

St Mary's Church, Puddletown
**Annual Report and Financial Statements
of the
Parochial Church Council**



for the year ended 31st December 2023

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 2024

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 expenses would be split in 2023 as follows: Puddletown 46% Milborne 27%, Dewlish 8% and Tolpuddle 19%; this reflects the number of people in the May count for each church. 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 for the first 9 months of the year.

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
Cynthia Metcalfe

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Pat Sparks
Vacancy

Elected Members:

1 year, to APCM 2024

Emma Hughes
Pat Sparks
Jo Crankshaw
Andrew Deans
Bob Todd

2 years, to APCM 2025

Peter Bishop
David Elliott

3 years, to APCM 2026

Margaret Rickard
Rod Hughes

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 51

During the past twelve months 3 names have been added, 4 people have died, and 7 moved away.

The total enrolment as at the annual meeting 14th May 2023 was 51. 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 churchwardens 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.

Churchwardens' Report

In the aftermath of Covid 19 St Mary's is now back to normal. The services from January until Easter and from October being in the church room for the winter months.

Maintenance and repairs remain ongoing - see Fabric report.

Health and safety guidelines and risk assessments are, as always, being adhered to. Safeguarding training and DBS certification continues. Infection control measures remain active, hand gel and masks being there for those who still have a need to use them. The Communion cup has been available since the spring for all whom wish to partake as authorised by Bishop Stephen Lake.

In January a card collect machine was set up in St Mary's.

In February a complete sound system with Bluetooth was installed.

Three windows in total were replaced in the church room in March and May and twenty new chairs were purchased. The broken chairs were disposed of.

St Mary's Inventory was carried out in April.

Due to the rise in fuel costs a Warm Space was organised one day a week in the church room from March until May. This proved popular and was recommenced in October for the winter.

The Lent group and the Lent Flex groups were attended by parishioners from all four churches.

Coronation events in May kept us occupied. In May we also attended the Crossways Deanery Service.

June was a busy month. We were sworn in as churchwardens again at the Archdeacon's Visitation at Crossways church and later in the month we had our St Mary's Visitation by Archdeacon Penny Sayer which went very smoothly.

July brought much excitement as not only was Maggie ordained, Bishop Stephen was at Dewlish church hall as part of his rural tour, so we got to see him. He talked with Cynthia about trying to simplify the work of churchwardens.

Ride and Stride took place in September. We also compiled a policy document together with Jane Stanley for the hiring and use of the Church room.

Bob Todd and the Ukulele band arranged a Sixties's Night on the 3rd October which was very enjoyable.

Sadly we had to give Maggie our very best wishes for her future ministry at her Milborne leaving service at the end of October when she transferred to Gillingham.

The Children's Society boxes were emptied for the last time in November. The sermon was replaced by an informative talk from the Society's representative, Paul Gray, and Dawn was presented with a certificate from the Society as she stepped down from being the Box Coordinator for ten years!

The Flex Advent Craft Group was enjoyable and the painting of Nativity pebbles were fun to do. These were left around the village for children to bring to the Crib Service.

December's wreath making afternoon and the Saturday Christmas Fare were as popular and well attended as always as were the numerous and happy Christmas Services.

We should like to give our thanks to all who have helped with the organisation, maintenance, the running of and the presentation of St Mary's and the church room, in order to make Jesus known.

We should also like to thank everyone that has supported both of us during our four years as churchwardens.

Dawn Loveless & Cynthia Metcalfe

Secretary's Report

There were 8 PCC meetings this year.

3 meetings were included with a joint meeting with the Benefice PCCs and 5 meetings were held alone.

Emma Hughes

Deanery Report

See attached report.

Pat Sparks represented the PCC at Deanery meetings during 2023.

Financial Review of the Year

A lot can happen in a year, and writing this report reminds me of the contribution made by so many people to generate the income needed to meet the costs of ministry and care for our church and community. Your commitment is sincerely appreciated.

