

St Mary & St John the Divine Balham



APCM REPORTS

March 2014

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PCC Report

Members of the PCC for 2013 / 2014 were:-

Revd Wilma Roest (Chair)

Martin Gray (Churchwarden)

Keith Holmes (Churchwarden)

Revd Eileen Serbutt

Revd Iain Faulkner

Nigel Collier

Karen Gray

AJ Haseley

Pauline Lacey

Keith Mitchell

Anzo Francis

Janet Jones

Jamie Morton

Victoria Gregory (Deanery Synod)

Alex Russell (Deanery Synod)

Christopher Serbutt (Deanery Synod)

The PCC was elected at the APCM in April 2013 and has met 6 times. Each member serves for 3 years after which time they can put themselves up for re-election. This means there is a good turn-over of members bringing new ideas, energy and enthusiasm. Meetings take place in the narthex or the balcony room. We start promptly at 7.45 pm and tea, coffee and biscuits keep us going. We always finish by 10.00 pm.

Our agenda covers all aspects of life at St Mary's. Reports are made by the various committees including Building & Finance, Chancel Restoration and Lettings Committee and we are brought up to date with developments at Deanery Synod and Churches Together by our representatives.

This year, as before, there has been much discussion about our church building and maintenance.

Our Safeguarding Officer and Electoral Roll Officer keep us informed of news and changes and it is always good to hear other local news from Mtr. Wilma, particularly in relation to our church school, Trinity St. Mary's.

Jamie Morton
PCC Secretary

Electoral Roll

At the 2013 APCM the Electoral Roll stood at 130 people. This year it stands at 138 people. It is always with great sadness that we say “goodbye” to people who leave our St Mary’s family, but with joy we say “hello” to those who join us.

Please continue to pray for the friends we no longer see. In terms of numbers on the electoral roll (and other ways) we are a growing church, which is very good news.

*Alex Russell
Electoral Roll Officer*

CHURCHWARDEN’S REPORT: FABRIC AND ORNAMENTS 2013

Martin and I have been sharing Churchwarden duties for another year.

We’re a very democratic pair. I let him sit on the Buildings and Finance Committee (which really doesn’t need TWO Churchwardens) and consequently he has to write the annual report. In return he lets me write this report.

This is an official report on the present state of the Fabric and Ornaments of the church. This includes buildings, land, furniture, fabric, candlesticks, church plate etc. There may be some duplication with other reports but this is unavoidable.

I intend to start with some good news. At the time of writing all the toilets are in good working order, most of the light bulbs are glowing brightly, nearly all windows and roofs are intact and the bell rings on demand. We have a new St George’s flag which will be raised at Easter in time for St George’s Day.

Last year I decided I wanted to paint the church front doors. It is over 30 years since I painted them last and I was looking for a little project. My thanks go to the Brownies and Guides for donating all the material. There is a removable panel on the left hand door which can be used for notices without putting pins or blu tack on the door itself.

When Sarah Jackson left us to go to St Mary Magdalene’s she gifted a new pair of glass flagons for wine and water with sterling silver

topped stoppers. These are now in regular use at the discretion of the duty sacristan.

I am pleased to report that the Green Memorial Frontal has been attached to its frame and is ready for use after Easter. This involved a long search for the correct type of pin as we wanted it to be as true to the original as possible (no staples). This turned out to be a half inch, green gimp pin. Well 550 to be precise. As I write, the names have not been added to the reverse yet so there is still time to add names and there will be into the future until such time as the frontal is full. Much of what we do in a building like this involves looking 100 years ahead.

We still have some problems with damp. These are nearly always caused by defective or blocked gutters, hoppers and downpipes. All the damage in the chancel was caused by two major ingresses of water over a period of 100 years because gutters were not maintained. This year we entered into a gutter maintenance contract which clears, cleans and reports yearly. Several 'historic' defects have been highlighted and we will be dealing with these as soon as possible. At the moment, work to the liturgical South Porch (Holy Family Chapel) is in progress. The narthex toilet wall and narthex wall are much improved. We still have a problem with the baptistery dome which was not resolved by the work which was carried out and this has now extended to a new problem with flat roofing (not entirely related) which will be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

There was one new problem in the oasis garden which involved a blocked downpipe at the join with the rain diverter to the garden water storage. This manifests itself on the liturgical North Wall (left hand side of the nave) beside the last window. This wall will take a long time to dry out because of its thickness before we can do anything to redecorate. The blockage has been cleared.

