



**Parish of Wargrave
with Knowl Hill**

PARISH REPORTS For the Year 2023

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
and
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL MEETING**

**To be held in St Mary's Church, Wargrave
on Sunday 14th April 2024
10.30am**

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PCC Report

The elected membership of the PCC at the 2023 APCM was 21 comprising 3 members of the Clergy, 2 Churchwardens, 3 Deanery Synod Representatives and 13 elected members. During the year Karen Larkins from Knowl Hill offered her resignation.

The PCC met 6 times during 2023 with an average attendance of 77%. At each meeting the PCC receives a report from the Safeguarding Officer, currently Sue Witney; and from the PCC Treasurer, currently Jane Wills.

Reports are also received from the COGs Leaders about their particular areas of responsibility within the ministry of St Mary's and a regular report is received from the Knowl Hill Strategy Team about St Peter's and St Paul's.

Helen Vonka continues to serve as the Electoral Roll Officer and currently there are 247 names on the roll (20 from Knowl Hill and 227 from Wargrave). Forms for new applicants are available at the back of the Churches and via the Church Office.

The PCC is responsible for compliance with various legal and financial regulations as well as returns to the Diocese. Confirmation that the Parish is compliant with all requirements is given at meetings when necessary.

Throughout the year the PCC discusses regular topics, eg arrangements for the major Church Festivals; organisation of provision for children and young people; approval of Foundation Governors for Church Schools; and the promotion of Planned Giving. During 2023 there a number of new initiatives were proposed and approved e.g. work being undertaken to enhance the Eco Status of the Parish; a new RE Programme in our local Primary Schools; changes in the pattern of Services; the offering one-off informative sessions e.g. on Funeral Planning.

Regular reports from the meetings are published in the Parish Magazine, and COGs Leaders take information from the meetings back to their teams as appropriate.

Each PCC Meeting has time allocated to reviewing and updating a specific area of the Parish Roadmap and some meetings have one-off presentations on specific areas of the Parish Ministry e.g. from the Director of Music, Peter Dart.

The PCC conducts a review at the end of each meeting to ensure that all members are content with the way the discussions and decisions have been conducted and reached. All members of the PCC have the opportunity to propose agenda items. The meetings start and end with prayer that the work of the PCC is the Lord's work and that He should be the guiding spirit for the discussions and decisions reached for his people in the Parish.

Sheila Williams
PCC Secretary

Vicar's Report

As Spring begins, our thoughts often turn to the garden, and most especially as I've read John 15. The reason we prune is so that things can grow healthily and bear more fruit. Sometimes, that means cutting off parts of a plant that are no longer flourishing and sometimes, and more painfully, it means pruning things that are healthy, so that they may grow back stronger and more fruitful. This may be necessary as we continue as churches at Knowl Hill and Wargrave to follow our Lord.

As we reflect on the health of our churches, it's helpful to focus on worship, discipleship and evangelism.

1. Worship: growing as worshipping people in church and life.

As I write, we are just about to meet to remember the ultimate act of service: that of Jesus willingly going to the Cross for us. The words worship and service are interchangeable in meaning: they involve an understanding of how much we have been forgiven and a full u-turn as we start to live lives of complete thanksgiving. As the people of God our lives should express praise and adoration and service of the one true living God. As the body of Christ, we meet to worship together on Sundays to sit under the Word of God together, as we do in mid-week small groups. But are we doing that daily: worshipping God at home, at work, with friends? This involves all we do outside Sunday church, in our work and play, in how we relate to other people and how we care for God's world.

With the whole of all our lives we are called to be worshipers. I pray that our church family grows in worship if God on Sundays and the rest of the week, with all our hearts, minds and bodies.

2. Discipleship: growing as followers of Jesus in who we are and what we do.

Growing in worship is just one of the ways in which we are invited to grow as disciples of Jesus so we may be the salt and light we are called to be. I have been struck by a comment from Dallas Willard, who says discipleship is "being with Jesus so we can learn from Jesus how to be more like Jesus". Discipleship is about relationship and transformation, and both are lifelong projects... there is always room for growth!

As we sit under the Bible, the Word of God, as we listen to Sunday sermon, in a home group or on our own at home, are we asking ourselves what we have learnt of the character of God? Are we being challenged to grow in our relationship with the Lord Jesus, seeking to live as He lived, and do as He did? We need to give time to letting the Holy Spirit work in us so we may love as He loved us, sacrificially and wholeheartedly. There is a need to give attention to growing a culture of whole life generosity in our life together. How important is the work of home groups, where we can study the Bible together, and pray for one another in all the joys and challenges of life as we follow the Lord Jesus. With prayer, a committed, focused dependence on the Lord, our churches will grow in his will and become more like Jesus.

