exemplary.

The school continues to tackle its financial challenges head-on. A marginal increase in pupil numbers have resulted in a bit of 'breathing room' and we hope things will continue to improve at the start of the 2023/24 school year. Greater pupil numbers will allow us to expand our teaching staff and although we remain without a Deputy Headteacher, two of our senior leaders have taken on a shared role of Assistant Headteacher thus allowing Debbie the opportunity to concentrate on her primary role as much as possible.

Whilst we continue to face financial challenges, all the work that needs to be done to the fabric of the building has to be carefully prioritised. The safety and wellbeing of our pupils must remain our priority and as such we have campaigned for better school site security for a number of years – the diocese awarded us a grant for improvement at the start of our school year resulting in new fencing being erected. The improvement in site security is an ongoing project but the recent work has provided a much safer and secure environment for our pupils.

The school has successfully navigated some significant challenges and has now turned a corner putting it on a positive trajectory. This is down to the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of our entire school team under the leadership of our new Headteacher. We also thank our dedicated parents who work as FOWPS (Friends of Wateringbury Primary School) raising money for the school.

Similarly, I offer thanks to the Governors who volunteer their time to help our school succeed.

The Governing Board now comprises:

Godfrey Pain – Chair (Foundation)

Debbie Johnson (Headteacher - Ex-officio)

Rev. Gary Townsend (Ex-officio)

Sarah Goodwin (Staff – elected)

John Callaghan (Foundation)

Suzanne Rowlinson (Foundation)

Kate Millar (Foundation)

Christian Ball (Co-opted)

Sarah Day (Parent Governor)

Adele Solomides (Parent Governor)

Mike Witts (Associate Member)

We continue to have three vacancies for Foundation Governors. As governors it is our role to set the vision and strategic direction for the school. We want our children to learn the importance of embracing our Christian values so when they leave, they carry with them a strong sense of community and responsibility.

Our school has played a pivotal part in local community life throughout the pandemic and our local community remains a vital partner. Thank you for your continued support.

Goff Pain

Chair of Governors

Wateringbury Primary School

Church Flowers

Flowers continue to be arranged in the Church by a faithful few. Although we have lost several of our flower arrangers, we now have an anonymous donor to thank for paying for the flowers used in the Church, for which we are very grateful. During the year we have arranged flowers for the platinum jubilee of HM The Queen and also in her memory later on. We have also arranged flowers in memory of Pauline Welch and Edna Craig. This year we expect to be arranging wedding flowers in the autumn.

Please let me know if you would like to join the Flower Rota and thank you so much for the continued support of Cathy Miller, Christine Byron, Maggie Hoyles and Suzie Warren.

Gillian Sessions

Holy Dusters

The church community owes a debt to the teams of church cleaners who take on the responsibility of regularly cleaning the church so it is always a pleasure to participate in services and other activities in the building.

So, our grateful thanks go to:

Mike Witts and Jackie Scott

Ros Diment and Emily Best-Shaw

The Wilson-Green family

Peter and Debbie Bond

Joy Searle and Alison Tibbals

We would always welcome you to join one off the teams or form a new team to lighten the load on existing teams. If you feel you can help out please speak to me at church or e-mail me on ruth.dunn33@btinternet.com

Bellringers

Up until the current year we have continued to ring on Sundays much as we have in recent years. That is, with three local ringers who are occasionally supplemented by some of the Mereworth ringers when there is no service at St Lawrence's. Three is the minimum number of ringers necessary to ring for Sunday services. During the current year it has unfortunately not always been possible to muster even three ringers because one of our number (the author) is now splitting his time between Wateringbury and Devon following a property acquisition.

In the circumstances we rarely have sufficient numbers for our traditional Tuesday practice nights either. However, at the time of writing we do have one promising learner, currently receiving tuition on Tuesday evenings. We continue to support Wednesday practice evenings at Yalding.

Justin Southwell
Tower Captain

Fairtrade Stall

Sales from stalls from 1 January 2022 to end of December 2022 was £1,418.38p enabling a profit of £300 to be given to the Treasurer. At a Big Brew held on 1 March 2022 £120.20p was raised for the charity Traidcraft Exchange. All invoices were paid. Sadly in January 2023 Traidcraft PLC went into administration and I could no longer order stock.

