

St Mary's Church, Puddletown

**Annual Report and Financial Statements
of the
Parochial Church Council**



for the year ended 31st December 2024

Vicar: The Revd Sarah Hillman,
The Vicarage, Puddletown, Dorchester DT2 8SL

Banks: **CAF Bank Ltd**, 25 Kings Hill Avenue,
Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ
The CBF Church of England Funds,
London, EC2V 6DZ

**Independent
Examiner:** Mr G Taylor, 23 Whitehill, Puddletown, DT2 8SB

St Mary's Church, Puddletown, Annual Report for APCM 2025

Background

St Mary's Church, Puddletown, is part of a Benefice which also includes Tolpuddle and Milborne St Andrew with Dewlish.

The vicarage for the Benefice is situated in Puddletown, opposite the church.

A monthly magazine is produced which covers the whole Benefice.

The Benefice has 4 churches, St Mary's at Puddletown, St John the Evangelist at Tolpuddle, St Andrew's at Milborne and All Saints' at Dewlish. The Churchwardens regularly hold joint meetings.

The PCCs of the Benefice agreed that payment of the Benefice share would be calculated from the Worship in Community figures in 2023 as follows: Puddletown 43% Milborne 24%, Dewlish 13% and Tolpuddle 32%. A benefice account has been set up for this and is administered by the Benefice Administrator. Puddletown now pays a regular sum into the Benefice Account.

Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting for a three-year term, a proportion being elected each year. During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Vicar: The Revd Sarah Hillman

Church Wardens: Dawn Loveless
Vacancy

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Pat Sparks
Vacancy

Elected Members:

1 year, to APCM 2025

Peter Bishop
David Elliott

2 years, to APCM 2026

Margaret Rickard
Rod Hughes

3 years, to APCM 2027

Emma Hughes
Pat Sparks
Jo Crankshaw
Andrew Deans
Bob Todd

There are 0 vacancies.

The Church Electoral Roll

Report to Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

The certified number on the Roll as at the date of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2023 was 43.

During the past twelve months 1 name has been added, and 2 people have died.

The total enrolment as at the annual meeting 21st April 2024 was 42. This figure will be certified to the diocese and deanery following this meeting. Also revised lists have been put up in the church and church room.

Please will anyone aware of address changes of existing members let me or the churchwarden know as soon as possible?

Pat Sparks, Church Electoral Roll Officer

Vicar's Report

The Revd. Sarah Hillman will make a verbal report to the meeting.

Churchwarden's Report

As of previous years, our services at St Mary's are governed by British Summer Time, economy and heating costs. Therefore, apart from baptisms, weddings and funerals, services are held in the Church Room between November and Easter. All Services are mostly well attended.

Bubble Church was held one Sunday afternoon a month in the Village Hall.

Safeguarding and Risk Assessments are kept up to date as is all First Aid requirements.

Furniture and Fabric inspection/repairs are ongoing as always - see fabric report.

St Mary's Inventory was completed on the 29/3/24.

Cynthia Metcalfe stepped down after four years as a second Churchwarden in April and I was sworn in for a fifth year on the 4/6/24.

The multifunctional church room is used for many outside groups and occasions as well as C of E needs. Regular local events include:

Warm Space was from 10/1 until the 24/4 and then recommenced in November.

The Flex Group held a social afternoon on the 17/3. Flex also held, montly and Advent Craft Groups, to which members from all churches attended.

In addition to the above the following fund raising activities were held in 2024:

Cream Teas in June - by courtesy of David and Jean Jeffreys in their lovely garden.

St Mary's Flower Festival weekend in July.

Ukulele Folk Night in October - organised by Bob Todd.

A Wreath making afternoon in December.

The Christmas Fair also in December.

On the 10/12 St Mary's had a Quinquennial Inspection.

St Mary School Christmas Services went well as did all our Christmas Services which were well attended.

I should like to thank Sarah and Margaret and Emma that guide and support me. I thank everyone who support and enable me to carry out my role as churchwarden, without their help my life would be considerably more fraught.

I also respect the time that so many give to keep our church, church room and graveyards up together and I thank one and all.

I shall continue in my role for as long as possible but would welcome a successor that would be happy to take over or to join me as a second Churchwarden.