3. Evangelism: sharing Jesus with people through relationships.

This is a real challenge, especially since the Pandemic and Covid restrictions made us more inward looking. As disciples we all need to look beyond ourselves and our needs to the pressing need of sharing the gospel with a dying world. The person of Jesus Christ is the very answer to the needs of those around us.

My desire is that in the years ahead the churches at Knowl Hill and Wargrave will be known as a Christ-centred community of living faith. Then as Jesus reminds us; "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

I want to thank each of you for your partnership in the Gospel. It is an immense privilege to work alongside my clergy colleagues Steve Turville and Richard Eves, and our Churchwardens Mark Puddy and Sue Witney who do so much.

Finally, I would like to record my deep gratitude for my loving and supportive wife for all she does to serve alongside me in the parish.

Yours in Christ
John R M Cook

Church Treasurer's Report

The year 2023 proved to be a challenging year amidst the Cost-of-Living crisis. The 2023 budget indicated that we expected a small deficit at the year end. However, due to higher-than-expected income, the year has returned a small surplus overall.

The movement on general funds reflects the normal recurring activities of the church – with income generated from stewardship, collections, donations and fund-raising etc, and the total costs of the day-to-day administration and ministry of the church, and the maintenance of its properties and churchyards.

The overall results for 2023 show a surplus of just over £1K on unrestricted (general) activities compared to £127K the year before which was enhanced by significant legacy income (£88K) which has not recurred in the current year.

Each year we examine our costs and implement whatever savings we can, but unfortunately many of these are fixed in nature so are difficult to vary significantly in times of reduced income. In contrast, the income levels are much more unpredictable, and somewhat easier to impact so we aim to maximise income as much as possible as well as minimising costs. The main influences on the income levels for 2023 were as follows: -

Stewardship income and unrestricted donations (excluding gift aid tax recovered) ended behind of the 2022 totals. The transition to the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) has continued in the year and this has proved to be instrumental in maintaining this source of income and aiding cash flow.

Gift aid recovery was also lower than in the prior year reflecting the reduction in income

Unrestricted donations were also much lower in 2023 as 2022 had the benefit of three of the £5,000 21C loans being converted into donations, as well as grants from the Deanery to assist in our energy saving work.

Church collections are recovering following a significant reduction over the Covid period. They are now in nearly £14K (which is £2K higher than for 2022), although this still compares unfavourably to over £22K in the last pre Covid year.

Fund raising - there was decreased activity in 2023 as this was not a Festival year. Fundraising income in Knowl Hill was channelled to the Restoration fund so was restricted income.

Fees from weddings and funerals (retained by the PCC) were higher than 2022 as a result of more weddings and funerals over the year and rising statutory fee levels.

The parish magazine income increased slightly in the year – this source of income will fall for 2024 due to the new format of the magazine.

Room rental – room rent for the Hannen Room and St Mary's Church has continued to increase over the year

Dividend income was similar to 2022.

Overall, total income from 'normal' activities (being unrestricted funds and endowment funds per the annual accounts) was £207,443 which represents a decrease of around £103,806 over the previous year.

Total unrestricted costs at £204,659 were around £21,780 higher than for 2022. The main changes are listed below: -

Ministry costs – these were £4K higher than the prior year. This 'heading' includes activities of the youth groups as well as the parish share, clergy expenses and music costs.

Fundraising costs – there were no Festival events this year but cost incurred related to wreath making, harvest supper and Christmas services.

General building repairs – General repairs and running costs were higher than in 2022. As can be imagined, there was a significant increase in the heat and light costs for all churches in the parish. Routine maintenance tasks were also carried out (boiler services and replacement of timers, mower services etc).

Churchyard and Cemetery and Mill Green expenses – the level of work carried out in the year was higher than in 2022. Specific maintenance projects have included the repair work on the churchyard wall, and Cemetery Memorial Cross.

Office expenses – these have increased over 2022. The additional costs include costs relating to WiFi upgrade in year.

Mission giving - this has decreased significantly over 2022 as a result of the reduced surplus. It is governed by a formula agreed many years ago, and is based on a proportion of certain income types in the year.

As a result of these movements, unrestricted funds are £250,954 at the end of the year compared to £249,189 at the end of 2022. Please note, this total includes amounts of slightly more than £13K which have been designated by the PCC for specific purposes.