Most important of all, a big THANK YOU to everyone who has done anything at all to make our jobs easier throughout the year. The church revolves around many people doing things without being asked, some large, some very small, all the year round. All contributions of time and talents are gratefully received.

Keith Holmes
Churchwarden

Building and Finance Committee

The Building and Finance Committee is a sub-committee of the PCC which deals with the day to day matters of maintaining the building and finances on behalf of the PCC.

Members of the committee were

Wilma Roest - Vicar

Martin Gray – Churchwarden and Chair

Victoria Gregory – B+F Secretary

Keith Mitchell –Treasurer

Nigel Collier – PCC Member

Janet Jones - PCC member (coopted)

Building

Throughout the year we have continued to monitor our ‘regular’ contracts for gas, electricity, water, telephones, broadband, insurance, fire extinguishers, fire alarms, boilers, sound system, timber floor polishing and lift, seeking to ensure we comply with legislation and keep the building safe for all to use in a cost effective way.

We entered into a contract with gutter maintenance company and they came and inspected then cleaned out our gutters. Something not done for many years. Their work included a full report with photographs identifying some work required in those inaccessible places we cannot get to ourselves. We have met with a local builder and are obtaining quotes for this work before attempting to action the repairs in this coming year (budgets permitting). If we can resolve them then we should be in much better state for another wet winter.

In addition we have a new quinquennial report from our church architect, listing tasks that need to be addressed in and around the building over the next five years.

We have undertaken work of a ‘routine’ nature throughout the year including: monitoring and attempting to solve damp ingress at places within the building. The wet winter has exacerbated our damp issues. Our major project for the year has been tackling the damp to the porch and family chapel which had become significantly worse following the theft of the lead roof. There was no obvious cause of the

damp so we are working with the builders to pick our way through a variety of repairs in the hope that we will finally resolve this damp. At present the bare walls are drying out after years of damp penetration. We are working to replacement of the plaster sometime in the summer.

Unfortunately the Chapel Dome repair undertaken in 2011 did not work. We now have puddles forming internally in addition to signs of high level damp in areas previously not affected. This is now on the list with the builder for costing.

Following the replacement of the two lead roofs stolen in 2011 and replaced early 2012 the damp that had penetrated into the entrance porch and staircase area has now dried out and is ready for repainting.

Rectification of the damp in the narthex toilet seems to have been successful and is now ready for repainting.

The tower staircase walls and ceiling have been re-plastered and is now ready for repainting.

A separate committee is considering the chancel restoration.

Finance

The main audited finance report for the year to 31 December 2013 is available elsewhere.

The finance team is now working well with a dedicated group dealing with weekly matters such as paying bills out and monies into the bank. The treasurer produces a variety of cash flows and forecasts for PCC throughout the year as well as drafting the PCC's annual budget and accounts. For that work we are very grateful.

We reached our cycle with the Diocesan Fairer Share Review this year. Thank you to all who completed the returns. Then review concluded that our contribution should increase significantly for the next three year cycle. We felt that whilst some increase could be justified the extent was excessive and would have been financially crippling to us. We immediately appealed and it was agreed that we would have a modest increase for one year but another review would be needed this year, which we are currently working

through. We remain hopeful that this year assessment will be more appropriate to our financial state.

On more mundane matters we have changed our electricity and gas suppliers in the hope of a better deal.

On behalf of the Building and Finance Committee I wholeheartedly thank you for your continued generosity.

God Bless

Martin Gray
Churchwarden

Lettings report for APCM

We have the following hirers, who are very pleased with their lets:

Caroline Whyman – Qigong/Chigong

Lucy Paul – Yoga

Lucy Quick – Perform Children’s Drama Group

Sonia Forde – Pilates

Stephanie McGreevy – Merton & Wandsworth Asylum Welcome

Phyllis Mills-Barnor –The United Church of the Messiah

Marta Macuejewska – Yoga

We also hire out the occasional let for Festival Chorus Rehearsals, Ravenstone School, Hornsby House.

