



Annual Report 2023

In Christ we,
though many,
form one body,
and each member
belongs to
all the others
Romans 12:5

- > **St Mary's, Chesham**
- > **St John 's, Bellingdon**
- > **St John's, Ashley Green**
- > **Emmanuel, Chesham**
- > **Hope Church, Chesham**
- > **Christ Church, Waterside**
- > **St George's, Tylers Hill**

Seven churches working together in and around Chesham



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RECTOR'S REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE PCC AND ACTIVITIES OF THE PARISH IN 2023

Reflecting on 2023 there were a number of opportunities, post covid, for us as a parish to go out into the community share our faith.

The year began with a wonderful baptism and confirmation service in January at which a number of young people from our churches declared their faith publically.



Throughout the year our churches provided toddler groups, messy church, pop up after school cafes, summer teas, pancake parties, senior's lunches and coffee mornings which were well supported by their local communities. We had parish stalls at Chesham's Schools Carnival and Peace in the Park.



The Mark Drama was held just before Easter and involved a cast of volunteers acting out the whole of Mark's Gospel which proved a good way of inviting friends and family to church.

Then in October the 'Bet Your Life On...' event at the Elgiva Theatre saw full audiences listening to a mix of great music, testimonies from local Christians and monologues from Nate Morgan Locke from Speak Life.



After the difficulties of the pandemic 2023 saw relationships with local schools being rebuilt with opportunities to lead assemblies, take classes and welcome them into our churches for carol services. It was a delight to see the whole of Chiltern Hills Academy, our local Church of England Secondary School, some 1400 pupils, attend church for a carol concert for the very first time.

Four of our seven churches provided regular Sunday School groups and the remaining three provided Bible resources for children to enjoy when present. In August we had over a 100 primary aged children attend a four day Holiday Club based on a Jungle theme.



Weekly youth activities and youth discipleship groups took place throughout the year with numbers growing at the fortnightly Friday Night Youth evenings.

Those in need were helped through our Christians Against Poverty project led by Ian Maxwell. Chiltern Foodbank, Chesham Community Fridge and Restore Hope continued to be supported by a host of parish volunteers as the cost of living crisis continued to affect many in our town and villages.

The PCC spent much of the year engaged in a Finance Review. A PCC Sub Group was established which met with representatives of the Diocese of Oxford and the Oxford Good Stewards Trust. The PCC was able to come to a new way of paying parish share which involved DCC's in the decision making process. This was against the backdrop of the decision at February's General Synod to support the creation of Prayers of Love and Faith for same sex couples which introduced a tension into the life of our parish and PCC meetings and took up much of our time and energies.

For most of the year we had a settled staff team though in September we said a fond farewell to our long standing Children's Minister, Hannah Martin. What a blessing she was to so many children and we wished her well in her move up to Norfolk. In addition to being Minister in Charge at St John's Bellingdon, Non Stipendiary Minister Tim Yates took on the role of Minister in Charge at St. John's Ashley Green. The parish staff team is a wonderful team to be part of and there are some great ministry teams across our seven churches not least our parish and district wardens who do so much on our behalf.

Love in Christ,

Edward

Rev Canon Edward Bowes-Smith

Team Rector of Great Chesham

ST MARY'S

2023 saw St Mary's continued to explore our three church values: Nurturing Biblical Faith, Offering Gospel Hope and Showing Christlike Love.

Nurturing Biblical Faith: We began the year with the Question Mark sermon series looking at some of the questions posed in Mark's Gospel leading up to the memorable Mark Drama just before Easter. In the summer we moved on to Romans 12-16 and our Christianity Applied sermon series looking at the practical implications of Christian belief on our everyday lives, church and society. Over the summer holidays we focussed on the faith of the Prophet Samuel and started the autumn with a look at our core values leading into a series on Jonah to coincide with the parish mission.

Offering Gospel Hope: The parish production of the Mark Drama proved a great draw for Christians and non-Christian friends and family members. This was soon followed by the Coronation celebrations saw a St Mary's stall at the town's High Street party with lots of connections being made. As a church we threw ourselves into the parish 'Bet Your Life On...'. October week long mission at the Elgiva. We saw some new faces on Sunday as a result and a number of people ready to join a Christianity Explored group in the new year. Christmas saw large services and it was great to welcome the whole of Chiltern Hills Academy for four back to back carol services for the first time.

Showing Christlike Love: Our third value continued to be seen worked out in our regular Friday morning Ukrainian hub. The growing integration of Ukrainians into society meant that these meetings drew to a close in the summer.

Thank you to everyone who has played a part in the life of our fellowship throughout 2023. We serve Christ because he first served us.

