

St Mary's Church Selly Oak
Annual Reports for the year 2023

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1. Vicar's report

For me personally, the first part of 2023 was challenging. I began the year with Covid, and had just about recovered from that, when my mother died after a short but terminal illness. Then followed time spent organising her funeral and clearing the family home in Somerset, and I am very grateful to you all at St Mary's for your concern and care through those early months of 2023.

As a church we continued to welcome new people into the fellowship of St Mary's during 2023. It is a great joy to see new people of all ages and cultural backgrounds becoming involved in the life of our worshipping community.

There were a number of changes to our **ministry team** during the year. On January 22nd we presented Revd David Parker with gifts to thank him for his valued ministry at St Mary's as he left us to become Priest in Charge of St Faith and St Laurence Harborne. His licensing on 27th March was a joyous occasion, made even more so by music led by a combined choir from St Mary's and St Peter's Harborne as well as St Faith and St Laurence. Another very joyful occasion was Father Jacob's ordination to the Priesthood at Birmingham Cathedral on 24th June, followed by his first Celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday 25th June when we welcomed Jacob's family and friends to the 10am service. Afterwards we all enjoyed St Mary's famous hospitality with a celebratory glass of Prosecco and lunch in the hall.

In September we marked the retirement of Richard Edmonds as Head Server and Lay Deacon with more prosecco(!) and cake after the 10am Parish Eucharist, and a presentation to Richard. The following week, during our Harvest Festival Service, we formally welcomed Isabella Wong as a Lay Deacon and our new Head Server. During the year Martin Sorby completed his 6 year term of office as Church Warden and was presented with a case of wine as a token of our appreciation. It has been good to welcome Kate Cheyney to serve as Church Warden alongside George Harrison.

During the year I continued to lead the PCC in discussing our vision and our priorities for mission and ministry here in Selly Oak, identifying what we should focus on. For our priority '**creating inclusive community**', alongside our programme of events and activities organised by the social committee, we also spent some time thinking about what it means for us to be a multicultural worshipping community. We ran the course 'Intercultural Church and Mission', and this led to some changes in our worship and church activities. For example, we now regularly invite the congregation to pray the Lord's Prayer in whatever language or version people prefer, and we also enjoy sampling food from different countries at our social events.

Our second area of focus for mission and ministry is '**exploring spirituality**'. We have continued to offer different forms of worship on occasional 'fifth Sunday' evenings: a service of music and readings for Candlemas on the 5th Sunday evening in January, prayer for different countries on the 5th Sunday evening in April, worship around the stained glass windows on the 5th Sunday evening in July, and Taizé worship on the 5th Sunday evening in October. All of these have been well supported. Prayers for wholeness and healing have been offered at the end of the 10am Eucharist on the first Sunday of each

month, which has been appreciated. 'The Well', a monthly Sunday evening service at the University Chaplaincy, continued throughout 2023 with a range of speakers on different aspects of spirituality. We have continued to livestream our monthly Evensong, and this has been appreciated by some who have not been able to attend in person. Study groups during the year included: 'Tenants of the King' (ecumenical Lent course) on the theme of caring for creation, some further sessions looking at the book 'Twenty Questions Jesus Asked' by John Pritchard, and discussions on the Advent book 'Stick with love, rejoicing in every tongue, every tribe, every nation'.

Our third area of focus for mission and ministry is **outreach, particularly to children and young people**. In May 2023 the PCC began discussing the admission of children to communion before confirmation, which has been an ongoing conversation, led by Father Jacob, about how we fully include our children and young people in our Eucharistic community. Alongside this, the PCC also appointed a small working group to look at our hopes and dreams and visions for our work with children and young people and their families, and how we might resource this work. Following these conversations, in November the PCC supported a proposal to recruit a paid part-time person to work with us in our outreach to children and young people for a period of 3 years. This is an exciting development made possible by some generous legacies and donations. Please join with me in praying for the right person to come and work with us.

Junior Church has continued to do well, with thanks to Jayne and then to Jacob, as well as those Junior Church parents who take a turn to lead. St Mary's Junior Club has also continued to run on Wednesday evenings, and I am very grateful to Gerald Fage and Jacob for their work in enabling this. Some of our children were a big hit in our Pantomime 'Peter Pan' in November, ably assisted by 'Crocodile Jacob'!

During 2023 we welcomed the children and staff from St Mary's CE primary school, along with good numbers of parents, to church at the end of every half term for services, which Father Jacob and I helped to shape, although the children themselves led them. I visited Watermill primary a few times in the year to lead Collective Worship, and Father Jacob hosted several groups of students from the University School to visit St Mary's.

