

**ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
&
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**
Monday 29th April 2024, 7pm
at St Bartholomew's Church

***Annual Report of the
Parochial Church Council for 2024***



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MEETING AGENDAS

Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Election of Churchwardens

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the APCM 24th April 2023 – results of elections
3. Electoral Roll
4. Thanksgiving
5. Elections and appointments
 - a. Election of Deputy Churchwardens
 - b. Election of Parochial Church Council members (max 11 – up to 5 proposed)
 - c. Appointment of Independent Examiner (Karen Anderson-Wallbridge ACA)
6. Financial Matters
 - a. Presentation of Accounts
 - b. Budget for 2024
7. Reports

The Annual report includes sections from the officers of the parish, subcommittees and volunteer groups, which you are encouraged to read prior to the meeting. Any questions can be directed to the report author directly or submitted to the Parish Office before the meeting.
8. Presentations

RECTOR'S REPORT FOR 2024

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you. (1 Corinthians 1:4-6)

Such are some of the opening words of St Paul's rather long First Letter to the Corinthians. Whatever had been reported to him, he was evidently well pleased, although if you read through both of his letters there was also much yet still to be done. I don't think Paul would have much liked the idea that he was standing in judgement over the church, any more than I would. It's God's church I keep telling myself, we do it all for Him. Yet there is this chance in my annual report, as fell to St Paul, for me to share a similar encouragement. I do so most wholeheartedly.

This will be my fifth year serving and leading in the parish which, although not without its challenges, remains a calling to which I respond with God's Holy Spirit at the heart of all I do. So, what gets me out of bed in the morning (and usually pretty early)? Well, if I'm true to myself, what gives me so much pleasure is to see God's Kingdom growing here in Haslemere. I'm often heard talking of *extending the ministry* or talking about *numbers and growth*. I'll be honest, I want us to be successful.

When reporting time comes around, be that for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, finances, or submitting attendance figures to the Guildford Diocese, I seek to be the bearer of good news and an arbiter of smiles all-round. Indeed, we do have much to be happy about, as these many annual reports will tell. Yet, leading the church is not easy. Barely has any year passed in this or any other of my former parishes where there was not some setbacks, challenges or upsets. Situations arise, people become unwell, bad news arrives, or the Church of England drops another one of its frequent clangers.

Like our old school reports, attainment and effort can be measured differently. So, if I'm looking out over the parish since spring 2023, what seems so clear to me is that *I've never seen the family of our church working so hard*. In every dimension of our ministry, effort levels have been super-high. I do hope that such spirits of joy, encouragement, and determination as I see in all parts of our parish, don't become muted when captured in such wordy reports. Thanksgiving and gratitude should be pouring forth from these pages upon all who have put so much time and effort into serving Christ. You can be sure that He will notice it and reward you much more than I ever could. God bless you all.

The previous twelve months feel to me as if they have been meant for consolidation. Granted, it's not all been like that (so please keep reading), but the previous year, up to spring 2023, had been one of considerable change and innovation. This last year feels much more like a settling time, particularly in the continuing and steady growth of Sunday worshippers. So it should be too - healthy churches will grow and deepen, and we can claim that for ourselves in Haslemere. You will often hear me talk of *setting the right conditions*, where we have quality worship, welcoming attitudes, and ways in which people can serve in response to their faith. In our pastoral ministry, children and families work, civic and town ministry, and developing leadership, we build ever higher on the successes of the past. I

feel that for the most part, the model of ministry and organisation we have here in the parish is the right one for us.

I've made no secret of my intention to grow the church numerically. So many parishes are struggling with basic Sunday numbers, with the negative effect that has on the ministry they can provide at other times. My determination is most assuredly that we should become a bigger and better church in all respects. All the figures add up to tell us that we are growing, not least with a considerable increase in those joining us for the major festivals of Christmas and Easter. Long may it continue.

The Parish Office remains a model of efficiency. It seems surprising that Kari has still only been with us for a little over a year yet has proactively moved us forwards as an organisation. My hopes were that we should be able to draw upon Kari's creative and communications skills, which I feel we have done well. A major piece of work has been to completely redesign and relaunch the parish website, with all the artwork that required. Many will complement Kari on her apparently unflappable nature, despite the huge variation of things that come her way. All this was achieved despite having to undergo major surgery last Autumn.

This last year has seen an embedding of our ministry to care homes. Such outreach amongst the elderly is core to the work of the parish. Currently we have regular services at Oak Hall, Redcot and the Hunter Centre. Justin has worked very hard to settle these ministries and teams into what is now a well-loved visit for both residents and those serving them. Not to put too finer point on it, these are reasons to suggest an increase in our funeral care ministry as a result! Pastoral ministry is a thing never finished, yet the busyness of pastoral care is directly related to the reach we have into people's needs. The Pop-In Coffee Morning and the Hearing Clinic are a vital part of that, especially in the cold and dark months.

In March 2023 we were able to launch a new initiative to help young families to access Sunday morning worship. Called 'Sunday Morning Families', this is effectively Sunday school as most people would recognise it. The parents have stepped-up, ably led by Victoria and Verity. It's not unusual for us to find on the first Sunday of the month, a congregation exceeding 120. Happily, this has the effect of bringing families into many other parts of church life.

You will often hear me speak about the 'leader and helper model'. We all know that leading ministries in the church can be a commitment beyond what many can reasonably offer. Many more are willing to join ministry teams than can lead them. The leader and helper approach allows me to focus upon a smaller number of ministry leaders, who in turn can enable others to get involved as appropriate for them. Church is very much a team game, yet the progress of ministry can be held back if too much is expected from too few. Encouraging and supporting leadership continues to be one of my top priorities at all times.

To attempt to summarise the Link Community Hub project here in my own Rector's Report would be to do the project and it's amazing team an injustice. Please find the dedicated report further on in these pages. Any project looking to deliver a set outcome is going to be goal focused, and indeed the Link project is very much about a specific aim. Unsurprisingly, those on the team faced challenges which they have not had to face before. Researching

into community needs and major fundraising, are two such challenges. What is so apparent to me is that the team has had to learn so many new skills, which will be very valuable to us in way we cannot yet even begin to understand. Even just planning the project and raising funds has been an outreach ministry all of itself.

I've been learning too. Music is not my strongpoint, admittedly, but what I do understand well is the conjunction of music and worship when overlaid onto people's experiences of worshipping God's glory. I can't make music, but I know how to use it well. Since its launch two years ago, I've taken so much pleasure in seeing the Junior Choir become established and progress well. As can sometimes happen with new projects, the initial energy of year-one can wain in year-two (particularly with time-pressured children and families). In fact, the Junior choir has consolidated, grown, and settled perfectly. A core group has remained, and new joiners have added to the strength. All the children are making musical progress, with qualifications and medals along the way. I was always hopeful it would be a success, but the team have surpassed my expectations.

Also, since spring 2023 we have seen some musical experimentation each fourth Sunday. Originally, my intention had been to allow Clive Osgood, our ever-talented Director of Music, to have some working space to try new things. It was far from clear what that would amount to. What has transpired is a network of many new voices, which has given Clive a paintbox of options to experiment. The quality has been as notable as the variety! All indications so far are that these different choral approaches have been well received and it remains to be seen how they progress. Happily, the Parish Choir has also seen a growth spurt. New voices are seen and heard, much of which has been encouragement from members of the choir themselves.

The APCM always brings a time of change in the leadership of the church, as members come to the end of their office. It is good practice, where possible, not to rely too heavily upon those who cannot easily set aside their years of service because there is no one to replace them. Many are the churches that have churchwardens and others who serve for unreasonably long periods of time. Our approach is to set a maximum of six years as the horizon, after which PCC members and church officials can step aside if they wish. For 2024, such changes are with us at the APCM.

Geoff Martin stands aside as senior churchwarden since taking up the role in 2019, a little before my arrival in the parish. He has been for me a constant support in prayer and service. Not one for a fuss, I think it's enough to say that Geoff has been a constant presence in what has been a busy and often difficult time since my arrival (and don't forget Covid). He was of the view that his work was to support me personally, and he has done so unswervingly.

Cathy Moore was one of those few who first interviewed me before I was appointed as Rector here. We all know that Cathy is a lady of tenacity and accuracy, with a broad understanding of the church as an organisation. Her tenure as Parish Safeguarding Officer has seen a high level of almost continuous change. In the statutory safeguarding discipline, the Church of England seems hardly ever to stop making changes (and not always with sense or care). Add to that the arrival of a new incumbent, a whole new staff team, the growth of varied ministries, and the unpredictable years of Covid, and you can understand

the depth at which Cathy has had to operate. I honestly don't know how she has managed to do it all. If anyone deserves a rest it's Cathy, and we all have much to thank her for.

