

**The Parish of St George the Martyr, Shirley**  
**Following Christ + Serving the community + Welcoming all**

**MINUTES of the Annual Vestry Meeting for 2023**  
**held in the Church on Sunday 21st May 2023**

**In attendance** Revd Barry Hengist, Chairman, Alexander Baldwin-Smith, Eric Baldwin-Smith, Heather Barker, Steve Barker, Dawn Barrett, Liz Bebington, Mary Brown, Anne-Louise Clayton, Sophie Clayton, Sue Hengist, Carol Jones, Hilary Fife, Katrina Francis, Toyin Magbagbeola, Brian McGinnis, Jacquelyn Moore, Helen McMullen, Heather Orton, Grennett Paulwell, Selvin Paulwell, Jan Payne, Evan Russell, Marjorie Russell, Pauline Russel, Nicholas Scott, Sandra Scott, Marion Sheehan, Judy Talmage, Owen Whalley, Ray Wheeler, Susan Wheeler,

**Apologies** had been received from Helen Aylward, Hugh Aylward, Elizabeth Birchenough, Janet Fitt.

The meeting was opened with Prayer by the Chairman who extended a warm welcome to all in attendance.

The minutes of the AVMs for 2022 had been circulated and no amendments tabled. Alexander Baldwin-Smith proposed and Steve Barker seconded that both sets of minutes be approved. The proposal was adopted unanimously with no abstentions or objections.

**Appointment of Church Wardens** There were only two nomination for Churchwarden Mrs Jan Payne and Mrs Heather Barker, there being no other candidates and Mrs Payne and Mrs Barker were elected unopposed.

This concluded the business of the 2023 Annual Vestry meeting.

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**MINUTES of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting for 2023**  
**held in the Church on Sunday 21st May 2023**

**In attendance** Revd Barry Hengist, Chairman, Alexander Baldwin-Smith, Eric Baldwin-Smith, Heather Barker, Steve Barker, Dawn Barrett, Liz Bebington, Mary Brown, Anne-Louise Clayton, Sophie Clayton, Sue Hengist, Carol Jones, Hilary Fife, Katrina Francis, Toyin Magbagbeola, Brian McGinnis, Jacquelyn Moore, Helen McMullen, Heather Orton, Grennett Paulwell, Selvin Paulwell, Jan Payne, Evan Russell, Marjorie Russell, Pauline Russel, Nicholas Scott, Sandra Scott, Marion Sheehan, Judy Talmage, Owen Whalley, Ray Wheeler, Susan Wheeler,

**Apologies** had been received from Helen Aylward, Hugh Aylward, Elizabeth Birchenough, Janet Fitt.

**Amendments** Paragraph headed Minutes Line 1 amend AVM to read APCM.

**Minutes** The minutes of the APCM for 2022 had been circulated and no amendments tabled. Owen Whalley proposed, Jan Payne seconded that the minutes be approved. The proposal was adopted unanimously with no abstentions or objections.

### **Vicar's Report**

This report, which had not been circulated, was given verbally by the Chairman..

“ I look forward to next year's APCM in the hope that we will be reaping the benefits of the new facilities and concentrating on using them to further the work of the kingdom.”

These were my closing comments from my report last year and have proved something of a “hostage to fortune.” The chairs were delivered in July and have been used in various arrangements, sometimes changing several times a week, to accommodate the various activities and services, especially around Christmas 2022 and Holy Week 2023. However, the long awaited annexe has met with some setbacks (not of our own making) which means that we are still in the planning-permission stage. But once permission has been granted, things should move reasonably quickly.

In August/September 2022 I was able to take a short sabbatical (already overdue but further delayed by Covid). I am extremely grateful to the Churchwardens and the staff team, but especially Revd Hilary Fife, for looking after everyone in my absence. It was during this period of reflection that it became clearer to me that it was time to start thinking about moving on to a new phase and/or mode of ministry.

#### Thanks

The variety and number of other reports to be accepted at this meeting are testimony to the many activities which take part in and around St. George's for the benefit of the congregation, parishioners and the wider community. I want to say thank you to the writers of all those reports for the work they detail and for the teams of volunteers involved in each activity. I am also grateful to the Choir, Music Group and Flower arrangers who week by week enhance our worship. I am sure that my successor will appreciate all that will continue during the interregnum and will aim to build on those foundations. Please keep in your prayers over the coming months all those who will be involved in finding your next Vicar.

My thanks go to the Staff Team, Hilary, Carol, Liz and Ray who put their own unique insights and talents at the church's disposal, complementing and supporting each other's ministries. I am also indebted to the churchwardens, Jan and Heather, for their hard work and diligence and for their willingness to face the uncertainties and increased workload that an interregnum brings. I am confident that members of the PCC and others will support them and take on additional responsibilities.

The preparation of last year's (2022) accounts and the introduction of a new online accounting system have been ably and generously overseen by Sophie Clayton. She has worked with a small support team including Liz Bebington, Jan Turner and Janet Fitt in preparing the finances for the handover to a newly appointed treasurer (subject to references), Mr. Alan Chitty, who will be officially nominated at the first PCC meeting straight after this APCM. Alan has acted as treasurer for a number of local voluntary organisations and charities and I thank Steve and Heather Barker for approaching him. We have asked Alan to concentrate on the introduction of the Parish Giving

Scheme which we hope will streamline the recording and processing of regular giving and the automatic monthly claim of Gift Aid from HMRC.

