

The PCC of Bilton Parish - Charity 1137095

Annual Report of Church Activities 2023

Introduction

St Mark's Parochial Church Council (the PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of St Mark's Church Centre.

Around Easter 2023, Tim Cockell the former incumbent left the parish to take up a role in the diocese. For the balance of 2023 the Rev. Glenn Lowde, curate, took the reins during the interregnum.

This report was approved at the Parish Council Committee meeting of 19/9/2024

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and become part of our parish community at St Mark's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and, through the Worship Group, makes suggestions on how services can involve the many groups that live within the parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

When planning activities for the year, the incumbent and PCC considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer, learning about the Gospel and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Providing pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work.
- In addition to these key areas, to facilitate this work it is important that the PCC pays attention to number of basic underpinnings, including appropriate safeguarding, effective administration and legal compliance, and maintaining the fabric of St Mark's church and Church Centre.

Before going through each of these areas, this report begins with the incumbent's overview.

Rector's Annual Report 2024 (year ending December 2023)

Rev'd Glenn Lowde Associate Minister has provided the clergy report to year ending 2023 while St Mark's is in vacancy.

The last year has seen change that we did not expect with the start of 2023. We went into vacancy at the beginning of July after my licensing as your Associate Minister at the end of June. However, it's been a year where we have continued to move forward. Particularly in the area of youth and schools work. We continued with our aim of looking to appoint a children's and family worker and we are progressing with that as we go into 2024. Many thanks to the team set up to work on this and particularly to Sarah Pallett in heading up that team and all her hard work in co-ordinating this.

I have been working at setting up links and good church/school relationships with the heads of Bilton Junior School, Bawnmore Infant School and Bilton Infants School. Work has also been ongoing with the Schools team headed by Sandra and Gill welcoming and talking to the children of various schools about St Mark's and its history, many thanks to you. All this hard work produced dividends in a greater presence of the schools within our parish in our church for harvest and Christmas services.

December was particularly busy but it was great to welcome not only the schools but other organisations and groups who wanted to hold their Carol Services in St Mark's. All this work and activity ensures we are seen by the community as a vibrant and active Christian community.

Other activities such as our first Snowdrop Saturday in February 2023 was a great success with many who visited the church unaware of the beauty and extent of our churchyard. All credit to the gardening team who keep the churchyard to be a haven of peace and an encouragement to a wide range of wildlife who inhabit our churchyard.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our Wardens Team Christine Assheton and Marion Ainslow. They have done a great deal in the last year and a tremendous amount in supporting myself as I take on extra responsibility during this time of vacancy. Also to acknowledge their work in putting together our Parish Profile and the extra responsibility they hold during a vacancy.

I also want to thank Phillip Street and Joy Sharpe for their support in taking various services during this past year.

Particular thanks also to our Parish Secretary Holly Byatt without whom things would grind to a halt. For all the support she has given me with the considerable amount of admin that a parish of our size has to deal with. There are so many others I would like to name who contribute in many ways to the life of the church and have supported me during these past months. So to all of you who contribute in many ways to the life of the church. You are too many to name here, but I hope you know who you are and know that you are thoroughly appreciated for all you do.

With every blessing

Glenn Lowde

Associate Minister

Achievements and performance versus objective/activity

Worship and Prayer

Worshipping God is one of the three elements of our vision at St Mark's. The PCC is therefore keen to offer a range of services during the week and over the course of the year that our community find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. For example, the 8.00 am Book of Common Prayer communion service and Evensong provide a quiet, intimate and reflective environment for worship. Opportunities are provided for people to engage in more outgoing worship at our Sunday morning family services and in parade services where we are joined by a number of the local uniformed organisations in our parish.

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at milestones of the journey through life. In 2023 there were 4 marriages in church, 19 baptisms, 51 funeral/memorial services of various kinds, and the remains of 12 people interred in the Garden of Remembrance.

As is usual, the church held a remembrance day service with the Royal British Legion in attendance, with a large local congregation, and a peel of bells was rung in celebration of the King Charles' coronation.

Prayer is at the heart of all we do at St Mark's. The act of bringing our community and our world before God is where two elements of our vision meet - 'Worshipping God' and 'Sharing his love'. As such there are a number of prayer ministries at St Mark's involving dozens of volunteers. Prayer is offered for those in need at almost all our Sunday and midweek services, both for the unwell and the bereaved. For those who like to receive prayer for healing in person, our Healing Prayer team regularly offers this opportunity. In addition, our Prayer Support Group is on hand to receive both urgent and long-term requests for prayer, which it passes on confidentially to its members. The Bible Reading Fellowship membership has an active program with 30 participants

The Prayer Support Group is made up of 33 people, who are committed to pray regularly for others. In the footsteps of Christ, whose ministry on earth involved many acts of healing, we pray in strictest confidence for those in need, whether that be for healing, or any other support need. Prayer requests can be urgent or long-term.