Edward Bowes-Smith

ST JOHN'S BELLINGDON

We continue to meet for worship at 10am every Sunday morning. Some of our congregation have become increasingly frail and are now housebound or in residential care, but generally our attendance numbers have held steady. We mourn the loss of two of our stalwarts, Bunny Sands and Margaret Webb.

We have continued with our quarterly Sunday afternoon services including Evensong and a Celtic-style service at key points in the calendar.

During the year we were able to join Hope Church for a joint service and for their Awayday with Emmanuel.

We held our annual Christmas Eve Village Carol Service at Huge Farm, courtesy of Anka and John Taylor, with villagers joining together to sing carols and listen to the Christmas Story read by children from the village.

We have a column in the regular Village Newsletter, delivered to households in Bellingdon and Asheridge, and we had a stall in the village fete. As a further service to our local community, we host Parish Council Meetings in our church building.

Our monthly "Meeting Point" get-togethers continue to be well-supported. This year, we have also started a midweek "knit and natter" group and occasional talks on Saturdays as ways of welcoming some new faces from the village, at least one of whom has also come along on a Sunday.

We are grateful for support from St Mary's, particularly Jean Corfield, Geoff Houston and from Emmanuel, Pippa Sands.

Tim Yates and Marjorie Davies

ST JOHN'S ASHLEY GREEN

Our regular pattern of worship on Sundays at 11.15 for our services of Holy Communion and Morning Prayer is now well established. And it's been very good to be able to add some extra services through the year to those we'd been able to restart following lockdown and all the challenges that it brought. Numbers continue to grow and its lovely to hear the very positive comments from visitors and those come for occasional services on the warmth of the welcome.

We've continued with a full programme of special services including Battle of Britain Sunday, Harvest, Remembering loved ones, Christmas, and Easter! And we've supported the community through the Village Fete, Bonfire Night and Pancake Day.

We're very grateful to all who help in any way and who serve so faithfully each week welcoming, supporting, providing music, reading our bible passages, leading prayers, providing flowers and baking cakes! And we're very grateful for the help we get from St Mary's, and Christ Church and St.George's.

At our District Annual Meeting last year I wrote that I was '....more hopeful about our future than I was last year!' This year I feel I've moved from 'hopeful' to 'confident'! We've weathered some storms and come out into a calmer period. I think for sure there are more challenges ahead, but I feel that we'll weather these just as those who worshipped here before us over the last 150 years have done.

Tim Yates (and Jacquie and Lisbeth)

EMMANUEL

Discipleship and Teaching

The 10am morning and 6pm evening service has covered a variety of Bible books. The Kids have followed their own curriculum. Monthly "Thank God" all age services and 'The Bridge,' (helping Pathfinders transition into services) also featured, as well as termly Testimony services and a youth led service.

We are beginning a termly preaching feedback workshop. 9 weekly bible studies meet in addition to Equip to Serve and Grow (a new initiative to grow in clarity about Gospel ministry and raise up a cohort of new ministry leaders).

Building Brothers (the men's ministry) meets monthly. The women's ministry thrives with guest speakers and home grown. The Lydia group continues to equip women in the work place.

Toddlers, Messy and Bible club at Newtown Primary have seen newcomers join church life. Despite a number of candidates, we have not been able to recruit a families minister.

Pastoral Care

Prayer triplets and one to one Bible reading persists. Pastoral care cascades up through the staff team to small group leaders to members. Pastoral care has been needed greatly this year. Many are grateful for feeling supported by Emmanuel in trials.

The stalemate in the Church of England over Prayers of Love and Faith remains challenging at Emmanuel, particularly in how to respond to that stalemate. I am grateful to God for Emmanuel's unity, lack of partisanship and zeal for the glory of God.

Edward Millais

HOPE CHURCH

Sunday Services The congregation has continued to grow slowly over the year and we are delighted to have a youth ministry developing in the congregation.

Outreach Café now meets every Wednesday from 2:30pm to 4pm. The earlier session is well attended by senior citizens in the community with several regulars. After 3:15pm many young families join the café, bringing their children after school. We are often at full capacity.

We are currently looking at material to introduce the Christian faith to those with no Christian background. We are also working with Kara Byrne, Bucks Council's Community Engagement officer as part of the Council's Opportunity Bucks initiative in our ward,

Our Friday Toddlers' Group has grown significantly since September. It is now fully utilised and there is a waiting list for mums and toddlers wishing to attend.

We also run a Bible club in Ivingswood Primary on a Monday afternoon each week in term time. We currently have four leaders and 5-6 Children attending regularly. We also are involved in School assemblies and occasional opportunities to take part in class lessons.

