

Churchwarden's Report 2026

Last May saw my appointment as St. George's Churchwarden for the first time.

It has been a steep learning curve to climb, being the only Churchwarden in the role. However, I have to thank Alexander Baldwin-Smith as Assistant Churchwarden for his amazing support throughout this last year, particularly during my very first service. It would be lovely to have two Assistant Wardens to ease the weekly duty role, if there is not a second Churchwarden. However, I would like to thank all those who have stepped in to help cover the service duties most weeks.

Many of the administrative roles undertaken by the Churchwarden previously, are still undertaken by Jan Payne as the Parish Administrator. I am grateful to Jan for her continued role as this has eased my burden. She keeps me informed of any developments.

Evan Russell has continued to maintain many of the ongoing small repairs for which I am very grateful. Such work has included, sorting the Church and Hall doors; filling pot holes and fixing loose panels near the Church organ pipes.

During this year, St George's was offered some cupboards to ease the storage within the Church. I am grateful to Fay Westray in highlighting the availability of the cupboards. In turn, Steve Westray was instrumental in selling the very large, cumbersome tables situated in the Choir Vestry. With the wonderful help of Dawn Barrett, it has been possible to organise the clutter into these cupboards, together with Marion Sheehan, Susan Wheeler, Tony Aufenast, Mary Brown, Liz Bebington and Ray Wheeler, who all helped to sort out. All cupboards are clearly labelled as to their contents, which should help everyone going forward to locate what is needed. The main result is that the Choir Vestry is now a very usable room.

Alexander Baldwin-Smith and I have conducted a Health and Safety walk around the premises. There are some items to be dealt with and some, mainly trailing cables, need to be checked every week.

Finally, I would like to thank Rev. Jenny for her continued support in my new role.

Eco Group report for APCM 2026

The Eco Group continue to meet using Zoom to enable all of the team to meet easily. Meetings are now held four times a year, just before the upcoming Litter Pick.

The Litter Picks continue to be a success. Equipment and disposal of rubbish is coordinated with Croydon Council ensuring the safety of the participants. The group continues to attract helpers both within St. George's and the local community.

Following on from last year's report when it was reported that St. George's had reached gold, the gold award plaque has been received and is currently displayed on the pulpit

In October 2025, the Bishop of Southwark conducted the service of celebration which was attended by some local dignitaries. Several photographs were taken and are displayed in the side aisle of the Church.

During the inspection, several recommendations were made. The land management plan, energy audit and celebrations were completed. However, the Eco Group still need to strengthen the net zero action plan and develop a Procurement Policy.

Jan Turner continues to be a volunteer Archdeaconry Eco Champion. The group met in person at Bishop Martin's home during March 2026, where various ideas were discussed.

As the Eco Champion, Jan has met with two members of St. John's, Shirley, to discuss moving their own Gold journey forward. In addition, she has been asked to meet with the Vicar and Churchwarden of St. Paul's, Thornton Heath who are keen to get involved in the Eco Church scheme.

Jan Turner
Eco Group Lead

Hall Report for APCM 2026

2025 was another successful year for children's party bookings in the hall, our listing as a polling station also means that we have once again benefitted from hire by wider community groups. We were, however, sad to lose Shirley Neighborhood Care as a permanent hirer of the Hall Meeting Room and wish them well in their new, more central location. We continue to follow up all hall enquiries and would welcome more regular hirers.

You will know that the main difference to the hall in 2025 has been our change of heating. The old gas heaters had reached the end of their working lives, like-for-like replacements would have proved very costly and potentially difficult to install, and our gas standing charges exorbitantly high. The Finance Team therefore made the decision to cut off the hall's gas supply completely and install the electric heaters which are currently on the wall, backed up with freestanding electric heaters when the weather is exceptionally cold. This may not seem an ideal but, following professional advice, it was the best solution available given the continuing uncertainty surrounding the hall's long-term future.

The other noticeable difference to the hall last year was the replacement of the rotting and broken kitchen windows. We are incredibly grateful to the very generous donors who funded the new windows which have made a significant difference to aesthetics and temperature of the hall, and particularly the kitchen.

The hall finances continue to be under the umbrella of the Finance Team (which includes the Hall Manager) but due to increased utility bills and last year's urgent repairs, you will see from the accounts that our finances are still very tight and rents have therefore, once again, been increased accordingly. I am particularly grateful to Liz Bebington for her continued oversight of the Hall's accounts.