### The departed

As ever, the APCM is an opportunity to remember those from the parish family who have died since the last APCM with gratitude for their unique talents and callings. This year we remember Hal Bittner who died in June 2022 at the age of 99 (a little short of his target of 120). Hal was a great supporter of St. George's and member of the Pop-In Seniors' Club and liked nothing more than to celebrate his birthday with his church family.

### The newly-arrived

Every year it's a joy to welcome new members of the congregation and 2022 was no exception. Everyone is invited to give us their contact details so that we can keep in touch about the regular and one-off activities at St. George's so if you haven't already done so, please let me have your details. Our GDPR compliant contact database, ChurchSuite, is something which should prove invaluable to a new Incumbent especially if people take the time to upload their photograph to their record. Trying to learn the names of so many new faces all at once can be quite daunting. If you've not yet used ChurchSuite or need a refresher, then please look out for the sessions I'm planning in the weeks ahead.

### Eco Group

Thanks to the work of the Eco Group and the response of the congregation, the church has achieved Silver Award status - one of only 17 churches out of more than 300 in the Diocese of Southwark. It is something we should be proud of but also spur us on to do more about raising awareness of the climate crisis that the world faces among the wider community of Shirley.

### Safeguarding

Following our successful Safeguarding Sunday on 20 November 2022 Toyin Magbagbeola offered to fill the role of second Parish Safeguarding Officer to help Susan Wheeler with the administrative tasks that have to be done. The APCM is always a good opportunity to remind everyone that, while the Parish Safeguarding Officers, the Churchwardens, the PCC and Incumbent have specific responsibilities and duties, we ALL have a part to play in safeguarding our children, young people and vulnerable adults. We noted that vulnerability is not something fixed - we can all be vulnerable at certain times and in certain circumstances. Vigilance is key.

### Conclusion

Heading into retirement is a bittersweet experience and Sue and I will miss everyone at St. George's which has been our spiritual home for the last 10 years but we have plans to do some touring to look forward to. I trust that your next incumbent will experience the warmth of welcome we received and for which St. George's is rightly noted and we hope that in due course (and after an appropriate interval) we may be invited to see the fruition of the Annexe and Hall Projects and the outreach they will facilitate.

***The Reverend Barry Hengist - Vicar –May 2023 ”***

Jan Payne proposed that the report be adopted, this was seconded by Heather Barker and carried unanimously with no abstentions or objections.

Steve expressed words of Thanks to The Chairman for his considerable efforts over the past year and the meeting endorsed this with applause.

### **Electoral Roll**

Last year the number of people on the Electoral Roll was 105. The roll has been revised in anticipation of this year's APCM. This indicates that there are currently 110 parishioners on the electoral roll, an increase of 5 from last year.

**Owen Whalley** *Electoral Roll Officer*

### **Report on the PCC**

Regular meetings of the PCC were held during the year 2022, and also by Zoom with an average attendance close to 95%. Ahead of the meetings a Standing Committee comprising Barry, the Wardens and Secretary met to plan the meeting, set the agenda and so forth. Over the year there were changes to the membership, new members elected others resigning. Joining, Marjorie Russell, leaving Sophie Clayton and Derek Hands. Considerable effort had been devoted to looking for a suitable new Treasurer and afforded the valuable opportunity to review and update the mechanics of the Church's finances, both activities continuing into 2023.

**Eric Baldwin-Smith** *PCC Secretary*

It was asked if future reports might include more information on the matters considered by the PCC throughout the year. It was pointed out that this information was amply covered by the reports provided on the various activities but thought would be given to the suggestion for coming years.

The adoption of the report was proposed by Marion Sheehan, seconded by Alexander Baldwin-Smith and carried unanimously with no objections and one abstentions.

### **Finance Report and Appointment of the Independent Examiner**

**Finance Report** (*Sections A and B reproduced below*).

The accounts had been circulated but in the absence of a Treasurer nor formal report could be given. Liz Bebington spoke briefly to advise the meeting about recent activity on the administration of the finances and acknowledging the assistance which Derek Hands had given in recent months. Much had been done to rationalise administration of the church's finances such as updating bank signatories. Sophie Clayton established an on line ledger system and a potential replacement treasurer had been identified. Administration of the payroll has been put in the hands of CPS Systems run by the Sutton Council for Voluntary Services

In response to a question from Brian McGinnis, Liz Bebington confirmed that monies donated for Overseas Missions in 2022 had now been paid out.

It was noted that Gift Day contributions were low this year. It was suggested that there could be some misunderstanding of the difference with the Gift Aid scheme. Susan Wheeler suggested renaming it to avoid confusion.

Liz Bebington conveyed thanks to everyone who donates to the Church by name or anonymously but stressed that we need to both increase our income and reserves whilst reducing expenditure and overheads.

The Chairman thanked Sophie Clayton for her efforts in dealing with what had not been an easy takeover of the finances especially given her work pressures and also expressed thanks to Liz Bebington for her efforts.

