



Annual Report 2023

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About St Mary's, East Barnet

The charity's full name is The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of East Barnet.

It is governed according to the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure (1956) as amended. It operates according to the Church Representation Rules (2020).

At the time this report was issued, the Parochial Church Council consisted of:

The Revd Dr Alec Corio (Rector, PCC chair, ex officio member)
Mr Roger Melling (Churchwarden, PCC vice chair, ex officio member, and deanery synod representative)
Prof Alison Blunt (representative of the laity)
Mr Victor Chan (representative of the laity)
Mrs Bettina von Cossel (representative of the laity)
Mrs Margaret Cranfield (representative of the laity)
Mrs Katherine Duncan-Kerr (representative of the laity)
Mr Stephen Edwards (representative of the laity)
Mr Grant Fassett (representative of the laity)
Mr John Hawkins (PCC secretary, representative of the laity)
Mr Tom Hodgson (representative of the laity)
Mrs Amy Jobson (representative of the laity)
Ms Gail Phillips (representative of the laity)
Rev Shaun Sanders (Methodist minister, ex officio observer)
Mr John Savage (deanery synod representative)
Mrs Angela Stancar-Johnson (representative of the laity)

The charity exists to advance the gospel in the ecclesiastical parish of East Barnet, according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England, for the benefit of the public.

The charity cooperates with the Rector to provide and maintain a building used for religious purposes; provide and maintain a building as a local heritage asset; conduct public worship, including services marking life events; sponsor cultural and artistic events; support local community formation; support educational activities; further the ecumenical and interfaith engagement of the Church of England; and provide pastoral care to peoples of all faiths and none.

The parish church is located at:
The Church of St Mary the Virgin
Church Hill Road
East Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN4 8XD

The parish office (for all correspondence) is located at:
East Barnet Parish Office
Brookside Methodist Church
2 Cat Hill
East Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN4 8JB

Telephone: 02084414401
Email: administrator@stmaryseastbarnet.org

The PCC's charity number is 1143134

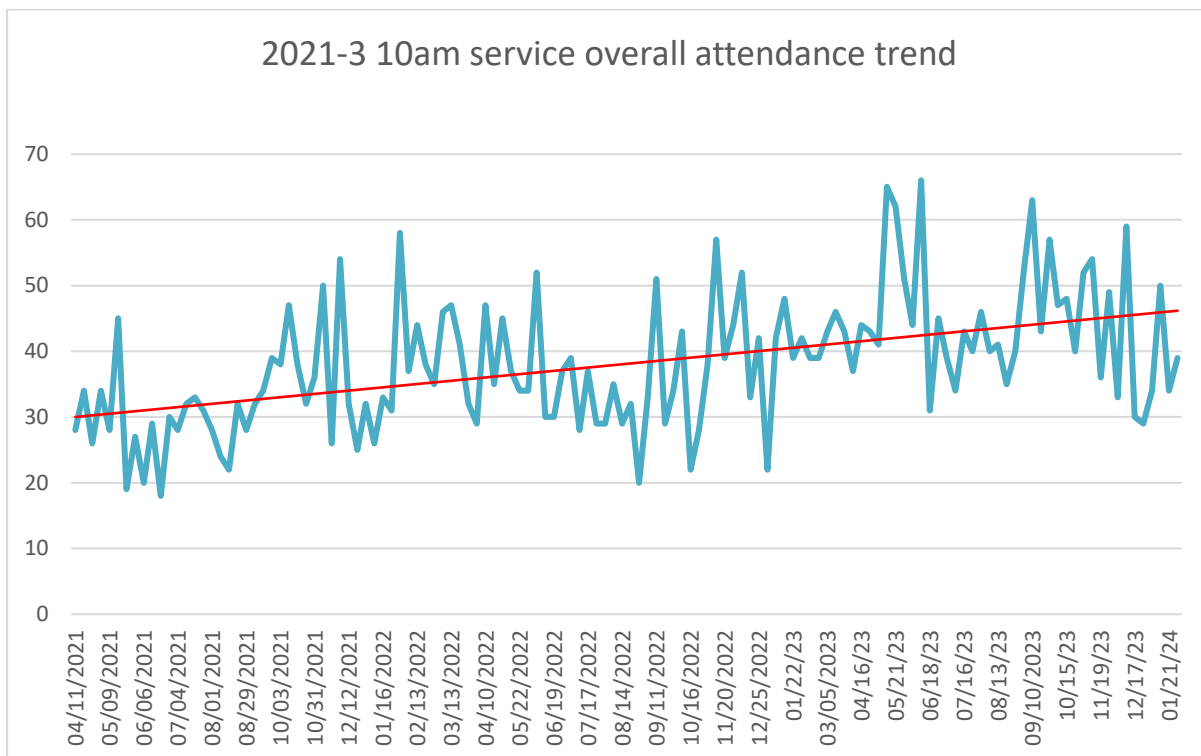
The Independent Examiner of the PCC's financial reports was Ms Victoria Neil of 30 Cedar Avenue, East Barnet, EN4 8DX.