Once again, the bulk of the income from bookings has gone towards Hall salaries, utility bills, heating (including routine maintenance), insurance and running repairs. Whilst we aim to keep these costs to a minimum, some of them are still unavoidable.

I am extremely grateful once again to Evan Russell and Steve Barrett who continue to support me with general maintenance requiring 'quick fix' solutions and to all of you who so generously support us through the 100 Club, which continues to be a crucial part of our funding to keep the hall going.

As I indicated at the end of my report last year, it appears that our church and community will continue to enjoy the benefits of the church hall for longer than anticipated so your continued support is more important than ever.

Jan Payne
March 2026

Georgettes Report for APCM May 2026

The Georgettes met several times last year with events once again geared around social gatherings, including our own version of 'Desert Island Discs', visits to the Churchill Theatre and just enjoying each other's company. Our events are always well-attended, and we also continue to welcome new members.

This year we have once again planned events right up to December, with different group members taking the lead on specific events and activities. Planned activities for 2026 include a craft evening, days out and visits to local theatres.

Please feel free to contact me for more information.

Jan Payne
March 2026

Electoral Roll

The current number on the electoral roll is 76. We will be revising the roll before the 2026 APCM and the number could well go up before then.

Owen Whalley

PCC

The PCC held ten meetings in 2025, four regular, one emergency and five to consider specific topics including reviewing the results of the Listening Exercise and matters to do with the sale of land.

Topics on the agenda for each regular meeting are reports on Finance, Safeguarding, Health & Safety and from Rev'd Jenny. Normally there is also a report from the Warden which enables the PCC to fulfil its responsibility of maintaining in good order the fabric of the Church and the Hall. Other matters on the agenda

range widely and vary from meeting to meeting. Some are dealt with quickly, others involve lengthy discussion.

There are written Policies, on a number of topics, among them Safeguarding and Health & Safety. These are subject to review annually.

Managing the Church's finances is a key responsibility of the PCC and so, as well as looking ahead at predicted income and expenditure, what has come in since the preceding meeting and what gone out, is always reviewed. Whilst the PCC exercises overall control of the finances, day to day handling is done by the Finance Committee which has delegated authority to approve expenditures of below £1,000.

Finance Report

The Statement of Financial Activity and Balance Sheet are reproduced here. Paper copies of the full annual report accounts are available on request or can be viewed via the Church website.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST
 GEORGE THE MARTYR, SHIRLEY, CHARITY NUMBER 1134140
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2025

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and legacies (note 1)	59,113	6,535	3,700	-	69,348	86,733
Income from charitable activities (note 2)	3,448	-	-	-	3,448	876
Other trading activities (note 3)	8,463	22,973	420	-	31,856	29,550
Investments (note 4)	16,877	-	156	-	17,033	23,786
Total income	87,901	29,508	4,276	-	121,685	140,945
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds (note 5)	12,758	750	-	-	13,508	13,546
Expenditure on charitable activities (note 6)	77,677	53,190	4,078	-	134,944	147,912
Total expenditure	90,435	53,940	4,078	-	148,453	161,458
Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer	(2,534)	(24,432)	198	-	(26,768)	(20,513)
Transfers						
Transfers between funds	11,694	(11,548)	(146)	-	-	-
Other recognised gains / losses						
Gains/losses on investment assets	-	1,172	110	4,638	5,920	407
Net movement in funds	9,160	(34,808)	162	4,638	(20,848)	(20,106)
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward	48,927	411,607	7,165	26,765	494,464	514,570
Total funds carried forward	58,087	376,799	7,327	31,401	473,616	494,464

