

ST MARY THE VIRGIN RIVERHEAD WITH DUNTON GREEN

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2021 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, serving the villages of Riverhead and Dunton Green;. 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.

As of 1 December 2019, we are part of the West Sevenoaks Team Ministry, working alongside St. Luke's, Sevenoaks and St. Mary's, Kippington. A new Benefice has been established and is known as the Benefice of West Sevenoaks. At the October APCM a new Joint Council was agreed for the Benefice and following elections this year will help to enable the Team to work together on agreed priorities.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council powers Measure. St Mary the Virgin, Riverhead with Dunton Green is registered with the Charity Commission as a charity, registered number 1128522. The Parish was in interregnum until January 2021. In cooperation with the Vicar, the purpose of the PCC 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 2021

TEAM VICAR (with particular Responsibility for Riverhead with Dunton Green)

Reverend Andy Finn (Chair from January 2021)

CHURCHWARDENS: (Serve for 6 years, adopted each year)

Alison Bull 2018

Rachel Wigley 2019

LICENSED MINISTRY:

Daphne Harrison - Licenced by the Bishop in January 2020 as a Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) to the West Sevenoaks Team Ministry

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER:

Susan Allender

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

Charlotte Rakhit	2018 - Standing Down 2021 APCM
Susan Allender	2018 - Standing Down 2021 APCM
Ali Wakefield	2018 - Standing Down 2021 APCM
Sarah Stott	2019
Simon Bull	2019
Jane Ibbotson	2020
Richard Gibson	2020
Barry Sharp	co-opted 2020
Karen Forster-Pearce	co-opted 2020

DEANERY SYNOD: Serve for three years

Bennet Smith	2020
Margaret Nicholas	2020

OFFICERS:

Stuart Wigley - Hon Treasurer
Veronica Todd – Hon Secretary

STANDING COMMITTEE:

Vicar, Licensed Lay Minister, Wardens, Treasurer, Secretary, Bennet Smith

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. During the interregnum the meetings have been chaired by one of the Churchwardens. The Standing Committee meets to set the Agenda approximately two weeks before each PCC Meeting.

A part-time Honorary 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 Stewardship Committee, delegated by the PCC, will be revisited after the APCM in order to share the workload between people, as it has been difficult to organise committees due to lockdown. The idea of the Stewardship Committee is to oversee and report back to the PCC on fundraising, financial, environmental ('Green Church') and procurement matters.

The PCC has delegated a Church Fabric Committee to oversee and report back to it on matters concerning church building, grounds and repairs. They have particular responsibility in responding to the various needs raised by our Quinquennial Inspections. They have also worked very hard at creating a welcoming church which, it is hoped, will lead to St Mary's being left open more often.

Safeguarding is on the agenda for every PCC and is overseen by our Parish Safeguarding officer. Over the last year the PCC has been kept informed about the latest updates to the guidance, reviewed training needs and has had due regard to the House of Bishop's safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

WORSHIP AND OCCASIONAL SERVICES

St Mary's is a village and local community church; serving all the functions that would be expected of it as such. It sits in an inclusive 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. In the past, 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.

In normal times, 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, although these services were held on Zoom this year due to the Pandemic. 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.

Our Christmas Tree Festival (created by and for the church and local community & organisations) has proved very popular over the years; as has its Christmas Tree Carol Service on the Sunday afternoon of the festival weekend. Because of the Covid pandemic and resulting lockdowns, the Christmas Tree Festival was held virtually in 2020 and proved very successful.

Our normal 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)

9.30 a.m. All-Age Eucharist (3rd Sunday)

9.30 a.m. Service is followed by coffee at the back of the church

Thursday:

11.00 a.m. (except the third Thursday) Holy Communion at Dunton Green Village Hall

During the interregnum, our Licensed Lay Minister, Daphne Harrison, had been taking non-Eucharistic services, funerals, Thursday Holy Communion at Dunton Green by extension (currently suspended due to lockdown), home communion visits, again by extension, (currently suspended due to lockdown) and arranging for visiting clergy, retired and in office, to take Eucharist services.

