

St Mary the Virgin Riverhead with Dunton Green

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2015 APCM

Background

We are an Ecclesiastical Parish within the Deanery of Sevenoaks, with St. Mary's located at the heart of Riverhead village; on the northern borders of the town of Sevenoaks. The building itself dates from 1831. The chancel and sanctuary were added in 1882 to a design by Sir Arthur Blomfield, but the nave itself was the work of Decimus Burton. The church became a parish in its own right in 1864. St. Mary's also serves as the parish church of Dunton Green, which had its own church of St. John the Divine until, sadly, it was made redundant in the 1980s.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity exempted from registration with the Charity Commission and, in cooperation with the Vicar, the Reverend Martin Booth, its purpose is the promotion within the ecclesiastical parish of the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. In summary:

- Parishioners on the Local Electoral Roll elect the Churchwardens at the annual Vestry Meeting.
- The Churchwardens and Deanery Synod representatives (if not also churchwardens) are ex-officio members of the PCC.
- Members of the church who are listed on the Church Electoral Roll elect the other members of the PCC at the annual Parochial Meeting.
- All Churchgoers are encouraged to register on the Church Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

LIST OF CHURCHWARDENS/OFFICERS/PCC/DEANERY SYNOD MEMBERS AS AT APRIL 2014

CHURCHWARDENS:

Barry Sharp 2010 - retires 2015
John Curtis 2013

READER:

Martyn Berry

PASTORAL:

Audrey Bernardi
Doris Gosnold - Retired 2015

CHILDREN'S OFFICER:

Zoe Bromwich

VULNERABLE ADULTS OFFICER

Diane Williams

PCC MEMBERS: (Date of election: serve for three years)

Stuart Wigley (2012- Retiring 2015)
Chris Ledson (2012- Retiring 2015)
Bennet Smith (2013)
Audrey Baker (2013- Retiring 2015)
Margaret Curtis (2014)
Diane Williams (2014 - Retiring 2015)
Jean Woods (2014 - Retiring 2015)
Karen Forster-Pearce (2014)

Robin Tong (2014 - Retired 2014)
Nicola Joyce (2014)

DEANERY SYNOD: Serve for three years

Anne Straight - (2014)
Margaret Nicholas - (2014)

OFFICERS:

Stuart Wigley - Treasurer
Veronica Todd – Secretary

STANDING COMMITTEE:

Vicar, Wardens, Treasurer, Secretary
(Note: the Christian Listener was also a member, but stood down in 2015)

The Parochial Church Council meets six times a year. The PCC and the Standing Committee are chaired by the Incumbent with one of the wardens as deputy. The Standing Committee meets to set the Agenda approximately two weeks before each PCC Meeting.

A part-time Parish Administrator is in post, undertaking those administrative duties necessary for the smooth running of the parish, including preparing and maintaining the registers, printing and circulating rotas, pew sheets, service sheets etc.

The PCC has delegated a **Stewardship Committee** to oversee and report back to it on fundraising, financial and procurement matters.

The PCC has established a **Church Fabric Committee** to oversee and report back to it matters concerning church building, grounds and repairs. They have particular responsibility in responding to the various needs raised by our 2011 Quinquennial Inspection. They have also worked very hard at creating a welcoming church which, it is hoped, will lead to St Mary's being left open at certain times during the week, other than just on Sundays and at other events, as happens at present.

Worship and Occasional Services

St Mary's is in many ways a traditional church village and local community church; serving all the functions that would be expected of it as a central part of a village and local community. It sits in what we like to think of as a middle-of-the-road tradition; all are welcome - churched, unchurched, enquiring.

Although the worship is centred on the celebration of Holy Communion, we also enjoy less formal forms of worship. Our Family Service each month is usually non-Eucharistic, but is still a meaningful but shorter service, especially accessible for families with very young children. We encourage all requests for Baptism in the church and, although the offering of marriage ceremonies for divorcees is largely a matter of discretion for the incumbent, the PCC broadly accepts it. The parish has admitted children to Communion before Confirmation when they have already been accepted in a previous church; the question of a general policy could be considered for the future.

A well-attended Parade Service for the local Uniformed Organisations is held at our Harvest Festival.

Local schools hold their various services in the church, and the vicar pays regular visits to them by arrangement with the head teachers.

The church holds Christingle and Crib Services on Christmas Eve. These can fill the church to overflowing with children, their parents and their families, many of whom do not attend on a regular basis, but rightly regard St Mary's as 'their' church; and are more than welcome.