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Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets						
Tangible Assets (note 9)	-	39,727	-	-	39,727	61,774
Investments (note 10)	22,224	16,942	4,585	31,403	75,154	69,234
Total fixed assets	22,224	56,669	4,585	31,403	114,881	131,008
Current Assets						
Cash at bank and in hand (note 12)	33,205	320,980	742	-	354,927	349,275
Debtors (note11)	6,077	-	2,000	-	8,077	19,623
Total current assets	39,282	320,980	2,742	-	363,004	368,898
Current liabilities						
Creditors (note 13)	(3,419)	(850)	-	-	(4,269)	(5,442)
Net current assets (liabilities)	35,863	320,129	2,742	-	358,735	363,456
Net total assets	58,087	376,799	7,327	31,403	473,616	494,464
Represented by						
Funds (note 14)						
General Unrestricted	58,087	-	-	-	58,087	48,927
Designated funds	-	376,799	-	-	376,799	411,607
Restricted funds	-	-	7,327	-	7,327	7,165
Endowment funds	-	-	-	31,403	31,403	26,765
Total	58,087	376,799	7,327	31,403	473,616	494,464

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on DATE and signed on its behalf by:

Rev Jennifer Walpole, Chair

Safeguarding Report for 2025 - 2026

The Safeguarding Committee generally meets three times a year. The next meeting, unless anything urgent occurs in the interim, is scheduled for Monday 22 June.

'Safeguarding Sunday' was held for the fourth year running in November 2025 during the main 10am Eucharist for the whole congregation. On this occasion we put open questions and a scenario suggested by the charity Thirtyone:Eight to the congregation and asked for their comments, thoughts and feedback. Most people were well aware of safeguarding protocols, although the session highlighted that some newer members (and a longstanding member) were not aware of the identities of the Parish Safeguarding Officers. We trust this situation has now been rectified. There is an envelope on the board in the Church Porch with business card sized details of who to contact in the parish if you have a safeguarding concern. If you do not already have one in your wallet or handbag, please do ensure you take one.

Following a data breach on 17 August 2025 by APCS, the service previously used by Southwark Diocese (and many other dioceses across the country) for clearing DBS checks undertaken by parishes, the Diocese moved away from APCS and are now using Thirtyone:Eight to complete all their DBS checks. St George's has only needed to undertake two new DBS checks since the beginning of 2026, but so far the new system seems to be relatively straightforward. Only time will tell if there are snags to be encountered along the way! Several other people need to renew their DBS checks and Susan will be emailing to those concerned in the near future.

The Church of England's safeguarding policy statement, *Promoting a Safer Church*, says:

"All Church bodies should ensure that they have a 'Promoting a Safer Church' action plan in place that sets out, in line with national and local priorities, how the policy is being put into action and is

reviewed regularly." To help parishes prioritise their safeguarding work, the Diocese has rolled out the *Safeguarding Dashboard* to all its parishes. The Dashboard can produce three levels of action plan:

Level 1 - Safer Foundations

Level 2 - Safer Foundations and Safer Activities

Level 3 - Safer Foundations, Safer Activities and Safer Practices

All three levels only cover the mandatory requirements for safeguarding in the Church of England.

Although St George's has a robust system for tracking all safeguarding training records and DBS checks and there are no really overdue records, the PCC will be invited to discuss and approve the Level 1 Action Plan at its first meeting after the APCM. Once Level 1 has been completed, then a Level 2 Action Plan will be produced. Each stage should take no more than three months to complete, since most – if not all – of the requirements are already in place at St George's.

Susan Wheeler and Toyin Magbagbeola Parish Safeguarding Officers

Croydon Addington Deanery Synod

The Croydon Addington Deanery met three times during the period April 2025 to April 2026. Meetings normally rotate around the churches within the Deanery with meetings held this past 12 months at St Edward's, New Addington.

There is always a 'good news' slot with representatives giving an update on what is happening within their parishes.

With fresh elections to Synod due in April members were encouraged to seek volunteers from their churches to stand for Deanery Synod. This is a great opportunity to meet Christians from our Deanery Synod churches and find out what is happening in our locality.

Another important aspect to membership is that Deanery Synod members vote on who stands at General Synod and consequently have a role in shaping the Church of England's structure and mission.

The Deanery Pilgrimage took place in September 2025.

The Deanery Confirmation service took place on 7th December 2025 at St George's with Bishop Rosemarie presiding.

