

PARISH OF ST MARTIN AND ST PAUL, CANTERBURY
Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting, May 2024



The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness...

Galatians 5:22



PARISH OF ST. MARTIN AND ST. PAUL CANTERBURY

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL 2023-2024

Rector (Chairman)	The Reverend Mark Griffin (until 20 th April 2024)
Vice Chairman (Chairman from 20 th April 2024)	Mr Christopher Robinson (Reader/Diocesan Synod)
Curate	The Reverend Charlotte Sleigh
Churchwardens at St. Martin's	Mr. David Stuart Mrs Christine Robinson
Churchwardens at St. Paul's	Mrs Jo Luck Mr Michael Keeler-Walker
Parish Treasurer	Mr Gordon Craig (and Co-opted member)
Readers holding the Bishop's Licence	Dr Rosemary Walters (also Deanery Synod) Mr. Samuel Keeler-Walker Mrs Mary Butcher (PTO- nonvoting member)
Deanery Synod Representatives	Mrs Ruth Matthews Mr Henrik Schoenefeldt
Elected members 2021-2024	Miss Ruth Baker Mrs Jackie Curd Mrs Judith Dimond Mrs Ruth Sibson
Elected Members 2022-2025	Ms Ros Newington Mrs Camilla Titterton Ms Felicity Bolton Mr Dan Titterton
Elected Members 2023 -2026	Mr Abraham Joseph Mrs Clare Butler Ms Jo Lawson Mr James Sampson
Co-Opted Member 2023-2024	Monica Walling

Also in Attendance (non-voting in matters of legal resolution and non-trustees)

Mr Dominic del Nevo (Choir Director)
Mrs Christine Page (PCC secretary)

1) THE RECTOR'S REPORTS

a) Significant Decisions 2023-24

June

New PCC formed and elections held.
Safeguarding Policy agreed and signed.
Return to full use of chalice.
8am Holy Communion service ended.
List of chalice administrators agreed.

July

Agreement of policy for filming.

September

Fund raising group approved and social committee to remain in place.
Inclusivity report agreed and circulated.
Christopher Robinson approved for Reader funeral training.

November

Outreach giving of 10% of covenanted income enacted as per the PCC's policy.
Anointing will continue at St Paul's on 5th Sundays.
Agreed that PCC will sign "No mow May" letter for the deanery.
Agreed to accept the DSV quote for the St Martin's sound system.
Agreed to set aside funding for the sound system.
Agreed to apply to the DAC under List B for the sound system.

February

Growing in Faith group agreed for 18-40 year olds, under PCC control
Agreement to upgrade photocopier.
Paper on developing our work with young singers was agreed.

b) Welcome to our 2024 Annual Report.

Our report this year reflects another busy and fulfilling year in the life of the parish. I would like to thank all those who have given tirelessly over the last year, churchwardens, our musicians, the ministry team and everyone who have been there giving of their time and skill in so many ways in the service of God and neighbour.

This report is a record of a very good year which has seen us grow and move forward. So read on to be reminded of all that God has been doing at St Martin and St Paul's.

c) Rector's Report 2024

Each year I have delivered my report from the "pulpit" and have had the opportunity to look back and to look forward, to celebrate and to challenge, while trusting in God's promptings and leading. This year as I come to the end of my incumbency, I present this report in written form, aware that the parish embarks on a new phase and towards a new incumbency.

As the parish has such a long history, my seven years is but the smallest of drops, and in a place with so many gifts and skills, the rector moving will be taken in your stride.

In looking back there is much to celebrate and so many things going on.

Back in May, we were up to a full slate of wardens as Jo Luck joined Michael at St Paul's, with Jo Lawson agreeing to be a deputy warden. It has been good to work with Dave, Christine, Michael and Jo over the last year and I want to thank them for their dedication and support, as well as their forbearance as I have plunged them into interregnum country.

In June Charlotte was priested and it was a special moment for us as a parish, as well as for Charlotte. We have seen her ministry blossom and witnessed her ability to bring her many gifts and her wisdom to her role in the parish. I want to thank her for collegiality and for her loyal support over the last two years. With some curates the incumbent leaving would be very inappropriate but in weighing things up, Charlotte's talents will guide her through the changes ahead. I know, too, that you will look after her and allow her to preserve the balance of her life.

In thanking Charlotte, I also want to thank Christopher, Mary, Rosemary and Sam for their hard work both in leading and preaching but also in the many other things they do in the parish. Thank you, too, to all our musicians- especially Christopher Gower at St Martin's and Dom, David and the Choir at St Paul's, who have continued to enhance our worship and provide a high standard of musicianship.

The year has seen some important gaps in our provision plugged. The launching of Hang Outs has been a realisation of our desire to support our Secondary School children which will grow over the years ahead. The Growing in Faith group has also given us the opportunity to work with the under 40s and to nurture that demographic. We have put in a bid to employ someone to look after our young people's music and we look forward to hearing the result of the application in due course. The new fundraising group through a number of evenings has raised money for the Without the walls appeal and is currently helping to find funds for an upgraded sound system at St Martin's.

Over the last twelve months we have seen further developments in lifelong learning especially in the range of courses that we offer and this year our book group began. Following a visit by Lorraine Apps-Huggins from the Living Well, we have introduced anointing at St Paul's on a quarterly basis for those who wish after communion, and it has proved very popular. The new tradition of a guest preacher at the St Paul's Patronal Festival was inaugurated by the visit of our former Archbishop, Lord Williams of Oystermouth, which has set the bar high. David Monteith, our Dean, spoke at Martinmass and at Evensong and Supper, cementing the relationship between parish and Cathedral. Our worshipping life continues to develop, as St Paul's grows in its diversity and St Martin's sees visitors to our services growing.