Our income increased by one-third in 2023 over the previous year and my thanks go out to everyone who has contributed to church funds. Giving in church has been enhanced by the installation of a card reader in March, the cost of which was generously met by a member of the congregation. Many of us carry little or no cash and this alternative way of giving has brought in over £800.

Fundraising events generated £3,000 in 2023 and thank you to everyone who organised and supported the Jumble Trail, Garden Party, Ride & Stride, Sixties Night and Christmas Fair.

Activities in the Church Room make a useful contribution to our income. The weekly coffee morning continues to be popular and 'Warm Space' on a Wednesday has a regular number of attendees. External bookings are a valuable source of income.

Producing, printing and distributing the Parish Magazine would not be possible without the commitment of a large team of people. Income from advertisers and subscribers together meet the editing and printing costs. Another activity which requires significant commitment is the ever-popular monthly Community Lunches held in the Village Hall.

Grants were received from Dorset Council and the Diocese of Salisbury towards our 'Warm Space' project, the Hobson Charity for our bells, the Aldhelm Mission Fund towards the cost of establishing Bubble Church, John Lewis Partnership for the Community Lunch Fund, and Puddletown Area Parish Council for care and maintenance of the Churchyard. Together these grants contributed over £5,000 towards meeting our outgoings. The Friends of Puddletown Church also released over £6,000 which was applied towards our new sound system, automating the Tower Clock, replacing a door hinge and stained-glass surveys.

Expenditure also increased by a third year-on-year. A significant element of this increase reflected the installation of the new sound system in church. Other one-off expenditure included replacing some chairs in the Church Room and adding an electrical winding mechanism to the Tower Clock, while repairs were needed to the Porch Door, Church Room windows and boundary walls.

Special collections enabled St. Mary's to make donations to the Friends of Salisbury Cathedral, Toilet Twinning, The Royal British Legion, The Children's Society, WaterAid, The Salvation Army for its work with the homeless and the

Women's Refuge. In addition, grants were made from the Community Lunch Fund to Puddletown Pumpkins, Puddletown Pre School, Puddletown First School, St. Mary's C E Middle School, Puddletown Library, DorSAR and Puddletown Scouts.

David Elliott (Treasurer)

Schools' Reports – not received

Church Room

The Church Room has continued to be an invaluable and comfortable space which is regularly used for church and village groups and meetings, as well as church services during the cold weather. It is also used fairly regularly for private functions such as children's parties, family gatherings and funeral wakes. Also again this year it has been much appreciated as a `warm space` one day a week where folk socialise, bring their knitting or crochet and enjoy refreshments including delicious homemade soup.

Recently Wi-Fi has been installed which has been appreciated by hirers. The hiring fees haven't been increased despite the considerable increase in the cost of lighting and heating which makes it a very attractive venue for smallish 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

The last year has been very busy for the churchyard team. We have kept up with the ever faster growing grass. Welcomed a number of new members joining the team. So a huge Thank you to Sheila, Carl, Andrew and George who continued to work hard in the churchyard. Welcome to Andy, Sue, David, Colin, Tina, and Peter all of whom have been busy cutting the grass cutting back the beech trees and picking up the trimmings from the beech hedge. At this point I would like say thank you to Caroline and Wakely Cox who have taken huge amounts of builder bags of trimmings for disposal. Also a working group worked together to replace the church mower shed which was a huge job so Thank you to Bob, Chris, Jeff, Carl, Peter, Andrew who all worked tirelessly to achieve a not so easy task. Together we ensured the Church looked at it best for many weddings ext. it must also be noted the contribution towards the Church yard by Jean, Bob, Sheila, Carl, Dawn, Pat, and others who have kept up with weeding the new area and over grown areas and graves. Together they have served the Church and community so very well.

Hazel Barret

Fabric

Repairs carried out in 2023:

The strap hinge on the north porch gate was replaced and the gate re-hung with re-bushed pintels. This was skilfully carried out by Bob Todd.

Another section of the boundary wall (next to the East gate) was repaired.

Sporadic investigations took place to trace the source of the leak over the passage to the Athelhampton Chapel, with no great success, but ongoing.