At one of the the Synod meetings Father Prem led a short presentation where he went through some of the points of the role he has taken on as Area Dean and moreover, the role of the Deanery Synod representatives. This led to breakout groups and discussions on 'How can the expectation of the Synod be fulfilled?' Some of the outcomes from the breakout groups (in no particular order) are given below:

- Concerns over geographical area as it has accessibility issue due to lack of public transport coverage from area to area. Some parts of the deanery are in two different boroughs. There are some natural alignments with the deanery, but perhaps not cohesive as a whole.
- It was thought at the commitment to the deanery needed to be looked at as it was felt that it was not fully supported by all parishes.
- The gap between the various layers that make up the Church of England national structure was thought to be wide; it was felt rather difficult to have any motions carried from the parishes to the Deanery Synod, on to the Diocesan Synod, to General Synod. There were many stumbling blocks along the way which were felt to be too obstructive. It was questioned as to why so many layers are necessary.
- The question of: 'Who decides what should be raised upwards?' was queried
- Finding an appropriate way of all deaneries exchanging community ideas with each other, both positive and perhaps at times if they have had a negative experience to warn others.

- Asking more external groups in to speak to us, for example a talk on modern day slavery, Christian Aid, Youth workers, Project Co-ordinators etc.
- To reach more of our members, due to the geographical issues, can it be considered that we have hybrid meetings, so running Zoom and in-person at the same time.
- How can we encourage our clergy to attend? It was noted that at this meeting, including Father Prem the host, there were only 2 other clergy members in attendance, this was felt to be very poor indeed.
- Lack of communication regarding when a church within our deanery goes through a change of status, and the boundaries are re-distributed, nothing was shared. Why? Who would be responsible for sharing such information?
- It was felt that as so many questions rather than answers came out of the breakout groups, the Archdeacon could be asked to talk with us.
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This year's Deanery Ascension Day service will be taking place on Thursday 14 May at St Mary the Blessed Virgin, Addington, at 7.30pm.

Fay Westray, Helen Aylward and Ray Wheeler Croydon Addington Deanery Reps

JUNIOR CHURCH and YOUTH CHURCH REPORT May 2025 - April 2026

At the end of July 2025, we had another happy Family Picnic with games and activities based on an Eco theme following the church's A Rocha Eco Gold Award. Ice lollies were enjoyed by everyone at the end of the afternoon and party bags were given out to the children.

At the start of September, as has become tradition, the children and young people had their school and college bags blessed at the beginning of the service and before the new academic term began.

I am pleased to say the team of leaders continues to be well supported by members of the congregation: the newest leader to the team is Siobhan Jamieson who will mainly work with the older, Youth Church members. Each term Revd Jenny comes in and leads a morning of singing with the children. After swelling to the dizzy heights of having fifteen children and young people on the register last year, we currently have ten on the register. However, following an extremely successful Good Friday workshop (more on this later in the report), I am hopeful that our numbers may increase.

Over the last two years we have been regularly differentiating the teaching on a Sunday morning. The older group focuses on a particular bible reading followed by discussion, whilst the younger group (4-9 year olds) participates in craft activities and/or games linked to a bible story. Miranda Haslem and myself have taken our young people on an outing to Bromley

The Good Friday workshop ran again this year. It was another happy occasion with a total of 15 children attending. Whilst only six children had formally registered before the event, on the morning we welcomed fifteen children in total. Children from both Monks Orchard and Orchard Way Primary Schools attended as well as children from our church families and their friends. It is good to know that Revd Jenny has managed to re-establish links with both local primary schools and this was evident in that the families who came from these two schools had received the flyer advertising the workshop. The atmosphere during the morning was calm, focussed and respectful with some really beautiful work being produced and taken home or included on the large frieze made of the events during Holy Week and Easter Day and displayed on the front of the altar.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedication, faithfulness and commitment of Timi Ashaye; Liz Bebington; Mary Brown; Sheila Fenner; Miranda Haslem; Fay Westray and Tanya White and we all look forward to welcoming and working with Siobhan Jamieson.

Susan Wheeler
Junior Church Leader

Health & Safety

Health & Safety is taken very seriously. The H&S policy is regularly reviewed and was recently revised. A Health & Safety Walk around the site was completed recently and action points identified.

LITTLE DRAGONS

Little Dragons Parent/Carer Toddler Group runs from 9.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. on a Monday during school term. Debbie, Shanti, Anne and I are there very week with our new helper Katharine joining us every two weeks. Reverend Jenny comes in to help and speak to the carers if she is available, though we do have to share her with the Pop in Group who meet in the Church Hall. If we are short of help, we are very pleased to be able to call on Pauline.