This year we hosted Angela Swindley for a placement with us as part of her last year studying before ordination in June. I also continued as reviewer for the Ministerial Development Review system and as a Pastoral Supervisor. As well as supervising Charlotte in her curacy, I worked with Lucy Fyffe- Jameson as her Training Incumbent until she moved

from All Saints to Beaconsfield and in Jo Richards absence with long covid have been Jenny Walpole's acting Training Incumbent.

Our ministry at St Martin's continues to grow in its scope. We've seen visitor numbers grow and also significant interest from the media- for once a good news story. In a time of transition, we sadly said goodbye to Jeanne as she relocated to Colombia; but have been very fortunate to welcome Jess Morris, who brings with her a great interest in social media and presenting the church to the widest possible audience. Jess has quickly made new contacts and built on existing links, helping us to capitalise on the great interest in St Martin's especially among a younger demographic.

So what are the highlights of the year? The parish pantomime in January saw some old stagers and young guns combine to have a lot of fun, entertain three packed houses and raise money for the bursary fund at Pilgrim's Way and provide a set of new tables (and trolley) for the Parish Centre. In February, Aled Jones and the Songs of Praise team came to film an interview with Charlotte and also some sequences of the new fire being lit, ready for broadcast in March. The choir returned to Rochester Cathedral to sing Evensong. The Archbishop of Canterbury came to St Martin's to launch the first of his prayer days and as one of our greatest publicists, interviewed the actor Gabriel Byrne and recommended he visit St Martin's to feel the power of a "thin place".

There were sadnesses, too, as we lost some dear and special friends Chris Spillett, Audrey Field and Rosemary Moss amongst other dedicated and loyal members and supporters of our churches.

The great thing about our parish is the willingness to get involved and to share the load. The churches can only function effectively with all the energy, commitment and skill shown by so many people. Each member is vital and so thank you to you all for all that you bring.

As my time comes to an end, I look back with great satisfaction and very happy memories of this year and the previous six- they have been unprecedented times with the pandemic but also times of growth and progress. For someone of such little technical ability, I bequeath the fact that all main services at St Paul's are live streamed, our hall is equipped with state of the art AV, that we have a weekly e-mail and that online and hybrid sessions are part of the bread and butter of parish life. God truly has a sense of humour and can use the most unlikely vessels.

I will miss you all but leave knowing that the parish is in good heart and ready to sing a new song in a time of transition but ultimately of new beginnings. Whoever follows me will be very fortunate in having so many gifted people to work with them, please love them and care for them.

Please pray for me as I will pray for you and your search for the right person to help you discern God's way ahead. I will be an evangelist for St Martin and St Paul's in the years ahead in my work in tourism and heritage and will watch with Christian pride all the good things that you are doing. Do invite me back for the opening of the St Martin's toilets and I will invite you for the first teatime and Evensong and Supper in Derbyshire.

Reverend Mark Griffin, outgoing Rector.

2 CHURCHWARDENS' REPORTS

a) Churchwarden's report - St Martin's

I don't know about you but the annual report season always seems to come around more quickly. In our last report we were writing about our new organ and at the beginning of this year we had a wonderful dedication service and we've enjoyed this beautiful new addition to our church which has become integral to our worship.

In our last report we also reported on a welcomed, and much needed, new addition with Jeanne McKay. She worked tirelessly with the congregation, members of the World Heritage Committee, both Universities and many more people (including a lute player) to put St Martins at the forefront of people's minds and engrain it more deeply on the map of not on the World Heritage Site but also Canterbury. When she was with us she helped us to grow to over 8,500 visitors, innovatively taking forward the UNESCO tours, encouraged an explosion positive Google reviews and encouraged more research in respect of St Martin's as a building. As a child we learn that all good things come to an end and we wished Jeanne, Matt and Ava bon voyage in August on their new adventure in Panama. We absolutely recognised that there is a need to continue to employ someone to lead on keeping St Martin's open for pilgrims, tourists and visitors and we gladly welcome Jessica Morris to fill the giant pair of shoes left by Jeanne. As Jessica joined us in November you will have to wait until next year's report to read all about the wonderful things she has already done for us! It has been a busy year for us with a number of special events taking place including a number of articles online and in print including an online article by Historic England about England's oldest church making use of some great pictures that were taken and an entry in Woman's Weekly reflecting our broad appeal to so many people. As part of the Canterbury Festival, St Martin's hosted a wonderful concert from Gareth Balch, who previously played medieval lute during the Heritage open days, is also part of a South American quartet. We enjoyed music from the Portuguese and Spanish diaspora, played on Guitar, Charango, Requinto and Bass. All the musicians were part of Canterbury Christchurch University Music department, and either lecturers or post graduate students. We also benefitted from an art exhibition from local artist Kirstie Craske and maintain links with both Gareth and Kirstie for future events.

I always enjoy our patronal service and we were fortunate to have Dean David Monteith as our guest preacher from the Cathedral, our daughter church.

We continue to put a significant amount of effort into maintaining our building at the beginning of the year KT Fire completed the installation of the new fire detection system, any snagging works associated with the organ works are nearing completion with just a guard rail around the plinth needed to complete the work. We are progressing with the replacement of our sound system, overcoming a few technical issues with the List B application. Our other priorities are around reordering the vestry, safe access to the bell tower and developing a sustainable solution to our lack of toilets.