It is sometimes easy to forget that we have a church school, St Bartholomew's, just down the road. Our ministry extends to school governance and frequent assembly services in church. At least every couple of weeks I'm busy with the school myself. If there is one aspect of my work which I would admit to being poor at it would be as a school governor! Thankfully, some are just brilliant at school governance, and none more so than Bryony Atkinson. In recent years Bryony has seen the school through both OFSTED and SIAMS inspections, and a change of headteacher. Her own personal situation has changed too, and not least being a busy mum. I thank God every day that God grants to us different gifts and abilities. As Bryony steps aside as the Chair of Governors she deserves all our thanks. Congratulations to Laura Walliss, as she picks up the mantle.

Last and not least is my own dear Sophie, otherwise known as my better half. It seems a long time ago since Sophie and Victoria set about relaunching the First Steps pre-school playgroup, following the hiatus of Covid. As we all know, Sophie has many health challenges, but was able to bring to First Steps her considerable experience of nursery practice. Alongside Victoria's energy and efficiency, the team have been able to build the group into the largest and most regular ministry we have in the church, beyond worship. Sophie came away from the team last September yet leaves behind her a very happy and well led group.

A firm focus now needs to be placed upon the major project of the Link Community Hub, which we are all hoping will be able to start its building phase over the next twelve months. As those plans go ahead, I feel that I would like to remain with a sense of consolidation of our current ministry. What this means is that I'm going to draw back on launching new initiatives and focus on strengthening what we are offering now. The Link will be plenty of change all in one go, so the process of transition will no doubt be quite absorbing. It goes without saying that I wish to continue my focus on growing leadership and the congregations.

Very little of what I've written here could proceed well if it were not for the support and ministry of my friend and colleague, Revd Justin. Throughout my time here, he and I have worked well together, both sharing and complementing in gifts and practice. Although I've written this report, Justin is embedded within it at just about every level. I thank God for him every day.

So, the future does look positive for our ministry in Haslemere, such is the support we share with the whole congregation and the good will of our community. We are committed to the charge for which God has sent us forth in Christ Jesus. We have much to be thankful for, and I am so very thankful for all of you.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Rector Chris

CHURCHWARDEN REPORT

Reaching the half-way mark in my four-year term as a Churchwarden, it is a great pleasure once again to be able to reflect on a year of progress and growth in our churches and to thank the many people who support our Rector Chris, his wife Sophie, and Rev. Justin in maintaining and developing the work of our Parish.

We are blessed with having a sizeable band of people who ensure the smooth running of our Parish Ministry and our church services and given the pressures on his time it is good to see the PCC forming an Operational Working Group, in order to help relieve the administrative burden faced by Rector Chris.

As Churchwardens, our prime responsibilities are for Church buildings and churchyards, so it is pleasing to be able to note that nothing major emerged from the quinquennial review of our buildings, with what works are required being dealt with thanks to the diligence and efforts of Richard Reincke.

Special thanks too for the continued efforts made by Philip Hunt to care for the churchyards, including those in Derby Road and Weycombe Road. In the coming months small plaques will be added to the gates by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, in recognition of the war graves within our churchyards.

One outstanding aspect of the growth we are seeing in our congregations has been the efforts at Town Ministry by Rev. Justin, who has successfully brought our Parish into the local community through a fourth Christmas Windows competition and social events with the local cricket and bowls clubs.

We are delighted to note that Rev. Justin is now Associate Minister and that Victoria Martin is progressing with her 'calling'. The Parish Office is running efficiently as Kari Hayden has now settled into the role, as well as taking on increased responsibility for Parish communications.

An outstanding success of recent months has been the securing of funding to the tune of £1.4 million from two local funding sources to pave the way for a transformation of The Link into a much-needed community facility. Once again, we owe a huge debt of thanks to the team, led by Andrew Culshaw and Debbie Peet, for all their work in delivering this exciting project.

Among those we feel must be singled out for special thanks are our dedicated deputy Churchwarden, David Simmons, Cathy Moore for her vital work on safeguarding, and the practical support given by Robert Fox, Andrew Silk and others. We are so lucky to be able to call upon their time and dedication.

Our aim over the past year has been to have a Churchwarden at each regular Sunday service, and that is something we have largely achieved. Looking ahead we need to recruit new sides-people, and with the PCC are examining ways of improving our welcome to visitors and newcomers to the Parish.

Finally, I must pay heartfelt thanks to my highly-experienced fellow Churchwarden and mentor, Geoff Martin, who is standing down from his role at the APCM and has been a stalwart presence during my first two years as a Churchwarden. I look forward with some trepidation to the future but am reassured by the amazing team around me.

Gareth David and Geoff Martin, Churchwardens

PCC OFFICERS AND SUB-COMMITTEES:

PCC Secretary

The PCC have met six times in the past year. Considerable time was spent reviewing and considering the work being undertaken on the development of the Link Community Hub Project, providing support and advice to the team in their endeavours to secure planning and funding for this important and worthwhile project. We continue to focus on the expansion of the Youth and Families work, the music provision within the church including the Junior Choir and adult choir, plus a lot of wider work on our welcome and inclusion to new members of the parish.

We welcomed several new members to the PCC in April, all of whom have settled quickly and made valuable contributions to our meetings. As is inevitable at this time of year, we say goodbye to some members of the PCC who are stepping down. Our sincere thanks go to Cathy Moore, who is stepping down after a six year term where her valuable contributions on Safeguarding will be sorely missed. We also give thanks to Hamish Donaldson and John Harvey who step down, plus as already mentioned by Chris in his rector's report, to Geoff Martin. Thank you to you all for your hard work and contributions to our parish, you will be sorely missed.

Katie Morgan, PCC Secretary

Electoral Roll

This Roll was first established in 2019 and will be updated each year with additions, modifications and deletions until 2025 when a new Roll will be established.

In April 2023, the electoral roll contained 208 names of which 35 were resident outside the Parish.

Since the last APCM on 24th April 2023, we have had 4 additions and 4 departures. The final Roll for 2024, after revisions, contains 208 names, of which 34 are resident outside the Parish.

All addresses have been checked using the Church of England website parish finder service, to ensure correct reporting of those on the Roll and resident outside the Parish.

Kari Hayden, Parish Administrator & Electoral Roll Officer

Deanery Synod Report

The Deanery Synod meets twice a year and the last meeting was on 15th November 2023. Rev Chris Bessant is currently the Area Dean.

There were three things to note about the meeting:

The Diocese has prepared a Racial Justice Covenant which PCCs are encouraged to adopt. Our Haslemere PCC did adopt it after some discussion and after adapting the wording to suit our circumstances.

PCCs are invited to study the Deanery Parish Needs Process grid (which is the individual church's vision for the future), with a view to cooperating with other local parishes on common areas. The common areas seem to be:

- Children & Youth
- Stewardship and fundraising
- Small Groups

A new Deanery Leadership team has been elected who will be setting out a Deanery Treasury policy. In addition to Chris Bessant as Area Dean, Andrew Culshaw was elected Treasurer.

Hamish Donaldson

Building and Fabric Committee

As ever there has been plenty of work done around the parish in the last 12 months and a huge amount of it done by volunteers.

- **Committee members and parishioners.** Once again, a huge thank you to the FABCOM team and those that have supported it over the year. To Philip Hunt for his tireless attention to the churchyards and unceasing persistence to ensure Waverley and Continental Landscapes are doing their job in the St Bartholomew's churchyard and the Derby Road and Weycombe road churchyards. To Roger Davies for his endless willingness to pay attention to a number of tasks around the Link and St Bart's. To Robert Fox for keeping St Christopher's in excellent order throughout the year and for being the man of action all around the parish with an unlimited capacity for solving all the practical challenges of the churches, the Link and the graveyards. To David for all his work in the last year in the St Christopher's churchyard and elsewhere. Particular thanks this year for trimming down the holly and the Cyprus trees between the St C's Churchyard and Mary Fillingham's garden. And a special thanks to David and Andrew (Silk) for their tremendous work and installation of an upgraded PA and AV system including the mixer desk and to Rector Chris for his advice and guidance and for organising a fine looking mixer cabinet. To Geoff for keeping an eagle eye on matters concerning St Bartholomew's. And to Gareth who is showing a willingness to help with tasks around the churches. To Dominic for his continuing advice and support despite not being a member of FABCOM, and to all those around the parish who point out the problems and keep a sharp eye out for any problems or issues. And, of course, my thanks are due to Andrew for being such

an efficient treasurer. And in addition to this I attend wardens meetings regularly to discuss works which need doing and any chasing of craftsmen required and wardens are happy to assist in this respect. The fact that both churches and the Link and the churchyards are in such good order is because we all care about them. They are Houses of God and we treat them with the same care, dedication and attention that we would devote to our own homes. And a particular thank you to the volunteers who are indispensable for keeping both churches in such good order. And massive thanks also go to all the volunteers who do so much work at St. Christopher's, a growing number of dedicated people who are the go to team to rise to all the challenges and exciting activities held there throughout the year. And a particular thank you to Verity for all her continuing, inspiring and creative work in the upper room of St Christopher's and bringing the church to life for all the young in the parish.