In the wider Diocese I have continued to support Curates through their training and assessment process, alongside supervising our own Curate – although this is not at all onerous, it is a great joy to see Jacob grow and flourish in ordained ministry. I have also continued as Bishop's Adviser for Spirituality for the Diocese, which mainly involves finding spiritual directors for those looking for one. I was invited to lead the Cathedral Lenten Quiet Day in March 2023, which I enjoyed, and I serve on the Diocesan clergy wellbeing group in my capacity as Spirituality adviser.

In the wider community Jacob and I continued to take regular services in Sellywood House, a care home in our parish, and we also took our turn to lead the monthly communion service at Bournville Gardens for those who live there and are members of St Mary's and St Francis Bournville. In December Jacob did a great job leading the outdoor carol service in Selly Oak Park. Jacob and I also spent a fair amount of time during the year supporting St Mary's CE primary school, as members of the governing body, as well as leading Collective Worship regularly.

I met regularly during the year with the other Incumbents of St Gabriel's Weoley Castle (now in vacancy), St Michael and All Angels' Bartley Green, St Peter's Harborne, and St Faith and St Laurence Harborne, as our churches officially became an 'oversight area'. We are still working out what this means, but we did enjoy a combined Ascension Day service at St Peter's Harborne last year with singing led by a joint choir from the oversight area. Revd Jayne's support of St Gabriel's Weoley Castle in leading a service there each month during their vacancy has been greatly appreciated.

So another full and busy year with so much to be thankful for. St Mary's Selly Oak is a great place in which to minister, and I am very grateful for your support and to all who contribute in so many ways to our church life together.

Revd Hazel White, April 2024

2. Altar servers, lesson readers, intercessors and lay assistants

Altar Servers

There were eleven church members who acted as servers during the year, three of them being new. We were very pleased to welcome Michelle Udo and Chris Udo in October, and Bob Lam in February as new servers. We currently have an acolyte as well as the crucifer at the 10:00 service.

Lesson Readers

During 2023, there were four members of the congregation who read the first and second lessons at the 8:00 communion service and a further nineteen who read the lessons at the 10:00 communion service on Sunday mornings. We will need to look for new readers for 8:00 communion service.

Intercessors

There were thirteen members of the congregation, plus the clergy, who led the intercessions at the 10:00 communion service, an increase of six.

Eucharistic Assistants

There were eight church members licensed to assist with the administration of Holy Communion, an increase of one. One of those members is currently authorised by the vicar to support the clergy by taking home communion to the sick and housebound.

Lay Deacon

The role of Lay Deacon includes leading the prayers of preparation and doing the Gospel reading. Until October, two members of the church assisted the clergy in this way at the 10:00 service on Sunday mornings. In October, Richard Edmonds retired from this role, leaving one Lay Deacon. We would like to record thanks to Richard for his distinguished 18 years of service as Lay Deacon in St. Mary's Church.

Summary of Readings for TWS

In addition to the clergy, there were five church members who provided the weekly summary of the readings for inclusion in the TWS sheet.

Isabella Wong, March 2024

3. Baptisms

Whereas in 2022 there were 27 baptisms, in 2023 there were only 9 - although I suspect 2022 was a 'post Covid catch up year' and therefore more unusual. Most of our baptisms in 2023 were children under 5 years baptised at 12 noon on the second Sunday of the month. It was, however, wonderful to baptise two young people who are members of our congregation, Wisdom and Praise Udo, during our 10am Parish Communion in July, and also Pippa Jarvis during our 10am Parish Communion in August. The clergy are very grateful to the baptism team who help to prepare the church and welcome guests for baptisms. Thanks also to Kate Cheyney who organises the rota for this.

Revd Hazel White

4. Bellringers

Keith Haslam the Ringing Master at Selly Oak Tower from 1988 - 2016 passed away on 03rd January 2023. A peal of Yorkshire Surprise Major was rung in memory of Olive and Keith on 06th Feb 2023 by family and friends. A quarter peal of Stedman triples was rung by members of the family before the funeral on the 21st Feb 2023. The tower was then opened for friends to ring in memory and celebration of both Olive and Keith's life on the day of their funeral.

Keith and Olives' family kindly offered to pay for the redecoration of the Tower in memory of Keith's 28 years of dedication as Ringing Master. This was graciously accepted, and work is expected to take place early 2024.

On 15th January 2023 the existing ropes were replaced with new ropes.

Ringing for Sunday services have been well attended collaboratively with ringers of local towers: Kings Norton, Moseley, and Northfield.

The bells were rung in celebration for all requested Weddings.

The Tower has been opened for visiting bands to ring quarter peals, peals, and Devon call changes. The Brumdingers also held a practice session at the tower.