A leaking radiator has been repaired.

The gallery balustrade seems not to be well-secured at the south end, but does not appear to move, and the wall at that point bears the (Elizabethan Coat of Arms?) wall painting. The Archdeacon was consulted, and advised that as any repair would involve many consultations with experts because of the wall painting, nothing should be done at present, but the situation should be monitored. Meanwhile, that area of seating should be blocked off.

Maintenance tasks carried out included replacing 2 tiles on the Vestry roof, clearing the rainwater hopper near the oil tank which was overflowing, a patch of new plaster on the north wall of the north entrance porch. Simon Crumbleholme again cleared the gutters at no charge. All gullies and downpipes are regularly checked.

Future repairs in process:

The tower door is rotten in its lower section. It is thought that the door is C18, so a Faculty is required to either repair or replace it. This is being sought.

The fragments of coloured glass in the north windows are the subject of 2 conservators' reports, both of which confirm that some of the glass is medieval and is in a poor state, and that all the glass is suffering from the effects of condensation and should at least be cleaned. Plans are underway.

Ursula Pomeroy

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 were increased in 2023.

Jan O'Mara has been managing the subscriptions and the distributors. This year there was a team of 20 Puddletown distributors delivering to 150 subscribers each month. In Tolpuddle a team of 5 deliver to a further 70. 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 285 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

The Flower team has 13 regular members, and I am very grateful for their support,

We decorate the Church for Easter, Harvest and Christmas, .

I have been trying to encourage team members who do not normally do the Altar Arrangement to put themselves forward and "give it a go" it does not have to be ornate, otherwise it is left to a few of us,

We continue to be available to arrange Flowers for weddings and have 1 wedding booked in for 2024 This year was a very busy year for weddings, and the team helped out as per usual, and learnt a lot from the professional team that was there in November.

All Risk Assessments have been updated for 2024 and have been, emailed out to the team. It was decided unanimously at the meeting that we would no longer be putting arrangements etc up in the high window sills. I continue to organise the team rotas.

Heather Mears

Bells

Simon from the Crackstone Clock Co. arrived on Good Friday from Gloucestershire, to start the work on the church clock conversion to electric.

Robin helped him with the works to reduce costs and they both managed to get the heavy motor up to the clock room. The works took 2 days, and Simon left 6pm on the Saturday. After a few teething troubles the clock is now running smoothly, and having the clock put to electric has saved me going up to the clock room every week to wind it!

With 7 Weddings last year we were busy with bellringing,

The ringers attended two bell maintenance courses at our tower in May and September; these courses were well attended from other ringers from local towers.

We ring at Milborne St Andrew on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Thursday and at Puddletown on 2nd and 4th Thursday.

We have 10 Ringers on the register, and continue to welcome visiting ringers from Dorset and other areas

Robin Mears, Tower Captain

Flex Group

In February we had the first of social Benefice gatherings. This was a skittles evening and quiz and was held in the pub in Milborne St. Andrew. People could purchase meals and drinks from the bar and we were encouraged that there were representatives from all four parishes.

We delayed our second event as all the churches were busy with Coronation and activities so our summer event of outdoor games was held in August at Puddletown and these were generously provided by Andrew Deans and Lizzie Peckover.

The Flex Craft Group ran monthly throughout the year but taking a couple of months break in the summer but in Advent it was run weekly. During the Advent session the group painted stones with Nativity characters – a set for each village – and these were hidden around the villages of the Benefice for children to find and bring to appropriate Christmas Services.

Margaret Rickard

Friends of Puddletown Church

The membership at present stands at thirty three, who actively give donations regularly to the funds that help with the costs of projects that keep our church fabric in good condition and repair.

Our numbers have fallen in the last few years and we look to recruit more members of the church and community to join us in preserving our aged church.

The Friends have contributed funds to many projects and will continue to do so in the future.

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 2023

Meeting Held 2 May 23 at St Aldhelm's Church, Crossways

The Rural Dean welcomed the Revd Stephen Waine to the Deanery, having been licenced before Holy Week to the Piddle Valley. The Revd Gemma Donnell was thanked for providing refreshments.