Oluwatoyin Magbagbeola proposed and Selvin Paulwell seconded that the accounts be adopted. The proposal was carried unanimously with no abstentions or objections.



CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St George the Martyr, Shirley		Charity No (if any)	1134140
Annual accounts for the period			
Period start date	01/01/2022	To	Period end date 31/12/2022


## Section A Statement of financial activities

Recommended categories by activity	Guidance Notes	Unrestricted	Restricted	Endowment	Total funds	Prior year
		funds	income	funds	funds	funds
		£	£	£	£	£
		F01	F02	F03	F04	F05
<b>Incoming resources (Note 3)</b>						
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and legacies	S01	112,889	8,316	-	121,205	64,915
Charitable activities	S02	4,422	-	-	4,422	3,507
Other trading activities	S03	21,450	-	-	21,450	16,805
Investments	S04	7,895	95	-	7,990	3,517
Gain on sale of fixed assets	S05	-	-	-	-	-
Other	S06	1,484	-	-	1,484	231
<b>Total</b>	S07	<b>148,140</b>	<b>8,411</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>156,551</b>	<b>88,975</b>
<b>Resources expended (Note 5)</b>						
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	S08	10,279	700	-	10,979	11,889
Charitable activities	S09	109,136	5,796	-	114,932	107,589
Other	S11	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	S12	<b>119,415</b>	<b>6,496</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>125,911</b>	<b>119,478</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure) before investment gains/(losses)</b>	S13	<b>28,725</b>	<b>1,915</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>30,640</b>	<b>- 30,503</b>
Net gains/(losses) on investments	S14	- 5,737	- 653	- 1,575	- 7,965	5,640
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>	S15	<b>22,988</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>- 1,575</b>	<b>22,675</b>	<b>- 24,863</b>
<b>Transfers between funds</b>	S17	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	S20	<b>22,988</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>- 1,575</b>	<b>22,675</b>	<b>- 24,863</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>						
Total funds brought forward	S21	458,295	8,882	28,287	495,464	520,327
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	S22	<b>481,283</b>	<b>10,144</b>	<b>26,712</b>	<b>518,139</b>	<b>495,464</b>

## Section B Balance sheet

		Guidance Notes	Unrestricted funds £ F01	Restricted income funds £ F02	Endowment funds £ F03	Total this year £ F04	Total last year £ F05
<b>Fixed assets</b>							
Tangible assets	(Note 8)	B02	72,902	-	-	72,902	8,058
Investments	(Note 9)	B04	36,853	4,100	26,712	67,665	75,630
<b>Total fixed assets</b>		B05	<b>109,755</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>26,712</b>	<b>140,567</b>	<b>83,688</b>
<b>Current assets</b>							
Debtors	(Note 10)	B07	16,593	-	-	16,593	628
Cash at bank and in hand	(Note 12)	B09	356,249	6,594	-	362,843	413,685
<b>Total current assets</b>		B10	<b>372,842</b>	<b>6,594</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>379,436</b>	<b>414,313</b>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(Note 11)	B11	- 1,314	- 550	-	- 1,864	- 2,537
<b>Net current assets/(liabilities)</b>		B12	<b>371,528</b>	<b>6,044</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>377,572</b>	<b>411,776</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		B13	<b>481,283</b>	<b>10,144</b>	<b>26,712</b>	<b>518,139</b>	<b>495,464</b>
<b>Total net assets or liabilities</b>		B16	<b>481,283</b>	<b>10,144</b>	<b>26,712</b>	<b>518,139</b>	<b>495,464</b>
<b>Funds of the Charity</b>							
Endowment funds	(Note 13)	B17			26,712	26,712	28,287
Restricted income funds	(Note 13)	B18		10,144		10,144	8,882
Unrestricted funds		B19	481,283			481,283	458,295
<b>Total funds</b>		B21	<b>481,283</b>	<b>10,144</b>	<b>26,712</b>	<b>518,139</b>	<b>495,464</b>

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval dd/mm/yyyy
	Revd Barry Hengist	15/05/2023

The 2022 Accounts as submitted to the Charities Commission can now be viewed and downloaded from the Charity Commission website. <https://www.gov.uk/charity-commission>

## **Appointment of an Independent Examiner**

The Treasurer then proposed, Steve Barker seconded that the present Independent Examiner be re-appointed. The proposal was adopted unanimously with no abstentions or objections.

## **Churchwardens' Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church March 2021 - March 2022**

Not unsurprisingly, our report this year begins, once again, with the effects of Covid-19 so it's great to be able to finally report that (for the moment at least) church life has returned to something like normal, albeit with a lot more open windows! Risk assessments were (and are) continually updated in line with government and diocesan guidance to ensure Covid compliance and for the safety and reassurance of the congregation and we hope you feel we have achieved this. We are very grateful to all those who helped with 'fogging' the church between each activity and event during successive levels of restriction to ensure that the church was open as much as possible as quickly as possible.

The company who removed, cleaned and returned the solar panels with pigeon-proof wire edging were called back as the wire edging proved so ineffective that the pigeons were able to lift it. We have now also installed a further deterrent which seems more effective.