Ringling for Wednesday practices have been very well supported by BUSCR, Moseley, Kings Norton, Smethwick, and Northfield ringers. Ringing call changes, plain hunting and methods of plain bob doubles, grandsire doubles, grandsire triples. Practice in raising/lowering bells, listening and striking is needed.

We rang for the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla followed by a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles.

We were delighted to be invited to ring at St Phillips Cathedral for Jacob Pallett's Ordination on 24th June 2023; 4 members of the St Mary's band rang prior to the service.

The annual dinner was held at the Coach and Horses.

We were invited to join St Mary's Moseley annual outing on 15th July 2023, organised by David Ingram, and St Laurence Northfield annual outing on 19th August 2023 organised by Graeme Lanfaer. Both days were very rewarding and nurturing, ringing collaboratively with friends at towers with character and uniqueness.

The band spent an afternoon Spring cleaning the tower removing flaking paint, sweeping away cobwebs & cleaning walls in preparation to open the tower for a Mother's Day experience.

My personal thanks go to the St Mary's band and members of our collaborative towers for their service to the church and weekly commitment to ringing.

We thank the clergy Hazel, Jayne, Jacob, and the congregation for their support. We look forward to serving the community of Selly Oak in 2024 with the selfless commitment from the band and the ringing community.

Joanne Goodall, Tower Representative

5. Book Group

We have enjoyed meeting at Bridgewater Court more or less monthly throughout 2023 and it has been lovely to welcome Jojo - the house manager there - to our sessions, as well as a steadily growing number of residents. Sadly, Sheila's health has not always enabled her to join us but I have been able to keep her informed about the books we have read and share her views with the group. As always, we have read a pretty eclectic mix of books, sharing an equally eclectic mix of opinions about them. We continue to have interesting discussions, some of which are actually about the books(!) and most of us say we appreciate the opportunity to read books we might not otherwise have chosen. As book groups go, ours is very relaxed and informal and is more about the chance to have a good conversation than about literary criticism.

Books read in 2023

January: Act of Oblivion by Robert Harris

March: Jane and Prudence by Barbara Pym

Slow Horses by Mick Herron

May: Tales from Lindford by Catherine Fox

June: Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus

July: Conclave by Robert Harris

September: Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys

October: Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K Jerome

December: Time's Legacy by Barbara Erskine

We always welcome new members and everyone is encouraged to invite friends along to join us. Refreshments are provided.

Kate Cheyney

6. Choir and organ

2023 seems to have been a year of coughs, colds and the occasional appearance of Covid. After an extended period when there was little or no heating in church, it was quite a luxury to have the new system working, although as those of us who function in the East end (chancel and sanctuary) will tell you, it is still one of the coldest areas in the Church building. We are so fortunate in being able to maintain a choir, and I sincerely thank all choir members who turn up regularly for services and rehearsals. The support and encouragement from Vicar Hazel and all the clergy team has been a great help. One of the most notable events of the year was the departure of Revd David Parker to be Licensed into the parish of St Faith and St Laurence, Harborne. We all enjoyed going over to join with their choir, plus the choir of St Peter's Harborne for the Licensing Service. The opportunity to sing with a larger group of choristers was enjoyed by all, and hopefully points the way forward for some more occasional joint events.

Over the last 2 years following the Covid outbreak, we had little chance to recruit any new people including students to join the choir, but we have had more success this year. We welcomed Janet to the Sopranos and Max to the Tenors. In September we welcomed Catherine to the Altos, Cian and Jamie to sing Bass. It was also very pleasing to welcome Helen Tunnicliffe back to sing Soprano having now returned to Birmingham. In August, it was lovely to welcome ex-chorister Ruth and husband Tom who came back to St Mary's for the baptism of their daughter, Pippa Elsbeth. In November, Josie and David Brannon announced the birth of Jessica Anne, a sister for Lucy. Kate Cheyney was elected to the role of Church Warden, but sadly her mother died unexpectedly in July. Hilda went in to the QE for a planned operation, but unfortunately just a couple of days after the operation, fell and broke her right femur. Not a good recommendation about post-operative care in the QE!

We continue to sing our monthly Choral Evensong services, culminating in the annual Carol Service in December, which was by all adjudged to be one of the best we have sung. We are also very grateful to Chris Stormont who comes to play the organ for these services with such professionalism, playing closing voluntaries from top class repertoire. It is important to mention the help and support that Kate Cheyney gives to me and the choir in addition to her many other activities in our church community.

The Organ is still in the care of Paul Daly, Pipe Organ Maintenance and Tuning Services, who continue to ensure that the organ is maintained in excellent condition. As we reported last year, we received a most generous donation to the Organ Fund at the start of 2022. It is pleasing to report that 2023 saw the installation of the re-voiced Great Trumpet pipes and the successful remodelling of the pipes of the Great Mixture. These changes have improved greatly the overall tonal balance of the organ, putting it amongst one of the best parish church pipe organs in Birmingham. We are most indebted to the donor. I continue to be encouraged that St Mary's PCC judges the upkeep of the organ to be important in its many other priorities.

