



District Church Council report 2022-2023

This year at St Mary's, the DCC discussed:

- the Mission Action Plan including a review of the previous MAP goals and planning for the revised MAP;
- proposals from the Church Wardens for some major works such as the refurbishment of Garden Hall, drainage works, stonework, the Chancel floor and replastering work including approval of related expenditure;
- the approval of various church groups including the Wimbledon Oldies Choir and the Friday coffee mornings;
- worship and church events such as the Patronal Festival, Harvest Festival, the Journey to the Crib and where to receive Communion;
- charitable giving and our Parish share; and
- received reports on finances, property, safeguarding, Deanery and Diocesan synod and health and safety.

Churchwardens' Property Report, 30 March 2023, Mike Leeson and Anthea Richardson

Thank you to every-one who has contributed to the running of St Mary's which makes it possible for us to maintain our wonderful church, churchyard and church halls. We are particularly grateful for the people who have donated to the Development Fund over the years and to the Charles Eglington and Ann Ross legacies. These are providing the funding that is making these works possible. As you will appreciate these projects in total are costing us hundreds of thousands of pounds (almost half a million) which is why your giving is so important to us.

If you would like to support the church wardens in managing any of these projects please let us know. In addition to costing a lot of money they are time consuming.

Here is a summary of the various projects we have completed and are working on:

Garden Hall

Hopefully, you feel a sense of joy in once again having glass doors that can be opened onto the grass area. I appreciate that our winter weather hasn't given us much opportunity to take advantage but hopefully we will be able to do so in the summer. Other key elements of the refurbishment package included installing acoustic panels, refurbishing the wooden floor, repairs to kitchen work surfaces, cupboards and the toilets plus re-varnishing the flooring, upgrading the lighting, as well as repainting foyer and hall. Not forgetting replacing the old wooden chairs so that we will no longer suffer from splinters!

Rendering Work in the Church

At the time of writing this is virtually complete. We are waiting for the plaster to dry and are trying to get a better match for the paint. However, a perfect match will be impossible given that there is 20+ years of dust on the wall and the same colour viewed next to plain glass windows looks very different when viewed next to a stained-glass window.

Chancel Carpet

As you know this was removed and we have restored the original flooring and tiles. We believe this is far more in keeping and celebrates the history and age of the church in a way that a carpet does not.

Masonry Repairs

It was in February 2022 that Storm Dudley hit the UK and we suffered from masonry falling from the windows on the church tower. It has taken the last 12 months to inspect, specify and contract the works and at the time of writing we are still waiting for the formal approval from the Chancellor to proceed. We are also addressing some other issues that were highlighted in our last 5 yearly (quinquennial) inspection of the church fabric which was conducted in July 2022. We hope that these works will start shortly if they haven't already by the time we meet for the ACM.

Vestry

The Vestry roof has leaked for years and whilst the last fix has kept the problem at bay, we have decided to go for a more permanent solution. We are going to lift the coping stones, adding another layer of stonework, extending the flashing up to the coping stones, and relaying the coping stones. Once we have done this and the drainage works (see below) we can re-plaster and re-decorate the vestry including the toilet area.

Drainage

Our Victorian drainage system is totally broken and that is why we have rising damp in parts of the church and the Vestry. Bazalgette did a good job but nature and time have run their course. What we plan for now has to accommodate 50% more rainwater than it would be expected to cope with to deal with the impact of climate change and heavier rains. The proposal is to install one large soakaway under the tarmac drive at the western end of the church which will take the majority of rainwater from the church and 2 much smaller soakaways in the graveyard on the norther eastern end of the church. The archaeologists are asking that we dig a test hole where the main soakaway will be sited to make sure there are no ancient ruins underneath the surface of archaeological significance.

West Entrance

There is a plan to redo the paving and to ensure it provides for entirely step free access. We intend to wrap this in with Vestry roof work and the permanent repairs for the falling masonry.

Church Clock

We are intending to refurbish and re-guild the clock when we do the masonry repairs as we will have scaffolding in situ and to fit a time regulator to it.

Lightning Conductor

The company that services and maintains the church's lightning conductor has recommended that we do some further works to bring it in line with current specifications. Given our exposed position on top of a hill we intend to proceed. Once again, we are intending to do this with the Masonry repairs.

Fellowship House

This is due for a makeover and we have a list of issues that need to be addressed but we have not yet taken it any further forward.

By the time we get to the 2024 ACM there will probably be some new additions but hopefully some of these works will have been successfully completed and fade into the background.

Deanery Synod Report, Etienne Lambert

Representation- The DCC's representation on Deanery Synod are Rev Mandy Hodgson, Rev Nils Bersweden, Lawrence Davies, Neil Harvey and Etienne Lambert. This meeting was the first since October 2021. Our representatives attending were Revd Bersweden, Etienne Lambert and Lawrence Davies.

Chair: a new Lay Chair was elected, Rupert Cowan of St Andrew's SW19.

Revd Alison Judge presented two motions on fossil fuels and investments that were discussed in length and passed by the majority to be submitted to the Diocesan Synod. The two motions were:

1. Commitment by the Diocese to divest investments from fossil fuel companies by 31 December 2024.
2. Commitment by the Diocese to only invest in ethical funds by 31 December 2024.

We also had a presentation of the 2021/22 accounts by Liz Holder, Deanery Treasurer.

The Synod needs a new Deanery Administrator, which is a small and vital role in keeping the Deanery running smoothly. Members were asked everyone to pray that someone would soon come forward.

Next meeting: 23 June 2023.

Safeguarding Notes April 2022- April 2023, Pauline van de Plas, Safeguarding Officer

We are glad to report that our 6 weekly safeguarding team meetings have resumed post pandemic.

This year saw a reorganisation and 'clean up' of all church groups and activities. After little activity and members of the congregation moving on during the pandemic, church groups started either in changed formats or with different volunteers. At the end of last year we agreed to go back to the basics and look at recruiting/reinstating volunteers for the right groups, prior to focussing on implementing further safeguarding measurements. This resulted in the team rolling out (training and renewal) letters to all staff and volunteers. We created a new DBS process in Churchsuite, removing volunteers that were no longer active and offering new training to existing as well as new volunteers. Church suite now has been set up to check active volunteers with group leaders every 3 months.

A new activity/group in church suite is the Friday Coffee gatherings. The existing WOC is now an official church activity and set up as such in church suite.

A larger project is to set up a parish wide safeguarding structure, including the appointment of a parish wide safeguarding officer. A job description and Person specification have been proposed in February and presented to the PCC for approval.

DBS updates:

Currently there are 99 individuals with a valid DBS certificate on record; of which 40 are in need of renewal in the coming months. Through the continuous DBS clear up exercise, 55 volunteers are no longer volunteering or have left the congregation, which is reflected in Churchsuite.

It is notable that the new training requirement, which now forms part of the DBS application process in churchsuite, applicants need much more encouragement and reminding. The process of finalising an application for a volunteer before they are able to commence volunteering, takes much longer.

The Diocese have provided us with updated Confidential Declaration Forms to be part of the DBS application process.

Safeguarding Incidents throughout 22/23:

There have been 6 safeguarding concerns raised throughout 22/23 (confidential information). One recurring issue is rough sleeping. This year a rough sleeper felt invited to put up camp (a tent) in the church field during the time that the "covid isolation caravan" was parked in the field for the night shelter. This sadly ended in verbal and physical threats from said rough sleeper, police were called for his arrest.

All other concerns have been or are being supported, either by the team or other support agencies/authorities.