NOTE:

Due to the Covid pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the majority of 9.30am services after our last APCM, have been held via Zoom. There were a few 8.00am and 9.30am services in church during September and October but they were stopped from November onwards because of the second lockdown. All Christmas services were held using Zoom. A midweek Compline service has continued on Zoom since the first lockdown and continues to be popular with some of the congregation.

Since the establishment of the new Benefice of West Sevenoaks, a prayer meeting continues to be held each Tuesday evening between 7.00 and 7.30pm with members of the three parishes. This is also held on Zoom at the moment, due to the lockdown.

Average Sunday attendance, in church, normally involves around 50 Adults and Children.

Since we have been holding Sunday services on Zoom, attendance has been 40 plus.

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

There are also around 30 funerals, cremations and interment services each year in normal times.

Since November 2020 there have been no weddings or baptisms, and 6 Funerals.

St Mary's continues to need people called to be part of our Ministry Team. The various duties 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.

MUSIC

The music at the 9.30 a.m. Parish Eucharist is usually led by the organ and the robed SATB choir. A weekly choir practice would normally take place on Thursday evenings. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to have singing in church since March 2020 because of the pandemic.

On the First Sunday of each month there is a non-Eucharistic Family Service, usually with more modern worship songs, often accompanied by a young person music group of instrumentalists.

Music has always been a very important part of the worship at St.Mary's. To that end we are very grateful to the continued invaluable contributions of Janet Sharp, Daniel Eaton and Nicholas Castell. Janet has successfully included hymns and music in our Zoom services, which has worked really well and for which we are very grateful, including a recording of Carols sung by the choir for Zoom Christmas services. We are looking forward to services being gradually introduced back in church after Easter. Hopefully, the music will follow once restrictions, due to the pandemic, are eased.

CHURCH LIFE

The activities undertaken in the church are many and varied. Unfortunately, again, these have had to be suspended due to the Covid pandemic but it is hoped they will restart as soon as it is safe to do so.

They would normally consist of:

An excellent Tots & Toddlers group which meets every Monday afternoon.

A first-class Sunday Club 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 we will be looking to improve in the coming months.

We have a Mothers' Union representative, but there is no longer a Riverhead branch of MU.

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. Our Treasurer also oversees management of the funds.

St. Mary's takes part every year in the Riverhead Carnival. We have also in the past supported both financially and practically, the annual Dunton Green Fun Day in June.

The Lay Minister sometimes leads a service of Worship and Word at Hamlyn Court; sheltered accommodation in Dunton Green.

In the past we have worked with Faithworks, an offshoot of Bessels Green Baptist Church, to serve the Dunton Green community. We are currently actively pursuing new ways of reaching the people of Dunton Green with the Gospel.

We are active members of the Churches Together in Sevenoaks, meeting at times for special services and sharing Lent lunches

St Mary's has a link with our brothers and sisters in Harju-Risti church, Estonia - Pastor Annika Laats.

Our outreach includes helping to support Kenyan children through the Sevenoaks Kenyan Education Trust.

We support the annual Rochester Diocesan Poverty and Hope appeal and also actively promote the annual Thy Kingdom Come initiative as a means of encouraging prayer for others in our community

In past years at the APCM, we have voted to actively support two or three further charities and invite them to come to talk to us during a Sunday service. This is currently suspended but we hope to re-start it at the 2022 APCM.

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

A regular group meets for bible study and prayer each Monday morning. There is a prayer board in the Lady Chapel for people to pin up their prayer requests.

In addition, the congregation is invited to participate in an ecumenical Lent Course led by our Vicar and also through Churches Together in Sevenoaks, together with similar activities from time to time.

Parish Finances

Our finances were published in advance of the APCM and approved by the PCC. The Treasurer has 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 the Treasurer and everyone involved in this important task.

2021 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 beyond Sunday Club age, and involving them directly in church activities, including active participation in church services.
- Possible refurbishment of the Gallery at the West End - currently on hold due to the pandemic and finance.
- Continuing quinquennial and fabric maintenance work.
- Encouraging new members of the church, as they feel more settled with us, to become more involved in the life of the church.
- Responding to the Diocese's *Called Together* initiative.
- Possible capital projects such as repairs to the church roof, upgrading our Chancel lighting system and cleaning of the mosaics.
- Returning to normal Church Life after Lockdown