Without the work of all these people - overseeing the work of others and exacting a high standard from them and their own hard work - our Churches and the Link would not be in the fine state of repair and cleanliness that they are today. You are all Godsend.

- **Progress on works.** At the risk of making the FABCOM report longer than the whole of the APCM report put together I will be brief on the significant work that has been done over the past year! I keep an excel spreadsheet (soft copy available in the Link office but NOT for removal as it is constantly changing) including the quinquennial (report done by the architect every 5 years and last done in September 2022) items for the two churches, the link and some info of work carried out in the church cottage. The latest excel spreadsheet actually incorporates the Quinquennial requirements from the QQ report done in 2022 by John Bailey. This was an astonishingly detailed account of the churches and in it he was very complimentary about the condition of both churches which was a reflection of the loving care given to them by us parishioners.

What more can I say? This is because of everyone's contribution in the parish. Thank you so much.

I will not itemise the details of all the works required as this is contained in the excel spreadsheet a copy of which is in the parish office. However, there are a number of maintenance items which I will summarise below. 35 for St Bart's and 5 for St C's. In summary

St Bartholomew's

Routine Maintenance and repairs.

The major achievement in the last 12 months is that there was a mass of work required for St Barts roof, hundreds of tiles replaced including on the tower. It was decided that it was more practical and cheaper in the long term to get all the roofing repairs done in one go rather than divide up the work in accordance with the priorities set out in the QQ report. This brings the number of maintenance items down to around 20 all of which are minor items.

The vestries and outside lavatory have been recently painted and the latter refurbished – not a QQ issue but nonetheless a much needed improvement.

St Christopher's.

We are progressing the purchase of a scaffolding tower with which to do the inspection and painting of the flagpole which is far more economical than hiring scaffolding so inspections and painting can now occur at the correct frequency.

Fall arrester rope for ladders. This has now been discussed with a company called At Height and we have discussed the best option. I have sent them a video of the ladder and belfry and hope to have a solution soon. This was the only item at St C's which should have been completed in the 1st 12 months of this QQ period.

The Lady Chapel, back passage and rear lavatory have recently been decorated which is a much needed and great improvement to these areas in the church.

The Link

I have not mentioned the Link in view of the major works which are likely to occur in the future and the fact that for this reason it does not form part of the QQ report. Suffice it to say that the roof is kept in a state of good repair, the heating appears to be working properly so as far as I can tell there are no major issues requiring urgent attention.

Please note that the prioritising in the new worksheet will follow the advice of the architect. However, RR only gives his opinion on the urgency of any work and reports to the PCC Standing Committee on any work considered requiring immediate attention.

Both the new and old worksheets are on file with the parish office and available for inspection or review by parishioners if required but they do not form part of this report and they are a dynamic record of the work and progress of various works and projects and the costs involved around the parish so constantly changing.

Richard Reincke

Churchyards

The last year has been one of both consolidation and exciting new developments in the churchyards. It is hoped that some of the flavour of what has been taking place will have been picked up by parishioners through the regular *Churchyard Jottings* column in the parish magazine. By way of background, and for those new to the Parish of Haslemere, it is worth explaining that St Bartholomew's has three churchyards: the main churchyard, a second on the opposite side of Derby Road, and a third in Weycombe Road, opposite High Lane recreation ground. All of these were closed to new burials during the period 1983 to 1990. This then allowed maintenance of the churchyards to be transferred to Waverley Borough Council which, in practice, has meant regular grass cutting by Waverley's contractor. Although very welcome and cost saving, it is not sufficient in itself and their work is supplemented by our own volunteer efforts.

Two meetings have taken place during the past year with Ann Hayward, Waverley's Green Spaces Contract Officer, who manages the contract with Continental Landscapes Ltd, the contractor carrying out grass cutting and occasional hedge cutting tasks. These are valuable two way discussions and Ann continues to be very supportive of the efforts of volunteers and the wider community, to enhance the main churchyard and increase biodiversity. At her suggestion the main churchyard has been entered into South and South East in Bloom 2024 (SSEB) in the churchyards category.

The main trigger for our entry in SSEB has undoubtedly been the success of the wildflower planting by The Den youth group, both along the verge in Derby Road and in the churchyard itself, near to The Link car park. The children, with adult supervision, returned on 20 March this year to plant further seeds and a dwarf crab apple was planted on the verge behind the dry hedge. They also created the wonderful Easter Garden with the three crosses and our Lord's cross complete with growing flowers. Particular thanks must go to Verity Sutherland and Peter Clarke for their efforts in bringing all of this to fruition. Further thanks should go to Gareth and Claire Matthes for their input and practical help and for the donation of the trees which now adorn the verge. Everyone will have appreciated the blaze of colour last year and it is hoped that this can be eclipsed in 2024.

There were two volunteer working parties during 2023, in April and October, and a further one was on 6 April this year but, unfortunately, it was poorly attended. However, much was achieved on that occasion and, in particular, the canopy of the large conifer, near to the memorial wall was raised to create new vistas. The war memorial garden was tidied and the adjacent boundary wall was cleared of ivy once again freeing up the seat. The various voids in the main churchyard, where the very wet weather had caused the grave plots to sink, were filled and grass seed will be sown in due course. The unsafe table tomb, near to The Link and previously festooned with tape and safety notices, was successfully dealt with by Stonecrest Monumental Stonemasons. The top ledger of the tomb is now resting on the ground and the failed brickwork has been removed. A further working party is planned for Saturday 1 June and this should be a good opportunity to improve presentation before the judging of SSEB, which is likely to be during the period of mid June to mid July.

There are eleven Commonwealth war graves in our churchyards – three in the main churchyard, two in Derby Road and six in Weycombe Road. It is often the case that the presence of such graves is marked at the entrance of a churchyard or cemetery by the distinctive Commonwealth War Graves Commission plaques. An application for these to be provided for our own churchyards has now been approved, following the Archdeacon's consent. The matter is now with the local Area Operations Team who will be responsible for installing the signs. No firm timescale can be given for this, but it should be within a maximum of 12 months.

The issues of keeping the Derby Road churchyard under control have been rehearsed previously and various options have been considered. It is clear that a major clearance of bramble and the thinning of large shrubs is required. A tree has fallen in the recent gales and this is being dealt with by Waverley. The objective is to make it easier to access graves and also develop a programme of more regular maintenance, not an easy task. It is hoped that in due course Waverley's contractor will be able to help, alongside their grass cutting activities. A major development is that Waverley have agreed to collect any amount of green waste that is generated by our clearance work. They already collect green waste from our working

parties.

One outside initiative, inspired by the Haslemere Society, has been the cleaning and renovation of the grave of John Tyndall, the eminent nineteenth century scientist and educator who lived the last part of his life in Hindhead. This is just to the right of the path in Derby Road churchyard and now looks resplendent, following the work carried out by Stonecrest.

Philip Hunt

The Link Community Hub

The past year has seen great progress on a number of fronts:

- **April 2023** saw the submission our planning application to Waverley Borough Council
- In **September** the Haslemere Fund approved a grant of £400,000. This fund holds in trust the proceeds of the sale of the Weycombe Road churchyard in the 1990's, funds which can only be used for church related capital projects.
- In **October** we received Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent
- Extensive consultation across the community led to an application to Your Fund Surrey (YFS) for £1m and Waverley's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for £400,000 in **October**
- **March 2024** saw approval of £400,000 CIL funding
- In late **April** we will hear if our YFS application has been successful

At the heart of our grant applications was the need to demonstrate that the project was both wanted and would deliver real and sustainable benefits to the people of Haslemere. Many readers will recall, and may have contributed to, the 440 indications of support on the YFS website in mid 2023. But our engagement went much further and we have been heartened by the tremendous support and friendship offered by so many in Haslemere. We have met with many people – at the school gate, the Annual Town Meeting, the Green Event and on many more occasions totalling over 3000 contacts. We have been overwhelmed by the positive way that people received the project, and the feedback on how many diverse community groups may want to use the building. Hub is much needed and so many people in Haslemere want the project to succeed. Facilities for young people are limited – the work done by youth leaders is inspirational but with the Hub they will be able to do so much more, as will Crossways Counselling which has ambitions to extend its counselling services to younger people. We can provide a long term and purpose built for home for both Crossways and Citizens Advice as well as attractive spaces for a wide variety of church and community activities. So we can say that the past year was not only one of tangible progress but also one where we have reached out to the community, made new friends and raised expectations. We hope we are able to realise those expectations and progress the project over the coming year.