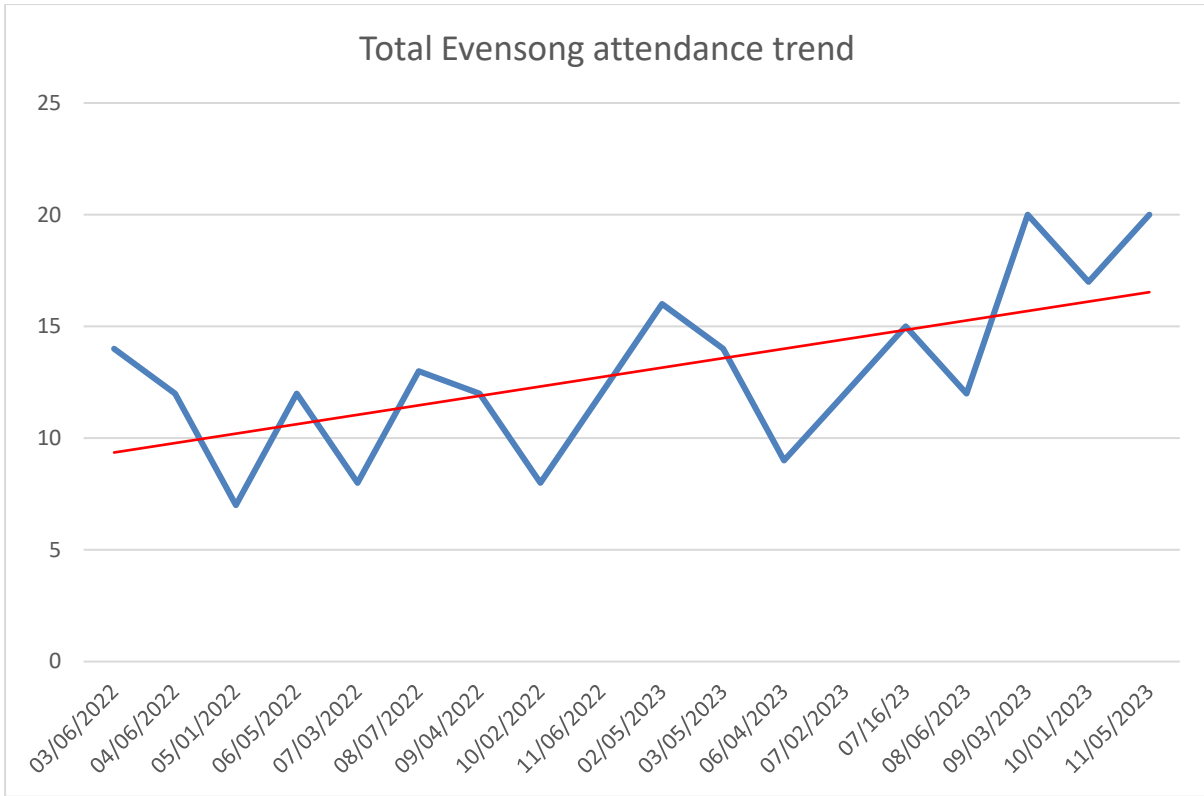
Rector's Report and Introduction

2023 witnessed slow but encouraging progress in the life of St Mary's, especially in the growth of the congregation following the disrupting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the community halls building project. We can now look forward to the halls becoming increasingly busy with church and community groups; sources of support and care; and signs of our service to the whole of East Barnet.

Our 'Statistics for Mission', unsurprisingly, show that all quantitative data related to service attendance at St Mary's has fallen in comparison to 2019. However, I have taken a week on week measure of attendance from the point when we reopened the building (permanently) for public worship in April 2021, and this reveals a slow and continuous positive trend in attendance across all types of service. There has also been very positive increase in attendance at most Sunday seasonal services, especially in 2023.

Perhaps more important, there seems to have been a much more enthusiastic level of engagement with events designed to reach out to our local community, and to deepen our own Christian faith, in 2023. This suggests that we are making progress toward both articulating a more invitational approach that will allow the church to grow, and planning sustainable improvements in the quality of our community life, as I outlined in 2022.





Seasonal Services attendance 2021-3

	2021	2022	2023
Christingle		55	76
Ash Wednesday		13	12
Mothering Sunday		32	37
Palm Sunday total all services		47	98
Holy Week midweek	32	50	35
Easter Day	36	99	104
Ascension	10	9	
Education	49	51	63
Harvest	47	34	47
Memorial Service	59	88	90
Advent Carols	75	61	68
Christmas Carols total both services	127	185	282
Other 'Christmas' special services - schools, crib etc	35	430	574
Christmas Midnight and Day total	69	133	122

This attendance data can't measure that depth of engagement. Nor can it show the continuing connections that the church has with those who are unable to attend services, but receive pastoral care and visits at home; or the wider work of public ministry in the parish. However, I hope it will be an encouragement to you in our work together to grow the authenticity and the size of the community of our church.

All this progress has been occurring at a time when I am very aware of the limitations placed on our local resources. In 2023 the Church Council took a series of very difficult financial decisions relating to those limitations, such as to pause payment of our Parish Share for part of the year. The

need to make an additional payment related to the contractor's overrun on the community halls building project was the immediate reason for that decision, and I am pleased that the Church Council was able to move rapidly to minimize financial risk to the viability of our parish. I am also relieved that, following some strict budgeting work, the Church Council has been able to resolve to resume payment of Parish Share at a sustainable level.

However, the budgeting exercise the Church Council authorized Roger Melling to undertake has shown that we are still running at an operational deficit. As we enter 2024, it does not yet seem wise to resume payment of Parish Share at the full level of our assessment. Energy cost rises since 2021 are just one factor in this calculation, as there has been a long history of spending beyond what our regular income permits at St Mary's. As a church, we have therefore conducted further fundraising across the year, and the Church Council has begun a stewardship programme, to ensure that we encourage responsible and informed decision making within our congregational community about offering a more appropriate level of financial support to the church's work.

We have also continued to try and keep operational expenditure to a minimum, though this obviously has a restricting effect on our community: we continue to operate without a parish administrator, professional building management, or paid children's work. That greatly increases the work associated with my role, and the burden on a small number of key volunteers. It stops us from doing positive things. Though the membership of the Church Council grew at the Annual Meetings in 2023, and our strategic leadership is in a very strong position as a result, there are roles which are needed – just for us to operate as we are – that cannot be filled at this stage. In a time when it is obvious that volunteers are able to offer less time commitment, the Church as an whole will need to consider the further, careful, professionalization of some areas of these ministries even though that comes with a financial obligation.



