

Church Committee Officer's Reports

Churchwardens' Property Report for 2019

As Churchwardens we are responsible for the maintenance of the "Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of St Mary's. We could not do this without the help of the many volunteers who give so much time to the church. We are immensely grateful to those who work behind the scenes to look after the church. In particular, we would like to thank those who clean the church, the sacristans, those who launder linen, vergers, flower arrangers and the gardening team. We would also like to thank all those who help from week to week with enabling worship to take place. Those who are sidesmen, communion assistants, who take the offertory, lead prayers, read, vergers... The list is endless and all roles, 'front of house' or behind the scenes, contribute hugely to the life and ministry of St Marys.

Church

Following the Quinquennial survey issued in April 2017, the church wardens instructed our architect Daniel Benson of Ablett Architects to draw up a specification for the work needed to the outside of the church. Some of this work was urgent but it was decided also to do other work, which would be needed in the next few years at the same time because it is more efficient to do this when contractors are on site and the scaffolding up.

The work included repairs to parts of the stonework and the leaded window on the north side of the bell ringing chamber in the tower, the investigation of damp and the repair of the churchyard walls on the east side.

Most of the work was like for like repairs which were approved by the Archdeacon but full faculty approval from the Chancellor of the Diocese was required for the repairs to the wall to the east of the chancel and the digging of a French drain next to the vestry toilet. This was because of the concern that burials in the churchyard might be disturbed by the work. The faculty was granted on 19th July 2019. The work was put out to tender and Universal Stone were appointed as contractors. Work began on 5th August 2019.

The following areas of work are of particular interest:

- The leaded window on the northside of bell tower at the level of the bellringing room needed to be taken out and repaired. The ferramenta, i.e. the metal work which supports the leaded lights, were badly corroded and missing in places. The lead and glass have been replaced where necessary. This work was done by Chapel Studios in their workshop. The stonework of a louvred window in the bell tower had cracked and was replaced.
- The stonework at the south east corner of the chancel was badly eroded. It was decided not to replace the corner stone with a carved figure similar to the carvings at the other corners of the church at a similar level. This would have been expensive and there was no record of what the original carving would have looked like. It is also at the back of the church which is not generally noticed by many people visiting. Consequently it has been replaced with a piece of shaped stone as shown by these photos.



Damp in south west corner of the church

The plaster on the inside of the church in the south west corner of the gallery and also in the south porch has been peeling because of damp for some time. We had not been able to find the cause of this damp. With the erection of the scaffolding, it was possible to examine the walls more closely. It was discovered that the cement holding the flints was crumbling on the facing of the parapet walls in this area and the other side of these walls needed repointing and sealing.

The flints and cement facing of the parapet walls above the windows in this photograph have all been removed and the facing reconstructed with the addition of extra flints. The brick wall on the other side of the parapet has also been repointed and the lead flashing replaced. It is hoped that the cause of the damp has now been found and that the internal walls will now dry out. There has been a recent



setback because the gully at the top of this corner was found to be blocked but this has been promptly cleared.

Survey of drainage

A survey of the drains around the church has been carried out using cameras where necessary to determine blockages and the location of the rainwater soakaways and the foul water drains. Most of the foul water drains for the toilet and sinks in the vestries were found to be in reasonable condition and some blockages have been cleared.

Of particular concern are the soakaways for rainwater, all of which are either inadequately sized or partially silted or both. The rainwater on the north side of the church drains into two soakaway chambers which quickly filled during testing and are not big enough to cope with the amount of run off during heavy rainstorms. One of these is partially silted. Although the systems on the north side of the

church could be improved, they have not been causing problems to the church building because the land slopes away from the church.

The drainage to the south and east of the church is of much more concern. It has not been possible to find the chambers for the soakaways and these are not functioning at all. Water coming down the drainpipe outside the vestry door is flooding down the path leading to Arthur Road. The drainage on the east side of the church is not being carried away and so is saturating the ground here. Some major work is needed to ensure that this rainwater drains away from the church. Our architect has presented a number of possible solutions and we will need some further advice on the most cost-effective way of solving this problem. This will not be easy because of the presence of trees and graves.

Damp in vestry toilet

The level of the clergy vestry and toilet is lower than the ground outside and the walls on the east side have been damp for many years. Following the investigation of the drainage system, it is clear that the damp is probably caused by the lack of adequate drainage for the rainwater coming down from the roof of the church. As noted above we are seeking further advice on how to solve this.

Boundary wall repairs

The boundary wall to the east of the chancel had cracked, probably due to the badger activity. The wall has now been reinforced and the mortar reinstated on both sides.