Andrew Culshaw, Debbie Peet and Cathy Moore

Finance Report

2023 saw another positive outcome for our parish finances:

Day to Day expenses of £188,000 which include building maintenance, Parish Share to the Diocese, administration, insurance and utilities were covered by regular income from parishioners.

Childrens' and Youth Work of £45,000 was covered in full by the Haslemere Religious Education Fund which owns the old school building in Chestnut Avenue and receives rental income from its letting.

Major building related costs of £47,000 – were covered from the Building Fund which now stands at £154,000. The main item of £34,000 related to Link Community Hub professional fees. The Building Fund comprises legacies accumulated in recent years including £19,000 received in 2023.

Planned Giving and Index Linking – half our regular income is now index linked via the Planned Giving Scheme. This helps our planning and also reduces our administrative workload. I would encourage everyone to consider index linking their giving.

- Donors always receive notification of forthcoming increases and can decline them if they wish
- Index Linking can be removed from your giving at any time
- CPI has replaced RPI as the index used

Thank You to both Geoff Martin and Kari Hayden for their support throughout the year.

Andrew Culshaw

St. Christopher's Committee

New audio system

A new audio system has been installed in St Christopher's to improve the overall sound levels in the church and for broadcasting recorded music. A new wooden cabinet, which matches the existing wood at the west end of the church has been built by a local carpenter to house the new equipment,

Lighter-weight altar

A local specialist carpenter has been engaged to construct a new lighter-weight altar for St Christopher's. He is using English oak from Sussex. Its design was chosen from a number of alternatives submitted for consideration. A faculty has been granted and we hope the new altar will be completed later this year.

Church building

The recent quinquennial report recommended the installation of some form of safety system for use by those climbing the tower. We have identified a system which appears to be suitable and are in the process of obtaining further information on its installation and cost.

New digital piano

A new digital piano has been purchased for use at St Christopher's as part of the increasing focus on music in the church. It was largely paid for from a redundant restricted fund

originally established for new choir robes. Appropriate steps were taken to obtain approval for the repurposing of the fund.

Church attendance

We have been delighted to note the generally higher attendance numbers at the St. Christopher's services, and on a number of occasions have had to bring out all the spare chairs.

Last but by no means least

Thank you to all the volunteers that make St Christopher's such a fine place of worship.

Chris Lemar, Secretary to the St Christopher's Committee

Safeguarding

Well, how time has flown. I took over the Safeguarding role from Margaret 6 years ago. At that time, we applied for DBS checks in paper copy, and training courses were all run as evening events in person. Things have changed a little!

You may have seen the TV dramas about past cases or read the reports on the Church review of past cases – all of which bring into stark light the fact that the church has not always been a safe space for everyone, and that we as a body need to do more to protect those who are vulnerable. And the church has responded, we now have good systems in place, and excellent training to raise awareness. There are those who feel that some of the subjects are too difficult, that our systems are overkill, or that the processes are un-Christ like. But for me, Safeguarding is where the love and welcome starts! Our church buildings are open to all, and we welcome everyone into a place of safety where we can all grow in love and faith.

My role as Safeguarding Officer has been to keep Safeguarding in peoples' minds. It is the PCC that takes the lead in Safeguarding, ensuring that we commit ourselves to support the Church of England's Promoting a Safer Church Policy Statement, House of Bishop's Practice Guidance. The challenge for the PCC is to create a loving church environment where we are aware of the risks and have our eyes open. For each activity involving children or vulnerable adults we consider the risks, put plans in place to manage those risks and, if needed, we do DBS criminal record checks for leaders and volunteers. (during my tenure I have done 96 DBS checks)

But also during my time, the central church has provided us with systems that make things easier – we have the Parish Dashboard that records and reminds the PCC when regular reviews are needed, and the new Parish Hub can be used to track when volunteers training and DBS checks need renewal. DBS checks can now be registered for automatic renewal – all of this reduces the administration. Our activity leaders (especially Verity, Victoria and Sophie) are fabulous at keeping Safeguarding central to their activity planning. It has been an absolutely pleasure to be involved in so many of the church youth and pastoral activities though my Safeguarding role.

At the time of writing, there are plans in place to reshape the Safeguarding role. I am very comfortable that those picking up the reins will do a great job!

If anyone has any concerns about our activities or an individual at risk, please do not hesitate to contact me, or those listed on the Safeguarding notices that are on display in each of our Church buildings.

Thank you for all the support I have received over the past few years.

Cathy Moore, Safeguarding Officer

Pastoral Care Report

The work of our pastoral teams goes forward month by month, largely unseen by the majority in our community, but hugely valued by the recipients of their care. It is a ministry of sacrifice and patience and as a church we are very grateful for all that is done. To my mind it is the most Christlike of our ministries. We are also extremely grateful for the three new recruits who have stepped forward recently, Jenny Simmonds, Wendy Neat and Claire Gratton.

Without sounding like an Oscar's speech, this really is just a huge thank you to everyone involved. Tessa Trollope has kindly stepped forward into the supervisory role for the pastoral care team. Tessa is supremely qualified and experienced to take on the role as offering pastoral care to the pastoral teams, as and when that might be necessary. The best outcome is that Tessa is rarely called upon because the teams don't come across situations where they feel the need to talk in confidence to someone with extensive experience. However, Chris and I are extremely glad that the back-up for our teams is in place should the need arise. Obviously, if there are concerns of a more spiritual nature Chris and I are always on hand.

Rev Justin Manley-Cooper

The Care Home Team

The Care Home Team has grown over recent times, and we now have an experienced cohort of individuals to call upon. Regular services are being held at Redcot, The Hunter Centre, Oak Hall and Whisper's village and the total attendance at all four in any one month is approximately around 50 or so. Whilst everyone is doing a fantastic job, it would be wrong not to thank Peter Sellars and Shirley and Michael Bawtree, who do a lot of the heavy lifting. Michael's contribution became particularly obvious when he was away and Vera, Jan and myself were left to lead the hymns! Eric Morecambe's "All the right notes, but in the wrong order!" springs to mind! Actually, they probably weren't even the right notes!

That aside, it is a terrific team, that does a terrific job on what is an extremely worthwhile and rewarding ministry. Thank you.

Rev Justin Manley-Cooper

Town Chaplaincy Report

Very little need be said about a ministry that grows by tentacles gradually making new contacts. Having established the retail ministry, we are now extremely visible with the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and the whole community through activities such as the Christmas Windows Competition and the Christmas market stall, not to mention the community Lenten prayers initiative.

Good contacts have been made with both the cricket club and the bowls club, with excellent events held at each club. The cricket club is now looking to make their day a real community event, which is in large part due to the terrific support of the congregation over the last two years. This support has given them the confidence to plan for a bigger day attracting the local community to come and support the town's cricket club.

This ministry is all about taking the church to the centre of the community and drawing the strands of our contacts together and as mentioned above is a congregational activity, which is fantastic. Another somewhat intangible and unmeasurable benefit, I believe has been how the church's reputation has grown for the better, as I said difficult to quantify but definitely a benefit.

Rev Justin Manley-Cooper

Pop in Coffee Morning Report

The Thursday Coffee Morning has now been running for 2 years. There are the regulars who come whatever the weather to meet their friends and enjoy the coffee, tea and variety of home-made cakes, and over the months others have heard about it and the regular group is growing. It runs in conjunction with the Hearing Aid Clinic which has proved a real boon as the clinic attracts clients from further afield who might well stay and enjoy the coffee and cake on offer and return at a future date even if their hearing aids are not in need of servicing. In addition to the refreshments there is also a book stall, donations from which go to the local Palliative Care Team at Midhurst.

I am very grateful to the team of volunteers who have provided so much support for this venture. More volunteers are always welcome. There are jobs for all from those who wish to welcome and chat, those who like to organise the kitchen and brew the coffee and tea or mind the book stall. We are always on the lookout for any who enjoy baking and can provide the occasional cake or similar.

Come and join us for coffee and chat and bring a friend on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 10 – 12 noon.

Sarah Mulliner

Hearing Clinic Report

Are you aware that most people leave taking a formal hearing test until it is at least 15 years too late? Just another extraordinary fact that you learn on the Hearing Champions training course. Hearing Aids can make such a difference to people's lives, but they do need regular maintenance and cleaning at least once every three to four months. In the past, residents had to make long journeys to the big NHS hospitals for maintenance services.