John Stormont. Organist & Choirmaster. March 2024

7. Church Hall

During the year it has been possible to maintain the pre-school group, breakfast club and after-school groups, as well as outside groups who are using the Hall in the evening, and other ad hoc hirers of the Hall for activities over the weekend. This has helped us to be more self-sufficient financially.

The Hall continues to be managed on a day-to-day basis, and essential maintenance work continued. Sometimes this required replacement of old stock, and it was necessary to replace one of the shutter motors. Another necessary job was the floor repair to the kitchen in the Westwood Wing, where the floor had started to sink.

The Management Committee considered their priorities for the year, which started with health and safety. In the report for 2023, reference was made to the fire safety report that had been obtained. Urgent matters were dealt with in that year, and this year the main focus was on replacing the internal doors with fire doors. This was managed during the year but at a cost in excess of £14,000. The committee is extremely grateful to Mrs P Finney for her generous donation to enable the doors to be painted.

A further health and safety improvement was to increase the level of lighting in the car park area, and to replace the light fittings in the parlour after one had spontaneously caught fire. Fortunately this was

managed without injury or damage to other structures. As a result of the costs involved to undertake these activities, it was necessary to put the refurbishment programme on hold.

I remain grateful to Gerald Fage for his services as Hall Manager and continuing supervision of contractors working on the site and to the whole Committee (Pat Finney, Kirsty Simms and John Surtees) for their continuing contribution to the running and maintenance of the Hall.

George Harrison 29/03/2024

8. Coffee mornings

During 2023 a number of coffee mornings were held to raise funds for Christian Aid. A total of £823.50 was raised including gift aid. These gatherings were held during the week, usually Tuesday or Thursday mornings and have always proven to be very enjoyable social occasions. Thank you to all who have held these events and to those who attended, without whom we would not have raised such an impressive amount.

If you would like to host one of these coffee mornings, please contact me on 07703279942, or speak to me in church.

Sue Wiltshire

9. Fabric committee

The Fabric Committee has continued to look after the fabric of the church during the year, ensuring that there has been regular internal and external maintenance of the fabric and grounds. Internal work included contracted church cleaning, organ tuning, photocopier and alarm system service. Volunteers have continued to maintain flowers, floor polishing, silverware, altar dressing and kitchen equipment. This year formal PA testing was undertaken on all electrical items.

Externally, this year we were no longer fortunate to have the assistance of the Probation Service, so the grounds have been maintained by the City Council along with the support of a paid gardener, as described in last year's report. New signage was erected on the drive to encourage slower driving, and to warn drivers that there were pedestrians and cyclists crossing the end of the drive.

The gutters were checked during the year and have been kept cleaned. However, it was noticed that there was damp coming through on the inside wall on the south aisle. On further investigation it was discovered that the down pipe on the wall immediately outside was blocked and therefore overflowing. A hole was cut in the pipe to reveal a broken tile, which was removed, and this allowed the pipe to be returned to normal patency. The wall was then allowed to dry out before the process was commenced to obtain Faculty.

Also, because the down-pipe which was responsible for this was connected directly into the drainage system, advice was taken from the Diocesan Advisory Committee about potential options to prevent this happening in the future. The two options considered were to (a) put in inspection hatches or (b) to cut the pipes short, fit with shoes to allow the water to drain into the drains. The latter was agreed and the Archdeacons approval was sought and obtained for this work to be undertaken.

During a walk-around by the committee, it was noted that there were a lot of shrubs which were of such a size that they were associated with foliage constantly touching the walls, which could potentially act as a source of water ingress. Subsequently a large working party was organised to cut back the shrubs and this has made a significant difference. However some of the shrubs were thick and required heavier tools than were available so a further working party was organised to deal with this. It was noted that there was other large rooted shrubs which would need to be dealt with, but this would need professional advice as they were occasionally wrapping the roots around the drainage system.

In August the presence of dry rot was noted in the south aisle. A full investigation was undertaken which indicated that this was not a new problem, and there is evidence of this having been treated beforehand. The main cause was that the air bricks on the south wall were below ground level. Advice was sought from the Church Architects and the DAC advise on the care of churches was also involved. As a Faculty was required for the replacement of the affected joists and creating small brick walls to prevent the ingress of water into the air bricks, this process was commenced and the Church Architects were to take charge of the designs and the tendering process. This is ongoing.