The wall in the north east part of the churchyard had partially collapsed. It has been rebuilt using both bricks recovered nearby and new bricks. Care has been taken to build the top of the wall to match the capping. Vegetation growing over these walls and over the graves in front of the wall has been removed to allow proper access for the repair and we need to keep this under control to protect the wall.



Other minor works have been done to make the flat roofs over the vestry, the organ blower room and the baptistry watertight, and rainwater gullies and pipes have been repaired.

Chancel carpet: An application has been made for a faculty so that the worn carpet in the choir stalls can be replaced. This has been delayed because the underlying floor has been found to be damp and we are now assessing how best to deal with this.

The clock in the tower had not been working for many months. After detailed investigation, a new part has been manufactured for the mechanism and the clock is now working.

A new freestanding mahogany bookcase was purchased for the Warrior chapel to hold the books used by the clergy for services.

Improvements to sound system: We are grateful to Richard Poulter and Richard Pelly for their work in arranging the improvements to the sound system. This has been completed with new microphones and speakers behind the high altar. There has been a great improvement in the quality of the sound in the church. Speakers in Fellowship House allow services to be relay to the creche. A media player has been fitted and there is now Wi-Fi in the Garden Hall and in the church.

Disability access: The hearing loop has been repaired as part of the improvements to the sound system. We are looking at ways to provide better seating for those not able to use the pews. The chairs at the front do not allow easy sight of the preacher.

Churchyard

The gardening volunteers, under the leadership of Allan Duncan, continue to work tirelessly to maintain the churchyard as a place of quiet contemplation, and we are grateful for all they do. Their report is later in this review.

The very large branch of a yew tree on the north side of the church which was brought down by the strong winds has been cleared and there is no apparent damage to the gravestones. The tree surgeons have recommended that the crown of the remainder of the tree be reduced.

The stone bollard and surrounding flagstones and tarmac outside the west door were damaged in May. Heavy lifting equipment was needed to lift the stone bollard back into position and the cost has been covered by the insurers of the delivery van responsible.

We are very grateful to Selina and George Master for managing a project to repair the five listed monuments in the churchyard which are on the heritage 'at risk' register. Work has now focused on the Bazelgette monument and it is hoped that urgent repairs can be commissioned before the end of the year.

Parish Office

This continues to be a hub of activity. We are most grateful to Jane Johnston, our Parish Operations Manager, for managing the office and the many property issues which arise, dealing with the administration for weddings and funerals, and much more. A big thank you to Camilla Peters who has taken over the management of the hall bookings. Thank you also to Sam Pedder who is continuing to help with the bookings of the regular hirers.

Fellowship House

Fellowship House is used from Monday morning until Friday lunchtime by Oak Tree Pre-School Nursery and this provides a very useful contribution to our income of over £37,000 a year. The meeting room is available for use by the church at these times and has been a useful asset. We have found that it is a much better place than the Garden Hall for smaller meetings, such as the church committee.

The five yearly electrical inspection required some work to improve the electrical installation in the hall and this work has now been done. Ken Cooper has repainted the upper part of the walls in the main room, following the removal of all the Blutak which had been left for several years.

The roof had been leaking in heavy rain. Total Roofing has cleaned moss off the roof where it was particularly dense, replaced some cracked tiles and cleaned out the valleys and gutters. It is hoped that this will solve the problem for the time being.

Garden Hall

The Garden Hall continues to be popular for both regular and occasional bookings. The floor has been sanded and re-varnished in August. It is now being re-lacquered every six months in order to keep it in better condition.

The oven and cooker hood are to be replaced shortly and it is planned to improve the other fittings in the kitchen. The large glass sliding door remains unusable and a lock has been fitted so that it cannot be opened. There is a danger that it could become stuck in the open position. When finances permit, we are advised that the insertion of top fixed panels with large bifold doors beneath would provide the best solution but other options will be considered in consultation with our architect.

Alison Neilson and Nick Long

Treasurer's Report

The church has made a deficit of £37,000 on its continuing activities during 2019, before account is taken of a generous legacy of almost £135,000 from the late Colin McKerrow. This is shown by the following summary of the unrestricted income and expenditure:

	2019	2018
	£'000	£'000
Income		
Congregational Giving	273	280
Legacies	135	10
Hall hire	98	110
Tennis parking	47	42
Other income	8	12
	561	454
Expenditure		
Parish Support Fund	241	235
Ministry in the parish	154	137
Charitable giving	25	22
Property costs	43	71
	463	465
Surplus/deficit	98	-11

The legacy masks what would otherwise have been a very challenging financial position, because the church is operating with a significant structural deficit, with expenditure being significantly more than income. The Church Committee in 2018 had pledged to increase the 2019 contribution to the Diocesan Parish Support Fund to £240,645, in the expectation that the Stewardship appeal in the autumn of 2018 would result in an increase in income. As Jane Moss explains in her report, this did not happen.