For nearly 2 years now we have been running a free NHS service in partnership with the Diocese. A regular hearing Aid maintenance clinic every 2nd and 4th Thursday alongside the pop in coffee morning. Sarah Mulliner and her wonderful team are there supporting us and welcoming our clients and are on hand to help in anyway needed.

We have developed good relationships with our local Care home Oakhall, Redcot and Holy Cross convent and have regular clinics and offer support when needed. This partnership has been very rewarding and a great benefit for those people who attend the hearing clinic, as they can socialize and have a chat over a cuppa. Attendees can also receive pastoral support if needed. Our attendance has been growing each month, some visitors attend regularly, often just seeking a friendly chat with a Champion, to help grow their confidence in wearing their hearing aids or general support and advice.

The hearing champion can deal with many people, some of whom are just lonely, whose only conversation that week might be their friendly chat with the Hearing Champion. Some want talk about recent bereavements and other difficulties they are struggling with. As you can see, being a Hearing Champion is not just about servicing hearing aids, it's more about just being there for people and giving them support. The hearing clinic is a free service for NHS hearing aid users, but we do have a donation box for supporting a Children Special Needs charity which has come from people wanting to make a little donation for the service that they have received.

The Haslemere Hearing Champions team are Sophie Bessant (lead champion), Sue Foster and Victoria Vaughan who have been champions for over a year now, and I am pleased to welcome our new champion, Jenny Simmonds. They have all been a real asset to the hearing team. We all must complete training with the Guildford Audiology department working with the partnership of the Diocese, safeguarding training and we all have DBS. Our team is growing in confidence to help and support the hearing needs of our community.

This last year the Team have seen over **250 +** people either at the pop in clinics, home visit (housebound) or in one of the three care homes: Oakhall, Redcot and Holy Cross convent. I believe it is wonderful gift to be able to help & support someone with hearing loss, to make them feel less isolated.

Sophie Bessant (Haslemere Parish Hearing Champion lead)

Bereavement Report

This has been a fairly busy year with 16 church funerals and 10 cremation-only services of these 10 had local next-of-kin.

Sadly, our Bereavement Visitor at St. Christopher's, Frankie Gaiter, has decided to retire after many years, and we shall miss her. Luckily, we have Sarah Mulliner who has been a tower of strength over this last year.

As usual we are giving out the Easter Baskets. These are made by the children under the guidance of Victoria Martin. They are beautifully made of raffia and then filled with real (as opposed to chocolate!) eggs, decorated and delivered to all those who have been bereaved during the year. They are always gratefully received, and it gives the visitor a chance to see people and how they are getting on.

In December once again we held our popular All Souls Service. This is when people are invited to come and light a candle in memory of their loved ones. Once the candles are in place, the names of the deceased are read out. Afterwards there is tea and cake in the Link, and this year we made 73 cups of tea! It seems to be a service which is much appreciated especially the chance for a chat afterwards.

I would like to thank all those who have helped during the year especially Sarah Mulliner, and Victoria Martin and all her team.

Linda Donaldson, Bereavement Team Co-ordinator

Children and Families

First Steps – First Steps has continued to grow throughout the past year – at the start of 2024 we have peaked at 48 children which is an amazing testament to the hard work of everyone involved. Every week we are attracting new families who, when asked, report that they are coming along based on recommendations from others.

Before we broke up for the summer last year we once again, organised a visit from Basil's farm! It was wonderful to see the children and their carers interacting with the myriad of different animals. The morning was so successful that we have booked the farm for another return visit this summer – it is truly a fantastic way to round off the First Steps year!

During the last session before Christmas, we held a Christmas party when families were asked to bring along a plate of food for a bring and share lunch. Much fun was had by all as we learnt about the Nativity Story and shared hospitality together.

Every week we are offering two different craft activities based around the theme for that particular week. Ranging from decorating sheep to Jesus in the Temple to making crowns – the crafts are then referred to during our Circle Time when we endeavour to tell stories and act out the Bible passage for that week.

Sunday Morning Families – This group has remained successful when on the 1st Sunday of each month, during the 10am service at St Bartholomew's, children are able to leave the service and join the CAF team, in the Link, for a short lesson, prayers, craft activities and games! Children and helpers then re-join the service for a blessing and to show the congregation what they have been making. The group is supported by a number of volunteer parent helpers who attend sessions based on a rota system.

The theme for the week will often relate to the main service, for example on All Saints Sunday we ran a session about Superhero Saints – comparing Saints of the Church with the powers of well known super-heroes. Qualities ranged from bravery, faithfulness and loyalty although we surmised that the gifts of the Saints were given from God.

Families@4 – Since the start of 2023 Families@4 has moved to one session on the third Sunday of the month. This is a friendly and approachable service where families can meet together whilst enjoying a different theme each week explored through craft, stories, prayers and songs. After each service we all congregate in the Link for a Children’s Tea which is supplied by the families and greatly enjoyed by all. In September the CAF team held a Special session when we teamed up with the Parish bell ringing team giving the families the opportunity to try out the bells for themselves after an interesting talk on the history of bells. Then in October a Special Light Party session was held, when families could all join in with various crafts and games connected to the Light of Jesus followed by a service celebrating Jesus as the Light of the World.

The Den - Our church youth group for 8–12-year-olds continues to grow, with up to 17 children attending (with 2 waiting to join), all of whom come from a variety of schools in the local area. Some of our eldest Den members, have now also started attending Summit as well as they begin to transition over to the older group when they turn 12 years old. We continue to have positive feedback from both the children and their parents.

Lara Butler, began working as an Assistant Leader from September 2023, having volunteered with The Den for a year. She continues to be a great asset to the team and her forest school teaching skills provide further enrichment to our sessions and environmental projects. The group has a dedicated core team of volunteers, and members of the wider church congregation often participate in sessions relevant to their interests or skills. For example, a number of church members hosted the Den’s progressive supper during harvest time.

Each term consists of a mix of church sessions, outings, fundraisers, and mission projects to help the children live out their faith and make a difference in the local community and environment. The aim of The Den continues to be to support all aspects of the children’s health, including their spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, social, and environmental health.

The Den kids have once again got involved in community events this past year, such as the Coronation Parade (details given in section below) for which they helped make costumes. Later in the year, The Den also participated in the Christmas Window competition. Their display this year was in Hasleworks and was inspired by two local charities, The Hunter Centre, and Cats Protection. Through their window decorations they encouraged passers-by to ‘Work Together to Make A Difference This Christmas’ and donate to the charities using the QR codes on the window.

The group continues to develop relationships within the local community (businesses, organisations, clubs & charities) which in turn provides wonderful opportunities for the youth and their well-being. From bowling at the Haslemere Bowls Club, dinghy sailing at the Frensham Sailing Club, to exploring music and worship during a Rocksteady Music School session. Recently they had a night at Haslemere Museum exploring Jesus in history and engaged in challenges around the museum, which they navigated in the dark with torches.

They were also invited to join in Harvest celebrations at a Harvest Meal at Imbhams Farm, with whom the group have a wonderful ongoing relationship.

Helping people in the local community continues to be important to The Den. After the previous year's success, the group teamed up with Tesco's for another very successful Food Bank Challenge. They also made kindness packages for the young families who live in the Skylar View Flats and were very excited to help at Cats Protection again, giving much needed love to the cats. They also had a visit from the RNLI and The Den will be running a car-wash fundraiser for this charity in the summer.

The Den also continues to focus on safeguarding and nurturing God's creation. They helped create the incredible wildflower display in their Derby Road Verge last summer, and again this Spring, the children planted more trees on the verges as well as pollinator friendly plants and flowers, whilst creating an Easter Garden and 'living cross' made of bedding flowers in their wild area. More wildflower seeds were added to the wild area of St Bartholomew's graveyard with plans to further scarify this area for additional seeding. The children also planted hedgerow saplings and trees at Imbhams Farm in Autumn, litter picked at Haslemere recreation ground in the summer and had a creative session using recycled materials while celebrating the special way God has made each of them, at the beginning of the year.

Some of the spiritual topics the group have covered include Jesus walks on water and staying focused on Jesus through stormy times, Jesus as King of Kings, Success in God's eyes, loving your neighbour as yourself, how we are 'fearfully & wonderfully made', the meaning behind Christingles, the nativity, making room for God in our hearts and minds, Lent & Easter, creative praying, Jesus as the light of the world (& mini light party), the power of giving, Elijah and the widow and giving even when you don't have much, thankfulness & sharing, being kind and the fruits of the spirit, trusting God to provide and Moses 40 years in the desert, to name a few.

Summit – This group for 12-14/15-year-olds meets every second Wednesday of the month, and in February Summit celebrated its first birthday. As a special treat, the Summit went bowling at Spectrum which was a great bonding experience. The group has up to 13 young people attending, its numbers boosted by the eldest Den members who are also now able to attend the older group having turned 12. The group's logo was finalised in May, and the group is promoted in the local and schools.