Dawn Loveless

Secretary's Report

There were 4 PCC meetings this year.

All meetings were included with a joint meeting with the Benefice PCCs..

Emma Hughes

Deanery Report

See attached report.

Pat Sparks represented the PCC at Deanery meetings during 2024.

Financial Review of the Year

To follow.

Schools' Reports – not received

Church Room

The Church Room has continued to be a comfortable and invaluable space which is regularly used for church, village and regional groups and meetings, as well as church services during the cold weather. It has also been used this year for private functions such as family gatherings and funeral wakes. Again for the third consecutive winter it has been much appreciated as a 'warm welcome' space every Wednesday between 10.30 and 1.30 where anyone can come for coffee and chat; bring any craft activities and also enjoy a light lunch of homemade soup and a roll.

An excellent new addition to the room this year has been the installation of a 'smart screen' which is being used regularly and is much appreciated for church services and group talks and presentations.

The hiring fees have remained unchanged which makes it a popular venue for 'not so large' gatherings.

Jane Stanley

Health & Safety

We continue to use the PCC-approved Health & Safety Policy.

Safeguarding

No incidents have been reported. Cynthia Metcalfe is now our Safeguarding Officer.

Churchyard

As ever the team worked very hard to keep the churchyards tidy again this year. Sadly we had to say goodbye to Tina and Peter Steggles, and two members had major surgery, but I am pleased to say they will join us again as soon as possible. We greeted Andrew as he joined our team, and helped out from the autumn last year. We had a get together in the parish room in January and were joined by the weeding team. I would like to say a huge thankyou to everyone for all they do. I know that Sarah our vicar appreciates the work carried out and we have received many verbal messages of thanks.

Hazel Barret

Fabric

Since last year, Ursula Pomeroy had for many years overseen the fabric maintenance of our church, but, who in 2024 finally passed over all her paperwork to our churchwarden and I to store and continue with the work of overseeing the many jobs to be undertaken for the future.

A lot has been carried out in 2024. The roof leaks have been attended to, the guttering and down pipes are now cleared out regularly; the tower door has been repaired; and a small team has carried out an assessment of the medieval stained glass shards in the north aisle which are in need of conservation.

Ongoing work on the church walls, which by agreement is being carried out over the next few years, to repoint and make good the wall's many missing mortar pointing and cracks etc...

A regular maintenance check list is now in place, and where possible work is carried out by volunteers and the use of professionals.

Bob Todd

Magazine

The Magazine Working Group team remains the same as the previous year and the magazine is managing to break even. The advertising rates and cover price remained the same as 2023.

Jan O'Mara has been managing the subscriptions and the distributors. This year there was a team of 18 Puddletown distributors delivering to 146 subscribers each month. In Tolpuddle a team of 5 deliver to a further 62 with 8 taken to St John's church. A further 10 free copies are taken to Dewlish and Miborne. There are also 3 postal subscribers. We put 20 for sale in the shop and 15 in the church. One copy is sent to the History Centre in Dorchester. We currently have approximately 280 magazines delivered each month. There were no extra copies delivered to Puddletown and Tolpuddle this December. The quantity sold in the church and shop varies from month to month.

Emma Hughes

Flower Team

We have sadly lost Ursula from the team and we will miss her inspirational ideas and input, we are grateful to her for continuing to purchase the oasis for us.

The Flower Festival was a big hit, and the depiction of the books was inspired!

We currently charge £75 to assist with wedding flowers if we are needed.

Funeral flowers are arranged through the churchwarden or the family themselves, to the arranger on duty.

4 of the team got together to assemble the Mothering Sunday posies.

We plan to have a team cupboard and pew clear out tidy up soon.

Heather Mears

Bells

Since the last report we had rung for 1 wedding, in July which was a family wedding.

I continue to look after the maintenance of the bells with the help of Robert Newton from Hilton, and put the flag up for special occasions, though I am finding it a struggle now, and I'm grateful to my son Robert who helps me.

Emma Hughes also helps to keep the ringing room clean and tidy.

The clock was serviced on Sept 14th and thankfully I was shown how to reset the clock, should we lose electricity, as we have had a couple of outages at church recently. The clock will run for approx. 11 hours after a power cut.

At the Flower Festival, the tower was open for visitors and this was very successful and raised £81 in donations.