Total restricted funds were £83,376 at the end of 2023 compared to £85,536 at the end of 2022. The main movement was in tree works on Mill Green, as well as the cemetery on-going mowing and initial architect's fees at Knowl Hill for the restoration project.

The capital in the Endowment funds is not available for use, and the movement on this balance represents the change in investment value of the underlying funds over the year.

A draft budget has been prepared for the new financial year. This predicts a deficit for 2024. This recognises that the current trend of static or declining stewardship income (caused by changing circumstances of many donors) has continued so that this source of income is still under pressure. It also assumes collection and donation income remain relatively stable or even decline slightly. This is an understandable movement over time and in current economic circumstances but given the critical nature of these types of income to the funding of the church operations, we need to ensure reductions in the current base of stewardship income, collections and donations are offset by new or increased giving from those who are still able and willing to give, and from new contributions.

The initial budget for 2024 also includes cost increases for the main operating expenditure for the churches – as we are trying to predict the impact of the current inflationary pressures these have been increased to try to allow for any further cost increases yet to come.

Whilst we have some buffer due to the one-off legacies received in the prior year, we need to ensure that we are careful in our stewarding of the resources we have as there are many churches which are suffering in this current economic climate. We are fortunate that we are not one of these. I am conscious we must not become complacent and continue to bear in mind the need for adequate funding to continue the work we are doing in the parish.

My thanks to Sean Sutcliffe for his continuing efforts on stewardship and to the office for its help and support,

Jane Wills
Treasurer

13 February 2024

St Mary's Churchwardens' Report 2023

Mark and I have continued to learn on the job throughout 2023. We were glad we had taken the time to complete the Terrier report earlier in the year (an inventory of items in the church) as not long after we were told it was our turn to undergo an Archdeacon's Inspection. This was scheduled for September, and we were presented with a very long checklist of items and documentation to complete in readiness. The list covered the external building, the churchyard, an interior inspection which included signage, safeguarding information, health and safety documentation including fire safety, security, GDPR, registers of paperwork, and a multitude of policies.

We set to work and by the time of the Inspection we were ready, clutching numerous folders, reports - and a tray of very nice biscuits!

It was a long evening, but the outcome was very positive with only a couple of points to work on that had arisen from the visit. We were able to report back recently that we had dealt with these areas and were working on another. We found the visit, and especially the preparation for it, incredibly useful. We were able to identify where we had evidence of good practice and improve and update key policies. As a result, we learnt an incredible amount and are thankful to all those who helped us prepare for this inspection with their expertise, John Cook, Rosalyn and Lucy in the Office, Christine Walker and Peter Mayes.

It was great to be able to hold the first Church Concert (in November) following the pandemic, as the previous year we had staged A Christmas Carol instead of a concert. Local talent, professional and amateur was on show, with the Community Choir a great addition and our very own Dart Family showed us their amazing talents. There was top professional musical input from Voces 8 and Richard Sharp, and we felt privileged to have such a concert in our Church.

We were able to hold a complete schedule of services over Christmastide including the Christmas Eve Nativity followed by the lighting of the Christmas Tree on Mill Green. This was a massive success, attracting 500 people from around the village to share the Christmas message. Massive thanks to Jayne and Graham Trolley for their hard work and generosity installing and decorating the enormous Christmas tree and the support of Daisy Love, The Bull and Richard of Hurst. Peter Dart, musical director, organised all the musical aspects of our Christmastide Programme brilliantly, and there were uplifting and thoughtful talks from all members of the clergy team. Indeed, we have been encouraged throughout the year from talks by the ordained clergy, as well as Camilla Cook, Lis Hobden, Andy Ferguson and Jubi da Silva, with their contrasting and complementing styles. Peter Dart and his music group together make an invaluable and spiritually uplifting contribution to our services.

As with last year, we would like to offer our sincere thanks and gratitude to all the people who continue to work behind the scenes in so many areas of church life, ensuring the smooth running of our Church. A special thanks also for the contributions of our vast number of volunteers. It is very much appreciated, and church life as we know it would not be the same without you all.

On behalf of the entire Church Family, a huge "thank you" to the staff in the Parish Office, Rosalyn and Lucy, for all they do to help the clergy and their gentle reminders to the Churchwardens when necessary. Their talent and enthusiasm are great blessings to our Church.