Communications work is obviously very important to the progress we are making, though I find improving our church advertising and messaging places a heavy demand on my time and energy levels. The church is advertised through banners and posters around the site. We are also present on social media and on A Church Near You, and engagement through Facebook and Instagram has increased across 2023. I'm grateful that John Hawkins monitored the church's social media accounts during my Shared Parental Leave. With John, I've made some further developments to the website so that it is a more effective way of sharing our community's vision. At the end of 2023, I decided that we would trial different approaches to how we share regular news within the church community, shifting from a monthly email News from St Mary's to a weekly Mailchimp offering, and setting up a new weekly pewsheets. Into 2024, these all seem to be continuing to enhance our

community life, but it is not sustainable for this level of communications work to be going on in the long term without employing a parish administrator.

In addition to the services noted above, our provision of special seasonal and festival services has continued to grow in ambition, and in 2023 these have included:

A blessing for the new community halls; the reintroduction of Eucharists with prayers for healing and peace; a series of Eucharists with preaching focusing on the creeds; a Safeguarding themed Eucharist; a Stewardship themed Eucharist; a festal Evensong for the coronation; hosting the Deanery confirmation service; two sessions of *These are a Few of my Favourite Hymns*; Caring for Creation (with Brookside Methodist Church, at St John's United Reformed Church); The Launch of the Poppy Appeal in East Barnet (at Brookside Methodist Church); An interfaith Act of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday (at East Barnet War Memorial); Christmas Carols in the Prince of Wales; St Mary's School Carol Service; The Brunswick Park – Church Hill School Federation Carol Service; a Family Crib Service; Children's seasonal parties; and more regular Messy Churches (jointly with Brookside Methodist Church).



The pattern I established in 2022, of using readings, drama or poetry creatively at carol and seasonal services, has continued, and there was a very encouraging growth in engagement with school carol services in 2023. Music at these services has been supported by Alan Danson's creativity and amazing energy levels, and it has been encouraging to see the success of Young Voices in leading our worship. We have also introduced a new setting for festal Eucharists and continue – now in closer collaboration with St Mary's Primary School and the RSCM Hymnact scheme – to try and increase our congregational singing repertoire.

St Mary's Primary School has also enriched the worshipping life of the church through the regular Collective Worship services that take place in the church building, and the opportunity given to me to lead many of these. In 2023 we also began to hold Collective Worship services at Brookside Methodist Church once a term, and I am grateful that Rev Shaun Sanders and Rev Dr Martin Wellings also covered many Collective Worship services during my Shared Parental Leave. One of Maria Constantinou's key contributions to the school as Headteacher has been to lead on a revision of the school's vision statement and its theological basis, so that in 2023 that was embedded in a wonderful new logo. Our school has also been affirmed in 2023 through a very positive OFSTED inspection report. The small number of areas for further development this highlighted were already being addressed before the inspectors visited, which served as

confirmation of the school's excellent leadership. We continue to see outstanding outcomes for the children the school serves.



I've also enjoyed seeing local learning engagement with the Book Club; Reflecting on the Readings; a Lent lunch and Lent course *Meeting Jesus afresh in John's Gospel*; and continuing to lecture on liturgy for the Eastern Region Ministry Course. In addition, I have begun working with Rabbi Gershon Sillins of The Liberal Synagogue, Elstree, to convene *Relationships between Religions* as a group for inter-faith families.

We have also welcomed more guests to preach at or to take our services than is usual, because I was on Paternity and Shared Parental Leave for a period of the year. Thanks are due to the Rt Revd Stephen Venner; the Revd Sam Korn; the Revd Brian Blackshaw; Canon Dr Tim Bull; the Revd Anna Studdard; the Revd Dr Jonathan Holmes; Mr Richard Osborne; the Revd Patrick Moriarty; the Revd Jenny Robinson; the Revd Preb Marjorie Brown; the Revd Francesco Aresco; the Ven Janet Mackenzie; the Revd Iain Lane; and the Revd Canon Laura Hewitt who visited St Mary's to preach or take services. Thanks are also due to the Churchwarden team for offering an exceptional welcome to our visitors, and also for stepping into the breach to lead Morning Prayer a few times during my Shared Parental Leave when a licensed minister was not available. Joanna Forbes L'Estrange also gave a very engaging talk at a Bring and Share lunch, after she had introduced us to her setting for the Eucharist during a service.

I would like to close the Rector's Report by expressing my thanks to everyone who is leading our community into a more healthy period of growth, and to all who help us to meet the challenges we face in our lives, as we seek to follow Jesus Christ, together.

I would also like to express my particular thanks to John Hawkins, who will be standing down as PCC Secretary at the Annual Meeting; to Roger Melling, who will be standing down as Churchwarden at the Annual Meeting; and to Rev Shaun Sanders, who will be moving to a new ministry in Walton-on-Thames in August. I have been supported by my colleagues with enormous generosity and grace during my service here so far, and am very grateful for their friendship and kindness in all we have worked on together.

Alec Corio

Churchwarden's Report

I regard 2023 as a year of consolidation for St Mary's. It was the first year that the new community halls were available. Not surprisingly they have proved to be a great asset. It has been a real joy to enjoy a cup of coffee and a chat after the morning service in comfortable surroundings, rather than balancing cups of coffee on the pews – that's quite apart from having a kitchen area to prepare the coffee, a dishwasher, decent toilets and wifi. The halls are being used by an increasing number of groups: our own Sewing Circle; Barnet Collective, who distribute food to families in need; the Residents Association; and towards the end of the year a Tai Chi Group has been meeting in the halls. There have also been a number of children's parties. It would be good if the halls had greater use, to offset the running costs but we need to find people who are willing to handle the bookings, open and close the halls, clear/put out tables and chairs and clean the halls. We have to widen the group of people who are willing to share these duties if we are going to expand the halls' use.