Our letting income from:

January 2012 – December 2012

£21,588.26

January 2013 – December 2013

£16,763.00

Car parking stayed the same with 6 spaces rented out.

Pat Nevard
Lettings administrator

Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary report

Since my last report my role has changed slightly, I am now an Arch-deacon Spa this is a role i share with another Spa. What this involves is communicating with the Spa's in the Wandsworth and Kingston Deanery discussing any issues or concerns they might have attending Spa council meetings and organising reflective quiet days for the Spas.

I continue to visit Brixton which is now a C cat Prison, It caters for men who are due to be released within the year and the courses are to prepare them for their return into the community I am involved in two such courses (1) The sycamore tree (2) Victim awareness and Restorative Justice

I also continue to visit the men on the ACTS, these are men who are drug addicts, self harm, suicidal or have mental illnesses. having discussions meeting chatting listening to their problems anxieties fears and frustrations and being asked to pray also having debates about religion which can be quite challenging

My role as a SPA continues to be a good listener, showing compassion, providing support and not be judgmental. God our heavenly father is a God of love and forgiveness ,and his love for us regardless of who we are is unconditional and that through prayer he will give us the strength and support that we need in times of difficulty .

Daphne Clarke
SPA

Director of Music – Choir & Organ

The choir has spent much of the last year learning new music, especially compositions (some my own) which are suited to smaller choirs. I think we are now in a stronger position regarding the range of music that we know.

I'd like to be able to say that the choir has grown in size over the last year, but I can't because it hasn't! We occasionally take on new members, but often find that they subsequently move away from the parish or drift away for other personal reasons, leaving the same dedicated band of singers behind. Being in the choir is certainly a commitment, but it doesn't have to be a week-by-week commitment – I'm happy to hear from anyone who is interested in singing in the choir, whether they want to do so every week or more intermittently. So come and talk to me, and I'm sure we can work something out. We certainly do need to build for the future: if current members started 'retiring', we could quickly find ourselves with not much choir left! So if music in St Mary's matters to you, why leave it to someone else?

Unlike the choir, whose behaviour is of course impeccable, the organ has misbehaved a lot over the last year, cutting out at some crucial moments. After very many visits from the engineers, it appears to be stable again...finally! But it is quite an elderly digital (electronic) instrument, and they don't last all that long before they become overtaken by technology and are not cost-effective to maintain.

With this in mind, the PCC have considered what we might do over the next few years, to be in a position to replace the current instrument. I'm glad to say that they have expressed the aspiration to acquire a pipe organ, instead of another digital instrument, and to start to put some money aside towards this. Though more expensive in the short term, pipe organs provide better value over their lifetime (up to 100 years between major restorations).

We are on the look-out for a suitable instrument to acquire (most likely from a church that is closing or no longer wants to maintain its pipe organ, as this is a far more cost-effective approach than building a pipe organ from scratch). There's a long way to go, but I'm pleased that the PCC has taken the long-term view and I look forward to helping get the project off the ground at some point in the not too distant future.

David Fawcett
Director of Music

Tooting Deanery Synod 2013-2014

St Mary's lay member representatives for Tooting Deanery Synod are Alex Russell, Chris Serbutt and Victoria Gregory. This APCM marks the end of a three year term.

Deanery Synods are the grouping of neighbouring parishes and chaplaincies within a diocese. Tooting Deanery, of which St. Mary's is a member, comprises 11 parishes and three chaplaincies roughly extending from Clapham South to Tooting Broadway and Furzedown. Its aims are to work together, to provide support to one another and to keep the member parishes and chaplaincies aware of what is happening in the wider local community. Whilst their role may have been rather downplayed in the past, the increasingly difficult economic climate means that the work of Deanery Synods is gradually being pushed to the fore.

Tooting Deanery Synod meets three times a year, at various churches within our Deanery, historically on Tuesday evenings, but now being trialled on different days of the week. These meetings are not just about business but generally also have a theme, with guest speakers. One of last year's highlights was having four of the SPAs in our Deanery talk to us about their far-ranging and very different ministries, what made them want to become a SPA in the first place and what keeps them wanting to continue.