We clearly would not be able to do all of this without the support of our community who do so much for us, in particular John, Ruth, Doreen, James, Gordon, Judith, Christopher and Sylvia and Claire and Mike.

Dave Stuart and Christine Robinson

b) Churchwarden's report - St Paul's

This year has been an exciting year in the life of St Paul's without the Walls, one of activity, energy and growth.

i) Worshipping and Community Life

The worshipping life of the community continues its path back from Covid. Last Easter the common cup finally returned to our Eucharistic Services and any lingering restrictions on our worshipping life came to an end for which we give thanks.

We have witnessed a heartening growth in many of our worshipping communities, with most service attendance showing a consistent upward trends. This growth can be attributed to several factors. We strive to offer an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere, ensuring all feel comfortable joining our services on Sundays and throughout the week. New people give us good feedback about the quality of our Sunday Eucharists is another draw, with many commenting on our mix of warm, joyful and relatively traditional worship done in a way that is not stuff. Furthermore, our choral music provides a strong attraction worshippers.

It is particularly encouraging to see a growing number of younger adults joining our congregation. The doors of St Paul's Church are open throughout the week, allowing people to explore the space, encounter a sense of peace, and the leave wanting experience our worship firsthand. This open-door policy has resulted in a consistent stream of new visitors, with many returning to become regular or occasional members of our worshipping communities. It is not uncommon to see a new face each week, and a good number of these visitors choose to stay and start to become part of our church family.

There were a number of particular highlights throughout the year, particularly around the celebrations for the coronation, the terrific 8 days of Patronal Festival Celebrations which included Dean David preaching at Choral Evensong and Supper, 3 showings of Beauty and the Beast with a total audience of around 200+ and then Bishop Rowan William's preaching at the Patronal Eucharist to top it off.

One slight downside was that Christmas was not particularly well attended with numbers down in all Christmas Services apart from Christmas Day itself and we will need to reflect on why this is and take steps to make sure we are reaching local people and meeting local need. On the upside, Easter 2024 was terrific with good attendances at many of our services with a standing room only attendance on Easter Day.

ii) Fabric:

This year, a significant project involved repairs to the east gable wall. The works, which addressed weather damage and ensured the long-term stability of the wall, came to a total of £15,000.

We are delighted to report that through the incredible support of our congregation, a substantial portion of this cost, £12,000, was raised through generous pledges, a fantastic charity concert by the talented David Rees-Williams and a grant from the Listed Places of Worship scheme made valuable contributions to the project's funding.

We encountered some issues with pigeons nesting in the church tower. To address this, pest control specialists were called in to install new bird defences on the louvres. Furthermore, the belfry underwent a thorough cleaning and disinfection process.

The overall fabric of the church remains sound. However, some ongoing issues require continued monitoring. These include the need for repointing of the floor and a few minor cracks on the walls and ceilings that are being closely observed.

The care of St Paul's Church is an ongoing responsibility, and we are grateful to all who have contributed to its upkeep this year. Mindful of our ecological impact we changed to smart meters to measure our energy usage more closely and the introduction of the Hive Thermostatic Heating controls lead to a 13% reduction in gas usage. With ongoing sensible care and stewardship, we can ensure this historic building remains a place of worship and beauty for generations to come.

iii) Looking forward:

We are immensely grateful to the incumbency of outgoing Rector, Revd Mark Griffin his leadership and his ability to enable others. In addition St Paul's would not be who it is without it's wonderful community of ministers and laity who do so much in so many ways - from a warden's perspective we know what a difference it makes and we certainly couldn't do it on our own – so thank you!

Finally, knowing and seeing that as a church that we are growing in number is a transformative feeling, and as we look forward it is imperative that we work to hold onto that. In 2024 we must continue to want, pray for and expect to grow and to be confident in welcoming and making new disciples by telling those we meet about the transformative love of Christ and showing them that whoever they are, they too can find a place to belong here in this parish.

Alleluia, on we go!

Michael Keeler-Walker and Jo Luck.

3 PARISH ACTIVITIES

a) Growing in Faith:

This year has seen the start of a new worshipping community called Growing in Faith, which aims to help those aged between 18-40 to grow in their faith. This is a response to a number of new people who fall into that age bracket. We meet every month on a Saturday morning for worship and breakfast, which gives us a chance to talk about faith and to build a sense of community. We have this year run a lent group which had an average attendance of 10 people throughout the 6 sessions. In the next year we are starting a vocations group and meeting on a Wednesday evening to discuss various issues which the group as raised. The first one in May will be focusing on disability theology.

Samuel Keeler-Walker.

b) Inclusive Church:

As part of our commitment to being an Inclusive Church, this year saw the first Inclusive Audit where we looked at what we do well in terms of inclusion and what we can do better.

Work has started on the areas highlighted and we will be conducting another audit in the summer of 2024. A copy of the inclusive audit is available at the back of church and we encourage you to have a look at it and let us know what more we can be doing to be a truly welcoming church to all.

Samuel Keeler-Walker.

c) Outreach:

The last year has seen the small Outreach Group putting in to practice our new plan to promote our support for our chosen causes. Each month we have a Cause of the Month which we highlight with a display at St Paul's and an article in Pilgrim Post. We are very grateful to Ros Newington for her work on the displays and to Clive Barlow for guaranteeing us space in the magazine each month.

We have a champion for each cause, who can promote the charity's work and answer queries that the congregation have. Last year Nick Thorley from Cord came to both churches. We are hoping to have several guest speakers during the year to highlight their work and giving us an update.