At the Big Brew on 12 February 2023 £121 was raised for the charity which is now called Transform Trade. All items left from the stall have been given to the Watlington School food bank and £350.75 from stalls this year and money left from 2022 has been given to the Treasurer.

Many thanks to all who helped with the stall selling, setting up and packing away, and the many customers over so many years, all of which has been much appreciated.

Ros Diment

Coffee Break

Pauline would have been pleased that the group has been meeting once a fortnight despite her not being with us anymore. We have welcomed several new people, and everyone is helping with the making of cakes, bringing milk and serving in the kitchen thanks to Sheena's new Rota system.

We have continued to support Maidstone Homeless Care and we took along sleeping bags as usual at Christmas plus winter coats for which they were grateful. We held a coffee morning in aid of Macmillan Nurses which raised £300 for their valuable work and a coffee morning/white elephant stall for the work of the Antony Nolan charity and also the church heating.

Members of the group have been making squares to be made into blankets for the hospice. A large number of items including knitted teddy bears, woolly hats and jumpers have been sent to Ukraine to bring comfort to the children out there. Lots of knitted chicks full of Easter eggs will be joining them shortly.

We visited Sheena's home when the weather was really cold and we hope to return to enjoy her garden in the summer. We made our annual trip to Brookside Nursery and enjoyed refreshments there during January when we met on a weekly basis.

We look forward to another busy and productive year. Visitors are most welcome.

Gillian Sessions

Weekly Newsletter APCM report 2023

The newsletter is sent out (usually each Friday) to 124 email addresses. This helps to keep those interested in our village church (some of whom do not now live in the village) in touch with services, events and general church family news. Good communication within any family is vital and we appreciate being sent items of interest by mid-day on Wednesday for the next newsletter. Hard copies of the newsletter are always available so that SJB Greeters can give a copy to anyone who is not a 'regular' member of the congregation or those not on email to let them know of the week's Activities.

Christine Byron

Anna Chaplaincy

Having been commissioned, in September 2022, as an Anna Chaplain to older people in our Benefice concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of older people, I would first of all like to thank many of our church members and those in the Pastoral team, of which I am a part, for their encouragement and support.

Being on the Pastoral team has enabled me to ease into the ministry of visiting, emailing and telephoning older people. I have very much benefitted from the wise counsel of more experienced members of the team for which I am grateful. We have been working together to regularly visit and contact older people in need.

I have been regularly attending the fortnightly Wednesday Coffee morning at Wateringbury Church to offer my support to individuals. And since last October, thanks to the help of Joyce Manning and Jackie Scott we have managed to set up a fortnightly Craft Group for residents of the flats at Meadowview Court in Wateringbury. This venture has been greatly supported and encouraged by Elinor Renfrew, who lives at Meadowview Court and who also attends Wateringbury Church and we are very grateful for this. We have 5 regular residents who come to the group (every 2nd and 4th Wednesday morning of the month) and we always have fun. Recently we have been making Easter gifts and have enjoyed getting messy creating papier mâché bowls. Nick, the Manager at Meadowview Court has always made sure we are provided with tea and coffee and the staff are kind and helpful to us.

Another venture I am responsible for and see as part of my ministry to older people, is the Sunshine Art Group which takes place once a month in the village hall. We are a collection of mostly local people who enjoy doing art. Everyone brings their own materials and we are going to be displaying our wares at the Church Bazaar nearer Christmas this year.

Alice English

Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) and Safeguarding

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the *Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016* (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults) in having due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

With guidance from Rev Gary, our parish administrator Clare Garvey is now Lead Recruiter for Wateringbury. Clare has done a fantastic job of ensuring all DBSs are up to date.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Several active church members have completed their required Diocese's Basic Awareness Safeguarding training.

Action plan for the coming year is to get everyone else compliant and guidance procedures will follow soon. This training is required every 3 years.

Please remember - if anyone wishes to raise an issue or concern, please don't hesitate to contact with me.

Debbie Bond