In the previous report for 2022, there was much detail about the work to replace the heating system. Although this was successful to the extent that there was a functioning boiler at the end of 2022, the boiler house had not been completed. This was due to difficulties in getting the stone cladding, as well as the correct sized fireproof door, and finishing off the guttering. This work had been completed by the end of 2023, and a Practical Completion Certificate was provided, but the final inspection by the company used for the Building Regulations had yet to be undertaken at the end of the year.

During the year, Faculty was granted for the replacement of the clock chime mechanism, which was completed by Smith of Derby. The new mechanism meant that it was now possible to have the chimes silenced during the hours between 11.00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., which has been of benefit to some members of the public.

The Church had been fortunate to have a sum of money bequeathed from the estate of Keith and Olive Haslam to have the ringing chamber decorated. Archdeacon's approval was obtained and this work has been undertaken, and the outcome is that the ringing chamber is a much tidier and cleaner area in which to work.

Permission was obtained for the work to be done on the trumpet stop on the organ, and that was completed this year.

After one of the PCC meetings, the members were horrified to discover that a significant amount of waste material had been fly-dumped on the drive. It was agreed that the CCTV system needed to be upgraded to enable better coverage of the drive and to provide increased safety to people entering and leaving the church on business after dark. This was not going to require permission as it was an upgrade of a system already in place. Quotes were sought, but it was also agreed that the wiring needed to be checked in the first instance, and that is currently being awaited at the end of the year. A further upgrade in the year was the connection of a Wi-Fi system to the church.

It has been necessary to replace broken light fittings in the drive during the year. Also, a member of the congregation has complained about the poor lighting to the toilet, so that is to be looked into. Finally, the PCC has agreed that the current floodlights in the north aisle should be replaced with LED lights as part of our work towards net-zero, and this was done in the year. There remain a further 20 lights, and it was agreed that, in consideration of potential cost, quotations were to be obtained from three contractors.

Finally, I would like to give my thanks to all the members of the Fabric Committee who have given freely of their time and knowledge to enable this work to be done, namely Ms K Cheyney, Mr Gerald Fage, Mrs P Finney, the Revd Jacob Pallett, Mr John Surtees, and the Revd H. White.

George Harrison Chair of Fabric Committee 1/04/2024

10. Flowers

The flower team has continued to arrange flowers in Church on a fortnightly basis during 2023, trying as far as possible to use flowers and foliage from our own gardens to cut down on costs. The Kids' Club has kindly continued to let us use one of their raised beds to grow dahlias for use at Harvest and in the late summer/autumn.

We have received one or two generous donations, for which we have been very grateful.

From January 2024 wedding couples will no longer be charged a fee for flowers unless extra flowers, such as pew ends, are requested. We have introduced a scheme whereby members of the congregation may sponsor the flowers to commemorate or celebrate a particular event/occasion, which should help to boost the flower fund.

Kirsty Simms

11. Funeral Ministry and Bereavement Group

Whilst working hard to maintain our ministry in Funerals and Bereavement, it appears we are slowly losing private family funerals to those now working as Civil and Humanist Celebrants.

We are officiating for some funerals when requested to, by local funeral directors. However the majority of services are now referred to us by the Funeral Directors who work with funerals for Social Services.

The same Funeral Directors also work with the Maternity Unit at Heartlands Hospital and we have been invited to work with them, when requested, taking funerals for families when a baby has died.

The Clergy team continue to officiate at funerals held in St Mary's Church and to take services in local cemeteries and crematoria, and occasionally having ministry at crematoria at Sutton Coldfield, Redditch and Perry Barr.

During 2023, we officiated for 70 funerals at a crematorium, 13 funerals in church and 2 burials of ashes.

Our Bereavement team continue to make phone calls to families, but there are fewer families to speak with as many of the social services funerals have no contact numbers or contacts are friends and neighbours of the deceased who request no calls.

We held our annual Service of Remembering in Church at the end of October 2023. Families and friends of those who have died during the previous year were invited and a gentle, reflective service of music, words, prayers and reading of the names of those who had died, was shared. The service was well attended, and we remembered those who live further away, are unwell and any not able to attend,

The clergy would like to thank members of the congregation who make phone calls and those who attend funeral services in church to work and support those who are bereaved, their care and compassion is always appreciated.

