

St.Mary's Wimbledon

Annual Review of 2015

Our Church Community

The church community of St.Mary's continues to grow and flourish with new regular worshippers joining every week. Especially encouraging is the number of young families at church. Sadly, several much loved and long-standing members of the congregation have died in the past year and are greatly missed.

During 2015 we performed 85 baptisms, 16 marriages and 14 funerals. 18 members of the church were confirmed and 7 children were admitted to communion.

In the summer, Mary announced that she would be retiring as Rector in January 2016. She has given nine years of wonderful caring ministry to St.Mary's and the Parish of Wimbledon and so much has flourished under her leadership; she will be much missed. This is the review of 2015, but it seems appropriate to record that Mary and Mark were given a memorable send-off on 17th January 2016 with a final Eucharist which over 600 people attended followed by a lunch and presentations. We wish them both well in their retirement.

Worship

Generally, services were well attended with very large numbers at Easter and Christmas. Over 2,000 people attended one or more of the Christmas services.

We have welcomed various visiting preachers including the Bishops of Southwark and Kingston, the Archdeacon and Kevin Hyland, the new Anti-Slavery commissioner.

Teaching and Spirituality

Bible Study

In addition to confirmation classes for children and adults, successful discussion groups were held throughout the year; the regular Bible Study in the Rose & Crown on Monday mornings led by our youth and families worker, Catherine Linsley; a Lent study group looking at the House of Bishops' pastoral letter concerning the national life ahead of the general election, led by the Curate; and a Bible Study led by the Rector and Curate exploring the five shortest epistles in the New Testament. All were well attended by a wide spectrum of people from our parish and congregations and were found to be thought provoking.

The Lent Lectures were on the importance of music in liturgy and worship.

Retreats and Spirituality

The St.Mary's clergy team all undertook annual retreats. A parish retreat was held at Los Olivos, an Anglican house of retreat in Southern Spain. The Rev'd Cynthia Jackson, working with the Deanery spirituality Co-ordinator, the Rev'd Kate Tucker, has continued to offer reflective opportunities including "quiet days".

Music

2015 saw the introduction of full choral evensong every Sunday and there are signs that the Sunday evening congregation is growing as a result.

The three new sixth-form choral scholars have been outstandingly committed to the choir and were also instrumental in the founding of the Wimbledon Youth Choir. The choral scholars have much enhanced the choir's sound, as have other new members. Music has enriched the worship at all the services including a beautiful carol service; the final one for the Bides and the choir gave excellent performances of Scarlatti's ten-part Stabat Mater and Mozart's Requiem to large audiences. The choir has sung evensong at Southwark, Salisbury and St.Paul's Cathedral and also, for the first time, at Westminster Abbey.

The wonderful tenor voice and staunch support of Mark Bide has been greatly appreciated and will be much missed.

Electoral Roll

17 people left the roll and 57 joined, giving a new total of 668

Outreach and Mission

Charitable Giving

In 2015, we supported Embrace the Middle East, Christian Aid, the Disasters Emergency Fund, Emmaus, The Church Urban Fund, Faith in Action and the Wimbledon Guild. With a share of the takings from parking during the tennis fortnight, we supported Operation Noah, The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust and the Linden Lodge Family Centre. From the Christmas collections, we supported Crisis, the Children's Society and Doctors of the World.

During **Christian Aid Week**, the car boot sale, which is a popular social event raised £1,437. The house-to-house collection is not an easy commitment but 42 members of the congregation took part and raised £5,477

We continue to collect for the **Merton Food Bank** each month.

Merton Winter Night Shelter

As in previous years, St.Mary's took part in the Merton Winter Night Shelter, opening the doors of Garden Hall every Wednesday night for seven weeks to a dozen or so guests who would otherwise have been sleeping rough. A team of volunteers provided our guests with

a warm welcome, a delicious supper, safe and comfortable overnight accommodation and a good breakfast the next morning. Two or three of the guests were able to find jobs during that period and some have since moved into permanent accommodation.

The shelter continues until March at other venues. MWNS is a truly inter-faith project.

The Environment

The main focus of the year was the climate change summit in Paris in December. A few members of St.Mary's congregation participated in the worldwide Pray and Fast for the Climate campaign by meeting on the first day of every month. Likewise, in October, we organized a well attended walk in Morden Hall Park as part of the global People's Pilgrimage project. A Christian play about climate change, "Baked Alaska" toured the UK in the run up to the Paris conference. We arranged a Wimbledon performance at Holy Trinity Church. The green group had a table at the family fun day in September.