Over the past few years our Christmas Tree Festival (created by and for the church and local community & organisations) has proved very popular; as has its Christmas Carols Service on the Sunday afternoon of the festival weekend.

Our pattern of weekly services is:

Sunday: 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP)

9.30 a.m. Parish Eucharist (CW)

9.30 a.m. Family Service (1st Sunday)

The 9.30 a.m. Service is followed by coffee in the Church Hall

Wednesday: 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP)

Thursday: 11.00 a.m. Holy Communion at Dunton Green Village Hall

Average Sunday attendance involves around 100 Adults and Children.

There are around 20 Baptisms and 3 to 4 weddings a year.

Each year, the Incumbent takes around 30 funerals, cremations and interment services.

St Mary's has experienced some personnel changes recently. This means that urgent attention needs to be paid to the strengthening of our excellent but reduced Ministry Team of one Reader, a Pastoral Assistant and a Christian Listener. The duties of the Pastoral Assistant and Christian Listener include liaising with families for baptism preparation, supporting them through the baptismal ceremony and beyond, visiting the elderly and sick and offering home Communion to those who are housebound. There is also a new role made available by the Diocese of Licenced Lay Minister, please speak to the Vicar if you are interested in finding out more about this.

Music

The music at the 9.30 a.m. Parish Eucharist is led by the organ and the robed SATB choir. A weekly choir practice takes place on Thursday evenings. On the First Sunday of each month there is a non-Eucharistic Family Service, usually with more modern worship songs, accompanied by a young person music group of instrumentalists.

Music has always been a very important part of the worship at St. Mary's. Having bid farewell to our latest organist, we are now looking to operate our Services and other events requiring music on a team basis. To that end we are very grateful to the continued invaluable contribution of Janet Sharp and welcome both Daniel Easton and Nicholas Castell.

Sadly, our organ broke down just before Easter 2015. We have a substitute in place, and are actively seeking how best to replace or repair our own one.

Church Life

The activities undertaken in the church are many and varied.

We have an excellent Tots & Toddlers group which meets every Monday afternoon. We also have a first-class Sunday School with around 20 children on any given Sunday.

Much more difficult in recent years has been the provision of opportunities for young people in the 11+ category, and this is a subject that continues to need addressing.

We have a Mother's Union group which is struggling to find new members from the congregation at St. Mary's and is another matter which needs addressing.

We are one of the founders and keen supporters of the Littlecourt Lunch Club which provides an excellent meal each Tuesday. Our involvement consists not just of providing front-of-house and cooking teams, but also drivers who augment the Age Concern buses that bring some people in and take them home.

We actively support Fair Trade and our regular stall held during coffee time in the Hall after the 9.30 a.m. service is very popular.

St. Mary's takes part every year in the Riverhead Carnival. We also support both financially and practically, the annual Dunton Green Fun Day; though it did not take place in 2014 due to the building of the Pavilion. This is an initiative organised by the Dunton Green Faithworks group, a community venture organised as an extension of Bessels Green Baptist Church, with whom we have good relations. Faithworks and the Vicar take turns in leading a Service of Worship and Word at Hamlyn Court sheltered accommodation in Dunton Green.

We are active members of the North West Fellowship of Churches, meeting at times for special services and sharing Lent lunches

Our outreach includes helping to support a Kenyan girl in her secondary education through the Sevenoaks Kenyan Education Trust.

We also regularly support the Rochester Diocesan Poverty and Hope appeal.

Each year at the APCM, we vote to actively support two or three further charities and invite them to come to talk to us on Sunday.

We have an active Events Committee who organise social activities, as well as the catering for special occasions.

A regular house group meets for bible study and reflection, and in addition the congregation is invited to participate in an ecumenical Lent Course through the North West Fellowship of Churches and similar activities from time to time.

Parish Finances

Our finances were published in advance of the APCM and approved by the PCC. However, following publication at our Sunday service, we have had a number of helpful comments about how to itemise certain elements. The revised Financial Statement will be presented at the APCM, where the PCC members present will be invited to discuss and vote on. The APCM meeting will then be given the opportunity to discuss and, if agreeable, adopt.

The Treasurer and other members of the PCC have worked extremely hard to reduce outgoings; for example by changing our Bank (reducing charges), Energy supplier, telephone and photocopying contracts. We are enormously grateful to him and everyone involved in this important task.

2015 and Beyond

Some of the challenges we will face together are:

- The strengthening of our excellent but depleted Ministry Team.
- The problem of retaining the young after Sunday School, and keeping them involved in church activities.
- Encouraging new members of the church, as they feel more settled with us, to become more involved in the life of the church.