Revd. Jayne Adams April 2024

12. Health and Safety

Accidents reported:

- Two trips over metal edge of carpet area. Although careful consideration has been given to solutions to this, it has been decided that it is not actually unsafe; it is lying as it should be
- One accident with bell rope, cause has been rectified by Tower Captain

Work regularly carried out to prevent accidents includes:

- Gritting/clearing of paths during icy conditions
- Checking on loose masonry after storms
- Regular fire extinguisher checks; extinguishers fitted correctly in new places
- Loose tiles checked and re-mortared where required
- Walk around church at least once (ideally twice) annually by church warden and health and safety officer performing overall H and S audit of premises

Other improvements/maintenance:

- Edges repainted white of all raised wooden platforms where pews stand
- Where necessary, Covid Health and Safety risk assessments have continued to take place
- Upper room, as well as other areas of church, tidied for safety as well as appearance
- Lighting improved outside toilet so pathway is clearly lit
- Risk assessments completed for regular events in church (other than services) e.g. school visits, school services, concerts etc.
- Acquisition of sanitary bin for church toilet
- Acquisition of spills kits to go with first aid kits – all in clearly labelled cupboard
- KC has renewed first aid training and is a certified first aider for a further 3 years
- Junior Church leaders offered first aid update course with Kids' Club leaders

Future/Ongoing improvements/tasks:

- Regular PAT testing of electrical appliances
- Modifying and rehousing PA system to prevent exposed wires (begun, ongoing)
- CCTV cameras and system upgraded and extended
- Investigation into feasibility of getting a community defibrillator for lych gate

Safeguarding:

- This comes under a separate heading, with new guidelines issued by the C of E and diocese. Safeguarding is a regular item on PCC agenda. DBS status of PCC members is currently being updated. Serious incidents, if any occurred, would be reported separately from this report.

Kate Cheyney

13. Junior Church

It has been a good year for Junior Church and we have welcomed new people into the group.

Members of Junior Church have contributed to the Parish Eucharist in various ways: participating in the dramatic reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday, leading parts of the All Age Worship and by being present in the sanctuary for the eucharistic prayer. The Christmas nativity drama was enjoyed by all!

It is the volunteers who are able to make Junior Church happen, and St Mary's is really grateful to Sarah, Sophie, Helen and Jacqueline who joined us this year, for all the hard work they have put into leading sessions on a Sunday morning. Junior Church continues to use the comprehensive ROOTS teaching resource which provides good theologically reflective material for each Sunday.

We have also reintroduced social gathering this past year and had a few end of term parties in the church hall, which included pizza and chips. These have been a particularly good way for Junior Church to get to know each other outside of their Sunday morning act of worship and learning.

I would like to express my personal thanks to the members of Junior Church for their willingness to attend and engage. It is a privilege to support and encourage them in the faith.

Fr Jacob Pallett

14. Kids Club

Kids Club continues to support our church school and many schools in the community at holiday times. We have just started planting our veg and plants over Easter and the children are excited to see what grows. If anyone has any spare plants or seeds that are now longer needed we can put them to good use for you and hopefully we can share the produce with the church Wednesday club and our parents as last year.

As with the junior club we are missing Netta as she was such a valued member of staff and the children are going to plant a memorial garden with nice plants for her. We await numbers for pre-school starters in September; as the birth rate was low, nurseries and schools are finding it hard to fill all their places. We are hoping we can continue as normal.

Gerald Fage

15. PCC Secretary

Meetings were held in January, March, May, July, September and November 2023. We said goodbye and thank you to two long-serving members: Stephen Constable and Prue Huddleston. Following the APCM 2023 we welcomed new members: Miriam Constable, Joanne Goodall, Angela Lidgbird, Christian Udo, KaLei Wong (Isabella).

The PCC received regular reports on Finance, Fabric, Church Hall, the Diocese and Deanery, Safeguarding, Young people and Junior Church, and Health and Safety, as well as a regular report from the ministry team. A regular item on Eco-church was added to the agenda. The PCC was pleased that St Mary's was awarded Bronze Eco-church status. It also welcomed the registration of the church as a Warm Space on Wednesday mornings.

In September, the PCC welcomed the Head of St Mary's Primary School, who gave a presentation and explained how the church and the school were working more closely together. The PCC also approved the appointment of Richard Lambert as a member of the Governing Body.

The main activity during the year was extensive discussion and action around three priority vision areas: (i) creating an inclusive community; (ii) spirituality; and (iii) outreach to children, young people and families. There was focussed discussion around initiatives to better reflect our diverse church family in church leadership, and around progression towards admitting young people to Holy Communion before Confirmation. After deliberation, the PCC approved the establishment of a part-time, fixed-term post working with children and families.

Susan Hunston April 2024

16. Safeguarding

The Parochial Church Council continues to comply with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in terms of training and its adoption of national and diocesan policy. Our Parish Identify Verifier, Suzanne Johnston, continues to ensure that all members of the PCC (and others required) have up to date checks and certificates from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). We will continue to ensure that training and knowledge in this area remains current and relevant members complete any new or further training e.g. newly elected members of the PCC and new training modules about the impact of domestic violence.