The last meeting, in March, was an Open Evening to which everyone in our Deanery, whether a Synod member or not, was invited. Along with special guest Adrian Greenwood, the lay chair of Diocesan Synod, the evening was spent in explaining what Deanery Synod does, what it has the potential to do and how it fits in with the structure of the decision making process of the Church of England. There was also a quiz and slogan writing competition!

The next Deanery Synod event will be on Sunday June 15 at 16.45 at St. Mary's. This will be a service of commitment and dedication for all new Deanery Synod members, but everyone is invited to come and support them.

If you have any questions about our Deanery, or about Deanery Synod in general, please speak to Mtr Wilma, our Area Dean, or Chris Serbutt, our Deanery Synod lay chair.

*Christopher Serbutt
Deanery Synod representative*

Sacristans' Report

This year the team (Alan, Chris, Jamie, Alex and me) has continued unchanged. Along with the whole church we mourn the loss of Sarah who gave us so much help, not just with the laundry, but also with her unfailing love, cheerfulness and kindness. We thank Diane and Keith for doing such sterling work laundering the cumbersome large altar cloths.

It was wonderful to receive the new green Memorial Frontal and Superfrontal from Vanpoules who did a magnificent job of interpreting our wishes. Once again we have Keith and Diane to thank for putting the frontal back on the old frame and repairing the broken fastener on the altar itself which was damaging all the superfrontals. Work is continuing on embroidering the names for the back of the frontal but will take some time as each letter takes at least an hour to sew. However we shall start using the frontal after Easter. Once the names are complete and attached we will display the back to the congregation.

*Penny Holloway
Sacristan*

around the table

Around The Table is a faith discussion group which meets every second Wednesday evening at St. Mary's, relaunching itself last year to become a group that is open to everyone. We cover a wide range of faith issues, with some theology as well, and how that can be applied to our everyday living. Sessions last year included an examination of Paul's letter to Philemon and a look at the question of why we need four Gospels. Everything is done in an open and confidential environment in which all questions and all opinions are welcome so that we can all learn together. A list of dates and future topics is on the notice board. The evening concludes with Compline, and there are always refreshments! You don't have to sign up for any of the sessions, just turn up. And more importantly you don't need to have any theological knowledge to be able to attend – just a desire to share and learn.

I would like to thank Mtr. Wilma and Fr. Iain for their support.

Christopher Serbutt

Saturday Morning

Did you know that the church is open every Saturday morning even when there is no specific event mentioned in the pew sheet? If you want to pop in just to say hello, have a cup of coffee or just spend a few moments in peace and quiet, then everyone is most welcome. If you would like to share in morning prayer, then that takes place at 9.30am in the Holy Family Chapel.

Safeguarding report

I am very pleased to report we have had no issues / concerns in relation to Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults to deal with.

Following on from our first Self Audit 2012-2013, Mtr. Wilma, Martin, Keith and myself, Elaine completed the 2013-2014 Audit on Saturday 15th March. The process was much easier this year as we used our Action Plan and outcomes from our previous audit as a guide, and you will be please to know we have met all our target dates, and have achieved much higher scores on the questionnaire issued by the Diocese.

The findings and results from this year's Audit were discussed at PCC on 19th March 2014 for acceptance and the Safeguarding Action Plan for the following year was agreed, prior to returning the documents to the Diocese. We will be concentrating on Risk Assessments for the recently formed groups within the church.

Changes to Disclosure and Barring Service:

A new Single Certificate is being issued following all processed applications. The Diocese does not receive a copy of the Disclosure Certificate, which means the PSO now becomes the Safeguarder and Verifier, must see the document and send a written report to the Diocese indicating our approval for the applicant to work in the position applied for.

Since our last report we have processed two applications, the last one was forwarded on the 4th March.

Information on changes to the above and the 10 Steps Procedure for All Recruitment can be found in the Safe Church Manual.

Safeguarding Training Sessions

Mtr. Wilma, Revd Eileen, Martin, Keith, Christopher and Elaine have all attended courses recently applicable to our roles.