We have 10 causes that we support. In 2023, PCC continued with the policy of giving 10% of direct giving to our causes, meaning that each cause received £800. We as a group hope that our Outreach is becoming more embedded in our life as a parish and that, by promoting 10 causes, we can focus our support. There continue to be other one-off appeals and causes that we support, often in response to need.

Our members are Ruth Matthews, Judith Dimond and Brian Munday. We are delighted that Irene Pickering and Diane Fawcett have now joined the group.

The causes that we support regularly are:

i) Local

- Connecting Canterbury
- Schools Work Trust
- Street Pastors
- Catching Lives
- KRAN (working with refugees in Canterbury)

ii) National

- Christians Against Poverty

iii) International

- Pastos Verdes
- Open Doors UK (working with those facing persecution for their faith)
- CORD (working in justice and development)
- Amos Trust

d) Community engagement

As always, this is just the official connections that we have as a church and does not begin to count the many connections that you all have as individuals with different community projects across the city.

i) Schools

This year saw Rosemary and myself take assemblies for Pilgrims Way School especially around festivals and seasons of the year. The Christmas collections from our services went partly to the school for their Bursary Fund helping families to access activities and trips that they otherwise might not be able to afford. We also donated half of the profits from the pantomime. This meant that our total support was £2200, and this was received with great gratitude and a beautifully written note by one of the year six pupils on behalf of the school. There were also visits to St Martin's to pick up on the stories of Bertha, Ethelbert, and Augustine.

This year, I joined the governing body of the Veritas Academy Trust looking after Pilgrim's Way School. Sadly, as part of my impending move, I decided to step back but was glad of the opportunity even if for only a short time to play a deeper role in the life of the school.

I hope that the relationship between school and parish continues to grow. For them the arrival of the builders means a new school building as the school grows numerically and in plant. For you a new incumbent will be the opportunity to develop that relationship and build on all that has gone before.

ii) Spring Lane, Howe Green and Querns

We have kept in touch with these communities over the last year, offering support where we could.

Querns has had another challenging year. The Community Centre closed permanently as the repairs proved to be too costly and many of the activities there came to an end. Their work with food poverty and food waste issues over the past few years has continued through Connecting Canterbury and the hub at the Baptist Church. Through the Relief in Need fund, we have continued to offer support to individuals and to the community, especially at Christmas.

Messy Church has continued at Spring Lane and is very well supported. We were able to sing carols in Spring Lane and at the Neighbourhood Centre again this Christmas with musical backing from our churches, which was a great success. We were working in partnership with the newly constituted Residents' Group and plans are already underway for the year ahead. As ever Barbara has been a good friend to us at Spring Lane and we are grateful for her friendship and support.

We have found that getting back into Howe Green post Covid has been difficult. The new development at Royal Parade on the site of the old barracks is almost complete, although the community facilities in the existing buildings will be the last to be finished and may not be ready until 2026. This poses issues for the future in how ministry can be undertaken.

I have done a number of walks around the estates, including one with Nick White, who is our deanery mission enabler resourcing ministry to the estates across the parishes of the Canterbury Deanery.

iii) Chaucer and Highland House

We now have now settled on two services at Chaucer House each month- one a communion, the other a morning prayer with hymns. Sue Manley has accompanied me for the communion visit. The home has made use of the ministry of the parish especially those coming to the end of their lives. We visit Highland House monthly where twenty residents sing favourite hymns and closer relationships have been forged with some of the residents. We also regularly visit three residents who have strong connections with the parish at the Red House with communion and a number of other people who are housebound receive the sacrament at home, taken by a number of individuals. In recent years the work with nursing homes has largely fallen to me. In reading this report you may feel that you can be involved in this ministry- if so, talk to a member of the Ministry Team.

iv) The Night Shelter

The night shelter again has not made use of church halls across Canterbury. This appears to be a policy decision which is unlikely to change. We have continued to provide treats on a Tuesday, which was previously our day to offer hospitality. Several people have also volunteered from the parish to help at Catching Lives.

v) Hall and church hire

The hall and church have hosted singing groups over the last year making the most of our wonderful acoustic. This year we've continued to welcome Domenica and her team to the hall for the drop in now on Monday mornings which provides English lessons for those who have come to the UK. The larger sessions on Thursdays finished when many of the refugees moved from Canterbury. We continue to support Domenica in her work on different levels, which she values greatly.

vi) Cost of living crisis

The last year has seen further inflationary pressures on many in our parish. We are fortunate in having access to the Adkinson Relief in Need fund and Canterbury Relief in Need, which gives grants for mostly white goods to those in need. We also have access to the food bank and now give food vouchers at Christmas to ten families in need.

Reverend Mark Griffin, outgoing Rector.

e) **Christians Together in Canterbury (CTC)**

CTC represents the 40 and more churches and their Christian members in Canterbury, and the Good Friday 'Walk of Witness' led by the Salvation Army band, continues as the principal public event. Lyndall Bywater, Secretary, circulates news and information on a diverse range of worship, praise and prayer events, including Taizé services at St Thomas's.

Representatives (including Ruth Sibson and myself on behalf of our parish), meet every two months to tell the Good News, and learn what is happening and being planned by other churches. Aaron Berko of the New Life Church is taking over as Moderator from Simon Redman, with Rebecca Fisher of Trinity Baptist Church as Deputy.

Please pray for the work of CTC ecumenically, including its support for Connecting Canterbury and people and families in need.

David Hartwell

f) Children and Young Families.