We welcomed many visiting bands of ringers to our tower in 2024. We also held the Salisbury Guild of Ringers Service, followed by tea and the AGM.

Robin Mears, Tower Captain

Flex Group

In March we had the third of our social Benefice gatherings. This was a games afternoon with refreshments and was held in Puddletown Church Room. Most of the games were kindly lent by Andrew and Lizzie Peckover. There was a good turnout from Puddletown people but few from other parishes in the Benefice. Although our intention was to run more social gatherings, as I have had voice problems, I have not been up to organising further events.

The Flex Craft Group ran monthly in Puddletown Church room throughout most of the year and during Advent it was run weekly. There is a small group of regular attendees from three of the churches in our Benefice. We provide a craft activity at each session and that is followed by a bread and cheese lunch.

Margaret Rickard

Friends of Puddletown Church

The friends currently consists of thirty three members, and is administered by a small committee made up of Andrew Deans, Chairman; Janet Nassim, Secretary; Bob Todd, Treasurer; Jill Temple, Communications.

The aim of the group is to raise funds to help in the upkeep of the fabric of our church here in Puddletown. To date the Friends have raised over 43 thousand pounds towards projects. The last year saw help in repairing the outside door of the tower, and monies have been set aside towards the conservation of the medieval shards of glass in the north aisle. The committee in 2024 held a Garden Party in the house and grounds of Dawney House, courtesy of Janet and her husband. This proved very successful and will be repeated this year.

Bob Todd (Treasurer, FOPC)

THANKS

Puddletown Church continues to be supported by a great number of people who give generously of their time and talents, along with those who contribute financially.

We would like to thank David Elliott for all his hard work taking over as Treasurer and to Emma Hughes, our benefice administrator and PCC secretary.

Thanks, too, to Heather Mears and the flower team for all their beautiful displays, the excellent catering team for their delicious meals and cakes, the churchyard maintenance team who keep our grounds looking so good and the church cleaning team ably led by Jan O'Mara.

Also, an appreciation for the hard work of those who have helped organize events and to the Friends of Puddletown Church.

DORCHESTER DEANERY SYNOD MEETING SUMMARY 2024

Meeting Held 18 Apr 24 at Charminster Community Hall

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and Jeremy Selfe from Dorset Historic Churches Trust (DHCT) as guest speaker. The Rural Dean, the Rev'd Sarah Hillman added her welcome and asked the Rev'd Keith Magee to say an opening prayer.

Matters Arising:

Presentation by Jeremy Selfe, DHCT: Jeremy spoke about the work of DHCT and how it raises funding, together with examples of grants provided.

Financial Statement from Treasurer: The Treasurer reported that 63% of the share was raised during 2023, with 20% of the share having been made during quarter one of 2024. The balance for the Deanery fund was £48.08 at end of year 2023.

Report From Diocesan Synod: David Elliott provided a summary report of the latest Diocesan Synod. Topics discussed include:

- *Making Jesus Known vision and strategic priorities* - discussed progress on the 5 strategic priorities.
- *Business case for the new share*. [Secretary note: Archdeacon of Dorset, the Ven Antony MacRow-Wood will be guest speaker at the next deanery synod meeting on 2 Jul 24 to discuss the share calculations].
- *Report by Diocesan Board of Education and Safeguarding team*.
- *Churchwarden Support*

Meeting Held 2 Jul 24 at St Alhelm's, Crossways

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and Archdeacon Antony McRow-Wood. The Rural Dean, the Rev'd Sarah Hillman added her welcome and said an opening prayer, specifically remembering the recently deceased Philippa Francis, who had been a long term member of the Synod.

Presentation by Archdeacon of Dorset, the Ven Antony MacRow-Wood, who was invited to discuss the new share calculations (copy of presentation circulated separately). There was a period for questions and discussion after the presentation and how this will be applied to parishes, with examples of effects and proposed implementation of the new share. There was also discussion on the proposed church reparation for slavery. Questions were raised about the funding from Queen Anne's legacy and that parishes have been experiencing problems as a result, with a following heated discussion.

Matters Arising:

Parish Representation at DHCT: Rachel said that there was a need for new parish representatives on the DHCT and asked that this be raised at PCCs.