Mark Puddy and Sue Witney
Churchwardens
April 2024

St. Peter's Church - Report to APC

Things have finally moved on at St. Peter's and I'm pleased to be able to write work has commenced on the installation of toilets and a small kitchen/coffee area at the back of the Church where the old kitchen used to be. The work will take a little while to complete, but we are hoping that we will be able to use the Church for our normal services on the first and third Sunday of each month. On the second Sunday we still have a communion service at St. Paul's in Warren Row which is a nice intimate service. Although we have small numbers at St. Paul's we did have a lovely Carol Service on the afternoon of Christmas Eve which was well attended and a great start to our Christmas activities. We are grateful that a number of Parishioners from St. Mary's come to our communion service on the third Sunday of the month which swells our numbers and forges a relationship between the two ends of the Parish.

Our fundraising activities have not been as keenly attended as we would have liked. The recession has taken its toll and money has not been as freely given as in the past so we are trying to think of other fundraising activities to encourage local villagers to support St. Peter's. We are hopeful of a keener interest when the residents of Knowl Hill realise the renovation work is now taking place and the new facilities will mean that the Church can be used more by the school and other local groups. Knowl Hill Church of England Academy continue to use the Church for services and any other activities that requires more space than they currently have in the school. In September Lesley Bell and Kay Bruce participated in the Ride and Stride fundraising walk round the Windsor churches which has added funds to the coffers.

The wet weather of late has given us a lot of problems with flooding on the road at the entrance to the church. The Highways Agency do not seem able to provide a solution to the problem. Borough Councillor, Maureen Hunt, has made a number of representations to them that something should be done immediately. Until we know that the drain and the gully down the hill outside the Church have been dealt with, we are still in danger of more flooding, which is not good for the Church. (I think I will consult with Noah and have a white dove standing by).

Until the re-modelling has been completed, we will not be able to deal with other repairs within the Church, for example the roof and guttering, as these problems will require further fundraising and planning. Ever onward!

Finally, the local volunteers and Community Service groups are doing a god job of keeping our Cemetery and Churchyard under control from invasive brambles and weeds and the fruits of their labours are appreciated when we get pleasure from seeing the beautiful primroses in bloom.

Lesley Bell
Karen Larkins
Valda Hadden

Deanery Report 2023

As well as excellent presentations around Youth and Children's Work and the building project at All Saints "Space for All", a major focus for Synod this year has been the adjustments to Parish Share which were voted through with a large majority. We decided in the end to reduce people's Share payments immediately while staggering those facing an increase by making up the gap with Deanery Funds. Our Deanery Green Fund has been very popular and we have made grants for things like lightbulbs, a new door for a parish hall and sensors which turn lights off when people have left the room. The application process is very simple and we match the funding offered by the PCC to a total per grant of £1,000. Parishes may only make one application per calendar year but there is nothing to stop parishes applying year after year.

The total Share we paid in 2023 was £1,017, 105, which is 93.6% of the total we are asked for by the Diocese. We were £69,797 short, a deficit made up of only two parishes. Thank you to all of the parishes, and all of the Finance Teams and Treasurers, for their excellent efforts to support mission and ministry across the Deanery and beyond. (We were £84,000 short in 2022 so this is a considerable and welcome improvement).

The congregation of Hong Kongers who worship in Cantonese at St Mary's, Winnersh are in good heart and steadily growing in number, to the extent that they now need to rent further space at The Forest School when they meet. It was good to have a presentation on this initiative at Synod in April 2023 at Owlsmoor.

The Deanery Plan was also voted through in 2023, with a limited reach and a focus on things like building support groups for people in set roles, like Safeguarding Officers and Treasurers. We are also working on a list of 'trusted traders' who parishes have used and putting on Deanery courses which all parishes can access, e.g. on spotting domestic abuse, and fundraising.

Deanery Chapter continues to be well attended and a real source of support and ideas. Part of the reason that we are keeping a narrower focus in our Deanery Plan is the significant number of parishes in vacancy at the moment. We are holding the line at the moment, through committed lay leadership, hard-working clergy in the parishes in question and willing support from the Deanery. I am really thankful for everyone's commitment and help in the four parishes of All Saints, Finchampstead, Ruscombe, Twyford and Hurst and Winnersh and Bearwood. At the start of 2024 we are still trying to work out what level of ministry is affordable for Winnersh and Bearwood, and how to split Hurst and Ruscombe with Twyford into two separate parishes.

Rickey Simpson-Gray was installed as Vicar of St Sebastian's, Wokingham Without in 2023 and Laura Wheatley Downs was licensed as Assistant Area Dean, alongside Jane Kraft who continues in role. I was also relicensed as Area Dean in November 2023- those five years have gone very quickly indeed, since I was first licensed in 2018.

Rev'd Canon Richard Lamey Area Dean

In addition to the Area Dean's report, In April 2023 Mike Buckland accepted the role of Deanery Environment Officer, which he will share with Rev Hannah Higgison of All Saints Wokingham. St Mary's and St Peter's have also received green grants from the Deanery.