This is the committee who oversee the work that focuses on this part of our Parish . The committee is small, and now even smaller without Mark. It consists of myself, Ruth Baker and James Sampson and is in need of new input. Do pray for us and if you would like to join us, do have a chat to me.

In last year's report, I said that we were hoping to start something for our older young people. I am pleased to say that, in October, "Hangouts" was launched for those who had more recently moved on to Secondary School. It has continued to meet once a month on a Thursday 4.30-6,30pm at the Parish Centre. There is a core of six young people who attend and it is hoped that the number will grow over time.

The committee also keep an eye on the work of Fisherfolk, SP@TT, Sunday Zone, Messy Church and St Martin's provision for children.

Sue Spillett

g) Fisherfolk Report

Having celebrated its thirtieth birthday last year, Fisherfolk continues to grow and flourish. We are open two mornings a week. The members of the Mothers' Union volunteer their time to run the sessions ably assisted by Debbie Rogers who works on a Wednesday. We are very grateful to Reem Khider who regularly ran the Friday session until her circumstances changed, and to Carol Walker who helps out at both sessions each week.

We have a wonderful core of families most of whom met at Fisherfolk; they are developing friendships that will only continue to grow as the children do. To listen to the children playing and the adults chattering is a lovely experience, and we are very lucky to have such an activity taking place in our hall.

We have also encouraged our families to worship with us and many of them are regulars at St Paul's@ TeaTime and on a Sunday morning. Many of our families have also brought their children for baptism and one baptism booked for a baby subsequently included three adults as well!

We had some lovely Christmas cards last Christmas and one Mum wrote "you don't preach at us but you just show God's love, thank you for being here".

I am very grateful to all of our helpers who give so generously of their time to create such a fun environment where others can grow.

Jackie Curd

h) Mothers' Union.

Our Parish Branch is continuing to support and encourage faith in families and the support of children and family life. We have 40 members with an age range of 30 – 90! We run the Fisherfolk Baby and Toddler group twice a week, which is thriving and well used. Our members enjoy a monthly meeting and also, on the second Saturday morning at 9.30am, a

Communion service. Meetings are usually on the first Wednesday, with speakers or activities and discussions and everything we do is open to all.

We have also reached out to St Martin's hospital with Christmas gifts and Easter baskets - not to mention making all the many Mothering Sunday posies for everyone to receive at all the services on that day.

Many Archdeaconry and Diocesan MU events happen at St Paul's Church and our branch is always the welcoming host to these services etc. We wished Mark a fond farewell and will miss his support and membership. We are hoping to hold an enrolment soon as some of our congregations are showing interest in joining this amazing Worldwide organisation. Have you thought about it? Would you like to know more?

Sue Spillett

i) St Paul's At Teatime (SP@TT)

St Paul's At Teatime is a wonderful and creative time for people of all ages to enjoy. We hold each of our sessions at St Paul's and have an amazing group of young people who come and get stuck into all our craft activities. For each of our monthly sessions we have craft activities, a story, prayers and tea and cakes.

A lot of what we do in church is based on a more structured worship, but Teatime offers a chance for us to teach the young people within our community about the Bible in a way that they find enjoyable and effective. We have a wonderful team who rotate between different duties each month and Jackie Curd who arranges all of our food for the event. All the work that we do is put on the board at the back corner of St Paul's and we invite you to look at the wonderful artwork that our young people create!

We all thoroughly enjoy watching everyone come out of their shell and show their creativity and enjoy running around and playing with friends. All are welcome!

Josh Gauden

i) Messy Church at Spring Lane Community Centre

We have continued to hold Messy Church in the Spring Lane Community Centre. For the latter, we hold meetings every two or three months on Sunday afternoons for a couple of hours, with craft activities and a Bible story based around a topical theme, followed by a tea. During 2023, we have looked at Candlemas, Spring/Easter, Summer holidays, Autumn/Sabbath rest, and Christmas.

The number of attendees has been fair, with about eight to ten children each time and a similar number of adults. We may be light on heavy doctrine - but we do have lots of fun with our crafts; and some interesting discussions can arise when sharing stories from the Bible. It is one of our prime ways of being church "without walls".

Many thanks to Mark, Charlotte, Christine Robinson, Claire Butler, Clary Read, Damien Corlett, Ruth Matthews, Henrick Schoenefeldt, and Sue Spillett, who have helped with some or all of the sessions; and to Ruth, Christine, Claire, Jennifer Llewellyn, and Sylvia Gower for

assisting by providing food. Thanks also to Barbara and all the staff at the Spring Lane Community Centre for their cheerful support for our work.

We are planning to hold the next couple of meetings on 26th May and the 28th July. If you would like to help with one of the future Messy Churches in some way, or would just like to come along and observe, please do not hesitate to contact me on 07584 355001 for more information.

Christopher Robinson

k) Choir Report

The Choir's regular duties cover the 10.30am service most Sunday mornings, monthly choral evensong (except in April, August and December), and additional services throughout the year (e.g. Advent and Christmas carols, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Ascension). Alongside that, as in previous years, we have led choral evensong at Canterbury and Rochester Cathedrals over the year.

We have continued to broaden our repertoire, introducing canticle settings by Edward Bairstow in D Major, William Harris in A Minor, and responses by William Byrd and Heathcote Statham. We have continued to support the work of female composers, including work by contemporary composers Tamsin Jones, Becky McGlade and Gemma McGregor, and not-quite-so-contemporary Hildegard of Bingen.

We have collaborated with other (relatively) local churches, hosting a combined choir evensong with delegations from St Michael's Sittingbourne, St Mary in Charity Faversham, St Mary's Dover and St Andrew's, Reading Street. We also held a 'Church choir with friends' performance of *The Crucifixion* by John Stainer on Palm Sunday.