Finally, our 'heartfelt thanks' go to all involved in co-ordinating and leading the various groups within the church, too many to list. It is with your continued support, loyalty and commitment we are able to provide a safe environment working under the umbrella of 'Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults'.

*Elaine Joseph
Suzanne Hinkson- Marks
Parish Safeguarding Office*

5th Balham Brownies & Guides Annual Report 2013

I am pleased to report that both units continue to flourish with 24 Brownies and 24 Guides, and a waiting list, so Friday nights can be very hectic.

The Brownies have worked on badges including Brownie Traditions, communication, Artist and Science Investigator. Again, we have hosted the District Brownie Adventure Day themed on the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. This year (2014) we celebrate 100 years of Brownies. Already 8 members of 5th Balham have attended a special weekend at Butlins in Bognor with Brownies from all over our Region. We are looking forward to having our 100th Birthday Party in the summer.

This year the Brownies and Guides won the District Swimming Gala at Balham Leisure Centre.

Jointly, the girls have continued to do secret cleans of the church including polishing the bird, delivered Christian Aid envelopes and taken part in the very important Remembrance Service.

Two members of 5th Balham, Alex and Sophie, achieve Jack Petchey awards for service and were presented with their medals at the Purcell Rooms on the Southbank. To spend their Jack Petchey money, during the summer term we had a Sports evening with events including wellie throwing and water races and finished with ice creams which were enjoyed by all. In January all the girls enjoyed a Line and International Dance Evening.

The Guides have followed a very varied programme. Apart from knitting, pancake making, lighting fires and toasting marshmallows they have also achieved their Cook's Confectionary and Culture badges.

Sadly, we had to say goodbye to Ella Higgs at Christmas after 12 years loyal service as Brownie, Guide and Young Leader as she prepared to go to Uni.

Finally a big thank you to my 3 Young Leaders, my Assistant Guiders (Jo, Karen and Helen), my parent and church volunteers and Keith my facilitator.

JUNIOR CHURCH

Junior Church continues to educate the younger members of our congregation in a way that is appropriate to their ages and abilities, which is vast.

Over the last 12 months a lot of time and effort has been put into planning ahead for the Junior Church programme. We have also continued to make the environment more identifiable for the children attending Junior Church. Displays of the children's work on the walls of the room and the continued use of a holy table with a cross, bible and the junior church candle all give the room a distinct Junior Church feel.

A real blessing over the last year has been the growth in the number of children attending Junior Church. Given the growth in number and age range in Junior Church, it may be that we have to seriously consider splitting the teaching into two groups at some point in the coming year, so that we can continue to educate and engage our young people in an effective manner.

The leaders and helpers do an amazing job both planning and delivering the sessions each week. A huge thank you must go to all who help in any way with Junior Church.

As Junior Church grows in number and in faith we will need to continue looking for and asking the help of members of the congregation. If you feel that you would like to help lead or assist at Junior Church then please speak to one of the leaders.

Fr. Iain

Serving Team Report

For those who may be unsure about what the servers do, as servers we seek to assist the clergy in presenting and offering the worship of Almighty God and in so doing, we aim to enable the congregation to share in the liturgy and we aspire to do so with dignity, reverence and respect.

I am very pleased to be able to say that we have been joined by 2 new junior members this year, namely Sammy-Jayne and Harvey who are rapidly becoming stalwarts of the team. However even with these additional members, it continues to be challenging on occasion to put together a full serving team for every principal service.

It is an enormous privilege to be able to serve at the altar and whilst the ministry of servers is a quiet one and often goes unnoticed, it makes a significant contribution to worship. If you have never previously served at St Mary's but would like to or even if you would simply like to explore what this essential role in the service of God involves, please do not hesitate to speak to me after any 10.30 Sunday service.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the serving team for their continued support and dedicated service as well as for their flexibility and willingness to step in at the last minute whilst we are relatively few in numbers, particularly during Holy Week this year.

*Jamie Morton
Head Server*

STEWARDS REPORT

During the last year we have had 12 stalwart stewards on our rota and as a result two of us have been available for the majority of services. However we are always ready to welcome anyone who would like to join us. At present this involves being on duty once in 5 or 6 weeks.