Safeguarding Report for APCM for 2023

Formal Obligation

The Parish of Wargrave with Knowl Hill is working in line with The Church of England's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. It has complied with its duty under Section 5 of the safeguarding and clergy discipline measure of 2016 i.e. the duty to have regard to the Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is a standing item at all PCC meetings.

Safeguarding Roles

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Sue Witney
DBS Recruiter and Verifier: Lesley Turville and Christine Walker

Policies, Guidance and Information

The Parish Safeguarding Policy is passed by the PCC on an annual basis (July) and displayed in all three churches. Other policies e.g. Diocesan and Church of England policies and recruitment of ex-offenders are available to read from the website. The website has been updated to ensure that Safeguarding is at the forefront of church life and policies and procedures are easy to access.

All activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults are asked to maintain a register of attendees and workers at each event.

Safeguarding Learning and Development

All PCC members have completed the Basic or Foundation safeguarding training.
The PSO, the previous PSO and two clergy have completed The Leadership Pathways training
All volunteers for work with Children and youth and pastoral work have undertaken their relevant safeguard training
All pastoral workers have had a DBS check and nearly all have completed the C1 (foundation level) training. This is in progress.
The PSO regularly updates the Safeguarding Dashboard is guided by this for areas of development.

Safer Recruitment and People Management

From January 2022 all appointments, voluntary or paid are made following safer recruitment practices. We are not backdating applications made before this date. All records will be held centrally.

Concerns raised

There were no concerns raised during this period.
There were no referrals to the diocesan safeguarding team.

Next Steps

To ensure we have job descriptions in place for the differing roles within the church.
To ensure all roles continue to undergo safer recruitment
To ensure all activities are fully risk assessed and reviewed regularly.
To ensure all registers are kept and are readily available to all staff.
For the PSO to meet regularly with the clergy and share areas of development.

Sue Witney



Caring CoG Report 2023

The Caring CoG is a team of 20 or more volunteers and concentrates on the care of the elderly and isolated in our Parish. Some volunteers serve across several areas, and we couldn't do the work we do helping people in our community to stay connected, without the dedication of these wonderful volunteers, so a very big thank you to you all.

The Welcome Café is open every Tuesday afternoon and is very popular, attracting up to 20 customers each week, supported by a fantastic team of 11 hosts who provide and serve the refreshments. The challenges? To find drivers able to bring people, and two more people to boost the host team.

(**CAMEO** - Come And Meet Each Other - in Knowl Hill provides a similar service led by Lesley Bell.)

Home Visits. Approximately 15 people are visited in their homes for conversation, prayer and Holy Communion, usually on a monthly basis.

The Mount. Tuesday Holy Communion at the Mount continued through the year, as did the weekly cakes baked by a team of 7 wonderful bakers and delivered to the Mount staff to say thank you for their hard work and dedication, The staff at the Mount are always very appreciative.

Elizabeth Court. We continue to have a clergy presence at Elizabeth Court coffee mornings and provide lifts to those who want to come to the Welcome Café, plus monthly Holy Communion Service (attended by 5-10 residents/locals).

The Grapevine weekly devotional is hand-delivered by a team of 3 to almost 40 folk in the parish who aren't able to access church services or other Christian support via the internet. They are also delivered to the Mount for their residents and the four Parish primary schools.

Seniors Carol Service Christmas Tea is provided by a bolstered team of makers and servers for this special Christmas treat for c50 folk.

Again, another very big thank you to all the carers, however and wherever you serve.

Rev Steve Turville
Caring CoG Lead



Communicating CoG Report 2023

Magazine

At the end of 2023, Bob Austen stepped down as editor of the Magazine. Under his tenure the magazine had won several awards and it was a fitting tribute to his work that in 2023 the magazine received the overall Best Parish Magazine Award. We were unable to recruit a replacement editor who could continue the Magazine in Bob's footsteps, and as the advertising income necessary to underwrite the costs of such a magazine had become harder to achieve, the Magazine Committee after discussion, decided to relaunch in a 4-page A4 format. The creativity and skill of Rosalyn Lane Heath have been invaluable in producing this magazine which is consistently visually attractive and informative. I am grateful to the stalwarts of the editorial team throughout 2023; Bob Austen, Lesley Bell, Jim Hadden, Annette Dart and Richard Eves, with advice from Christine Walker, Andy Ferguson and Steve Turville.