Some of us have also reciprocated the support, with trips to Sittingbourne, Faversham, and Dover over the year.

As always I would like to extend my thanks to David (and our cover organists when he is away) and the members of the Choir for their commitment, and to everyone who supports our work throughout the year.

Dom del Nevo

l) Visits at St Martin's

The last report for St Martin's spoke of the start of the role of 'Senior Visitor Host' (2022) placing the church on a more formal footing for organised tours. Jeanne worked hard to lay a key foundation for this, especially toward organising UNESCO World Heritage tours with English Heritage and the Cathedral. This has been reflected in the World Heritage Committee Meetings where pushes are being made to formalise the relationship between the sites further and, importantly, look further into the appointment of a World Heritage Site Co-ordinator.

The efforts being made within St Martin's has certainly been seen over the past 12 months with increases in visitor numbers when compared to the previous year; and it has only increased further in the opening months of 2024. This, of course, would be impossible without

our fantastic team of volunteers; we hope this group will increase with some new volunteers joining our ranks.

Relationships with the other heritage sites have also become closer following Jeanne's efforts, whilst Jessica, having only recently been appointed to the position, has begun trying to grow connections elsewhere, including the likes of Eastridge Hospital and Franciscan Gardens. March 2024 also saw a pilgrimage led by the British Pilgrimage Trust along the Via Francigena and there are hopes after it that St Martin's will continue to work closely with pilgrim groups. In turn, expanding on Jeanne's first involvements into a new initiative, Jessica has also begun seeing to the fruition of the project with Lyminge and Folkestone churches, resulting in a new pilgrimage the *Royal Kentish Camino*. This project has brought together the three churches through the connections of Bertha, Ethelburga and Eanswythe both as founders of key Christian Communities but also as three generations of the Kentish Anglo-Saxon Royal Family. There is a strong hope that the history of women who played vital roles in the conversion of England to Christianity will begin to come closer to the forefront as a result of this project and also bring people's attentions to the importance of these three churches.

As a part of both the promotion of the new pilgrimage and to place St Martin's closer into the community, we plan that 2024 will be a year of *media*. Setting up of a Social Media page to try and interact better with visitors, pilgrims and the general community has resulted in forging closer links with members of the communications department of the Canterbury Diocese. This has allowed the parish to spread its reach further but also seen things like 'Sunday Spotlight', ITV Meridian, and other outlets reconnecting with the church to share its history. These have all helped to increase visitor numbers, especially following the local news piece, with many visitors saying they were local to the Kent area and were only learning recently of the church being in their community. This summer, St Martin's will also feature in Canterbury BID's *MyCanterbury* magazine, which will be shared out amongst businesses and hotels and, we hope, continue to bring more visitors into the church.

2024 will continue to see plans being made for fundraising for a new sound system which is particularly important in our attempts to become more accessible. This project is running parallel to the hopes of introducing a toilet facility on the grounds of the churchyard once the money is raised.

Jessica Morris

m) *The Parish Centre*

The Parish Centre continues to offer a welcome space for our parishioners and hirers alike. In the spring we rearranged the first floor office and created a room that could be used for meetings or as an office. This has attracted new hirers who are enjoying the space.

Mel Curd has worked miracles repairing most of the equipment in the kitchen at some stage this year and we are very grateful to him. Unfortunately, we did have to buy a new coffee machine, but the generosity of the coffee drinkers meant that the costs were quickly covered.

We failed our electrical inspection and had to replace all of our illuminated fire exit signage. We are grateful to our electricians who managed to salvage the wall lights upstairs and find new fittings.

Our quest to find a cleaner failed so I have continued to keep the Parish Centre clean on a voluntary basis.

We were very excited to be able to purchase six new tables and a storage trolley as a result of funds raised at the Pantomime. A further donation has also enabled two new sets of tablecloths for them.

Sadly, Chris Page retired as our Office Administrator in April 2024 and we will miss her. Going forward, we have now set up an online booking system for St Paul's Church and the Parish Centre that can be accessed from the parish website by all users and hopefully increased accessibility will generate more income.

The Parish Centre is approaching its twentieth birthday and would certainly benefit from some fresh paint inside and out in the next year.

Jackie Curd

n) Parish Lifelong Learning 2023-4

This year Parish Lifelong Learning has continued to stimulate our explorations in faith. We have arranged:

- Two sessions on **Climate Change: Everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask** with Rev Charlotte Sleigh
 - *Science and Spirituality*
 - *Science and Action*
- Four sessions on **Healing** with outside and experienced speakers from our own congregation.
 - Simon Redman Healing on the Streets
 - Christine Robinson Healing in the NHS
 - Dr Claire Butler Healing and Suffering
 - Richard Farrant Healing Life's Hurts
- Lent groups which attracted 40+ participants on the themes of
 - *Emmaus* - Growing in the Scriptures,
 - *Emmaus* - Life, Death and Christian Hope,
 - *Tom Wright'* book - Lent and Easter for Everyone
- We have also:
 - promoted and resourced the Church of England Advent and Lent campaigns *Follow the Star* and *Watch and Pray* via booklets and apps,
 - advertised the latest publications from Church House Bookshop,
 - advertised online lectures from St Martin in the Fields
 - publicised learning opportunities from the Diocese.
- Meet, Eat and Explore has had a break but will be back!
- The Parish Library has had the first stage of a makeover and will shortly be starting a renewed existence as a resource from which books may be borrowed/taken with no signing out.