Home Groups continue to play an important part in the life of St Mark's Church. Currently we have 6 groups meeting on different days and at different times, two in the afternoon and four in the evening.

Pastoral Care

As we have recovered from COVID, some pastoral visits have taken place this year, in response to incoming requests. Under the leadership of Angela Maxwell it is hope to build upon this in 2024, and pursue a more proactive strategy in 2024.

Mission and Evangelism

Many of the activities reported on so far are imbued with spirit of mission and evangelism within the parochial community. A number of additional areas are the subject of further focus below

Overseas Mission

St Marks continues to support Busiliwa Faith School. The following is an extract from the APCM report.

The school continues to run with about 200 pupils and 10 teachers. For Uganda these class sizes are very good but does mean that the school fees that can be expected are small compared to the running costs. A charity has provided funds for some of the classrooms as earlier reported, to be made into more permanent structures and this work is ongoing. This charity also provides some nutrition for pupils at the school. The running costs of the school and the orphanage are the real challenge for David and his team. The original orphans, 10 children who had lost their parents due to landslides has now expanded with over 30 vulnerable children being cared for. When they were young their educational needs, through the nursery and primary years, were met by the adjacent school. As they got older, graduating from the primary system and entering secondary school the running costs of the orphanage has an added dimension and challenge, that of school fees, uniforms and academic materials.

On the 15 October, the school and community held a musical fund raiser so that the school could have some funding to meet their basic financial needs. A total of around £275 was generated and will go some way to temporarily alleviate their dual challenges of paying the teacher's salary and the orphans secondary school fees. David is embarking on brick making to raise additional funds for the school and orphanage but there is still a shortfall.

In 2022, after five years on a tree planting project, unrelated to the school, I stood down as chair of this programme, which has planted over 20 million trees in six districts in Eastern Uganda. During the five years of the tree planting programme I visited Uganda a minimum of twice a year for a month and always made the journey up into the mountains of Bududa to visit the school.

Media

After a year off, the VOICE, the parish magazine has restarted. It has been great to have some new contributors on board writing articles, along with our regular favourites.

A web site complements the parish magazine and provides information about all aspects of the work and activities at St Mark's church. It has been upgraded through 2023, with new churchdesk software, and seeks to provide a wide range of information for members of the congregation, the wider community and for those new to the area or to St Mark's and has provided an alternative way to communicate with those in our community during the pandemic.

Other Key Areas / Supporting Activities

Before mentioning a few key areas, we begin with the Church Wrdens Report

Church Wardens

(Marion Ainslow & Christine Assheton)

First of all, we would like to extend thanks to all those who contribute in any way to make the services at St Marks run as smoothly as possible.

Without the welcome team, readers, intercessors, deputy wardens the church wardens would have a much more difficult job.

Our thanks must also go to Patsy and the choir who enhance the services with their choral singing.

Of course none of this would be possible without the leadership and guidance from the clergy team.

During the last year we have had a lot of work done in the churchyard including extensive tree surgery that was necessary for safety reasons and thanks to the team of garden volunteers on Saturdays the churchyard is looking very tidy and by leaving the wild flowers to set their seeds and animals and insects have been brought back leading to an award from the Butterfly Conservation trust.

It was good to see the church resplendent at Christmas with new altar linen that we were able to purchase with a generous donation from the Friends of St Marks.

Due to Tim being 'borrowed' by the diocese he was only able to work part time in the parish and our thanks go to Glenn and other clergy members for keeping things going in his absence.

Indeed, little did we know that within a short time of Tim's secondment to the Archdeacons office coming to an end, we would be saying goodbye to the Cockell family as they moved on to pastures new.

We have now been in vacancy since July and Christine and I would like to record our thanks for all that Glenn has stepped up to during this time and for all the support from the groups mentioned already and members of the congregation who are never slow at stepping up to the mark when asked for help.

Work has been completed in the church centre with a new boiler being fitted upstairs and a kitchen area fitted in the upper room so refreshments can now be offered in meetings without carrying hot drinks upstairs. The addition of fitted cupboards has also given the choir room for music storage. With the need to empty to the gas meter cupboard, new storage facilities have been fitted in the activity room enabling us to give more storage facilities to Sunbeams Pre-School. New LED lighting and additional plug sockets have also been installed in the activity room.