The Summit has more in-depth spiritual discussion than The Den, but still includes a mix of socials/outings and community projects/fundraisers. On occasion both The Summit and The Den are brought together, such as on the visit to Cats Protection and the Rocksteady Music & Worship session.

Recent discussion topics have included 'what happens when you pray?' and creative prayer stations, 'Can Christianity be cool (and does it matter)?', 'What it means to serve?' and 'How God works through us?', 'What are healthy & unhealthy friendships and how can we be guided by Jesus?' (this included the use of a safeguarding poster on this topic). During our Remembrance session, Former Army Major, Jamie Harle, tackled some tricky topics surrounding war and shared how faith has helped him and other soldiers through difficult times. He then got the young people sharing their own experiences.

Helping in the local community and the Parish is another key part of Summit. The young people sewed together 'holding crosses' and visited Shottermill House Care home to interact with the elderly residents suffering from dementia and hand out their special hand-made gifts. Other more environmental focused projects include kayaking and water testing with SE Rivers Trust and learning about how to protect our waterways. The Summit serve within the Parish, such as reading at Carol Services, to helping at the Parish's Christmas Market, helping prepare and participate in the Passover Meal and making Christingles for the children's services.

The group also has a lot of fun together from dry ski-slope 'donutting', to baking and making fresh mulled apple juice with a giant apple pressor, to visiting Westminster Abbey & Parliament.

Coming up Summit are having a 'youth takeover' family service and will be participating in all aspects of a Sunday morning service.

Young Leaders

The Parish's Young Leaders, Yasmin & Phoebe Ingram, continue to attend the Diocese Young Leaders Forum three times a year (usually accompanied by Verity), which is run by Emma Coy and Alastair Etheridge. The forum aims to hear the voice and views of young people so that they are represented at decision making levels across the diocese.

Both young ladies had the opportunity to present their thoughts to the Synod in November (with the other young leaders), based on the topic of how to help the church grow younger, which was the focus of their discussion. Both young ladies were also involved in the process of selecting a new Bishop of Dorking through the Young Leaders Forum, and they enjoyed having afternoon tea at the Bishop's house, Willow Grange, in the Summer.

Yasmin Ingram regularly helps at The Den as a 'Young Leader' even though she is still counted as a child in the group due to her age, which is important for safeguarding.

Confirmations

Anna & Maclaren who attend The Den & Summit were Confirmed on Sunday 5th November.

Assemblies

Weyhill Montessori continue to visit St Bartholomew's Church for special assemblies. Victoria and Verity ran an interactive service for Harvest, and Rev. Justin joined Verity as a full-sized Easter Bunny for their Easter Service as Verity's Jesus puppet taught 'Bouncy Bunny' the real meaning of Easter.

Coronation Parade

All of the Parish's children's groups were invited to participate in the Coronation Parade. Costumes were made in advance by the children and keen sewers in the congregation also assisted. The children were dressed as 'eco-bishops', in keeping with the environmental theme. Some of the young people rolled giant inflatable worlds along in the parade, all of which was to convey the message that as a church we care about the environment and God's creation, just like the King.

During the parade itself The Den and Summit used donation buckets to raise money for The Hunter Centre, whilst handing out wildflower seeds. They raised £84.10 through change thrown into the buckets.

Harvest Festival

On Sunday 1st October the CAF team ran a Sunday morning Harvest Special in the Link during the Harvest Festival family service which included discussion and Harvest themed craft and activities.

The Den made a traditional Harvest bread sheaf at Imbhams Farm which was also displayed during the church service.

Christmas

Christmas Market

The CAF team and some of the Summit helped with the Parish's Christmas Market in December. The theme was 'Bethlehem Post Office' and children were encouraged to write a prayer to Jesus on a post card, colour and stamp it, and then post it in our own post box. The CAF team randomly chose three of the prayers to read out at the Christingle Services and prizes were given to the children whose prayers were picked out. Bags of goodies were also handed to children at the Christmas market, and these contained chocolate coins, a children's society Christmas book, Children's & Families group leaflets, a wooden angel Christmas craft decoration and a Children's Society leaflet.

Christmas Window Competition

As mentioned earlier, both The Den & Summit participated in the Christmas Window competition, creating an incredible charity themed display in Hasleworks.

Sunday Morning Families Christmas Special 5th December

The CAF team held a Special Sunday Morning Families session on the 5th December when we discussed the 'real' meaning of Christmas followed by an array of Christmas Crafts. During this session the children made decorations and cards which were then posted to those on the Pastoral list.

Christingle Services on Christmas Eve

After a very busy morning on the 22nd Dec making up Christingles (thank you very much to such a wonderful team of helpers!) we were ready to go for our Christingle services!

On Christmas Eve we held two services at: 3pm and 4.30pm and for both services we were overjoyed that the church was full to bursting for both! After a wonderful welcome from Rev Chris the meaning of Christingle was explained accompanied by lots of rousing carols!

A fun interactive re-telling of the Nativity Story followed – as the story unfolded various interruptions ensued, such as an Amazon delivery, pizza delivery and a phonecall by Frosty the Snowman! All rounded off by the ultimate interruption of Father Christmas himself! It was then explained how all too easily the real meaning of Christmas can be forgotten: Jesus Himself. The service ended with the dimming of the lights in the church and the lighting of the Christingles - which the children held high whilst singing, 'Away in a Manger'.

Easter

Passover Meal

The Den & Summit were involved with the Parish's Passover Meal this year. The Den made the traditional charoset paste and helped lay out the tables. The Summit & The Den were also involved in the evening itself, reading out questions to prompt the explanations of the symbolic aspects of the meal by Rev. Chris and Rev. Justin. Both groups also had their own mini Passover Meals and discussion during their sessions.

Good Friday & Easter Sunday

This year on Good Friday a Special Easter service was held at St Bartholomew's Church from 10.30 followed by an Easter Garden craft in the Link and well as the opportunity for the families to help decorate the eggs to be given to bereaved families and much more!

During the Easter Sunday service, the children had the opportunity to undertake Easter crafts and games in the Link after the CAF team discussed the meaning of Easter helped along with a few props! The children also enjoyed an egg hunt – we had a busy morning with nearly 30 children!

A big thank you to all of the volunteers who continue to put their time and energy into children's and families work within the Parish – we couldn't do it without you!

Victoria Martin, Children's and Families' Worker

Verity Sutherland, Older Children's Worker

PARISH ACTIVITIES AND GROUPS

Music and Choirs

This has been another successful year for music within the church. The junior choir, now in its third year, continues to go from strength to strength, with about 14 choristers currently on the books. The children regularly join the adults to sing for services in St Bart's as well as singing by themselves in St Christopher's. They have also sung for Evensong, and a Christmas concert, as part of the Friend's Saturday Coffee Concert series.

In a new initiative for services in St Christopher's, we have been delighted to welcome a variety of different groups on the fourth Sunday of the month, including the Junior choir, the Winterbourne singers and Quarta dominicae.

Clive Osgood, Director of Music

Junior Choir

Clive Osgood continues to direct the choir with support from Sally Hollyer as accompanist and conductor. Since September, Clive has been mentoring a young organ scholar, Scarlett Martin, who attends most rehearsals and occasionally accompanies the Junior Choir during services.

We currently have 15 choristers in the choir (the same as this time last year). This is an ideal number because they all fit in the choir stalls and even with a couple of absences the choir is still able to function effectively. The demographic of the choir is:

2 x Year 7

4 x Year 6

4 x Year 5

2 x Year 4

3 x Year 2

The choristers come from a variety of schools now: St Bartholomew's C of E Primary, Grayswood C of E Primary, Liphook Junior School, Woolmer Hill and Bohunt. We have 11 girls and 4 boys.

The choir continues to sing regular Sunday morning services at St Christopher's Church and also at St Bartholomew's Church for some Family Services and other occasions such as the Harvest Festival. The Junior Choir, aided by the adult choir, are becoming familiar with the various Communion Service settings: Rutter, Osgood and Thorne. They are also becoming more confident when seated in front of the congregation and they know how to process in and out of services. Recently they have been given their own hymn books and have been shown how to mark the correct pages with sticky tabs.

Since last April, the choir has sung for some notable occasions: the Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday, Mothering Sunday, Easter Day, Carol Service, Christmas Day. They also sang for a special Civic Service in St Bartholomew's Church on 7th May to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. The Junior Choir also hosted its own Coffee Concert at St Bartholomew's Church in December. The event showcased several familiar Christmas carols, including harmonies and solos from several members of the choir and an Encore from the 'Sound of Music'. A couple of singers also played the violin and trumpet, and Scarlett played a magnificent interlude on the organ. It was evident that our young choristers (and the audience) enjoyed the whole experience, and it was lovely to see how proud they all were of their achievements. Thank you to the volunteers who provided the tea and extra mince pies for all the children.