- Two weekly groups have been meeting and we shall be discussing possibilities for extending this and our future programme at our coming meeting.

Thanks to all the LLL committee, New voices are always welcome, as we look to where we journey next!

Rosemary Walters

o) Pilgrim Post

Editor and Printing – Revd Clive Barlow

Advertising and Circulation – Parish Office

Our Pilgrim Post ‘editorial policy’ continues to be outward looking and it has been good to receive and publish articles that make it so.

Pilgrim Post continues to be printed each month for subscribers who collect a magazine from church or receive one by post. A pdf copy of each edition is accessible on the parish website, and this is also emailed to subscribers who have requested pdf copies. Our thanks to all those who are or have been part of the collation team again this year.

We are as always, very grateful to those who willingly deliver magazines around the parish and to Chris Page in the Parish Office who attends to postal subscribers and deals with people wishing to advertise. Alternative arrangements will need to be made when Chris retires at the end of April.

We hope that the variety of articles, book reviews, the ‘Monthly Archive’ researched by Brian Hogben and more recently regular reports from St Martin’s make the magazine a source of interest to our readers. Items for Endpiece sent in by readers are always welcome too. All this combines to make the magazine what it is and makes the job of editing a real pleasure. Proof-reading each month continues to be kindly undertaken by Judith Dimond.

Pilgrim Post is published by the PCC and represents very good value for our subscribers. Complimentary promotion copies are available by request to the parish Office.

Clive Barlow.

p) Eco-Group

The past year has been most productive as St. Paul’s has received the silver Eco-Church award. There remains work to do to bring St. Martin’s to this level but it is work in progress. Work on the churchyard at St. Martin’s has continued with snowdrops and daisies planted which hopefully will come to maturity over the next few years. There is still much to do and again volunteers are needed. The brambles are rampant and the box shrub has died and needs to be cut down.

Energy conservation will be a significant part of St. Paul’s efforts to achieve the gold award but significant progress has been made on reducing gas consumption which has fallen by 19.44%. The churchwardens are working hard to ensure that the heating is only used when absolutely necessary. The boiler at St. Martin’s is continuing to perform, thankfully.

The Deanery Eco Group meets regularly and there is great support and encouragement amongst members and from our Deanery Eco champion, Caroline Blamey.

Sue White.

p) Flowers

i) Flowers at St Paul's

Appreciation must be conveyed to the team of regular helpers who keep the flowers at St Paul's looking so splendid throughout the year; a huge Christmas tree added to the decorations from Christmas to Candlemas! In addition, we were privileged to arrange flowers for two weddings and for the thanksgiving services of Andrew Thurston, Audrey Field, and Rosemary Moss.

The cost of flowers has continued to rise over the past year, so we are extremely grateful for donations given in memory of loved ones or to celebrate a special event. Unfortunately, with the imminent change in the customs duty for cut flowers and plants, the price will continue to rise significantly.

All the greenery for the arrangements comes from our gardens and we are always on the lookout for further sources of evergreen shrubs that will last in an arrangement or be used to decorate the church at festival times.

We would gladly welcome new flower arrangers to our team. It is not an onerous task and only involves a commitment for a couple of weeks in the year. If you are not sure, why not come along and see what it involves! No experience is necessary, as help and support will be given whilst you gain the confidence to have a go.

Ros Newington

ii) Flowers at St Martin's

A dwindling number of not very skilled people arrange flowers at St Martin's. We are extremely grateful, therefore, that Diana Francis and Vanessa Stanton have continued to create beautiful arrangements at Christmas and Easter. Increasingly large numbers of pilgrims, tourists and other visitors come to this famous church, so it is very important to us, that fresh pretty flowers greet them. We shall continue to do our best!

Doreen Laven

4 SAFEGUARDING REPORT

After taking over from my predecessor and having completed all the specific training, I have been looking at how we could improve safeguarding across the parish.

I worked with Mark to complete the initial self-evaluation of the church using the National Safeguarding Standards and completing Quality Assurance, which I am now transferring across to The Dashboard to monitor and develop high standards of safeguarding across the parish.

This year we are monitoring:

- Prevention
- Learning, Supervision and Training

These will be reviewed in September.

Training is being monitored and recorded and all new members will be expected to complete their training as part of their induction programme, which will be overseen by Ros Newington.

To ensure members of the PCC are reminded of safeguarding issues they are presented with three safeguarding scenarios during the year to discuss and relate to current practices. Safeguarding will always be a high priority within the parish.

Lydia Newington - Parish Safeguarding Officer.

5 DEANERY SYNOD REPORT 2023/4

Deanery Synod has met three times since our last APCM.

- In June 2023, we met at St Nicholas Thanington and heard from the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, Revd Jon Marlow and Vocations Officer Jackie Town, on support for a variety of vocations, lay and ordained. We also heard about the Ministry Experience Scheme from Revd Steve Carter.
- In October 2023, at St Stephens Hackington we had a fascinating talk by Dean David from the Cathedral on relating the Cathedral and the parishes in or Deanery.
- In February 2024, at St Cosmos and St Damian in the Blean, David Elliot and Revd Dawn Watson gave an inspiring account of the values, culture and life of Archbishops School, followed by members of Synod speaking of the links between schools and their parishes.

Synod members were among the diocesan electorate for a recent casual vacancy in the General Synod House of Laity. Prof Catherine Richardson was elected.

The Deanery Eco group continues to flourish and Deanery Synod has also set up occasional meetings, Care in a Crisis, networking local agencies working against poverty and disadvantage.