The cost is £2 per child and we are finding that this meets all our expenses at this time. We average 21 children a week plus their carers. Our current children range from 11 months to 5 years but we will be losing our 5 year old in September as her parents have found a very good school suitable to her needs. Money is paid in cash or on the Church payment machine that is set up for us after the Sunday service. We are finding the new petty cash sheet Liz produced for us much easier to use. All expenses for anything bought are reimbursed that day so no expenses are carried over.

Most of the children and carers come along regularly so we have all got to know each other which creates a warm and friendly atmosphere. I am very happy to report we have never had a problem with a child or adult. There are many activities for the children to participate in. Apart from playing with toys they can dress up, read, draw or make something with Playdough.

The children arrive from 9.30 am and choose whatever activity they want to do. Around 10.40 a.m. Debbie goes to the front of the altar rail starts the singing and all those who want to sit with their carer for a singalong. Shanti, Anne and I get the snacks (fruit and biscuits) and the drinks ready for after the singing. There is time for a little more play then its home time for children and carers and we begin washing up and putting the Church furniture back. We all work very well together and just after midday we are ready to go home. The last Monday that we meet before Christmas is a little different as Reverend Jenny tells the story of Jesus' birth and carols are sung. This is followed by party food and a party bag. The last Monday before Easter we give the carer a mini Easter egg for the children.

The reorganisation of space has meant we have the large cupboard next to the toilet and a lockable cupboard in the vestry which gives us ample space for our toys, rugs and miscellaneous equipment.

I have really enjoyed helping run Little Dragons and as time has gone by, I have found everything much easier. The urn for making hot drinks is so much better than boiling kettles and we always have hot water to wash up. I can now manage to lock the Lady Chapel door and press one button to turn on the lights when I arrive and one to turn off the lights when we leave.

Thank you to everyone who helps set up on Sunday after the service and on the day.

Mary Brown

PROPERTY REPORT

The Hall

There were many repairs done, especially in the Hall. The broken windows in the kitchen area were repaired which was organised by Steve Westray.

New electric overhead heaters were installed organised by Jan Payne.

The main entrance door of the Hall has been a main problem. I among others, have been involved. Steve Barrett did most of the ground work on the door, replacing the old rotten wood with new stronger wood. Selvin Paulwell did a fine job of repairing and replacing the floor boards at the entrance to the Hall. The outside lighting of the Hall was also repaired.

The Church

The back door was varnished by Steve Barrett after it was repaired last year.

The front door light of the Church was repaired and the Tower lighting at has been repaired but the circuit is intermittent and is causing some problems for the electrician,

Evan Russell

SHRUBLANDS FOODBANK

The church continues to support the Shrublands Foodbank with a donation of essential food each month. The Foodbank sends us a list of items most needed in any particular month.

The task of shopping skilfully and getting the best deal requires keeping an eye out for the items needed at any given time to get the amount required and the best value. Tesco, Aldi and Lidl usually have the best bargains. Food prices have gone up significantly but basic items are still in great need.

It is taken to the Shrublands foodbank shortly after the shopping is done. On a weekly basis the food donations left at Church is collected and taken to Shrublands Foodbank every Thursday.

I am glad to be able to continue in this supporting role and have had the help of others on occasions.

Evan Russell

Gardening Group

During 2025 the Gardening Group worked hard throughout the year to care for the church garden. A mowing rota was established to ensure regular grass cutting, alongside maintaining the flower beds, pruning shrubs, refreshing the soil, and replacing a number of standard and bush roses that had reached the end of their life. A highlight of the year was the visit from A Rocha, whose inspection team reviewed the garden as part of their overall assessment for the Eco Church Gold Award. While they were impressed with the work already undertaken, they encouraged the church to develop a Land Management Plan that would guide the garden's future development in a clear and phased way.

In response, a five-year Land Management Plan (2026–2030) was prepared and approved by the PCC. The plan aims to support the ongoing care of the grounds as a place of beauty, remembrance, prayer, biodiversity, and community welcome. It focuses on balancing thoughtful garden design with ecological care, supporting species in decline such as pollinators and hopefully hedgehogs, strengthening the spiritual connection between faith and creation, promoting sustainable gardening practices, and encouraging community involvement and education.