Pat, has continued to assemble the hymn books, pew sheets and order of service booklets each Saturday in preparation for the Sunday morning service. Thank you again Pat.

We are pleased to say that Graeme is joining us again after his 'sabbatical year'.

The crèche area, which we arrange before the Sunday morning service, has become even more fully stocked with toys and books during the year. We would like to thank the Mums and Dads and Carers who tidy up after the service.

Gillian Bannerjee

Golden Years

Golden Years has met regularly on the fourth Wednesday of each month after the 12.30 Eucharist. We have enjoyed talks on the countries of our birth, on music with David Fawcett who told us about his composing, playing and conducting, on holidays, complete with fascinating pictures; we have relaxing afternoons of Scrabble, Chinese Chequers and chat, and, most recently, exotic dancing in which everyone was a participant!

We also enjoyed a Christmas lunch and have already started contributing to another one this year. Many thanks go to all who have lead talks and discussions, to those who have prepared food and to everyone for coming and helping to make the group so lively and interesting. Special thanks to David and our Egyptian dance teacher for giving of their valuable time to us.

N.B. Golden Years is for ALL with experience and time to spend with like-minded people. Age is no barrier!

*Daphne Clarke
The Revd Eileen Serbutt*

The website report for this year's APCM

Last year saw the website undergo a major redesign, with the aim of helping the church to better communicate information to the congregation, parish and wider local community. Since its launch in October 2012, the website has been continuously updated, with 25 notices being posted by the vicar since launch. The home page also shows the latest updates from the @balhamvicar twitter account and the St Mary's Facebook group, giving visitors a great feel for the church's vibrant community.

The new website is hosted through Linode.com, who have so far been extremely reliable. At the time of writing, the website had been live for 303 days since the last known incident. Linode have even given the church website an upgrade to a plan that allows us to expand the website even further in the coming months and years at no extra cost.

The room hire booking system continues to be used to manage the church's internal and external bookings. A few minor issues with the new system have arisen in the last year, as is to be expected with any new system, but they have all been addressed and fixed accordingly. In the last 12 months, www.stmarybalham.org.uk has had around 500 unique visitors a month, up from 350 last year. Most visitors to the website are interested in the "What's On" and "Contact Us" pages. In the future we hope to expand the website with more information and pictures. If you want to make a contribution to the website, or if you have any comments or questions, please talk to Martin or Wilma, or email me at webmaster@stmarybalham.org.uk.

Charles Gray

St Mary's Film Club

The Film Club again met monthly throughout the autumn and winter, to watch a wide range of recent and older films. In January, members went to the Clapham Picture House together, to see “Mandela – The Long Walk to Freedom”.

(P.S. Note for annual accounts: so far, from October 2013 to March 2014, the Film Club has paid £155.50 into church funds, with contributions from the April and May meetings (anticipated £50) to be added into our annual total.

Sally Nicholls

Mary's Little Lambs

St Mary's parent and toddler group, meeting on Wednesday morning, 10—11.30, continues to thrive.

Mary's Little Lambs is run by the parents, with support from Moira and Mtr Wilma. On average 15-20 'Little Lambs' attend each week with their mum, dad or carer. The children play, take part in craft activities, and there is always a time for story and song. And the adults chat a lot!

Resources from the church crèche area are used and donations of unwanted toys have been much welcomed.

All baptism families are given an invite to Mary's Little Lambs and new members are always welcome.

Mary's Crafty Lambs

Mary's Crafty Lambs is a craft group which takes place every second Saturday of the month at St. Mary's. It is ostensibly for children aged between 5 and 11, although I think the parents and adults who have attended enjoy it just as much – if not more! We make all sorts of things from phenakistoscopes to model churches, and for last year's Harvest Festival we even decorated the display board in the Children's Chapel. If you enjoy making craft then, whatever age you are, why not come along? There is no need to book ahead and everybody is always welcome. I can guarantee you will be able to make the craft – because it has to be something I am able to make myself!

I would like to thank Elaine for providing us with much of the material that we use and for doing such a fantastic session making puppets (out of plastic milk bottles!) and Janet (J) for providing all the juice and biscuits.