An electrician has replaced most of the electric heaters in the Lady Chapel which were of a sufficient age that parts were no longer available.

The live-streaming of our church services has now become an integral part of our mission and has been greatly appreciated by of wedding and funeral families as well as members of our church family and community. We are particularly grateful to Tony Aufenast for his continuing leadership on this and to Ian White who has created a very comprehensive set of notes for the un-initiated.

The Church Log Book has once again been updated, the Terrier has also been updated to reflect the gift of a aspergillum. The church floor is now back to its regular cleaning by Joan and David Abberly and the cleaning of the church toilets is now included in the hall cleaner's contract. All the statutory annual maintenance checks have been carried out including the boilers, fire-fighting equipment and portable appliance testing. We have also appointed a new architect for our Quinquennial Inspection as our previous architect was no longer able to undertake the work.

As ever, we are grateful to all of you for your continued support, especially the 'Premises/Maintenance' team who respond to our requests for additional help. We are also grateful to Brian McGinnis for his continued work in maintaining the garden so that, even during the worst of the pandemic, it was a place to lift people's spirits as they sat in it or walked past on their daily exercise.

The last two years have been difficult for all of us in so many ways but, as we move forward in 2022 with the exciting plans for the annexe, more flexible seating and ultimately a new church hall, we are hopeful that with God's blessing, Barry's guidance, and all of your continued love and support, we can take our church to an even stronger and more vital position in the heart of our community.  
*Jan Payne and Heather Barker*

The results of the efforts to remove the pigeons was discussed. Despite all that had been done they were still on the roof. In response to a question from Martin Cook it was explained that the cost of hiring a falcon had been considered but being quoted as some £8000 was rejected as an option especially as repeat visit would be required. Hoppers had been covered to prevent nesting in them. The general view was that having done what we could to minimise the problem we had to bow to nature and accept that some pigeons were inevitable.

The adoption of the report was proposed by Alexander Baldwin-Smith seconded by Jan Turner and carried unanimously with no abstentions or objections.

### **Election of Laity to the PCC**

The Chairman reminded the meeting of the procedure whereby normally a third of the Lay members stand down each year after serving on the PCC for three years. The recent pandemic had disturbed this cycle. The intention was to adjust the length served by of some recently appointed members to restore the pattern.

the Chairman reported that under the three year rule Steve Barker had stood down. There had been three nomination, Steve Barker, Marjorie Russell and Susan Wheeler. No other nominations had been put forward for election to the PCC and the Chairman asked if there were any other names were proposed. None were forthcoming and so the Chairman declared that Marjorie Russell, Susan Wheeler were duly elected to the PCC.

### **Other Reports**

The Chairman proposed that the other reports be individually considered but adopted as one. This was agreed. The following reports, appended below, were then considered.

Hall Report  
Croydon Addington Deanery Synod  
The North Wall Annexe  
Eco Group  
Safeguarding Report  
Junior Church Report  
Little Dragons  
Shrublands Food Bank  
The Church Garden/Grounds  
Longheath Community Care and Church Centre  
Monday Evening Bible Reading Group  
Book Reading Group  
Church Magazine  
Churches Together in Shirley

Adoption of the reports was proposed by Susan Wheeler, seconded by Evan Russell and carried unanimously with no abstentions or objections.



## **Any Other Business**

No matters of other business were raised and the Chairman thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting with prayer at 1.12 pm.

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## **Other Reports**

### **Hall Report**

After a real struggle during Covid and its ensuing restrictions the Church Hall is now back on an even keel. Weight Watchers has been replaced by Slimming World and all our regular bookings have also now resumed. Casual lets for party bookings etc are generally back to their pre-Covid levels and we hope to maintain that in spite of the financial restrictions on future hirers' personal budgets.

The rapid recovery in casual let numbers has, however, enabled us to employ a cleaner again. Rob comes with the experience of having cleaned in schools and has proved a valuable asset to the staff maintenance team.

Once again, the bulk of the income from bookings has gone towards Hall salaries, utility bills, heating maintenance, insurance and running repairs. Particular thanks must once again go to David Abberly, the Hall Treasurer, for so ably managing the financial aspects of running the Hall; to Livi, Selwyn and Evan who have always answered my calls for help with running repairs; and to all of you who so generously support us through the 100 Club.

As the age of the hall has an ever-increasing impact on its maintenance, especially heating and plumbing, we are now looking forward to an exciting future as plans for the annexe and, ultimately, the new hall move forward.

*Jan Payne*

### **Croydon Addington Deanery Synod Report**

St George's lay representatives as elected are Helen Aylward, Liz Bebington and Anne-Louise Clayton. Ray Wheeler is also a member of Deanery Synod as he is a co-opted member of Diocesan Synod.

Croydon Addington Deanery includes churches in Shirley, West Wickham, Addington, New Addington and Selsdon. Our current Area Dean is the Revd Debbie Forman of St Mary's, Addington and the Lay Chair is Alice Hicks.

Having only been elected at last year's APCM, we still feel like newcomers, and getting to know how Synod works has not been helped by various admin problems with getting Minutes out or advising dates of future meetings in good time.