This year Clive has introduced the choir to Evensong. They attended an Evensong at Chichester Cathedral last year and have since sung Evensong at both St Bartholomew's and St Christopher's. The choir has also been invited to sing Evensong at St Nicolas Church in Guildford on 16th June.

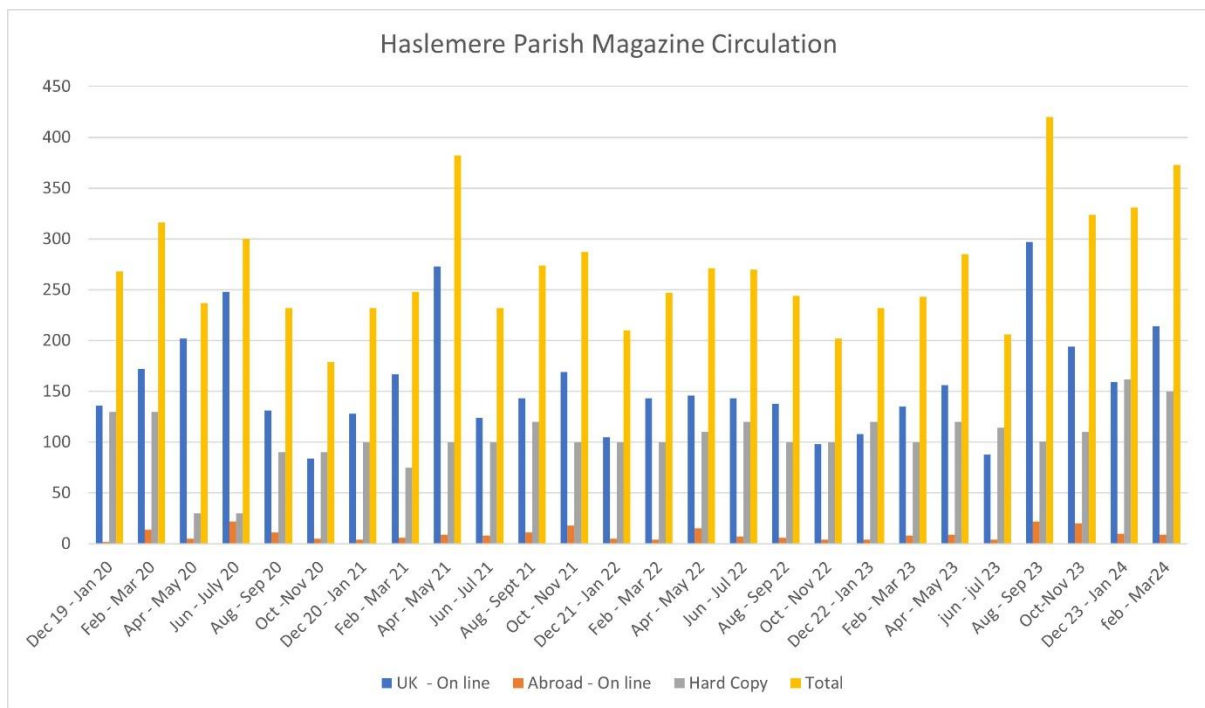
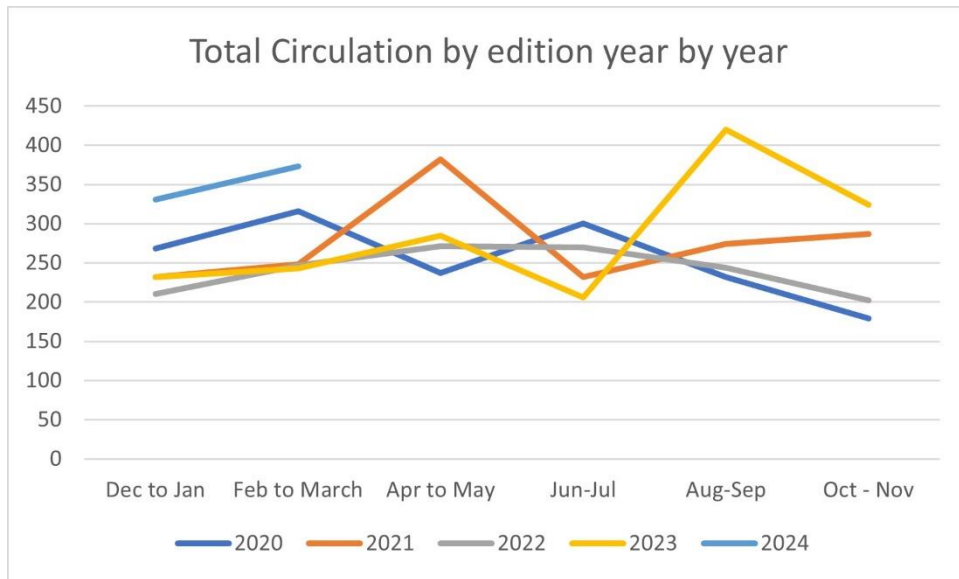
Our choristers continue to work their way through the Royal School of Church Music's, 'Voice for Life' syllabus. The Tuesday rehearsals are structured to enable Clive and Sally to spend time each week working through the music theory books. Our most experienced choristers have completed stage 2 of the syllabus and have been awarded their light blue ribbons. Our newest recruits will receive their surplices once they have completed the first theory book. The older members of the choir have become 'buddies' to the younger ones and they have been able to help with some of the theory lessons.

We are grateful to Revd Chris and Sophie for hosting our end of term barbecue at the Rectory last summer. It was a lovely opportunity to get all our choir families together socially. The choir bowling trip to Portsmouth was once again a huge success and so was the Christmas pizza party, held in the Link.

I would like to thank Carol Skeates for all her assistance during the Junior Choir rehearsals and for providing the refreshments every week. Also, choir attendance has been excellent this year thanks to the commitment of parents and the choristers themselves. All the hard work is most definitely paying off!

Liz Chapman, Junior Choir Administrator

Circulation:



Our circulation figures are being captured and monitored with the above detailed results.

Overall, our circulation is slowly increasing, and we distribute to more outlets than ever before. The hard copy magazine is available at both of our churches as well as the following places around town, Haslemere Museum, Haslemere Library, Haslemere Book Shop, Haslewey Centre, Station Information Hub, The Link Coffee Morning, and Oliver’s Café. We also include a copy in our postal packs. This results in a print run of around 150 hard copies of each edition. We also publish online through a web publication platform where we average around 250 reads for each edition.

We encourage everyone to offer a copy to any newcomers in the Parish, as the magazine provides parish contact numbers, as well as information on our regular service times and information about what's on locally. It provides a good introduction to our Parish life.

We would appreciate further outlets for hard copies and people to deliver to potential new outlets, if any parishioners would like to help with this, please contact the editorial team (Jane Slevin-07949 633979).

Increasing our circulation is a key target for two main reasons.

Primary Consideration - Outreach into the wider community.

Secondary Consideration - Covering the costs of the magazine through increased donations and advertising.

The Team:

The team has remained stable for the year with individuals' roles becoming more defined, allowing us to become an efficient and well-oiled machine. Most recently we have been delighted to co-opt Margaret Morris for a trial period due to her previous experience with the magazine and a pressing need for holiday cover. We have every hope this may become a permanent addition to our team.

The team meets six times a year where we review our previous edition and plan for the next one. We also consider our costs, advertising, and ideas for future development. There is then a period of frantic activity as we pull together our next edition ready for publication at the end of the month.

Every page/article needs to be typeset and proofread and then collated into a complete magazine.

Particular thanks go to Kari Hayden for her incredible support and hard work on all aspects of the magazine, as well as to Sue Davis for her patience in proofreading. Debbie and Frances have brought in some excellent articles and news across the parish and their contributions have been essential in bringing a vibrant new look to our publication. Whilst Geoff continues to be our bedrock of commonsense, managing payments from our advertisers and encouraging us to see our service as one of outreach and value.

Content:

The Link magazine endeavours to be an interesting and informative parish magazine with a mixture of regular articles, news about the parish, parishioners and what's on locally, alongside one-off features and views.

We welcome contributions from all the parish and are always delighted when we get a one-off article, on whatever topic. It would be helpful if we had more contributions of this nature.

Our regular contributors are the lifeblood of the magazine and provide interesting articles on many topics. Those who take the time to write for every edition are a great blessing and we would like to give a big thank you to them all.