For me a second area of consolidation is the recovery from the consequences of the pandemic. We all know that the pandemic has impacted every aspect of our lives, and that some things will never be the same again. One of the consequences for St Mary's, like many other churches, is that our patterns of worship have changed. Pre-pandemic, many in the congregation attended every week. Post-pandemic probably a similar number of people are attending church, but not every week. Consequently our week by week attendances are lower than before. Interestingly, however, our monthly Evensong Services are attracting greater numbers than before. Collections during the service have been reintroduced. We continue to be very grateful to all those who give through the Parish Giving Scheme or by Standing Order, but this of course is an 'invisible' form of giving. Collections during a service bring to the notice of those who are not members of these schemes that the church does require all of us to share in its financial support.

The new Rectory was essentially completed by the end of 2023. However there are a number of residual issues that the Diocese has to resolve before Alec will be able to move in. Not living locally has placed an additional burden on Alec. It is not an easy journey from St Stephen's Vicarage, taking up a valuable portion of his time. I also hope that our parish finances will improve sufficiently to allow us to once again employ an administrator. This would release Alec from the administrative work he also has to spend a lot of time on at present. I seem to be repeating points I made in last years report, although I had assumed that Alec would have moved into the Rectory by now! On behalf of us all I would like to express our appreciation of all that Alec brings to St Mary's.

This is my last report as churchwarden, as I announced a year ago that I will be retiring. I stand down with mixed feelings: I have been churchwarden for 7 years and have enjoyed the role but as I get older I am finding that the responsibilities can at times be over-bearing. The basic duties of a churchwarden are relatively limited and essentially fulfil a legal requirement. Having been involved in church activities for many years I have accumulated other many duties as well which could be undertaken by any member of the congregation. I have already been relieved of some of these duties and will carry on with some of the others. I will continue in the role of Acting Treasurer for the time being, at least until other arrangements can be put in place. It is disappointing that at the of writing this report no one has stepped forward to take on the role of churchwarden. Really we should have two churchwardens to work with and support Alec, the congregation and each other. I will be here to fully support anybody who takes on the role, if they wish.

In standing down as churchwarden I want to express a huge debt of gratitude to the many members of the congregation who have always been prepared to offer me their help and support: the Deputy Churchwardens; Sidesmen; readers and intercessors; the refreshments team; church cleaners; the

open church team on Saturday afternoons; and the school collective worship teams. I am also very grateful for the work undertaken by the sacristy team; the choirs and Director of Music; and those who work in the churchyard.

I hope you will understand that the person I have to pick out to thank by name is Heather. Make no mistake, I could not have been churchwarden without her love and support. She has always been there when the going got tough, she reminded me when I forgot things; came up with good ideas; and has very frequently helped out with churchwarden duties. I am so fortunate to have such a marvelous wife.

Many thanks to you all for your prayers, support, friendship and love.

Roger Melling

Deanery Synod Report

Deanery Synod met on three occasions in 2023.

Synod met at St Giles, South Mimms, in February when Dr Jacob Kurien reported on the Work of the Diocesan Racial Justice Group and Dispute Advisory Service.

In May Synod met at King Charles the Martyr Church in Potters Bar to hear from the Diocesan Giving Adviser on 'Encouraging greater levels of giving from parishioners'.

In October, meeting in St Mary's, Potters Bar, Synod had two speakers. First the Very Revd Jo Kelly-Moore, Dean of St Albans Cathedral, spoke about 'The St Albans Cathedral Revisioning Process' and secondly Martine Whitaker-Lucas talked about the Barnet Fostering Service.

Roger Melling

Electoral Roll Report

The Parish Electoral Roll is our list of all those entitled to vote on our electoral matters.

Anyone over the age of sixteen who resides within our parish or who regularly worships at St Mary's may join the roll.

Our 2024 Electoral Roll revision in April 2024 added a total of 2 names to the list and also removed 2 names. This means our total remains static at 118 names,

In accordance with the Church Representation rules, our electoral roll will be deleted and a new roll started in 2025.

John Hawkins

Fabric Report

During 2023, maintenance work on the church's historic fabric proceeded to schedule as snagging and defects work were carried out by Ash on the new community halls.

Annual maintenance, inspections, and checks were conducted on the following areas of the historic building: the Lightning Conductor; Fire Safety Equipment; Boilers and Gas Appliances. Sparklight also carried out remedial work to the current lighting installation and electrical control panels. The Church Council is grateful to Roy Mears for organising these inspections and works.

Shared Access also carried out maintenance work to the tower phone mast installation, and the Church Council is thankful to Roger Melling for facilitating their access and liaison over electrical billing to Shared Access.

The Organ Blower and Humidifier were serviced, and the organ also required additional work, to resolve a problem with its power supply. The Church Council is grateful to Alan Danson for his continuing care of the organ.

Also within the main church building, volunteers oversaw the disposal of some obsolete furnishings such as a prayer desk and icons, and carried out a lot of cleaning in the vestry and gallery that the building works had held up. There is some further tidying of these areas that will be needed to make them more usable in the future. Early in 2024 flooding to the basement made repairs to the boiler and electrical installations there necessary.

Permission was granted, in the churchyard, to extend the Garden of Remembrance that is set aside for the burial of ashes. That comes with new churchyard regulations that are now in force, and these have enabled a number of burials to take place and be marked with memorial stones. The corners of the Garden of Remembrance will be marked in 2024.

New benches were donated to the churchyard from the Knitwits and East Barnet Residents Association. One of these is now in place. In 2024 the other will be sited, and an older bench resited to allow better access to the Garden of Remembrance.