There have been three meetings this year, each including news from the churches of the Deanery, plus a flurry of emails and zooms about the elections to General Synod which took place in early autumn and for which Deanery Synod members are the electors.

Our first meeting in June was held online only, and included an interesting and thought provoking presentation about the Living in Love and Faith debate.

The second meeting was in person at St Francis in November, with a speaker from the Dioceses' Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Dept. about the church's role in caring for the environment, the A Rocha Eco Awards etc.

Our third meeting was in person in Selsdon in February this year looking at a vision for the Deanery but unfortunately, none of us was able to attend.

*Liz Bebbington*

### **The North Wall Annexe**

St. George's church aspires to be more fully accessible, and to offer the possibility of an enhanced space and facilities for both the church membership and the wider community. Its plan is fourfold: to gain the initial funds required (through the sale of Church Cottage), to change from fixed pews inside the church itself, to more flexible seating, to develop the North Wall Annexe (NWA) and thereafter, build an entirely new church hall (with funds required coming from a sale of combined church and Diocesan land).

The sale of Church Cottage was successful and we now have the principal part of the funds required to build the NWA. The decision to change from fixed pews to more flexible seating inside the church itself was confirmed by the PCC and following on from extremely useful work undertaken principally by Judy Talmage, we gained a sizeable grant to help pay for both new chairs and tables – to be used in both the church and the NWA.

Working closely with the Diocese and with the Archdeacon, a great deal of preparatory work for the NWA has happened, with a number of surveys and reports undertaken inclusive of; site topographical studies, sub-soil studies, drainage surveys, a tree survey and an environment/habitat report. An asbestos survey is imminent. In addition, and following appropriate guidelines and requirements, architects, quantity surveyors, structural engineers, electrical engineers, and land valuers were appointed and have undertaken various site visits and have been involved in all stages of planning to date.

The project has been led by a small team – the Project Support Group (PSG) who have been involved with the day-to-day undertakings necessary. Special thanks must go to Susan Wheeler who has liaised with all groups involved and especially, with the Diocese. Alexander Baldwin-Smith has invested significant amounts of time in constructing, for example, 'Statements of Need' and the business case. Derek Hands and Sophie Clayton have kept a tight rein on spending and have paid invoices promptly thereby helping keep all sub-contractors 'on side'. The 'Eco-Group' have inputted through the additional representation of both Jan Turner and Liz Bebbington. The Church Wardens (Jan Payne and Heather Barker) have been kept busy with any number of tasks and a second mention to Judy Talmage who has been key in applying for (and gaining) grant incomes. Overall direction and leadership has been provided by our vicar Barry Hengist (ably assisted by both Hilary Fife and Ray Wheeler, who have both contributed significantly) and supported by this report's author. In turn, the PSG has reported directly to the full PCC, where all important decisions have been ratified. Thereafter, and principally through excellent newsletters and presentations, Barry has kept the congregation informed as to progress and importantly also, our immediate neighbours. Liz Bebbington continues the task of informing MORA, local councillors and our local MP.

As of now (end April 2022), we have finalised our design plans for the NWA to include; a fully accessible toilet, two additional toilets, a kitchenette, a small office, a large, multi-use general space, incorporation of the stairs down to the boiler room, new entrances to the NWA itself and in to the church, new boundary fencing and provision for cycle storage. A 'brown roof' will help to keep the environment as close to the local ecology as possible. [Brown roofs generally mimic landscapes and natural habitats of creatures and insects who have been temporarily disturbed as a result of building development. A brown roof is a simple mat or blanket providing a growing habitat for local wildlife and the environment it lives in.] A new entrance from Elstan Way will lead along a new access path to the NWA, allowing fully pedestrianised access to the NWA and to the church itself (in due course). Additional (and relatively minor) changes will be made also to the current in-church access-ways, toilets and flower room. Plans and all other relevant documentation has been forwarded to Croydon Council for planning permission. Next meetings with the Diocese are planned. Preparations are underway to choose a suitable contractor to undertake the actual building work – keeping to our strict budget. But no break following..... We will now turn our attention towards preparatory work for the new church hall.

Steve Barker – for the PSG and NWA Project.

### **Eco Group**

Since the last APCM, we have secured the Bronze Eco Church Award. The certificate, dated 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2021, is displayed in the Church porch. We are now very close to reaching the requirements for the Silver Award.

Throughout the year, the Group have organised activities to raise the profile of caring for God's earth.

There was a litter pick around St. George's site which enabled the group to consider how to conduct one on a larger scale. With this in mind, the group arranged a community litter pick in Long Lane Woods. Members from the group, the congregation and Monks Orchard Residents' Association (MORA) met in April, 2022 to begin the task, having made arrangements with Croydon Council to remove the litter found. This activity was met with great enthusiasm with the result that a further litter pick is being arranged for the beginning of July, 2022. We have been contacted by the London Wildlife Trust's Great North Wood Project, who is also occasionally litter picking there. They are suggesting they could run some child friendly activities at a suitable date: watch this space. It is encouraging that since our litter pick, some local residents are now regularly removing easy to reach cans and bottles.