The plan sets out a phased approach to development over the next five years. Formal memorial areas will continue to be maintained with dignity and care, while other parts of the grounds will gradually include more wildflower planting, native trees, and wildlife habitats. Symbolic planting, such as the Bible Bed, will continue to provide opportunities for reflection and prayer, while environmentally responsible practices, including composting, soil improvement, sensitive mowing, and minimal chemical use, will guide the long-term management of the garden. Most of the work will continue to be carried out by volunteers through the Gardening Group and Eco Group, with opportunities for wider involvement from church members, families, schools, and local groups.

Steve Westray

Men of St George

The men's group meet regularly each Wednesday by Zoom. The numbers vary but usually there are 5 or 6 on line, including members who have moved away. There is no set programme and what we talk about is just what comes up on the day. We visited Bluebell railway and meet regularly for breakfast at the Shirley cafe. The members also run the model railway and the honey jar stall at the Fetes to raise money. New members will be welcome, for details contact Tony Aufenast.

Tony Aufenast

Pop-in.

We held weekly meetings and enjoy refreshments and bingo sessions and quizzes. We had varied programme of a number of other events were as follows,

In January we had a raffle and a bring and buy, in March and September we had our fish and chips lunches while in June we had our plough man's lunch. We had a coach trip to Eastbourne in August with 32 members, it was a good day out which everyone enjoyed.

In December we had our Christmas raffle and again 32 members had a Christmas meal at the Wheatsheaf in West Wickham.

Ron Bright

Church Magazine:

Church magazines are becoming less common. St George's magazine is not unique in the Shirley Churches family, but it is unusual. (We make sure our sister Churches see our magazine each month.) Where church magazines do exist, they have a variety of types and functions. Some, especially in rural areas, are basically community magazines, with some church content. Some are really for church members only and are not designed to appeal to anyone else. Most seek to reach out to a wider readership, both in the information they provide and in the topics they explore. The broader approach makes much more sense, not least because many church members are part of a household not composed exclusively of church members, and most churches have people who attend occasionally. (This is in addition to responsible outreach to people who see value in their local church although they don't attend it. Not all our magazine distributors are church attendees.)

For most of its 89 years, the St George's magazine has sought to inform, to encourage people to think, to entertain, and to involve. For much of that time, it has made use of the Parish Pump church magazine resource – not least for cartoons. Magazine articles which invite people to think about what is, or might become, their faith, or their attitude to controversial issues, are different from sermons in being very

short and allowing the reader to re-visit them as often as they wish. If articles attract a response, that might also get published.

The ambition is that the church magazine should be seen as “our magazine”. Feedback and offers of articles help towards that goal. One recent non-church member feedback was “It’s not like a church magazine!” Given that this came from someone renewing their subscription, that seems to be favourable feedback.

Brian McGinnis

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group:

Zoom was not our first choice of meeting format, but it has become an essential part of how we are. It suits people with work commitments, people with family responsibilities, people with limited mobility, and people with caring duties. The 40 minute time slot is less of a disadvantage than we had expected, and it means participation does not rule out all other activity on Monday evening. I guess we may be the only Shirley Bible group with participants in Norfolk and Poland and catering for Shirley participants who are away on holiday or business. We practice democracy: sharing the hosting and the leading, though no compulsion to do either. Being on-line means that we can share post-meeting reflections, rather than waiting for the next meeting. Because we do not use the church Zoom link, anyone wanting to join us as a new member or for a single meeting (or as a trial) needs to check with an existing member for that week’s link. Such participants are always welcome. We learn a lot from each other, as well as from the text.

We are currently studying Old and New Testament parables. (Yes, there are a lot of OT parables.) This has prompted writing our own parables, as well as much reflection on what we thought we knew about some very familiar picture/ action stories. After that, we shall be moving on to the Book of Acts and St Paul’s Letter to the Romans. Commentaries on these books are available on request.

Brian McGinnis

Overseas Missions:

With so many domestic good causes competing for our support - over 170,000 of them – it is challenging to focus adequately on our Christian responsibilities towards our Christian brothers and sisters overseas. and their support for their non-Christian brothers and sisters. It is good to glance back to the Book of Acts and remind ourselves how fragile and vulnerable were the little Christian communities that founded and supported Christian communities in other countries many days travel away. Our poor churches (in resource terms) are rich compared with many overseas churches, and a good many of these overseas churches are threatened by their neighbours in a way that we don’t experience in this country. Persecution alongside poverty. It may not be popular to be a vocal and active Christian in this country. Threats of death are almost certainly not in our experience.