I have continued to work with the London Borough of Barnet Council, which is statutorily responsible for the maintenance of the churchyard in good order and safety, to improve its condition. In 2023 the north fence was replaced, and repairs to the Lych gate actioned, though these were not carried out until 2024. In addition, the Council authorized a tree survey, and the trimming and removal of a number of trees.

Around the coronation, the churchyard was also sown with wild flower seeds and a rowan tree was planted to commemorate this special event. A number of other shrubs have also been planted, the bare soil around the new halls seeded with wild flowers and grasses, and an area of native hedging at the west boundary established. The Church Council is grateful to everyone who has helped with the churchyard works, especially Steve Harris for his regular maintenance work.

Over 2023, a new Rectory has been built next door to the church site. When finished, this will be the first new parsonage building constructed in the Diocese of St Albans for over 30 years. It will also serve as a trial site for green measures that may be retro-fitted to other, older parsonage buildings as the diocese moves its entire housing stock toward achieving Carbon Net Zero by 2030. As we enter 2024, there is not yet a firm date for its practical completion but this is close at hand.

The parish's house at 54 Church Hill Road has been tenanted since February 2023, and remains in excellent condition.

The school house was re-roofed, as part of a larger project affecting the whole old school buildings, in summer 2023. The appropriate annual inspections were also carried out. The Church Council is still seeking to transfer management of the schoolhouse, and its funds, to the Diocese of St Albans as managing and custodian trustee.

In addition, in 2023 I formed an informal Fabric Working Group to report to the Church Council on how best to plan projects that can be coordinated within the church community. Seeking the Church Council's authority for our works, the Fabric Working Group has been authorized to carry out a number of small projects to improve accessibility; to begin work improving the physical welcome of the porch and under-gallery area; and to start planning for the minor roof works that will be needed before any restoration of the church interior can proceed.

Alec Corio

Community Hall Building Project Report

A certificate of Practical Completion on the community halls was issued in December 2022, and the church and community has had regular use of the halls since January 2023.

A certificate of Practical Completion was issued on the house built in connection with this project, at 54 Church Hill Road, in February 2023, and the church tenanted that property immediately.



We celebrated the opening of the halls in grand style, with a small dedication ceremony at which a commemorative plaque was unveiled; and also with a larger service of blessing and community lunch.

The opening of the halls is the culmination of many, many years of prayer and hard work, and we were delighted to invite special guests, including HRH Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester, to the hall's dedication; and to welcome old friends, including many former Rectors and Churchwardens, to the service of blessing and lunch.



During 2023, snagging works on the halls and 54 Church Hill Road were first completed and then defects were rectified. Ash Construction's work on the halls defects list has not seriously disrupted the increasing use of the halls by both church and community groups. A small number of defects remain to be rectified as we enter 2024, and Ash continue to work to complete these to a high standard under JBKS's oversight. Stanley and Ingram's work on 54 Church Hill Road has been much more limited following practical completion, and equally only a very small number of defects remain to be rectified there as we enter 2024.

During 2023, gravestones that had been moved during construction were also repositioned around the halls by Memorial Masters, to ensure that those buried in this area continue to be respectfully

commemorated and also to allow a more open atmosphere surrounding that area of the site in the future. Some loose stones now require removal from the churchyard. For cost issues, I hope that can be done by volunteers from the congregation.

The final costs of the building project were all also finalized in early 2023. These included an additional fee to Ash beyond what was originally budgeted for, to cover unforeseen delays and time extensions that arose during the building programme. These additional costs was settled at a reasonable level, following the church taking appropriate professional advice and a period of negotiation.

These additional costs forced the Church Council to make further limitations to our operational budget. This led the Church Council to decide to pause payment of our Parish Share to the Diocese of St Albans for a period of time. Once budgetary adjustments were made, payment of Parish Share was resumed as soon as it was possible to do so, at first at a reduced rate. Taking stock of our improving finances, in very early 2024 the PCC was able to take the decision to repay the outstanding balance of 2023's Parish Share, and to increase our payment rate toward the normal level. It is hoped that in 2024 and then going forward, full payment of Parish Share can be made.

The total costs of the community hall building project were finalized at £1 028 310. There are also other fees, additional to this, that were paid at earlier stages of the project, prior to my tenure at St Mary's. They are unfortunately harder to quantify. Some of those earlier fees were necessary expenses that the project's eventual success was dependent upon. Others, regrettably, had to be written off when the Church Council made alteration to its plans or were required to change architect firms. There are financial controls within the way the PCC operates that should prevent expenditure that is difficult to track, in this way, in future.

The project's costs have been supported by the sale of part of the site of the old parish hall; funds from Church Council controlled trusts; historic congregational fundraising; the Garfield Weston Foundation; the Benefact Trust; the Diocese of St Albans; the City Churches Fund; and the London Borough of Barnet. The Church Council is extremely grateful to these funders and to everyone whose generosity, hard work and prayers has now been fulfilled in the new community halls.

Alec Corio

Financial Statements

The Statement of Financial Activities below sets out our income and expenditure for 2023.

In 2023, we had a net negative expenditure of £63,147 as we completed building work on our community halls. The halls are now fully operational and as well as being able to enjoy this excellent asset for the ministry of our church, we are also able to earn money through renting out the facilities.

Income

Our church saw an increase in Voluntary Income in 2023, notably due to two grants, one from the City Churches Fund through St Albans Diocese (£10,000) associated with the hall building project, and from the London Borough of Barnet (£1,000) to hold community celebrations of the

coronation. Income from planned giving also rose by over £1,000, and we were able to recover gift aid of £15,625.

Our fundraising activities continue to provide a welcome income stream, and this year the Christmas fayre at our church and at East Barnet village fayre raised an impressive £1,500 for our church.