Mission Partners Having concluded our lengthy partnership with Carol Townsend, the CMC reallocated mission funding to support both Fountain of Peace and Restore Hope.

Property The property committee, led by Jon Reynolds, has overseen the management of the fabric of the church building. Work required in the quinquennial report on the building has been carried out over the course of the year. Work to replace the old heating system in the church and hall was completed in January. Some preliminary work has been done to consider what improvements would be needed to the building at Hope to bring it up to a modern standard.

David Hyndman

CHRIST CHURCH WATERSIDE

This year has brought many challenges to Christ Church around conversations concerning Living in Love and Faith. Some members have chosen to leave for a church more aligned with their theological views, while new families have started attending and calling Christ Church home. A steady Gospel message has partly enabled this growth. It's encouraging to see church members growing spiritually during this time. Our church wardens, Chris and Matthew, with support from Keith, have been invaluable sources of insight and stability during this challenging period.

Connections are developing in our community, thanks in part to the Waterside Community Action Group's key role engaging local authorities, including the future Mayor of Chesham and our council representatives. Relationships with local and wider schools have grown through weekly offerings of safe spaces and leading classes on faith and wellbeing. Building relationships with parents has been a rewarding experience. Some have asked what costume I will wear for next year's Christingle service, while others have requested I could support their children who are going through difficult times. Christ Church is increasingly recognised as a valuable community partner.

I pray as we navigate this season, we treat one another with the love and respect God showed through Christ - listening well, discerning prayerfully, moving forward as a church and parish to glorify Him in service to one another, known as Christ's disciples.

Darren Dalton

ST GEORGE'S TYLERS HILL

Last year brought some challenges as we navigated different understandings of scripture and how to walk together in unity. Despite those difficulties, we were able to continue the journey with grace, compassion and love, fostering a true sense of family and community. I am deeply grateful for the support of wardens Gill and Julie and the encouragement and wisdom of Keith as he upheld the ministry at St. George's.

We have built positive relationships with Ley Hill and Hawridge and Cholesbury schools, engaging not just the children but their parents too, even though Hawridge and Cholesbury school is outside our parish. This presented wonderful opportunities, like partnering with Ley Hill school for Remembrance.

Christmas allowed us to connect as well, with Keith leading carols at the Hen and Chickens. All our outreach - fayres, coffee and cake afternoons, learning and sharing meals, the dog show, Easter services - lays the groundwork for St. George's to be known and valued here.

Moving forward, we must reflect on why more people are not making St. George's their spiritual home and taking the next steps to grow our numbers. What are growing churches doing differently? What prevents people from committing to St. George's despite our welcoming and loving community? Identifying and addressing these obstacles will be key as we seek to expand our reach and grow our family in Ley Hill.

Please spend time in prayer to discern God's calling for St. George's, so that we may faithfully serve and be called "good and faithful servants."

Darren Dalton

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The PSO received calls or emails concerning 7 separate situations over the last 12 months. None of these needed to be reported to the Diocese. In some, relevant help was signposted by the PSO. Where needed, best practice was reviewed and in some, pastoral support continues.

We continue to use the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard and Safeguarding Hub provided by the CofE. The Dashboard prioritises action to improve our Safeguarding Practices. We are in a reasonable position (still on Level 2 of 3) but there is still more to do.

The Hub makes communicating the Safeguarding Status of each individual and each activity much easier. Please contact Rachel using the contact details below if you would like more details about this.

We are thankful that we had an excellent application for our Parish Safeguarding Administrator Role who will be in role as soon as the final paperwork is completed.

Safeguarding is best seen as something that we are all responsible for. As such, thank you to all staff and volunteers who make Safeguarding a priority and to the DSOs who do much of the administration.

Rachel Meldrum

Parish Safeguarding Officer
safeguarding@cheshamparish.org
01494 782783

BUILDINGS AND FABRIC REPORT

The sub-committee comprises the Buildings Manager/Committee Chairman, Deputy Chairman and representatives from each of the 7 churches in the Parish. The committee met twice during the year, on 20th February and on 21st November. Its responsibilities are to liaise with the PCC and Standing Committee and to co-ordinate each district's proposed expenditure on the church buildings and to look after the parish owned/rented staff houses, plus the parish office. The PCC has welcomed the chairmanship of the committee passing to Neil Cooper in Summer 2024.

Church Buildings

2023 was a relatively quiet year in terms of maintenance and improvement work on the church buildings. The first of two slight exceptions was St Mary's where the damaged listed Georgian columns and arch had to be repaired, mostly under Veolia's insurance, and various stained glass windows were restored at a cost of c.£15k. A leak in the church rooms roof was also repaired costing under £3k. The second exception was Hope church where various fire safety and other quinquennial works were carried out and professional fees paid in preparation for the proposed mainly internal improvements that are being planned.