Synod has kept a working brief on the Deanery Mission Plan. This looks to future co-operation including:

- Communication: of Good News around our parishes including Facebook.
- Mission Opportunities: New Housing, Young People, Schools.
- Partnerships:/Working Together: The Cathedral, Study and Ministry Courses, Clergy and Lay Ministers, Parish Officials and Groups.

Go to the Deanery Facebook page www.facebook.com/CanterburyDeanery/ to see current news of the huge range of activities among our Deanery parishes and Christians Together in Canterbury.

Thanks to all the Deanery officers including the Revd Jo Richards, our Area Dean, Liz Morrison, Lay Chair, John Morrison, Treasurer, Harry Macdonald our Administrator and Revd Nick White for valiant work with the Facebook page.

Rosemary Walters

6 FINANCES

a) General Note

For details of our finances for the year just passed, please see the separate tables of figures which have been audited by Mrs Jane Neame FCA.

b) The Treasurer's Report: Finance & Stewardship

The accounts have been audited in the way required by the Charity Commission. The surplus for the year is due to the good performance of our investments. Parish Giving increased by 9% to £88,761. The majority of donors use Parish Giving and those that don't have valid reasons for not doing so. Tax relief amounted to £26,254.

Donations increased by 59% mainly due to special appeals. Church and Parish Centre lettings increased by 32% to £19315.

Looking ahead we need to improve our letting and invoicing if we are not to lose business. Looking at our payments, Parish Share is the largest. In 2023, it amounted to £85,980 but it has increased by 5.8% to £90,964 in 2024. This amounts to £7,580 per month.

The increase in minor repairs is due to the masonry repair work at St Paul's. Energy prices are fixed until September 2024 and I hope someone will be willing to negotiate new contracts. The final invoice for work at St Martins has now been received. £12,000 was paid in February and the remaining £5,805 will be paid by the end of April.

Outreach payments of £800 each were paid to 10 charities, while both our Christmas charities (Pilgrims Way School and Embrace the Middle East) received £500. We said goodbye to Jeanne McKay, our senior visitor host at St Martins who has been a great success. Jess Morris has now taken over the role and is proving to be a good choice. Looking ahead, the current year will be difficult but it is worth noting that we have one of the soundest balance sheets in the Diocese.

I recommend that Jane Neame, who is our independent accounts examiner and also responsible for our payroll service, be reappointed for 2024 so that she can continue her good work.

Last, but not least I would like to thank everyone for their time, efforts, and money.

Gordon Craig

C) The Fundraising Group

i) Without the Walls Update:

Although pre-dating this group slightly, the 'Without the Walls' campaign was immensely successful made up of the following:

- The costs of repair were £14,449.
- The Lent Appeal raised: £6,121.73 plus gift aid of £1,530 totalling £7,652.1
- Christopher Gower's evening with music raised: £255
- The VAT grant claim was £2,139
- Evensong and Supper including Gift Aid raised: £906.81
- An evening with David Ree-Williams raised £1,900.62

Total: £12,853.59 leaving only £1595 needing to be drawn down from the St Paul's Fund, this success means that the appeal has now closed.

ii) First 'event':

Since our last meeting, the Fundraising Group have held our first fundraising event with 'An Evening with David Rees-Williams' at the end of November. This was a keenly awaited event, and a good one to start on, as we knew that there was pent-up demand as David is very popular, both in the church and locally.

The event made a profit of £1900.62. Most of this profit was through ticket sales, amounting to £1,159; however, there were some significant income items in terms of the bucket at the end and two other donations by cheque. These additional donations and the retiring bucket are Gift-Aid eligible which boosted the profit line. We also benefitted from people's overwhelming generosity in other ways – for example, David gave of his time and talent for free; someone sponsored the wine; and all the food during the interval was very kindly donated by a host of willing volunteers – all of which was very humbling.

As a first event, there were a few things we learnt to take forward:

- The strategy of having an 'early bird' price worked well with a slightly unintended consequence. 99% of tickets were booked in advance with very few 'full price' sales on the door. If used again, this will help us gauge numbers for catering and also reduces risk of an event not being well attended.
- People happily pay £15 for a high-quality event but there is also a balance to be found.
- People's generosity in supporting through the provision of food, sponsoring wine etc is a great blessing – one which is a gift and must be called on sparingly and strategically to ensure it is not taken for granted.
- If you include a free glass of wine on arrival, you won't be selling much during the interval. Sales during the panto suggest wine sales are not particularly buoyant. Even when not included as part of the ticket price, the sale of wine is not vastly profitable profit on, even when sold at £3 a glass. So, essentially, do not rely on bar profits to make a profit from an event.
- Cabaret style/relaxed seating with low lights and creative decoration really helps the feel of an evening event.

iii) Looking ahead

With the cost of the sound system being about £8,000, we need to raise some money for this project which is currently unfunded except for taking money out of reserves.

- We will look at doing four events per year, although that might be three from 'this group' in 2024. The reason for this is that we have already had the Parish Pantomime, which was borne out of a coming together of a wider group from across the parish with a huge sense of purpose and tradition. It was, of course, a huge success – although the profits not known at the time of writing.
- We are mindful of the cost of the sound system and feel that a dent ought to be made in this. A concert by the Cathedral Choral Scholars was held at St Paul's on 2nd March. Tickets were £10. The Scholars played and sang wonderfully – full of feeling – but ticket sales were disappointing.
- We are currently in discussions with a band about an event; possibly 'Music on a Summer's Afternoon'.

Michael Keeler-Walker