As shown above, our congregational income and hall hire income is lower than in 2018. There appears to have been a reduction in one off evening hiring of the Garden Hall – however, children's parties continue to be booked as much as before. The car parking for the tennis was particularly successful this year – with additional income coming in from the opening of the new Court One. A total of £47,140 was received (2018 £41,628)

Expenditure overall is about the same as for 2018. The cost of the children's ministry has gone back to its previous level now that Catherine Linsley is back from maternity leave, and we benefitted from an accounting adjustment from previous year's charges by the parish. We also received some donations specifically to support the cost of ministry of Nils Bersweden.

St Mary's is very fortunate to have the Development Fund available for funding expenditure which includes major repairs and other improvements and development initiatives. Some £120,000 has been spent from this fund in 2019 to undertake essential repairs and maintenance identified by the recent Quinquennial survey. The improvements to the sound system in the church costing £12,546 were also funded from the Development Fund. We are fortunate still to have funds in this reserve held for works to the building following a generous legacy of £250,000 received for this purpose during 2019 from the late Charles Eglington. Following the receipt of this legacy and another generous donation specifically towards the costs of the recent works, the balance on the Development Fund stands at £492,629 at the end of 2019.

In autumn 2019 the Church Committee approved the budget for 2020. They reluctantly decided that the contribution to the Diocesan Parish Support Fund needed to be reduced to £200,000 for 2020 and, even at this level, the operational deficit for 2020 was expected when the budget was approved to be around £26,000. In reaching this decision, the Church Committee had reduced the other categories of

expenditure as far as possible and it was hoping that in practice other income, including that from giving, would mean that by the end of 2020 there would not be a deficit.

The reality now that the Church has had to close in March 2020 is that the deficit in 2020 will be substantially greater than this. Although it is hoped that regular giving will largely be maintained, other forms of giving as well as hall hires will be reduced and nothing will be received in relation to Tennis Fortnight. Modest reductions in expenditure will be possible, but not on the same scale.

Kezia York

Church Committee Secretary's Report

The Church Committee have met five times since the last ACM. One of these meetings was the open Church Committee meeting to discuss the Mission Action Plan for St Mary's with the wider congregation. Due to the current coronavirus lockdown, the Church Committee meeting scheduled for March 2020 could not take place and some reports are being circulated by email.

This year the Church Committee has discussed the following topics:

- Quinquennial repairs to the church
- Mission Action Plan
- The Parish Support Fund pledge
- Church Finances, the budget for 2020, reserves and legacies policies
- Parking in the Churchyard
- Part time verger role
- Governance and running of the ACM
- Safeguarding
- Health and safety
- Property
- Patronal Festival, Harvest barn dance and other social activities
- Monuments in the Churchyard

Laura Campbell

Electoral Roll Report

St Mary's Electoral Roll Annual Revision 2020

The new total number of people on the Roll is 507 (which comes from the 2019 figure of 482 plus 45 additions less 20 deletions ie a net increase of 25).

Safeguarding Report

DBS process:

The aim for this year was to have a better follow up on DBS applications since too many applications started but never finished. Due to the lack of reporting systems those applications were difficult to track as the DBS agency tool does not register those applications. Nils, Mandy and Pauline met regularly in the first half of the year, to embed the entire DBS process within the churchsuite. This went live in summer 2019 and has resulted in a transparent workflow for the DBS process. 23 new DBS applications were successfully issued and registered in churchsuite.

The decision was made that a DBS process must always be initiated through churchsuite, also when a volunteer isn't a worshipping member of the congregation.

In respect to our voluntary workers: safeguarding training, attendance registration and risk assessments were other areas that needed improvement. We held a successful Safeguarding Training, hosted by the Diocese, on 13th November 2019. Out of 80 DBS approved volunteers 32 volunteers attended training. The Diocese Safeguarding Training Team has been invited again to host training late spring/early summer 2020, however at the moment of writing this date is uncertain due to the COVID19 situation.

All PCC members need to be DBS checked as Safeguarding ultimately is the responsibility of the PCC. We decided to commence this in the week of 4th April 2020, when elections/ PCC meeting has taken place. Again, at the moment of writing this needs to be reviewed in light of the COVID19 situation.