Thanks to Parish fund raising in Lent 2021, we have been able to twin the church and hall toilets as well as the flower room tap with various sites in Africa. The certificates are displayed in the relevant toilets

There is a social evening being arranged for 7<sup>th</sup> May, whereby members of St George's congregation and members of other local church Eco Groups have been invited to attend. During the evening, the Eco Group will be introduced, a film will be shown and the evidence folders displayed. This is a means to promote Eco Church not only within our Church, but to the wider community.

The hardest section for us to complete is the Buildings section, which requires quite a lot of changes in the thinking of the Church. However, the group are working hard to ensure we can reach the required standard.

Once we have reached Silver, our next task will be working towards the Gold.

*Jan Turner*

## **Safeguarding Report**

The Safeguarding Committee has met three times in the last 12 months.

Despite advertising the vacancy of a second PSO in the pew sheet and at church services, no one has yet come forward, nor been identified as a suitable candidate for the post. We remain hope-ful that a second Safeguarding Officer will be appointed in due course. It would be very good if we were able to widen the ethnic representation of members currently on the Safeguarding Committee.

All PCC members, staff members, Junior Church staff and church officers have completed online applications and received DBS clearance. They have also each undertaken online safeguarding training and received certification through the Church of England safeguarding portal. A new system of tracking and recording safeguarding training and DBS checks within the parish has been set up and is working well. One member of the Junior Church staff has not yet managed to undertake their online safeguarding training but this is in hand and I am confident this situation will be addressed in the very near future. Three people will need to renew their current DBS checks and safeguarding training in forthcoming months.

As members of the congregation will be aware, the Pop In Club for Seniors recommenced meetings at the end of March 2022 after a lapse, due to the pandemic, of more than two years. Apart from two volunteers who have already been in touch to renew their DBS checks, all other volunteers and the leaders have DBS checks requiring renewal. In my capacity as Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) I will be visiting the Pop In on Monday 16 May 2022 to ensure all DBS applications are made, and to assist anyone who needs help with their online application. Some of the volunteers struggle with present-day technology. Once everyone's DBS check has been completed and clearance received, everyone involved in volunteering with the work of the Pop In will be required to complete online or in person safeguarding training.

The Archdeacons' Articles of Enquiry focussed on three areas of safeguarding this year:

- How is 'due regard' as required by the House of Bishops following the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) demonstrated in our parish;
- guidelines on Safer Recruitment were revised in June 2021 requiring a designated person to be identified for the safe recruitment of volunteers and employees. The Vicar and PSO have each committed to undertake this training – by end of Summer 2022;
- the measures that are in place within the parish to ensure completion of Leadership Safeguarding Training (required by anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid).

With the information provided in the earlier paragraphs of this report, parishioners will be able to rest assured that the parish is able to demonstrate 'due regard' is regularly practised in the execution of our duties in respect of safeguarding all members of the congregation, young or old, attending St George's and its events. However, it is important for each member of the congregation to be aware that safeguarding is not only the responsibility of the relevant appointed Church Officers, but it is also the responsibility of each person attending the church and church events to remain alert at all times and to voice any concerns they may have in respect of a child, vulnerable adult or, indeed, someone else's behaviour. Complacency in such matters is dangerous. It is only when there is a culture of alertness that parishes are insured against running into safeguarding issues.

*Susan Wheeler*

## Junior Church Report

Continuing the practice started in 2020 with the first Lockdown during the pandemic, Junior Church continued to meet weekly on Zoom throughout the Spring and Summer months of 2021. We maintained the regular attendance by children from church families but also retained the two children in Trinidad and Tobago, cousins of one of our church families. Almost every week we had 13 children turning up to attend our online teaching of the Christian faith remotely.

In June last year the children learned about the letters of encouragement that St Paul wrote to congregations in the days of the early Church. They wrote their own letter, to the congregation at St George's, based on St Paul's letters. Here it is reproduced, for those who may not have seen or heard it at the time:

From the members of Junior Church meeting on Zoom to the church of St George's, Shirley and all the grown-ups meeting to worship God.  
Keep smiling even though it's hard! We miss seeing you all; hearing the Choir, hearing your voices, lighting the children's candle, showing our work to everyone, and you complimenting us on our Sunday outfits. Tiffany misses serving too. We miss coffee time and the biscuits and running round the church and hugs and shaking hands. Some of us don't think we would remember to keep our distance if we came to church but we wanted to let you know we think about you all and thank God for you and for Zoom Junior Church.

Gradually social distancing restrictions began to ease, and the leaders became more confident about mixing with others outdoors, so we decided to hold a Family Picnic in July with the theme 'Family Reunited'. We had 11 children with their families attend. Each family brought their own picnic and we played games, sang and prayed together as well as making a beautiful collage of the church showing everyone looking out of the windows – representing how we are to go out into the world to spread the good news of God's love to our community.

With the return to school in the Autumn, and coughs and colds on the increase, the Junior Church team felt that whilst Covid-19 figures were beginning to decrease, we should remain cautious and therefore we agreed to continue to hold Junior Church sessions via Zoom on alternate weeks and deliver teaching sessions in the church hall on the other weeks. This pattern however proved confusing for parents and therefore we returned to meeting physically in the church hall after the October half term in 2021. Unfortunately, this has meant that we lost the two children in Trinidad and Tobago, and another child who had joined us on Zoom during 2021.