The last few months has been mainly taken up with preparing documents ready to advertise the position of rector, such as the Parish Profile and I am pleased to report that this has now been accepted by the diocese and an advert has now gone in to appear for 4 weeks. We pray that it will be fruitful and the right person for St Marks will apply.

Safeguarding

Christine Assheton, PSO

With the introduction of the Safer Recruitment and People Management framework from January 2022 the PCC have been kept informed of any changes and the parish action plan was presented for monitoring during 2023.. After only 2 DBS checks undertaken in 2022, 8 were undertaken in 2023.

Volunteers

We would like to thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make our church the lively, vibrant and welcoming community it is. There are about 70 volunteers registered, with a parish electoral role of about 200. In particular, we want to mention our churchwardens and service wardens, clergy, and the many other groups and individuals who work so tirelessly on our behalf. There are numerous other centres of activity throughout the parish which have been making a large contribution to the life of the parish. Without going into details these include the following, in addition to activities mentioned above. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all those in the community involved in and contributing to the mission of the Church. (Full details in the APCM report are available)

Prayer Support Group	Churchyard Team	Christian Aid Liaison
Lionhearts	Audio Visual Team	Finance/collections
Friends of St Marks	Pastoral Visitors	Welcome Team
Bell Ringers	Ladies Day Group	Choir, Organ. Music group
Junior Church	Teen Talk	Youth Club
Home Groups	Bible Reading Fellowship	Worship Committee

A FULL ACCOUNT OF MOST OF THESE GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES CAN BE FOUND IN THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING REPORT.

Friends of St Marks

This organisation generates additional funds for the church, which it passes by the way of grants for specific purposes, for example, new altar frontals acquired in 2023. Fund raising events were held in January, July, October, and December – a cheese and wine evening, a Strawberry tea, a choral concert, and an event at the home of Margaret and George Sherman. All of the above activities brought together members and friends of St. Mark's Church in Fellowship, Friendship and Support. Donations from these events will all go toward the work and needs of St Mark's Church.

Finance

The overall result is a £18,000 loss, against a 2022 loss of £13,000. It was only slightly worse than we had budgeted. All 2023 major projects were completed as expected. These projects, totalling £21,000, account for the loss. Income was boosted by a windfall. This windfall was a combination of exceptionally high returns on deposits, an unexpected large legacy, and grants received. These were £18,000, £14,500, and £3,000 respectively, totalling just over £35,000. Total Assets at the end of 2023 were £411,000, down from £429,000 at the start of the year. Around £10,000 was given as grants to other charities.

Full detail follows in the Finance Appendix.

Structure, governance and management

Administrative information

St Mark's Church is situated in Church Walk, Bilton, Rugby. It is part of the Diocese of Coventry within the Church of England. The correspondence address is St Marks Parish Office, Church Walk, Bilton, Rugby, CV22 7LX.

Parish Church Council

The PCC is governed by two Church of England Measures - The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as amended, which defines the principal function of the PCC, and the Church Representation Rules 2011.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. Members are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM). Representatives on the Deanery Synod and elected members normally serve for three years, unless elected to fill a vacancy. Readers and Co-opted members serve for one year. All members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and to stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

The PCC is registered with the Charity Commission as a charity (number 1137095). Membership details are found on the Charity Commission website.

During 2023 the full PCC met six times . Given its wide responsibilities, the PCC has a number of committees each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life, each of which is responsible to the PCC. These Committees met between meetings and reports of their deliberations were received by the full PCC and discussed as necessary.

Standing Committee

This is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. It oversees the general financial dimension of the work of St Mark's by monitoring income and expenditure, budgeting, maintaining appropriate financial controls and co-coordinating the annual review of the Christian Stewardship of money through planned giving.

Worship Committee

Attends to matters relating to worship in the Church, planning services, drafting orders of service and associated work.

Ministry Leadership Team (MLT)

The St Mark's MLT was launched in 2001 and commissioned in January 2005. It is a collaborative team of lay and ordained people, working together, under the authority of the PCC, to lead, envision, enable and release all God's people at St Mark's for mission and ministry in the whole of life. It was disbanded in 2023 as it was felt that it had done its work, and its aims were now being achieved through other groups

FINANCIAL APPENDIX TO
Annual Report of Church Activities 2023

See facing page