Simon Avenell, Rev. Chris Bessant, Sophie Bessant, Andrew Culshaw, Hamish & Linda Donaldson, Philip Duly, Haslemere Museum, Haslemere Bookshop, Philip Hunt, Victoria Martin, Dorothea Natrass, Sally Pollard, Richard & Frances Reincke, Peter Sellars, Verity Sutherland, King's World Trust and The Hunter Centre.

New regular contributors would be very welcome.

We aim to publish between 56 and 60 pages for each edition.

Advertising & Costs:

There are five pages of paid adverts managed by Geoff and we also promote local charity events for free. We have lost some of our advertisers during 2023 and also gained some, however our income from advertising in 2023 has dropped from the previous year.

With a high print cost and estimating production figures we suspect that we made a net loss of around £800 for the last financial year.

However, due to a new printer, increased circulation and advertising, our budget for the coming year is much improved. Whereby we anticipate a breakeven situation.

We are a not-for-profit publication but do regularly review our income and costs and aim to be able to cover our publication costs.

Discussions in the team and feedback from the PCC members on the team lead us to believe that our priority is outreach in the community rather than income generation.

We now include a QR code on the cover of every publication to enable donations to be made electronically. This allows people to donate via their smart phones when picking up the magazine around town.

The Team (in alphabetical order): Sue Davis, Kari Hayden, Geoff Martin, TBC- Margaret Morris, Debbie Peet, Frances Reincke and Jane Slevin.

Mothers' Union

As a major charitable arm of the Church of England. we demonstrate our faith in action. This happens as we work towards stopping poverty, inequality and injustice. Our members around the world work at grass roots level. They bring hope and practical support to millions of people every year through parenting, literacy and community development programmes. A highlight of the year, at a local level, is helping at the annual Summer Party MU give for families from the Women's Domestic abuse Refuges in the diocese.

Volunteers are always needed for craft sessions in the women's prison at Send.

Thanks to closer links with the Bishop of Guildford we are being invited to Willow Grange for a garden party on 7th June at which Bishop Paul Davis will be addressing us. This would be a good time for potential new members to join in.

I am always happy to tell you more.

Dorothea Natrass

Women of Worth

The Women of Worth launched on 24th March 2024. This event was attended by 12 women. The aim was to introduce the group where a presentation was shown outlining the importance of the group. We discussed topic ideas such as exploring characteristics of Biblical Women and how these could shape us as women. We incorporated our first topic and an activity in this session. Overall, the event was enjoyable, and we received positive feedback.

We developed a communication platform which is working well providing updates and information. This has 17 women. Through word of mouth, other women have expressed their interest in joining the group and would be attending the next session. Most of the women particularly liked the idea of doing an activity to aid the discussions. It would encourage teamwork work and is a good icebreaker.

One of the aims of the group is to develop friendships through our love of God and share experiences and ideas. This is beginning to reflect in the group.

So far, the group is going well. All this could not have been achieved without the help and support of the Church.

Linda Feliati

The Carpenters

The Carpenters relaunched in March 2024, following a break in service after the pandemic. The first event was a curry evening on 12th March, at Chilli Nights in Haslemere. We had 12 Carpenters attend and we decided to relaunch the breakfasts. Our second gathering was a breakfast at St Christopher's on 13th April where around 18 of us gathered to hear about Jamie Harle's experiences in the British Army and how this has shaped his view of fate versus faith.

At the time of writing, we are due to meet to celebrate St George's Day and we are also looking at attending the Blackbushe Air Day. Our aim is to meet every 4-6 weeks for a breakfast and a talk, as well as programming in some wider social events. We are established to support the men of the Parish, discuss faith, and be visibly active in the community. We're also here to remind each other to have fun and to talk. Many thanks to those who have supported our first two events, and we look forward to seeing you at the next one.

Jamie Harle

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S GROUPS

St Bartholomew's Church Care Group

This Group has been running since 1970's looking after St Bartholomew's Church. The members choose a job when they join and fit the work involved into a time and a day that suits them during the hours when the Church is open. We look after all the needs of the furnishings, woodwork, brass, silver, linens, candles etc.

We currently have 16 members and I wish to thank them most warmly for all their reliable and conscientious help. The Church looks so well looked after and clean and this is regularly commented on by Visitors!! We are always delighted to have new Members and do contact me (on 01428 651561) if you would like to have more information and meet us at our annual coffee morning.

Roscelin Rees

St Bartholomew's Bell Ringers

This year has been another of change on the personnel front with many little absences due to small and not so small niggles offset by further additions to the band.

We started with some national recruitment publicity called "Ring for the King" in preparation for the Coronation. Out of that came Bryony and Lucy who were both halfway through training at the Coronation but knew enough to help us make a noise. Also making an appearance was Sue Wreford who decided that it was the moment to restart ringing after a 35 year break having learnt here. After only a few nervous moments she showed she had not forgotten a lot and is now a valuable addition. Our training continues with a few more recruits again of the slightly younger and quicker learning variety.

The Coronation was fortunately altogether a more relaxed affair than the Queen's funeral to which we added a small tea party after the event itself!

Following from all this I am pleased to report that we rang for all morning services, special services and for two weddings during the year (and more to come this year) as well as for most Evensongs. We also rang for Doris Quick's funeral at the request of the family and have been able to follow that up with memorials for two other members of the church family: John Lear and Bernard Coe.

The one other innovation we have made this year with our improving band is to attempt some quarter peals before Evensong on the second Sunday of each month. These take about forty-five minutes and have to be rung continuously without mistake and are then recorded nationally. We have been successful in both February and March. In April we allowed a band of experts from the Farnham District to come and ring a quarter peal on all ten bells (ours are on six to date) due to Farnham bells being out of action. I am told the sound was well received.

During the year we took part as we normally do with the Haslemere Festival via an open day. 30 or so came and seemed to enjoy the bells and the tea as well as our live video feed.

Out of that sprung a session for the [Families@4](#) service. Crafting something that would be of interest to the young kids as well as to their parents was a bit like writing a pantomime particularly as no actual bellringing was appropriate, but we were still able to show our toys and the bells that hide around everyone's homes, as well as an expert training demo by Victoria, the families minister.

As last year we are planning an outing this time later in the year to East Sussex. We also hope to enter the district striking competitions although for the second year running, we were able to help win the Guild inter-district eight bell striking competition, as evidenced by the shield currently hanging in the tower.

We also took part in the district quarter peal weekend with a total of seven attempted by three of the band as well as a full peal.

Finally, we were able to welcome Justin (but not Chris or wives who were all away) to join twenty or so of us, to our dinner at the Coppa Club in March.

As ever we thank Chris and Justin for their support. I hope we remain near the core of church life aided as always by the regular interactions members of the band with the leadership team. My thanks also to the other ringers for their fantastic support.

Paul Bagshaw, Tower Captain

Church Flowers Report

The Flower Teams at both St Bartholomew's and St Christopher's have enjoyed a fairly relaxed year with one big exception last May, the Coronation. The flags and bunting went up all over the country and we were able to enjoy decorating the churches with red, white, and blue flowers. Apart from that great event we have had a quiet year as there were no weddings. There were however funerals and memorial services several of which for friends we have known and loved and for these services there was often a queue of flower arrangers wanting to have the privilege to contribute to these occasions.

The teams are now quite accomplished at doing floral foam free arrangements using just chicken wire and water. The arrangements are less formal than previously but suit a more natural style. This can be rather unnerving for several of us used to foam as nothing seems to stay where it was initially placed! Frances and I would like to thank both our excellent teams for continuing to rise to the challenge.

There is always room for more volunteers to join the flower teams at either church. No previous experience is required. Flowers and greenery can be provided as well as support if needed. We would love to see you!

Sarah Mulliner and Frances Reincke

PART 2 MEETING DOCUMENTS FROM 2023 APCM

Minutes of APCM 24th April 2023 – election results

The 2023 APCM was held at 7.00pm at St Bartholomew's Church, chaired by Revd Chris Bessant. Katie Morgan, PCC Secretary was in attendance to help facilitate the meeting, and the Church Wardens and more than 50 parishioners attended in person.

The following positions were advertised as vacant. As the number of candidates put forward did not exceed the vacancies there was no requirement for contested elections, but in each case the candidates were supported by a show of hands at the meeting, and with no objections.

CHURCHWARDENS

Geoff Martin
Gareth David

ELECTED PCC MEMBERS

David Simmons (deputy church warden)
Stephen Vaughan
Geraldine Lambrechts
Simon Ingram

CO-OPTED PCC MEMBERS

Richard Parker

LAY MEMBERS OF THE DEANERY SYNOD:

Andrew Culshaw
Hamish Donaldson
Alistair Morgan

Revd Chris thanked those volunteers who had given so much time, energy and experience to the smooth running of the parish in the past year.

Haslemere Parish
St Bartholomew's and St Christopher's