As noted above, in 2023 we completed our building work and we were able to recover VAT of £13,484 on our expenditure. We also received £3,388 from the London Borough of Barnet as a contribution towards fencing works in the churchyard.

We also benefited from rent received in relation to 54 Church Hill Road for the first time in 2023. We also continue to receive rent in relation to the School House. The rent for 54 Church Hill Road is available for our charitable purposes. The rent for the School House is kept in a restricted fund for use solely in connection to that building.

Expenditure

Our expenditure on Church activities was significantly lower in 2023 as we paused on contribution for our Parish Share between March and August 2023. We resumed payments in September 2023 at a reduced rate of £3,000 per month for the four remaining months of the year.

The final payments to our contractors and for professional fees on the building of our community halls in 2023 amounted to £138,847. An amount of £17,615 remains unspent within our General fund designated by the PCC for building work.

Cash position

Overall we remain in a positive cash position, at a total balance of £130,490 at 31 December 2023 (£193,637 at 31 December 2022). Of the balance of £130,490 at 31 December 2023, £82,026 is in unrestricted funds (noting that £17,615 of this remains designated by the PCC for building works) and £48,464 is restricted to use in connection with the School House.

Anna Catasglioni

	Unrestricted Funds		Restricted	Total	Total
	<i>General</i>	<i>Designated</i>	funds	2023	2022
	£	£	£	£	(restated) £
Income					
Voluntary income	87,207	-	-	87,207	71,639
Income from church activities	20,197	-	-	20,197	27,913
Interest received	2,137			2,137	1,422
Income for building project			16,873	16,873	165,000
Proceeds of the sale of the old church hall transferred from the Diocese of St Albans				-	686,500
Rent received for School House			8,400	8,400	8,400
Rent received for Curate's House	25,455			25,455	
Total income	134,997	-	25,273	160,269	960,874

Expenditure

Church activities	- 77,308			- 77,308	- 117,831
Cost of building the new church hall		- 75,747	- 63,100	- 138,847	- 810,681
Administration of School House			- 1,223	- 1,223	- 2,760
Administration of Curate's House	- 6,038			- 6,038	
Total expenditure	- 83,346	- 75,747	- 64,323	- 223,416	- 931,272
Net movement in funds	51,651	-75,747	-39,051	-63,147	29,602
Cash at bank at 1 January 2022	22,760	83,362	87,515	193,637	164,038
Cash at bank at 31 December 2023	74,411	7,615	48,464	130,490	193,637

Statement of assets and liabilities

	2023	2022
	£	(restated) £
Cash funds		
Cash at bank	130490	193,637
Other monetary assets		
Debtors - VAT recoverable	0	13,484
Liabilities		
Trade creditors	-	119,119

The attached notes form part of these accounts

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 10 May 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



The Revd Dr Alec Corio (Chair)

The attached notes form part of these accounts

**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

	Total 2023	Total 2022 (restated)
	£	£
Analysis of Income		
<i>Voluntary income</i>		
Planned giving	41,963	40,669
Regular donations	9,363	9,389
Other donations and grants	20,257	9,336
Bequests		1,000
Gift aid recovered	15,625	11,245
	<u>87,207</u>	<u>71,639</u>
<i>Income from church activities</i>		
		-
Phone mast	12,750	23,895
Fundraising	4,060	3,305
Rental income from church hall	1,950	-
Fees for weddings and funerals (net)	1,437	713
		-
	<u>20,197</u>	<u>27,913</u>

		-
Analysis of Expenditure		-
Church activities		-
	-	
Parish share	23,510	67,958
	-	
Organist fees	9,700	9,700
Church running costs:		
	-	
Church services	2,035	2,519
	-	
Light, heat and power	25,692	22,038
	-	
Insurance	2,606	3,576
	-	
Repairs and maintenance	3,014	2,042
	-	
Organ maintenance	1,357	856
	-	
Printing, postage and stationary	1,221	2,983
	-	
IT costs	2,213	1,074
	-	
Telephone and internet	523	544
	-	
Rent	1,220	915
	-	
Support of mission	-	1,139
	-	
Subscriptions	167	169
	-	
Donations	56	-
	-	
Sundry expenses	3,635	1,996

Bank charges	-	358	322
	-	<u>77,308</u>	<u>117,831</u>

Designated funds

These funds have been designated by the PCC for the building project.

The movement of funds in 2023 is as follows:

	At 1.1.23	Income	Expenditure	At 31.12.23
	(restated)	in year	in year	
	<u>83,362</u>		<u>75,747</u>	<u>7,615</u>

Restricted funds

These funds can only be used for the administration of the school house and the building project.

The movement of funds in 2023 is as follows:

	At 1.1.23	Income	Expenditure	At 31.12.23
	(restated)	in year	in year	
School house	41,287	8,400	1,223	48,464
Building project	<u>46,228</u>	<u>16,873</u>	<u>63,100</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>87,515</u>	<u>25,273</u>	<u>64,323</u>	<u>48,464</u>

Related party transactions

The PCC members are considered the key management personnel of the church. No remuneration is paid directly to key management personnel, although the church contributes to the diocesan fund and the incumbent, who has overall responsibility for promoting the whole mission of the church, is remunerated directly by the diocese.

Income from planned giving includes £12,400 excluding gift aid (which would be £2,380) received from PCC members.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 and in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 governing the individual accounts of PCC's, and with the Regulations 'true and fair view' provisions, together with FRS102 (2016) as the applicable standards and the 2016 version of the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities SORP (FRS102).

The accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis as the income for the year is below £250,000. As a result, the comparative figures for 2022 have been restated as those accounts were prepared on the accruals basis, due to the higher level of income in 2022 in relation to funding the building of the church hall.

The PCC is a public benefit entity within the meaning of FRS 102.