Our Safeguarding Policy, Domestic Abuse Policy, Promoting a Safer Church Policy Statement, Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy Statement, Safeguarding Complaints Procedure and Safeguarding Action Plan were reviewed and adopted at the PCC Meeting in March 2023. Annual reviews and revisions (where necessary) of these documents take place to ensure we are in compliance with legislation, guidance and best practice. The most recent documents are published on the church website and copies displayed at the back of church.

We continue to use the online Parish Safeguarding Dashboard to help us keep track of safeguarding at St. Mary's, keep us up to date with local and national changes in safeguarding guidance and ensure we are fully compliant with church and legal requirements.

17. Social Committee

As always, social events and occasions have been an important part of our church life at St Mary's. Of course, we all love a piece of cake and a glass of prosecco, but our social events are more than just that! They also serve to develop and maintain friendships within our congregation and perhaps even more importantly allow us to reach out to the wider Selly Oak community in a relaxed and welcoming way. As the Parish Church, we want St Mary's to be for *all* in our community, not just for those who are comfortable attending services, and our social activities definitely help us with that mission. The pantomime, for example, saw at least 200 people in the audience, the vast majority of whom would not ordinarily come into church – giving all of us an opportunity to meet new people and forge links.

Some of the main events and activities which took place between January and December 2023 were:

January: Quiz Night

April: Ramble in Clent

May: Feast for the King (Coronation Party)

June: Selly Oak Festival

July: Car Boot Sale

September: Car Boot Sale

October: Ramble in Great Alne

November: Pantomime (Peter Pan)

In addition to these events, we welcomed school-age children to our Easter and Christmas Activity mornings in the hall in April and December. Wednesday morning tea and toast has continued to be thriving weekly event; it is a great opportunity for the 10am congregation to catch up and also provides a warm space for anyone who cares to drop in. Monthly coffee mornings continue to be hosted by different members of the congregation. The Knit and Natter Group meet regularly to do just that (whilst all looking out for each other in between meetings!)

On the last Friday of the Autumn term, Jacob tried out a new venture of providing coffee and croissants for parents who were attending the school service in church at 9.30am. This meant that they could drop off their children at school and then enjoy a quiet half hour with refreshments before the service began – and it was very much appreciated. This has now become a half-termly fixture – and has been furthermore extended to include an “coffee stop” which takes place every Thursday in the church hall after school drop off.

As well as all the above, we have enjoyed a few “after church” fizzy celebrations in the form of a Farewell to David Parker in January, a Celebration of Jacob's ordination in June – and a minor

recognition of the far less significant event of the King's Coronation in May (in fairness, we did give the King two events!)

2024 has even more events planned, including three car boot sales and – at last – a Christmas Tree Festival. I would like to extend my thanks to the Social Committee, and also to all the many people who have helped make our social events and activities possible.

Kate Cheyney

18. Sound system and internet

The sound system equipment at the rear of the South aisle has been re-organised and re-wired to make use of the repaired sound control mixer. A new graphic equaliser has been installed and is performing as required to reduce echo. Sidesmen are getting used to the new arrangement and gaining confidence to make adjustments during worship to help everyone to participate.

The lectern has been repaired and made safe, thanks to Malcolm Simms and microphones are being re-fitted.

Future proposals will be aimed at balancing sound coverage in the church and improving flexibility for special events like the nativity and passion dramatisations.

The church and vicarage are now efficiently connected to the internet, thanks to Fr. Jacob and streaming of Choral Evensong has been successfully piloted.

The next stage is to trial fixed cameras in the church. Following the upgrade of the CCTV security system in the church grounds the replaced cameras and recorder have been retained. These will be tested for re-purposing to a new function of recording and streaming existing events and new methods of outreach.

Stephen Constable April 2024.

19. St Mary's Junior Club

Junior Club continues to thrive, and we are keeping our numbers steady with exciting activities each week. Again we thank Father Jacob and Hazel for their support in all we do. After the summer break we did not start back as planned as we lost one of our loyal and long-serving members of staff – Netta, aka 'tuck shop lady'. She gave over twenty years of service to Youth Club, Boys Brigade, and more recently Junior Club. Netta is very much missed, as reflected in our current numbers. We have been waiting for the arrival of our family support worker to help increase numbers and move us forward, and we still wait for this to happen. We have decided to increase our current numbers so that the appointed person has a good club to start with.

Gerald Fage

20. The Way Group

We were unable to meet our planning meeting in January so we had a latter start to the year than usual. Our Lent book was Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan. We discussed this in March. In April we looked at Contemplation of a Word. At our February meeting we discussed our problem with falling numbers. We had decided to try a re-launch with an event we hoped would attract new people. So in May the Reverend Charlotte Gibson bought some of the Icons she paints and talked about the process. It was a fascinating evening, but unfortunately only two new people turned up. Reluctantly we decided that the Way was no longer a viable group. We met for the last time in June to discuss our favourite hymn. This turned out be a wonderful evening-many of us had chosen the same one, and one of our number played the piano so we ended with a joyous sing song. In July we held our annual house communion presided over by Jacob and then a final party, inviting past members.