News of our United Society missionary partner appears from time in the magazine; and is available in a more comprehensive form in the US prayer booklet. The more you know, the more you care.. and your prayers are of infinite value, whatever you can or can not afford in cash terms.

Brian McGinnis

Christian Aid: CHRISTIAN AID WEEK MAY 10 - 16:

We shall need people to deliver (but not collect) envelopes, and people to host (temporarily) envelopes returned by those who have received them. Please let Brian McGinnis, Pauline Russell or Helen Aylward know if you can help: the system depends on local delivery being matched by local hosting. Coffee mornings, teas, and sponsored activities also welcome. Every little helps greatly.

This year's theme is poverty in Kenya. Most parents in the target area wake every single day knowing that they must go and earn money, otherwise their children won't eat that evening. Fridah knows this reality well. But she's determined to protect her grandchildren from hunger. Through our partner, Beacon of Hope, she's received tools, seeds and training to grow fresh vegetables in a small city space – food she can cook for her family or sell to earn income. ***'Now I can plan. I can buy this; I can buy that. I can help my family.'***

There will be envelopes in church for those who would like to give personally.

Brian McGinnis

Churches Together in Shirley

Churches Together groups throughout the country bring together the wide variety of Christian Churches, with their different histories, structures, forms of service, and indeed (within the broad Trinitarian family) theologies. Churches Together enables information sharing, joint worship, and partnership community activity. CTIS supports Shirley Neighbourhood Care and Shrublands Food Bank. It has its own website, nursed by Tony Aufenast. Member Churches, some more active members than others, are St George's (Anglican), St John's with All Saints (Anglican), Our Lady of the Annunciation (Roman Catholic), Shirley Methodist Church, West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church, Church of God Apostolic (Pentecostal), and Shrublands Christian Fellowship (Baptist) It is a largely informal grouping – so Christians of other denominations are welcome; but they don't have a church building in Shirley.

At the recent CTIS AGM, Rev Jennifer was elected CTIS Chair for the next twelve months, and Deacon Al from Shirley Methodist as Vice Chair. (The Chair is open to lay and clerical members.) The meeting agreed to explore the possibility of having a Prayer Labyrinth Session instead of the traditional CTIS Quiet Day; and of having some sort of shared Good Friday witness event. Both events would be planned to include less mobile participants. The meeting also agreed to try a return to short

monthly prayer meetings, hosted by member churches, and accessible on Zoom where possible. The January 2027 Unity Week service might be held at All Saints – to emphasise the continuation of this worship space as part of St John’s parish.

The reports to the AGM highlighted different activities/challenges which can inform our prayers and maybe offer opportunity for participation. Including:

Shirley Neighbourhood Care: Building on the move to Shirley Library, with new outreach and fund-raising activities. A need for more volunteer drivers. Struggling to replace Croydon Council financial support.

Shrublands Trust (Foodbank): Nearly 2,300 individuals helped over 12 months – thanks to support from a number of partners, including St George’s. Food costs have risen and financial contributions fallen. New English language teaching initiative planned – to help those whose lack of English is impairing self-help. Teaching help will be needed.

Our Lady’s: A Diversity Group is valuing the wide range of nationalities involved in the parish, including their food traditions. A new Assistant Priest from Nigeria: Fr Cajetan Dara.

Shirley Methodist: The November Lantern Festival was a great success, despite the weather. The Lent Course, focussing on the journey to the cross and pilgrimage, included a visit to crucifixion paintings in the National Gallery. A new Minister will be replacing Rev Richard Lawson in September.

St John’s: All Saint’s is being made fit for purpose, and the congregation is building up. The St John’s Ministry Team now includes Tabitha as Curate, Steve a potential priest in training, and Alison a Missioner. St John’s is working towards a silver ECO award.

West Wickham and Shirley Baptist: The HUB outreach programme includes a Coffee Shop with free Soft Play; a Baby Bank supporting low income families with essentials; The Pantry providing low cost basic foods; and Book Nook with books and board games. There will be a (free entry) Passion Play at 7 30 p.m. on 2nd April.

Brian McGinnis