AudioVisual

We have benefitted from continued strengthening of the Audiovisual Team over the last year. Doug Clark's new recruits have acquired skill and confidence, even when the system has behaved unpredictably. Maria Monte, Julia Freeman and Katie Cosnett have joined the team, while Chris Beatty has continued to work with calm efficiency. The Parish Office Team has been producing more elaborate visual content for the services, including animations for some of the songs for the All-Age Services. A big thank you goes to Katie Blades, who has been assisting the Office Team on a voluntary basis with preparing the AV content for services. This has been an enormous help, allowing the office team to deal with their busy day job. The success of the AV contribution has enabled us to reduce the quantity of printed material, improving the green profile of the Church. We have been assisted by the expertise of Graham Trolley, advising us how to maximise the potential of our current AV system, and options for development.

Website

Rosalyn has continued to work on improving the content of the website. There are currently some technical constraints preventing us from achieving the full potential of the website, but we have expanded the information available to our members and others who are interested in our Church.

Grapevine, Newsletter, and Wargrave News

We have continued to issue two weekly publications in electronic and paper form; the weekly newsletter, with thoughtful contributions from Rosalyn Lane Heath, and The Grapevine, with stimulating content and insight from Steve Turville. Richard Eves has provided monthly contributions from the Church for publication in the Wargrave News. Occasionally these have appeared word for word as submitted by Richard, but we have been helped by Cynthia Coombes, our source on the Wargrave News Editorial Board, and are happy with the accuracy and appearance of recent items.

Social Media

We have continued to inform our community of our activities by postings on local groups and Facebook.

Opportunities to volunteer to help the team.

If you feel that you could help our team in any of these areas, please contact Mark Puddy via markpuddy@btinternet.com.

Dr Mark Puddy
Communicating CoG Lead



Supporting CoG Report 2023, including Health and Safety Report

Safeguarding

Sue Witney, as Safeguarding lead, has continued to add to the work Lesley Turville had done over the years as Safeguarding Lead. She has been very thorough in ensuring that our records and processes are in line with current best practice, and in alerting us to the training everyone needs to undertake. We are very grateful for her diligence in this area of vital importance.

Health and Safety

Mark Puddy has continued as acting lead for Health and Safety. Working with Lesley Bell at St Peter's and Jill Hendry at St Paul's, H&S risk assessments and fire risk assessments were undertaken for all the churches of the Parish, as well as ensuring that safety and first aid equipment is updated. No issues have arisen during routine or special events throughout the Parish.

Updating the records for the Cemetery

Following the work undertaken last year by Sarah and David Wyatt in updating and verifying the records held by the Parish Office, there is to be a computerised GPS-based record system funded and rolled out progressively through the country by the Church of England. This has yet to reach our Diocese, but we are well placed to implement this when it is released and funded locally.

Updating the Website Database and Record Archive

Rosalyn Lane Heath, in the Office, continues to work on the databases in the Parish. We have continued with the process of scanning of old documentation, continuing to minimise the amount of paperwork held could be reduced, in the Office and the archive in the Woodclyffe Hostel.

Parish Office Team

In the Parish Office, we have a very strong team, with Rosalyn and Lucy dealing with all changes to plans with commendable calm, professionalism, and good humour. We would be far the worse in so many aspects of the life within the parish without their skill, dedication and enthusiasm.

Volunteers

As in all aspects of the church, we rely on the skill, enthusiasm and good will of teams of volunteers. Within the Supporting Cog, as well as those mentioned above, Helen Vonka keeps the Electoral Roll up to date, Katie Blades, assists in the office and Sean Sutcliffe has spearheaded the drive to increase giving through the Parish Giving Scheme, and at the APCM we will have heard another clear and masterly analysis of the current financial state of the parish.

Dr Mark Puddy
Supporting CoG Lead



Gathering CoG Report / Music 2023

Gathering CoG roles:

Throughout 2023 the Gathering CoG continued to support the services at St Marys. There is a large number of people involved, in a wide variety of roles involving both clergy and laity and covering the weekly Sunday 8am and 9.45 services as well as occasional mid-week services: operating the AV; reading the Bible passages; preparing and reading the intercessions; ringing the bells to call people to worship; sidespeople duties (many tasks, including welcoming, taking the collection and ensuring everyone has everything they need); teaching and caring for the young people in Junior Church and creche; assisting with the administration of communion; leading parts of the liturgy; preparing and serving refreshments and clearing up afterwards; singing and playing instruments; preaching; presiding at the communion services; preparing the rotas; setting up the communion table; changing the coloured frontals; planning the music and co-ordinating with the office team who so ably support these tasks. Thanks go to all the people, too many to name, who serve us all in these many ways. The various teams for all these tasks are always delighted to have more volunteers, so please do get in touch with the clergy or Rosie Creedon if you would like to serve in any of these teams and pray with thanks for those already doing so.