Social Activities

Congregation Breakfasts have been growing in popularity and are a good opportunity for the 8am and 9.30am congregations to meet socially. Once again, the Sunday School put on an excellent Easter morning breakfast for those attending the dawn service.

The Family Fun Day was held in the afternoon of Patronal Festival Sunday in September. It was a gloriously warm and sunny day and a good crowd enjoyed stalls, games and refreshments.

The Harvest Lunch was well attended and raised a good sum for charity.

Baptismal Lunches have continued to be a good way for new families and clergy to meet.

The Quiz Evening proved to be as mind-challenging as ever and much enjoyed by all who took part.

The Dads Behaving Madly group continued to grow and flourish during the year, with twenty-five dads and a larger number of children attending fairly regularly. It provides much-valued social contact for the dads who attend and it is wonderful that a number of them are now helping to run the group, thereby making it more sustainable.

Children & Young People

Sunday School

The average attendance is around 20 children and the age range 4 to 8. The Sunday School aims to teach the children in an enjoyable way about the Bible and Jesus and to pray and sing together. The Sunday school has a team of dedicated teachers and helpers recruited

from the congregation. The Sunday School spearheaded various charitable initiatives in the last year, including the Christmas shoe box appeal for the Spires Centre, a sale of Christmas cards designed by a member of the Sunday School in support of Spires and the annual cake sale, this year in support of Pour le Sourire d'un Enfant.

There is a lovely community at the **Toddler Praise** sessions. Parents lead the stories and the singing, assisted by Mark Underwood on the piano. The tea and toys after worship is much enjoyed, as are the occasional outings.

Friday People meets fortnightly for fun, snacks and a variety of activities. We have some very dedicated parent volunteers but could always do with more. There are outings in the diary for the summer term, and summer evenings are spent playing in the field.

Rafters meets every Sunday night in term time in Garden Hall to discuss faith-based issues, play games and share food. Events have included a music evening, games on the common, a cinema trip, and bowling at David Lloyd. We also provided the breakfast after the 8am Easter Sunday Service. Huge thanks are due to Liz Johnson who volunteers every week.

Connect is a new parish-wide youth initiative. Together with Bethan Jenkins from St Mark's, we meet once a month with young people from the other churches in the team. This is an activity based group and these have included a film night, a treasure hunt, Capture the Flag on the common and a Christmas themed quiz night.

There was the annual **Light Party** attended by over 100 children and adults, a Good Friday children's workshop and lots of outings and trips organised throughout the year. Eight young people were **confirmed** in November and a group of children received communion for the first time at Pentecost.

Older People

Tuesday Lunches continue to be very well attended and provide a good opportunity for members of different congregations to meet socially during the week. More hosts would be welcome.

Fountain Group

Word of mouth and personal contact continues to bring carers of the elderly and those with dementia to Fountain Group. The Dementia Workshop we held in October also attracted new members. One third of Fountain Group members are not on the Electoral Roll of this church. They all live within the Wimbledon area, some are from other churches and some have no church affiliation.

we are continuing to establish closer links with St.John's, St.Mark's and St.Matthew's and are grateful for the encouragement we've received from the Team clergy and their pastoral assistants and associates.

We are also in touch with a number of local charities, organisations and Sutton and Merton Community Services and have been delighted to welcome a variety of guests including the Reverend Jonathan Goodhead, Chaplain of St Christopher's Hospice, Philip Parker, our community dementia nurse and PCSO Shelley Collar from the Wimbledon Village Safer Neighbourhood Team.

Feedback from Fountain Group members and visitors encourages and shapes our future direction:

Yesterday's talk was thought provoking and could lead to more interaction between the generations. I am sure this, in an informal setting, is the way forward.

Fountain Group continues to provide peace, rest, and love, yes, in a world which desperately needs to experience them. Thank you for all your support through these last two years I was so impressed with everything but particularly the warmth and caring attitudes and how much the attendees appreciated the opportunity to get together.

I have a better understanding of the word 'dementia' the way she explained Alzheimers with that little film of the Brain was just Brilliant; and made it all so easy to understand!!

Bellringing

The highlight of 2015 was winning the Pat Cannon trophy at the 8 bell striking completion held at Putney on October 17th. The trophy was displayed in the church the following day and will remain in the tower until the 2016 competition unless we succeed in winning again. We have continued to ring for every 9.30am Communion service and Wednesday practices are well attended by local ringers and visitors. Our teenage recruits are beginning to ring simple methods and all three took part in the ringing for Mary's last service which included a quarter peal begun as the congregation were leaving the church. They have been joined by two adult learners who are also making good progress.