Matters Arising:

Arrangements for Deanery Service: This was to be held at St Aldhelm's Church, Crossways on 21 May 23 at 1500.

Bishop's Visit 19 Jul 23: The Rural Dean outlined the details of the visit by Bishop Stephen and asked that groups should write down all the 'Good things about the Deanery / Parish / Community' that you would wish the Bishop to know, then identify 'Challenges we have to meet in our Deanery' and 'Questions we would like to ask the Bishop.' It was explained that the Bishop had expressed a wish to get out and meet people, going to Dorchester Market and ideas for lunch were gathered, with a visit to a school, farm, Dorchester Foodbank, Poundbury Quiet Space or meeting locals.

Financial Statement: The Treasurer reported that we do not spend much money but this year the deanery paid for refreshments at the July Meeting in Kingston Maurward and for book tokens for the young people who had been invited to speak. Regarding our share to 31st March the Deanery has paid 23% of which five parishes out of our 35 have paid 100%.

Diocesan/General Synod reports: The Dean said the two items on the Diocesan agenda were 'Living in Love and Faith' (morning) and 'The Bishop's Strategy' (afternoon). The General Synod had not recorded any meetings since our last one.

Vote of Thanks: The Rural Dean thanked everyone for their work on the deanery, especially the House of Laity and Standing Committee. She thanked the officers (Roger, Jane, Michael and Nigel) and the Clergy.

Meeting Held 23 Jul 23 at Kingston Maurward

The Rural Dean welcomed the Venerable Penny Sayer to the meeting.

Election of Lay Officers:

Lay Chair	Rachel Bywater
Secretary:	Ian Bishop [appointed after meeting; endorsed 9 Oct 23 by Standing Committee]
Treasurer	Michael Clarke
Information Officer	Rev'd Keith Magee

Election For Standing Committee:

Rev'd Leila Mather, Jill Minchin, Hazel Morgan

Meeting Business:

Presentation by The Venerable Penny Sayer, Archdeacon of Sherborne: The Archdeacon spoke about the new diocesan vision which began with the vision 'Thy Kingdom Come Here and Now' and now has the strap line 'Making Jesus Known'. She explained there are five strands to the vision Courageous Christian Leadership, Working for Justice, Creative Partnerships in Local Mission, Climate Justice and a Stable Financial Future.

Reporting back on Bishop Stephen's visit on 19th July 2023: The visit was agreed to be a success with the Bishop visiting both the rural and more urban parts of the Deanery.

Financial Statement from Michael Clarke: With regard to Share the Treasurer advised that as at June 2023, 43.6% of the £581,341 has been received by Salisbury. 8 of 35 parishes have made little or no contribution to Share whilst remaining parishes are making regular monthly payments and a few have cleared their account. The Treasurer also requested that parishes who have not sent a copy of their Annual Accounts should ask Treasurers to do so.

Meeting Held 9 Nov 23 via Zoom

The Rural Dean welcomed Janet Eardley from Through the Roof as guest speaker.

Matters Arising:

Presentation by Janet Eardley, Through the Roof: Janet spoke about the work of Through The Roof and how churches can be helped to be more aware of the needs of people with disabilities and to become a more welcoming community. Meeting attendees were invited to share their perceptions and experiences within their parish and encouraged to be aware of ways in which different types of disability can be recognised. Janet also encouraged parishes to think about next steps and provided links to a toolkit for inclusion to assist in the audit of documents for message and culture.

Financial Statement from Treasurer: Due to the absence of the Treasurer, no financial report was available.

Report From Diocesan Synod: Topics discussed include:

- Making Jesus Known vision and strategic priorities - discussed progress on the 5 strategic priorities.
- Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Action Plan - Action points
- Diocesan Financial Report and agreement of Budget - debate on financing the future sustainably
- Arrangements for 2024 Diocesan Synod Elections - reducing representation of laity to approximately equal numbers of clergy and laity.