Services in 2023:

In 2023 we continued the pattern of Sunday services as a weekly 8am traditional said Holy Communion, and a 9.45 service with provision for young people: All Age service on the 1st Sunday of each month, Holy Communion on 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays, and Morning Worship on 3rd Sundays, with creche and Junior Church (re-named from Sunday Club) on all but the 1st Sundays. During 2023 there were a large number of baptisms, some due to 'catch-up' from the pandemic. One of the challenges for us as a church is how to encourage families who bring their children for baptism to come more regularly. We recognise that, along with many churches throughout the country, there are challenges in building up the younger end of the congregation, and we continue to pray and look for ways to make our services meet the needs of all ages and the great variety of preferences in musical and liturgical style. As always, the festivals of Christmas and Easter are highlights in the year. Christmas was a particularly busy time with many services and events, and these were very well attended. Remembrance Sunday is a big occasion in the village, and many attended the church service with more coming to join the follow-on British Legion service on Mill Green. The annual Bereavement service was held in early November and those who have lost loved ones in the past year as well as longer ago, appreciate the opportunity to reflect, pray, and remember them.

Music:

The Music Group continued to meet at every Sunday Service and members of the group are thanked profusely for their diligence and commitment. In addition, the organ was used at a large number of weddings, funerals and memorial services. Many notes of appreciation have been received from these gatherings. An enhanced choir supported the annual carol service, and a wonderful performance was enjoyed by all. A Concert in November was well attended, and local performers (Liz Drew, Laura Anstee, Paul Speed, Rosie and Katie Dart) were supported by professionals from further afield who were connections of Peter – the VOCES8 scholars and Richard Pearce on organ, who is the accompanist of the Royal Choral Society. In 2024 the Academy of St Martin in the Fields will be making their 4th appearance as part of the Wargrave Festival. In these ways the role of music in St Mary's is both to enhance worship (Gathering cog) and to provide enjoyment more broadly outside the services (Celebration cog).

Rosie Creedon
Gathering CoG Lead

Peter Dart
Director of Music



Nurturing CoG Report for 2023

House Group News

St Mary's house group community continued to grow during 2023.

Young Families Our new group for Young Families, established and led by Annie and Jubi Da Silva, flourished and is now 'bursting at the seams' with members. We look forward to the possibility of introducing a second group in the future as we welcome more young families into our own church family.

Youth Group -Our group catering for young people re-started in the autumn. Previously known as the Tuesday Group, open to youngsters between the age of 11-18, the Youth Group, now meets on a Monday at 5.30pm. The evening provides members with opportunities for fun, games and conversation, during which the group considers what it means to be a Christian. Bible passages form the starting point for discussion.

Although our eight house groups meet at varying times, with varying frequency and with each having its own individual 'flavour', they all share in the aim of growing in the Christian faith and living out that faith in everyday life. We thank all of our dedicated house group leaders for their input, enthusiasm and commitment.

Details of all house groups can be found on the website or by contacting: sarahwhiteside@btinternet.com

'In-house' Seminars:

Clearly Christian Thinking -Led by Richard Eves, these seminars were well received by attendees.

'**Just one way?**'- (Being a Christian in a world of options), '**You who?**' (Identity according to the Bible)

'**That's not fair!**' (Justice according to the Bible) '**Being the bad Guys**' (Hostility according to the Bible)

'**On the cross**' (Getting to the heart of the Crucifixion) Further seminars in the series are planned.

'A Better Story' Series- (6 week course)

Led by Richard Eves, this course looked at the Story of the Bible, and compared it to other stories we tell ourselves about life and existence. Although initially planned as an outreach course, there were no attendees from outside our church family and, disappointingly, attendance was low.

'Questioning Evangelism' -This seminar, led by Richard Eves, explored the principles of engaging with others and why asking questions can help us in our understanding of people.

'Honest Evangelism' -Presented by Jubi da Silva, this seminar centred around how we can talk to others about Jesus even when it is tough.

Our thanks go to both Richard and Jubi for their hard work in preparing and leading the seminars.

Eco-church Resources:

'**A Christian Look at the Environment**- a series of five bible studies to help church members think about what a Christian approach to environmental issues might look like. '**The Walter Climate Change Lectures**'- '*a series of lectures offering evidence for climate change and the likely impact it will have on all aspects of our lives*'

Details of these resources/lectures were shared with house group leaders and made available to church members. Our thanks go to Mike Buckland for passing on the details.