During the Autumn term of 2021 we welcomed Timi Ashaye to the leadership team of Junior Church. Timi has proved to be a great asset, not only as a role model for the boys in the group but also with his enthusiasm, ideas and delivery of lessons. We now have a strong team of six leaders regularly teaching the children of St George's.  
The 'Step Into . . . Good Friday' workshop held recently had 13 attendees which, after a 3-year gap due to the pandemic, was a manageable number and a pleasing result. Everyone, including the leaders, enjoyed the morning and the atmosphere was extremely relaxed whilst also being able to teach the children about the events of Holy Week leading up to Jesus' crucifixion through story, a little bit of drama, music and craft. Most children returned on Easter Day to share in the joy of the church service and thoroughly enjoyed the Easter egg hunt in the church garden afterwards.

Members of the congregation will have observed, no doubt, how the children skip into church when they come in from our sessions in the hall. They are always keen to participate in the All-Age worship services once a month by either reading the lesson, leading intercessions or assisting with the collection. The children quite rightly very much view themselves as part of the congregation and regard the church as their own. St George's is blessed to have such a strong core group of regularly worshipping families with children and a team of talented and dedicated

leaders. I would like to take this opportunity to place on record our gratitude for the enthusiasm and commitment of Timi Ashaye; Liz Bebington; Sheila Fenner; Jaqualyn Moore and Faith Okpara without whose service to teaching the Christian gospel to the church's younger generation St George's would be all the poorer.

*Susan Wheeler*  
*Junior Church Leader*

### **Little Dragons**

The Little Dragons Toddler Group at St George's resumed in September 2021 following a prolonged closure from March 2020 due to Covid-19.

The return of the group has proved to be very popular with many families in our area and from families further afield. The need for social interaction for many 'lockdown' toddlers/babies and their carers was obvious from the many comments we received. It has been wonderful to see how many of those attending, children and adults alike, have overcome their initial nervousness and now join in happily at the playdough/colouring tables and with the singing time. There is a lovely atmosphere with many friendships being forged.

We have become a large group, with 25+ toddlers/babies each week. We have mums, dads, aunties, grandparents and childminders all bringing their little ones to the group.

We charge £1 per child and, after expenses, we are about to pay over £350 into church funds to help with the cost of heating and lighting so far.

Running this toddler group is a big commitment and requires setting up all the equipment and clearing away at the end each week, as well as the actual 2 hours spent with those attending and serving and clearing away the refreshments. This would not have been possible without Barry doing the majority of the setting up with a little help from me and the loyal help from Regina who comes each week. She is a natural with the carers/children and as well as helping with serving the refreshments, she always does the washing up while Barry and I make sure we are able to say goodbye to everyone and ensure we have no 'runners' out of the door at the end. Regina then helps Barry with most of the clearing away/vacuuming. My thanks to her are immeasurable. My thanks also to those who have stepped in to help on the few occasions Regina has not been able to come.

We have been asked if we could provide another session during the week but we know we wouldn't be able to cope with that unless we had significantly more helpers and if there was a time slot in the church availability.

*Sue Hengist*

### **Shrublands Food Bank**

Throughout the pandemic the food bank was served with groceries and toiletries of the £100 per month donation from St George's. This was a difficult time because of queues at the supermarkets and restrictions on the amount of items allowed to be bought during this time. However, determination and getting to know some of the staff who sympathised with the cause, followed through with a few bumpy rides at times.

When the church had to shut its doors Brian McGinnis set up a drop off point by his front door so that members of the congregation could leave their donations in a large plastic container. This sometimes included cash left in an envelope. The donations were collected every Thursday and taken to the Food bank by myself.

At one time the Food bank was short staffed and needed someone to buy groceries with the cash that had been donated and there was no one. Beverley Warner asked if I could take on the task and this I did.

Last year there was a call for Easter Eggs and a couple donated £200 for the purchase of Easter eggs. Needless to say this was very much appreciated.

The pandemic has caused many hardships and many challenges but to the best of my ability I have tried to get the best value for the money donated.

I continue to collect donations of food from Church every Thursday and shop once a month and take it to Shrublands food bank.

Rising food prices has meant that £100 has not bought as much this year as in the past, at a time when more families are having to use this service. This service is now in its third year.

Many people might have forgotten about the box for donation at the entrance of the church. Perhaps there could be a pew sheet reminder on a weekly/monthly basis to jog our memories.

*Evan Russell*

### **The Church Garden/Grounds**

You can't make the journey from Palm Sunday to Easter without being reminded, forcefully, of the long history of struggles over who is in charge of a particular space, who can occupy it, and what can be done there. This year at St George's, the Bible narrative about e.g. the Temple Court of the Women, traders in the Temple, and the Promised Land, was background to more local discussion of our own church as worship space and diverse "activity" space. The street cleaners who park their barrows in the church grounds, and rest on the Remembrance Garden seat before going off duty see this as their space. The dog (or tortoise) walkers likewise; and the young folk with cans to empty or cigarettes to smoke, the victims of domestic disputes seeking refuge, the children needing a safe tricycle/cycle space, the smaller children being introduced to greenery by parents whose own gardens have little greenery... But likewise, and with a far longer history to back them, the foxes, badgers, squirrels, numerous bird varieties, who share "God's Acre" with the human species.