Fund accounting

The general fund represents the unrestricted fund, which is available for use at the discretion of the PCC members in furtherance of the general objectives of the church, and which has not been designated for any other particular purpose.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by PCC members for a particular purpose.

Restricted funds represent funds which are to be used in accordance with specific instructions imposed by the donors or which have been raised by the church for particular purposes.

Income

In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) donated services and the time spent by volunteers, of which the church is heavily dependent in order to achieve its aims, are not included in income as the economic benefit cannot be measured reliably.

Fixed assets

Consecrated and beneficed property is not included in the accounts in accordance with s.10(2)(a) and (c) of the Charities Act 2011.

Neither the cost of the new church hall nor the curate's house have been treated as a fixed assets. The church hall is attached to the church and title is held by the Incumbent.

The Curate's House, 54 Church Hill Road, is owned by St Mary's Church Hall (separate Charity Scheme) with the Diocese of St Albans serving as Custodian Trustee and The PCC as Managing Trustees.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PARISH OF EAST BARNET PCC

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 16 to 21.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



Victoria Neil (Chartered Accountant)

19 May 2024

Methodist Minister's Report

During 2023 we have continued with the well-established pattern of our shared ministry and mission in the East Barnet Anglican Methodist Partnership, but also taken opportunities to be creative with new ways of working.

The annual memorial service, launch of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Sunday are established services much appreciated by the wider community and civic leaders. Moving the memorial service to a later time on a Saturday but earlier in October worked well for a service which continues to grow in attendance and appreciation. We continue to reflect on these services and find ways in which they can be meaningful to those who attend.

I was pleased that Brookside folk could share in the Sunday Eucharist to mark the opening of the new community halls at St Mary's. We give thanks for all the vision, planning and hard work which has gone into the new building over many years. It was also a delight to see former Rectors and many other friends back for the special service.

Our Lent course was hosted in the new halls. We studied the York Course, 'You can be serious – meeting Jesus afresh in John's Gospel' and were joined not only by friends from St Mary's and Brookside, but also Manor Drive Methodist Church and St John's United Reformed Church. We covered a variety of topics from the historical accuracy of the Gospels to what we yearn for in church and society. There was also a mention of *Brideshead Revisited* - which gave us the idea that we could read that novel at our book club.

The bi-monthly bookclub which met at the Prince of Wales during 2023 has discussed *The Garden of Evening Mists* by Tan Twan Eng, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce, *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell, *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus and of course, *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh. All these books gave us a lot to discuss with conversation ranging over many topics over a pint or two at the Prince of Wales.

The pub's recent closure reminds us that nothing stays the same. On a personal note, I will be leaving East Barnet in the summer after eight years, in order to move to a new appointment in Walton-on-Thames. Although there will be a time for goodbyes nearer the time, I am very grateful to Alec and my friends at St Mary's for the many opportunities of fruitful worship, prayer, learning and service that we have shared during my time in Barnet.

Shaun Sanders

Parochial Church Council Report

Throughout the year, the Church Council convened six times to deliberate matters pertinent to our parish's well-being. Additionally, I am delighted to report that five new members joined our council at the Annual Meeting, bringing fresh enthusiasm and new perspectives to our collective leadership.

The completion of the new Community Halls at the start of 2023 was a major milestone both for the church and the Church Council. Having occupied much of our time for many years we are now more able to start focussing on other aspects of our church life beyond the building project. Our

2022 annual accounts were particularly complex due to the hall expenditure and required an additional, exceptional meeting to approve.

Our financial situation more generally has required many discussions and difficult decisions and I am grateful for the Church Council's guidance on this. Particular thanks are due to Roger Melling for his hard work in presenting a detailed picture of our finances that have enabled the Church Council to make decisions around expenditure and particularly the payment of the Parish Share.

As well as continuing to focus and promote our Mission Action Plan, the Church Council also discussed the fabric of the church building, our work with families and young children and our approach to sustainability: at the end of 2023 we gained Bronze Eco Church status.

We have encountered some difficulty in finding meeting times that accommodate all members of the Church Council. However, we remain committed to finding solutions and will continue to evolve our schedule of meetings to ensure the fullest participation of all members.

John Hawkins

Parochial Church Council
Mission Action Plan 2022–2023

We are aware of the blessings we have received as members of the church of St Mary the Virgin, and the signs of inclusivity, welcome, commitment and care that already exist within our congregational community.

Following the example of Mary, and learning from the words of the Magnificat, we are seeking to share them more effectively with our parish community, and become a people of God who are confident to speak words of hope and perform signs of service in the world.

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom we will communicate effectively with those resident in the parish of East Barnet by developing an integrated communications strategy

To teach, baptise and nurture new believers we will create a welcoming atmosphere in our church building and at congregational events by increasing sidesmen numbers by 50% and providing invitation and welcome training to lay volunteers

To respond to human need by loving service we will develop the use of our new community facilities by inviting community groups into partnership in them

To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation we will further develop St Mary's commitment to being an Inclusive Church by making a commitment as lay volunteers to pray for an ecumenical pioneer ministry on the NLBP housing development

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth we will reduce our consumption of resources, and our contribution to climate change by achieving Bronze eco church status

This Mission Action Plan was created in 2021, and we have updated the SMART goals for 2022–2023.

These goals will be a standing item on every Church Council agenda, so that our progress can be monitored. They will be renewed in 2024.

Partnership Enabling Group Report

The Enabling Group which oversees the East Barnet Anglica-Methodist Partnership has not met since before the Covid-19 pandemic, as we do not currently have the required number of lay members from our congregations to convene the Group. Liaison between our churches continues because of the close collaboration of our clergy, Churchwarden and Senior Stewards, and their presence within both Church Councils.