Christopher Serbutt

Space Academy

Space Academy was the holiday club which took place last year on the first three Saturdays in August for children aged between 5 and 11. It took as its theme the story of Daniel giving it a slightly astronomical twist – you really had to be there! We made craft, sang songs, played games and learnt how to grow our faith through the actions of the characters in the story of Daniel. And had plenty of fun together!

It was so successful, that we are doing it again this year, (in August) and we will be looking at Jesus' encounters with various people in Matthew's Gospel with the added strand of mad inventions. All children are welcome to attend, whether or not you go to St. Mary's and all adults are invited to help. Further information will be available shortly, so keep an eye out on the pewsheet and the notice board.

There are so many people to thank for last year that I will leave someone out if I start to make a list – so thank you all very much.

Christopher Serbutt

Churches Together in Balham and Upper Tooting (CTBUT)

Jesus prayed "that all may be one" and yet often to the outsider it may seem that we are divided as Christians. One of the roles of Churches Together is that of bridging the gap, of encouraging us to get involved in presenting a more united Christian Church, which doesn't mean uniformity, but unity in diversity, working in harmony. During the year 2013-14 CTBUT has organised several joint activities such as services were during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and One World Week, and the Good Friday Procession of Witness which also takes in non-member. It has been the custom for CTBUT to organise joint Lent groups alternate years so that church members can get to know and share with people from denominations other than their own and, although there has not been one over the past couple of years, planning has begun to resume this practice next year. Through CTBUT, events in the various churches are advertised so that people can participate. This year we have supported events such as the African Children's Choir and regular contributions to charities are made.

CTBUT has a link with BATCA which enables us to be involved in activities within the wider community, and also has a link with the Balham Town Centre Partnership through Mtr Wilma.

In order for Churches Together to remain relevant to our community it is important that church members get involved. Fresh ideas and enthusiasm are welcome! Involvement can be as an elected representative at meetings (held quarterly) and/or by taking part in the various activities which are organised.

Each member church may have at least 2 representatives on the "committee" plus their clergy or ministers.

As Christians it is important that we be seen by the community to be working collaboratively wherever possible rather than always working and worshipping in isolation.

Moiria Hodgson

Prayer group

In early 2013 a handful of us at St Mary's, all women, across a wide range of ages, came together with a desire for support and prayer and an openness as to how that might take shape. What has emerged for us is a group which meets roughly monthly, for a couple of hours on a weekday evening, rotating around each other's homes. There is no leader - the person whose home it is keeps an eye on the time. We dedicate time at the end of our meeting to praying together, and occasionally we have chosen a topic for discussion (such as prayer, our understanding of death). But what has become most important for each of us is taking it in turns to share, uninterrupted, what is going on in our lives. Those of us who were newer to St Mary's have a sense of belonging in the church that we didn't have before, and we all value having members of the congregation who know us more deeply than is possible over coffee after church.

Whilst we are not looking to expand our group, we value immensely what we have and would be very happy to talk further with anyone who might be interested in being part of a similar group - which could just as easily meet fortnightly, or at church, or at the weekend - as works for the individuals concerned.

Susanna Long

2013 Data for Occasional Offices

Baptisms	21
Admission to Holy Communion	0
Confirmation	3
Marriages	2
Funerals	15 of which 5 in church

Vicar's Report to the APCM 2014

What does it mean to be church? I'm sure you all know the answer: it's the people, not the building. That is very true. What makes St Mary's is the rich variety of people whom come together week by week to worship together, to share, to learn, to receive and to share.

We are a blessed people here in Balham and there is much to be grateful for. Despite gloomy news items on national decline in church attendance, we hold our own and have even seen signs of growth during 2013.

I would like to acknowledge the debt of gratitude we owe to each other:

- to those who beautify our worship – our choir, organists and servers, our sacristans, our stewards, our flower arrangers, our church cleaners;
- to those who work with our children and young people, through Junior Church, Junior Choir, Crafty Lambs and Mary's Little Lambs;
- to the countless helpers who deliver postcards at Easter and Christmas; to the concert helpers;
- to our Parochial Church Council who share decision-making on behalf of St Mary's, to Jamie our Secretary and those who have helped with PCC minutes.