There are competing views on what a "garden" should look like: only what human hands duly authorised have planted, or what "nature" has planted. In between are things like Valerian (red or white or pink) and Forget me not, that haven't necessarily been deliberately planted, but tend to get classified as flowers rather than weeds.

You should have noticed that this Spring the colour display has been more than usually impressive; and English bluebells and other Spring bulbs have been planted for next year. As building plans and first steps in building preparation reduce our green space, and destroy long-established trees and shrubs (some dating back to the 1930's), attempts are being made to sketch out a land management plan which will try to reconcile the different objectives of: wildness, contemplative/remembrance space, recreation space, and traditional garden, as Shirley becomes increasing houses and car parks. Whatever your perspective, don't accept drift **and** unintegrated initiatives. We are stewards of God's Acre.

*Brian McGinnis*

### **Longheath Community Care and Church Centre**

St George's (including Rev Carol Jones) shared in securing the Centre, in a new estate with no shops or focal point; and continues to have membership of the Centre Trustees. A retirement means that Barry and Carol now need a new colleague as Trustee. Covid closure pushed the Centre very close to running out of funds and hence to closure. Re-location of a children's group to the Centre as the major Centre user, Baptist Church re-opening, a new Estate-based Christian group with a variety of activities, and increased private bookings, have ensured the Centre's viability. Things now look good, although the Trustees are still heavily dependent on Ian Cordery

as Chairman in effect also acting as Hall Manager and General Factotum. The hope is that as the financial situation improves a wider volunteer base can again be supplemented by more paid input. Please keep Centre and Trustees in your prayers.

*Brian McGinnis*

### **Monday Evening Bible Reading Group**

We have continued our Zoom meetings every Monday evening, usually within a 40 minute slot. This has made possible a very widely geographically spaced participation; but has excluded from formal participation those without Zoom access, or who don't like Zoom. We are focussing on Second Corinthians at the moment, and learning a great deal from and with each other, helped by multiple commentaries. The weekly notes are on the Bible Reading Group blog, which provides another means of participating.

Bible study in the sense of learning from the lessons read in church, and the sermons that go with them (usually the Gospel) is foundational, and personal use of Bible Study notes is excellent as a weekday addition. But sharing in a Bible Reading Group does a lot to help a lot of people along the discipleship journey.

*Brian McGinnis*

### **Book Reading Group**

Reading separately and swapping notes has had to become the norm. This has enabled us to deal with distance, transport, and ill health issues; though there is an obvious downside in terms of effective sharing. For economy's sake, we have adopted a new "tradition" of a few big reads, plus extracts, plus poems. This seems to be reconciling challenge with feasibility. Details are on the group blog and monthly in the church magazine. Please feel free to join in, either regularly or as the fancy takes you and circumstances allow.

*Brian McGinnis*

### **Church Magazine**

It may be possible to return to a more "magazine delivered" system, but that depends on prior consultation with both potential deliverers (if there is such a word) and potential recipients). In the meantime, the magazine continues on-line and via about 66 hard copies to fulfil its traditional roles:-

1. To brief church members and other interested parties on what has been, is, and will be happening.
2. To keep former very active members of St George's in touch, including those who are house-bound and those who now live far away,
3. To stimulate thinking on current issues and on issues which are always current because always important.
4. To share a little history, since history does have a bearing on present and future.
5. To give a range of people what might be a "good read".
6. To encourage people with diverse views to exchange thoughts: the discipleship process of learning from each other – even from what you might not particularly like to hear.

As our in-church and on-line study courses have very effectively shown this year, there



is always a new way of looking at what is familiar, and there are always useful things to discover that are not familiar.

7. Maybe a laugh from time to time.
8. Certainly a challenge.

*Brian McGinnis*

### **Churches Together in Shirley**

CTIS came very effectively to life for the Christian Unity Week Service held at St George's in January, featuring the retiring Bishop of Croydon, and including most (not quite all) of the member churches. (It was good to see neighbours who attend other churches.) The Bishop's sermon told us very clearly what Christian unity is all about, and its importance as a core Christian

responsibility – not an optional extra for all the bits of Church cheerfully doing their own thing with little regard for all the other Christians doing their own thing. It isn't irrelevant that the most memorable of the later Jesus prayers was the prayer that all his disciples might be ONE, even as Father and Son are ONE.

Since Covid, Christians in Shirley have not stopped working with each other, but the well established routine of monthly prayer meetings held physically in each member church in turn has been suspended. Suspended too are the periodic business meetings, and the annual election of Chairman and Vice Chairman (lay or clerical). Barry remains Chair and Jonathan Baxter from Shirley Methodist Vice Chairman until such time as we can physically meet again.

In the meantime, there is a regular monthly Zoom prayer meeting supported by a prayer leaflet featuring local and national and international prayer themes. These meetings have tended to be St George's inspired and with predominantly St George's participation. However, Our Lady's is always involved, and frequently St John's, Shirley Methodist and West Wickham and Shirley Baptist. We hope in due course to return to normal.

*Brian McGinnis*