Financial Statement from Treasurer: The Treasurer reported that 50% of parishes have so far provided copies of their accounts.

Report From Diocesan Synod: The rural dean said that the recent planned Diocesan Synod had been postponed.

Meeting Held 2 Oct 24 at St George's, Fordington

The Rural Dean welcomed Bishop Karen, Bishop of Sherborne as guest speaker.

Matters Arising:

Presentation by Bishop Karen, Bishop of Sherborne on Living in Love and Faith

Bishop Karen began her presentation with an overview of the history of the Living in Love and Faith journey within the Church of England and what the next steps will be.

She emphasized that God calls all of us by name, loves us and welcomes us acknowledging that we can hold true to scripture but hold different views. Despite the publication of LLF there is still a sense that inconsistencies continue. There is a need to retain good doctrine and walk together as the Church of England whilst addressing the fact that Civil Marriage is now open to all.

The prayers of blessing offered by LLF were intended to bless and acknowledge relationships when couples wanted God to be part of this. The plan was that there would be no compulsion to use these prayers but it was hoped that they would be a source of hope and comfort for couples who wanted affirmation for their committed relationships lived in God's love and light.

Since the publication of LLF, problems and dissent have continued with some churches directing their Parish Share to alternative funds. This has resulted in General Synod adopting a more cautious approach allowing prayers to be said but no formal blessing. Dissent continues with some groups demanding their own Bishops, training courses and separate ordinations.

Synod continues to work on this issue. Conversations are continuing about working with difference and how this might look with the possibility of either formal or informal arrangements put in place. There is a need to give a voice to the silent majority who want to welcome all and who see God's love in those who are present excluded. There is a hope that new resources will be offered that will help us to navigate the complexities and honour those seeking God's Blessing on their relationship. If we can find a way to remain united The Church of England has the possibility of being a witness in this divided world.

Synod were encouraged to break into small groups to discuss the Bishop's presentation.

Feedback included:

- The issue of the under-representation of rural communities on Synod
- 45% of those applying to adopt are same sex couples
- We are all getting old and not representing the young
- Community keeps our churches alive and people may not come into churches, if we are not seen to be inclusive it sends the wrong message to the vast majority of people who are not church goers
- Is this really about money? Are we scared of a schism that may be the result of being fully inclusive and the money that will be lost from the wealthy evangelical churches
- The church is out of kilter with law
- There are a number of clergy who are in same sex relationships. Some have to retire to be married. This is a cruel system
- There is much anger around this issue
- Same sex couples are wanting to have wedding blessings and clergy would like to offer this.
- Jesus told us to love one another. How is this loving?
- Churches will be able to opt in to offer blessings – it will be interesting to see who will sign up. For those who don't sign up could be viewed as homophobic. But if people know who to approach it would be a way forward. Lots of churches want to be pastorally sensitive. The Labour Government could change our exemption to the equalities act or could revoke our privilege of celebrating weddings – all weddings then would have to be civil with church blessings available for those who want it.
- Methodists have the issue of conscience and the question of what is a holy life written into their constitution.
- We are alienating the children of same sex couples
- Marriage is a stable relationship within society where children may be nurtured and is a strong and true desire for many especially for clergy

Bishop Karen thanked the synod for their contributions and reminded us to hold this issue in our prayers. There was a vote of thanks for Bishop Karen.

Financial statement

The Treasurer reported that we are three quarters of way through the year and to date 60% of share has been paid.

The Treasurer asked that PCCs who are not paying to review their position.

PCCs and Treasurers should have received an email from the Diocese giving them access to the new Share system.

Each benefice has an allocation for their Share but they can determine how this is allocated across the Benefice meaning wealthier churches in a benefice can support the churches that are struggling. The Diocese needs to be informed by 31st October if there are to be adjustments to the way Share will be paid.

It was noted that there seems to have been a mistake in the calculation of Share and the 2028 figures are not accurate. This needs to be taken up with the Diocese.

Diocesan Synod Report

Synod met on 24 Jul 24 for the final meeting of the triennium. The Deanery representatives are Rev'ds Keith, Leila and Gemma with David Elliott as the only Lay representative at present. The next meeting is on 1 Oct 24. The vacancies on Bishop's council have now been filled.