We all felt that sometimes groups just reach the end of their natural lives. The Way has had a proud history. It's been meeting for more than twenty years and reached many people. I personally can say that The Way brought me back to the church. I'm sure others would have similar stories and memories. We hope to see it reborn one day by and for a new generation.

Mary Cutler

21. Website

The website in its current form has run its course as it is using very outdated software which will probably cease to work very soon, and therefore I shall be handing the reins over very soon, and a replacement has been found.

The hosts of the website (a company called UK2.net) reset their entire system recently which seems to have also reset all our statistics too, so I can't offer any numbers this year! That said, I hadn't spotted any anomalies and it seemed to tick over undramatically.

Ben Reeves

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY, SELLY OAK
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Stewardship	49,910			49,910	49,775
Stewardship tax	11,564			11,564	11,590
Cash collections	5,868			5,868	5,142
Donations & Grants	3,261		2,449	5,710	32,876
Gift Aid tax	1,808		605	2,413	7,186
Legacies & Memorials		1,924		1,924	
Fundraising	2,376			2,376	2,013
Fees	5,309		2,200	7,509	7,805
Use of church	925			925	400
Interest	7,558			7,558	2,027
Social & hospitality	512			512	
Church Hall		21,825		21,825	19,027
Ringers			699	699	284
Total Receipts	89,091	23,749	5,953	118,793	138,123
Payments					
Charity donations	3,000			3,000	3,000
Common Fund	48,740			48,740	49,491
Clergy expenses	2,298			2,298	1,118
Parsonage	261			261	274
Worship	1,226	61	479	1,766	2,349
Church running	25,662			25,662	19,795
Curate's housing	998		2,500	3,498	2,025
Repairs & Improvements		30,849	8,104	38,953	83,491
Education & Training	200			200	624
Staff	5,041			5,041	4,846
Church grounds	885			885	847
Administration	3,157	409	115	3,681	945
Junior Church	172			172	158
Social & Hospitality	441			441	
Fundraising	565			565	
Church Hall		28,680		28,680	18,928
Ringers			1,832	1,832	494
Total Payments	92,646	59,999	13,030	165,675	188,385
Excess of Receipts over Payments	-3,555	-36,250	-7,077	-46,882	-50,262
Transfers between funds	3,555	6,900	-10,455		
Funds at 1 January	298,665	145,147	73,936	517,748	568,010
Funds at 31 December	298,665	115,797	56,404	470,866	517,748

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 December 2023

	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed Assets		
Church hall and contents	267,289	267,289
Current Assets		
HSBC current account	12,025	38,244
CBF deposit account	186,000	204,000
Parsonage redecoration scheme	0	1,499
Church Hall account	4,032	3,987
Ringers account	2,534	3,667
Total Assets	<u>471,880</u>	<u>518,686</u>
Less Current Liabilities		
Childrens' Society	0	
Christian Aid	464	
Acorns	0	
Service fees	300	
Arcadians	<u>250</u>	
	1,014	938
Total Net Assets	<u><u>470,866</u></u>	<u><u>517,748</u></u>
Unrestricted Funds		
General Fund	298,665	298,665
Designated Funds		
Hall	4,032	3,987
Legacies & Memorials	<u>111,765</u>	141,159
	115,797	
Restricted Funds		
Organ	24,283	30,301
Drive	4,739	3,689
Flower	391	489
Fabric	9,543	10,579
Youth	223	193
Bereavement	457	450
Choir	1,396	1,415
Outreach	139	
Deficit	4,970	8,525
Energy Grant	4,729	4,729
Ringers	2,534	3,667
Hall Building	<u>3,000</u>	9,900
	56,404	
Total Funds	<u><u>470,866</u></u>	<u><u>517,748</u></u>

APPROVED by the Parochial Church Council on 12 March 2024 and signed on its behalf by

Rev'd Hazel White	George Harrison
Vicar	Churchwarden

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS/TRUSTEES OF THE PCC OF ST MARY SELLY OAK

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Independent Examiner

As trustees of the charity, the members of the PCC are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility

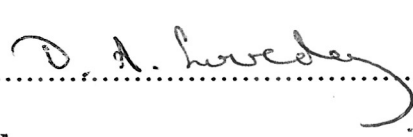
- to examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners in section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination no matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and to prepare accounts in line with these records have not been met or to which in my opinion attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

signed.....

David Loveday
35 Bristol Road South
Birmingham
B31 2GH
Independent Examiner

date.....11-2-2024.....