Our 2015 summer outing was to the Dorking area and in the autumn we had a weekend away to Loughborough and Leicester which included a visit to Taylor's bellfoundry and to Leicester Cathedral. Ringing for special occasions included a celebration of the 70th anniversary of VE day and ringing to mark her Majesty becoming the UK's longest reigning monarch. Ringing for her 90th birthday is planned for 2016.

Handbells were rung at the start of the Christmas carol service and we continue to practice handbell change ringing.

Church & Churchyard

The Church

The new lighting has been installed and was completed ready for the Advent Carol Service. The church has also been fully rewired. The last of the minor repair works required by the quinquennial inspection are been undertaken.

Recovering the pew cushions is still underway with 80% of the seats finished in the main body of the church.

The Churchyard

The volunteer team of gardeners has kept the churchyard looking beautiful and tidy. The pot-holes in the tarmac have been filled and part of the drive re-skimmed.

Halls

Both Garden Hall and Fellowship House continue to be well used for both church and outside activities and provide a considerable source of income from their rental.

The floor in Garden Hall had to be replaced due to water ingress causing boards to buckle. Fortunately the cost of this was covered by our insurance. However, regular maintenance of these buildings and running costs have increased this year.

Office and Administration

The Parish Office has been as busy as ever dealing with the day-to-day running of the church "estate"; booking halls; weddings, baptisms and funerals whilst providing support for the clergy team.

Gregor Robertson now works for St.Mary's for one or two days a week looking after routine maintenance.

We maintain a useful and informative website.

Flower Arrangers

If it's Thursday, it's time to go to Covent Garden, not for "Fidelio" but for freesia, ferula and other flowers for our Church carefully chosen by our leader, Carolyn Ritchie. Her return is eagerly awaited by two or three of the team who open the elegant long boxes to see what we will be working with but not before we have cleared all last week's blooms, washed the containers and put the blocks of oasis into soak. The new arrivals are conditioned by having most of their leaves removed and stems snipped to allow them to settle down and have a good drink. Fridays is more fun - another two of the team - more if it is a wedding or a Festival - set to do the West porch, the Chancel and anything else that is required. We are there for anything from two to three hours on a normal day but if there

are requests for pew ends and the altar it takes a lot longer. The real challenges are weddings time after time brides who have little knowledge of flowers are surprised to be told that it is not sensible to want those whose air fare they will have to pay for! At Christmas and Easter it's a three line whip for all of us to pitch in, which we do willingly as we get coffee from Carolyn and rock cakes from Sonia plus we are allowed a break to consume them and have a chance to gossip and catch up with each other's news. This Easter saw some people working from 9.00 to 6.00 to produce the beautiful displays which are always appreciated by those attending services - there cannot be many churches who can boast having such a talented team to produce such lovely displays which contribute to the beauty of worship.

Finance

Unrestricted Income and Expenditure

	2012	2013	2014	2015
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Income				
From congregation:				
Planned giving	191	193	186	220
Income tax recoveries	41	41	42	49
Loose collections	21	19	26	26
Other donations	13	22	11	14
Total from congregation	266	275	265	309
Tennis fortnight	41	38	44	45
Surplus on hall lettings	74	69	74	83
Other income	19	18	30*	31*
Total Income	400	400	413*	468*
Expenditure				
Diocesan Assessment & share of Parish costs	248	247	266	272
Ministry to young, worship & music	44	43	54	62
Running Costs	68	79	50	65
Running costs	5	7	3	4
Gifts to missions & charity	21	20	20	23
Total Expenditure	386	396	393	426
Surplus / Deficit	14	4	20	42

**2014 & 2015 income include £20,000 rental from 3, Arthur Road

Hall lettings are shown net of costs

The above chart excludes income and expenditure on Restricted Funds.

During 2014 and 2015 substantial Restricted Funds were spent on the spire, the new lighting and related projects

Volunteers

St.Mary's could not function without the huge body of volunteers who give so much of their time to so many aspects of church life. From the many duties at Sunday services to cleaning and polishing, flower arranging, catering, assistance in the office, giving lifts, preparing rotas, assisting with pastoral duties, verging and so much more.

We are grateful to everyone for their contribution.

Looking forward

The Mission Action Plan was completed in 2014.

Areas for improvement and development have been worked on throughout the year.

With the departure of Mary, we shall have an interregnum for at least the spring and summer of 2016. Interviews for the new Rector will be held in May and if we find a suitable candidate and all goes to plan, we could have a new incumbent in place by autumn. We have to pray that a suitable priest comes forward.

However, whatever happens, St.Mary's is a vibrant and thriving church and we are fortunate in having so many active and dedicated members of the congregation to sustain the life of our community.