- to the finance team, led by Keith, for ensuring we live within our means.
- to Pat, our lettings administrator, who ensures all our lets pay on time and are happy with the space they use, and who in addition to all that does most of the church's photocopying;

All of these people are volunteers.

St Mary's employs 2 people. They deserve our thanks for what they give to the Parish and for going way beyond their contractual obligations:

- to David, who provides wonderful leadership in music and who tirelessly gives of himself so that we have a choir which not only sings well, but knows that it is valued. We are also blessed to have been able to get to know David, the composer, with wonderful, appropriate compositions, some specially for St Mary's.
- to Nicky, who keeps the public parts of this church which are used by many looking spotless;

My work as Vicar is shared with all of you, but your two Churchwardens share more than most of the statutory business.

- Martin and Keith have given generously of themselves over the past year. Often their work is unseen and behind the scenes (do you know who changes the light bulbs?). Usually their work is tedious and unexciting – like wrestling with architects and builders, but St Mary's could not exist without the work they do. We are so fortunate that they have now served this church for a number of years, providing continuity and lots of wisdom.
- May I also thank Karen and Diane for their support to their husbands as they fulfil the calling of Churchwarden and for their friendship.
- Thanks also to the Deputy Churchwardens, Daphne and Diane, who assist our Wardens.

My work as Vicar and Priest is also shared with the Ministry Team:

- Eileen and Bill provide wonderful support with services and also share their wisdom. Thank you both for continuing to share your ministry with us.
- Iain, our non stipendiary curate, who gives a lot of time and energy to us (in addition to having a challenging fulltime job) and who continues to grow and develop in ministry.
- Susanne who as our licensed reader preaches and inspires but also takes a lead on Fairtrade, and maintains links with various groups outside church.
- Daphne who takes pastoral care from Balham to people at Brixton Prison, as well as caring for many of us
- Chris who edits the pew sheet, takes charge the holiday club and Around the Table and a host of unseen jobs.

Endings and beginnings

It is always hard to say farewell to people, and this past year has been no different. Two of our long standing members passed away, amongst whom Sarah Collier, our former PCC Secretary.

We have also been able to welcome new people, especially young families, through Mary's Little Lambs and local links. We pray that those who have started coming to church will soon feel at home here and become part of the family that is St Mary's.

Vision—MAP

As a church it is important that we have a vision for mission: what do we want to look for, where do we want to go, what does God want us to do in the church and in our local area. The PCC have worked on a three year Mission Action Plan, of which the first year was completed in 2013. Mission for us is about growth, both numerical and spiritual, and about lay empowerment, helping all God's people to fulfil their potential.

TSM

We continue to value our strong links with Trinity St Mary's. The Foundation Governors - Penny Holloway, Eileen Serbutt, Nick Teasdale, Sharon Teasdale, David Fawcett, Robert Stevenson, Suzanne Hinkson-Marks and I - serve on the school's Governing Body but are also actively involved in what goes on in school. I continue to take weekly assemblies and RE lessons throughout the school.

Balham links

As a church we have a privileged position in the local community. On your behalf I am a member of the Balham Town Centre Partnership, meet regularly with other schools (for assemblies, RE and concert), work with clergy and members of local churches (e.g. Holiday @ Home), and local community groups. It is my hope that our church is at the heart of our local community.

Additional roles

As well as your parish priest and vicar I continue to serve as Area Dean, as a member of Diocesan Synod and of Bishop's Council, as acting chair of the diocesan Liturgical Committee (for 2013 only) and also on Wandsworth SACRE.

Wherever I go, I take St Mary's with me, and it is wonderful to hear people speak very positively about the Church on the High Road.

We, the family of St Mary's Church Balham - Parish Church and Community - enter the next twelve months in joyful expectation. May God bless us all.

Mtr Wilma

The Parish of St Mary and St John the Divine, Balham

**St Mary's Church
is a community of Christian people
who embrace the commandments
to love God
and to love one another.**

We aim to be

- an inclusive church that welcomes diversity
- a thinking church where questions can be asked
- a living and growing church where change can happen

Reaffirmed by PCC in March 2013