Advent Devotions-Our recommended book for 2023 was '**The Advent of Glory**' by R.C. Sproul. 70 copies were purchased in total, compared to 25 copies in 2022. Feedback comments received were favourable. We thank all those involved in promoting, selling and delivering the books.

Sarah Whiteside
Nurturing CoG Lead



Reaching CoG Report for 2023

Overview

A key goal of our life together is reaching our community with the good news of Jesus Christ. As has been mentioned in previous reports, this takes two forms - organised structures and events, and organic relationships leading to welcome and invitation. On the structural side there have been successes and challenges this year. Overall, our Christmas Services were very well attended, and all of these involved - to one degree or another - an invitation to come and find out more about Jesus Christ. On the other hand we have struggled for attendance at all of the invitational courses which we have run.

Organically, there is much to be encouraged by. Many across the year have brought friends or families with them to church, and we can all be praying both for more of these invitational opportunities, and that when people come they are intrigued, and come back to find out more.

There has also been growth in the informal relational networks which support this organic outreach. New networks of Dad's and Young parents in the village have been established, and we pray these will become fruitful over time.

Reaching Children and Young People

Our schools work (regular assemblies at four schools, two RE Inspired teams, regular Services in church from three schools, school governors etc.) Continues to flourish. This is the main opportunity we have of directly engaging primary age children, and we are making good use of it.

Reaching teenagers continues to be a lacuna, although with the reestablishment of our teenagers group in 2024, more opportunities in this area will be forthcoming.

Richard Eves
Reaching CoG Lead



Stewarding CoG - 2023

Our vision is for a parish that obeys God in how we manage the land, buildings and resources that He has entrusted to our care.

Stewarding duties include cleaning, maintenance and land management. In all of these tasks we care for the environment, as befits our Eco Church status.

Regular tasks are supplemented by our annual “all hands on deck” events, the **Spring Clean** and **Leaf Rake**, which in 2023 took place on 18th March and 2nd December respectively.

We apply for **grants from Diocese and Deanery** whenever we can. In 2023, St Peter’s received a contribution from the Deanery Green Fund for LED lighting, as St Mary’s had in 2022. The Church of England is committed to net zero by 2035 and measures every church’s carbon footprint to that end via the Energy Footprint Tool in the parish returns. To help with that, we have been invited to submit plans to the CofE’s Net Zero Carbon Preparation Fund for a heat pump and/or new radiators.

2023 was our fourth consecutive year of running **wildlife surveys** at St Mary’s in June for Churches Count for Nature. We also count for the Butterfly Conservation Society every summer, and several of us assist every month on Wargrave’s **nature reserves** at the Chalk Pit and Mumbery Hill. Following the purchase of a scythe in 2022, we ran a **scything course** in April 2023 for our long grass areas at St Mary’s and St Peter’s.

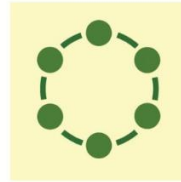
I would like to take this opportunity to **publicly thank** everyone who works so diligently behind the scenes, year in year out, often unseen, managing our churchyards, cemeteries and Mill Green, cleaning our churches and meeting rooms, keeping us stocked with everything we need from loo rolls to candles, looking after the church linen, brass, keys, flowers, clock and flag on St Mary’s tower, and Fairtrade stalls during Lent and Advent. None of our churches could function without you.

I also wish to thank the clergy, churchwardens and members of all CoGs for considering the environment in everything we do. The Eco Church award covers all areas of church life, not just what our church calls Stewarding.

Mike Buckland
Stewarding CoG & Eco Church Lead



Parish of Wargrave
with Knowl Hill



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More information
Sean Sutcliffe
0118 940 1105 | sutcliffefamily1@btinternet.com

Every Sunday at 8am

Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am

1st Sunday - Morning Worship

2nd Sunday - Holy Communion

3rd Sunday - Morning Worship

4th Sunday - Holy Communion

5th Sunday - Parish Holy Communion

Junior Church takes place every week apart from
when we have All Age Services at 9.45am

Baptisms

Take place during the

9.45am services

Please contact the Office to discuss further or
speak to a member of the Clergy Team

Contact the Office

0118 940 2300

office@wargravechurch.org.uk

Monday 9.30am - 12pm

Tuesday - Thursday 9.30am - 1pm

Life Events & Administration

Lucy Bowley

lucy@wargravechurch.org.uk

Communications & Website

Rosalyn Lane Heath

rosalyn@wargravechurch.org.uk