Safeguarding Incidents and Past Cases Review:

During 2019, four safeguarding concerns were reported. One of which related to the fencing/hedging of the field. This was taken up in relevant Activity Risk Assessments and presented to the Committee for a decision. The three other cases have been offered pastoral support and reported to the Diocese Safeguarding Team or relevant authorities.

In December 2019 we received a request from the Diocese for a past cases review (PCR2) for all past and ongoing cases from 2007, to be submitted by 14th February 2020 (and reported on next year).

Other safeguarding related development throughout 2019:

In January our website was updated with new safeguarding content such as newly formatted safeguarding forms and templates. New regulations from the Diocese in November saw another update to display our safeguarding contact details on the opening page of our website.

In March we submitted our annual safeguarding audit for 2018 to the Diocese.

April saw the new Diocesan Serious Incidents Reporting Resolution pass our PCC approval.

Since May 2019 Mandy, Nils, Yunghee, Catherine and Pauline meet every six weeks at the Rectory to discuss safeguarding matters. In January 2019 pastoral team meetings ceased to exist and safeguarding concerns are now dealt with during these regular safeguarding meetings.

In June Tina Harvey was appointed Deputy Safeguarding Officer to mitigate any risk with Pauline being the only PSO with access to the online DBS system. We thank Tina for taking up the role as deputy PSO.

New promotional safeguarding material was published by the Diocese during the second half of 2019, which we distributed to our volunteers and group leaders. Churchsuite has been set up with a workflow for the parish office to post a letter and safeguarding booklet once an applicant becomes a DBS approved volunteer.

Pauline Bakker

Deanery Synod Report

John Bright and I have continued to serve as your Merton Deanery representatives, the third year of our three year appointment. In addition I have served as one of Merton Deanery's representatives to Southwark Diocesan Synod, a deanery representative on the Lambeth Pastoral Working Group, and a diocesan representative on the Diocesan Board of Patronage. I am also a member of the Vacancy in See committee, should that ever be needed, and a member of the standing committee for the Deanery.

Diocesan Synod has met three times since my last report. On the 9th March Bishop Christopher's address focused on Brexit and diversity, Brexit being a little premature. It did not happen. Southwark Vision has been a recurring theme, and the year started with the presentation of targets and goals to be announced through the annual vision events. Jay Colvill updated us on Mission Action Planning noting that only 21% of parishes have an up to date plan in place. Duncan Swan, as Deaneries advisor, outlined the plan to create Deanery Leadership Teams with seven deaneries piloting the idea. Reigate Deanery brought forward it's motion to fight knife crime.

The July meeting is always to receive the accounts, but we got an update from John Spence, the Chair of the Archbishop's Finance committee, noting that there was a fund of £40m to support Dioceses and Ordinand training. Ordinands had grown by 22% in the past two years. Finances continue to appear good on the surface. A surplus of £3.1m was recorded after Property profits. The Parish Support Fund, the main funding stream, rose from £16.1m to £16.4m. Bishop Christopher moved the motion the Southwark become an Eco-Diocese of at least bronze level by 2025.

At our last meeting on November 17th, Rosemary Mallet was presented as the new Archdeacon of Croydon. Safeguarding was once again a topic with the announcement that all past safeguarding cases were to be reviewed. Sutton Deanery has moved into the Archdeaconry of Reigate. Will Cookson announced that a new department had been formed to promote Fresh Expressions by the creation of a hundred new Pioneers. Parish giving was reviewed. Giving had risen over the past 5 years by £500,000 to £16.3m. Smaller parishes were giving more, but some larger ones were struggling to maintain previous levels of commitment. Gabby Parikh, the Parish Giving coordinator, was keen to demonstrate card readers for collections, and Direct debit schemes. Finally the budget for 2020 was presented with an approved expenditure of £25.75m against an assumed income of £25.57m.

Merton Deanery Synod has met twice since my last report. The meeting on the 11th April was a presentation by Stephen Rouse on evangelism in our everyday life. It was announced that Bruce Rickards, Vicar at St Johns, was standing down as Area Dean. Our next meeting was in September when Rachel Taylor took the chair as the new Area Dean. The main event was a presentation from Duncan Swan on the development of deaneries as centres for mission. Merton Deanery is now reviewing how it can be instrumental in that work by an audit of initiatives and provision in its parishes. The Merton Spirituality Group, formally run by Cynthia Jackson, is now in the hands of Rev Allison Judge. The treasurer, Liz Holder outlined a new process to calculate Parish contributions to the Deanery.

Finally, as noted above John and I are at the end of our three-year tenure. Whilst I am happy to continue, John has now resigned his position so at least one new deanery representative is needed. May I record my thanks to John for his outstanding support and contribution to the Deanery Synod.

Neal Harvey