Expenditure on the other church buildings was limited. A new fence adjoining the woodland at St George's Tylers Hill was erected.

Staff Housing Nothing major by way of work was undertaken during the year although the rear garden fence at 230 Chartridge Lane was renewed.

Annual Maintenance The usual fire safety checks including the servicing of the fire extinguishers were carried out at the beginning of the year. Gutter and downpipe clearance was also undertaken at the beginning of the year and the boilers at 31 Chapman's Crescent, 230 Chartridge Lane and 5 Farriers Way were serviced.

John Brown

AMERSHAM DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Amersham Deanery is a large one and reflects all the issues that have been experienced throughout the C of E, especially at General Synod level. Nevertheless, there is a genuine prayerful effort to support each other, even where there is disagreement.

The Members are all elected from the churches in the Deanery and consist of both Clergy & Lay reps, with a priest Dean and Lay Chair. Two committees are in operation, namely the 'Standing' which is charged with finances and legal proceedings and the Mission & Pastoral which acts as a very supportive team aimed at producing the most effective, encouraged and staffed parishes for the active proclamation of the Gospel, in word and deed.

Each meeting includes speakers who bring fresh ideas and during the past year some of those we have been addressed by included missionaries, safeguarding advisors, musicians and reporters from General Synod. We have two people from Gt Chesham as members of Synod: Rev Jeremy Moodey, and Hon Canon Julie Dziegiel.

Although St James GX and the Team Ministry in Chesham are by far the largest in the Deanery, meetings do happen at smaller church centres, and the contributions from all are welcomed and utilised. Therefore Deanery is not just a talking shop but all are active; all are praying together, and planning for the future.

It would be a great contribution if some younger members of congregations were willing to serve on the Deanery!

Jacquie Hardman

TREASURER'S REPORT

There is a surplus for the year of £175k (2022: £39k). This is primarily due to a favourable gain in the value of shares held by the charity (£68k gain in 2023 vs £31k loss in 2022) along with a reduction in expenditure. Overall income has increased by £7k compared to 2022 due primarily to a large increase in restricted income and a smaller increase in investment income which exceeds the one off surplus on the disposal of a property in the prior year.

Total expenditure in 2023 was £32k less than 2022. This is primarily due to a £64k reduction in the Parish Share but it should be noted that of this £51k has been designated and will be given in 2024 to support orthodox Anglican Ministries in the Oxford Diocese (and so it will be shown as expenditure in the 2024 accounts).

Due to inflation there was as expected an increase in a number of costs along with an increase in grants to mission partners of £22k.

If the investment gains were excluded in 2023 and the £51k additional Parish Share had been paid out in 2023 then there would have been a £4k deficit on unrestricted funds and £60k surplus on restricted funds (of which at least £49k was a one off gift that won't be repeated in future years)

Praise God for His faithfulness in 2023. It is worth being aware though that with the cost of living crisis and inflation it is likely that income will reduce and costs will increase in 2024. Therefore please pray for generosity among the people in our churches and encourage people to review their giving and where appropriate to increase their giving as a result.

I want to say a big thank you to the DCC treasurers who do lots during the year to manage the finances of the churches and help prepare the year end accounts. If you have any questions about the 2023 accounts or the Parish finances generally then please do get in touch with me.

David Green

Parish Treasurer

pcctreasurerchesham@gmail.com.

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

The Electoral Roll is the Parish of Great Chesham’s register of electors. It is a list of those eligible to attend – and to vote at – Annual District Church Meetings (ADCMs) and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in the elections for District Church Councils, the Parochial Church Council and the Parish Representatives on Deanery Synod.

Officially, anyone can join the Electoral Roll so long as they are:

- ~ Baptised in the Christian faith
- ~ Over 16 years of age
- ~ Either resident in the Parish or have habitually attended public worship at one of the District Churches during the last 6 months.

However, it is only appropriate for an individual to join the Electoral Roll if they feel they ‘belong’ to their District Church and are willing to play their part in the life of the Church as far as they are able.

At the time of the compilation of the Annual Reports the 2024 Electoral Roll revision was ongoing; a Report will be provided at the APCM.

In 2023 the Electoral Roll stood at:

St Mary’s with St John’s, Bellingdon	
Emmanuel with Hope	280
Christ Church	217
St George’s	51
St John’s, Ashley Green	41
Total	48
	637

Kris Grannell

Parish Electoral Roll Officer



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