One important development within the partnership in 2023 was the ending of our Building Sharing Agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969. The 2021 Methodist Church Conference concluded its review of the report from the Marriage and Relationships Task Group and agreed that individual Methodist Churches could be registered to conduct same-sex marriages. Barnet Brookside Church Council met in 2022, and agreed that Brookside should apply for registration. To enable this to happen it was necessary to end the official building sharing agreement between Brookside and St. Mary's, because of the current position of the Church of England on equal marriage. This decision was supported by the Parochial Church Council which "supports the registration of Brookside Methodist Church to conduct equal marriages ... and will continue to deepen our partnership with Barnet Brookside Methodist Church through other ecumenical instruments, including the existing Local Ecumenical Cooperative Scheme that embraces our shared mission and ministry."

This has not affected how our churches work together and share in mission and ministry in any practical way.

Graham Wheeler

Safeguarding Report

Throughout 2023 St Mary's has followed the safeguarding guidelines laid down by the House of Bishops, and worked to create a safe environment for all who attend our church.

The Church Council adopted Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Policies, which are in keeping with the relevant Church of England policies. Recruitment checks and safeguarding training are ongoing for everyone involved in leadership and ministry at St Mary's.

A new initiative in 2023 was to keep 26th March as a Safeguarding Sunday. Following my talk to highlight the importance of safeguarding, quite a few people spoke to me to discuss certain points, and also to say that they didn't realise that there were so many types of potential abuse.

As I always say, it is the responsibility of everyone to continue to be vigilant and report anything suspicious. Let us ensure we keep our community as safe as possible.

Chris Mears

Minutes of 2022 Annual Meeting of Parishioners
21 May 2023

1. The meeting opened with prayers and welcome.

2. Election of clerk to the AMP and APCM

Alison Blunt was elected as clerk (proposed by Bridget Bowden; seconded by Joyce Bailey; unanimously approved).

3. Apologies for absence

Steve Edwards, John Hawkins, Debbie Windeler

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 29 May 2022 were approved as a true record. Passed with two abstentions (due to absence at last year's meeting).

5. Election of Churchwardens

Roger Melling was elected as Churchwarden (proposed by Chris Mears; seconded by John Savage).

Alec Corio expressed his gratitude for Roger's willingness to continue to serve as Churchwarden for one more year and for his exceptional work in this role. The meeting recorded its thanks to Roger. We will need two people to stand for the roles of Churchwarden at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners in 2024.

Minutes of 2022 Annual Parochial Church Meeting
21 May 2023

1. Apologies for absence

Stephen Edwards, John Hawkins, Debbie Windeler

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 29 May 2022 were approved as a true record. Passed unanimously.

3. Annual reports: questions on the statutory reports

No questions were received

4. Annual reports: questions on the non-statutory reports

No questions were received.

5. An addendum to the Annual Report, on the church's progress in 2023 so far.

Alec Corio reflected briefly on 2022, which had been a very demanding year for St Mary's. We were still operating under pandemic conditions at the start of the year, and the long-term impact of the pandemic will continue to be significant long into the future. We were also limited in terms of what we could do on site in 2022 because of the halls building project.

There were some very important areas of progress. Considerable work has been undertaken to communicate more effectively with our wider parish area; we have made positive moves towards strengthening our lay leadership; and we are building strong foundations for our children's work.

There has also been a lot of 'unseen ministry', which continues into 2023, including pastoral work and increased numbers of home communion visits; administration (including financial administration); and our growing progress in working with schools since pandemic restrictions eased, particularly St Mary's School.

Alec then reflected on 2023 so far, which after such an emphasis on 'building up' has started to see more 'building out'.

One important development has been the transition into the use of our community halls, and how these facilities are already starting to permit a greater ambition in congregational and community formation work; and resource many more outreach and invitational events, particularly those focusing on work with children and families.

There is scope to further build on and extend our partnership with Brookside Methodist Church.

There is also the opportunity to deepen and grow our distinctive traditions of liturgy, where Alan Danson is leading the development of the musical life of the Church. Our choirs are small and there is scope for further growth of these.

Figures for Church attendance in 2022 were broadly static. In 2023 to date, there has been a small and steady increase in usual Sunday attendance; an increase in the size of our worshipping community; and an encouraging increase in the stability of Sunday attendance.

Whilst we are continuing to deal with some long-term issues and vulnerabilities – and have dealt with acute problems during the pandemic and the building project – there is a positive momentum to our life at St Mary's.

Roger Melling provided a brief update on the Church's financial position.

Chris Yates has stood down as Treasurer due to work commitments, and the processing of payments for the community halls project has made the preparation of annual financial statements more demanding than usual.

There has therefore been a delay in the process of preparing our annual financial statements, and we have received special permission from the Bishop of St Albans to approve the accounts not later than September (see below). There is no procedural issue or risk indicated by this delay.

Our financial resources are far from satisfactory. A stewardship campaign leaflet handout was provided to outline the operational deficit of the Church, and Roger asked us all to think about how we might be able to assist the Church to become financially stable.

6. Conduct of elections of representatives to Deanery Synod

There are two vacancies for representatives to Deanery Synod for the remaining one year of this three-year term. Our Deanery brings together parishes in Barnet, Borehamwood and Potters Bar.

John Savage has been nominated (proposed by John Hawkins; seconded by Alison Blunt). John was declared elected as one of our representatives.

7. Conduct of elections of representatives of the laity on the Parochial Church Council

There are six vacancies for representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council. Six nominations were received:

- Thomas Hodgson (proposed by Grant Fassett; seconded by Alison Blunt);
- Amy Louise Flannery (proposed by Heather Melling; seconded by Lesley Danson);
- Grant Fassett (proposed by Gail Phillips; seconded by Heather Melling);
- Bettina von Cossel (proposed by Roger Melling; seconded by Alison Blunt);
- Victor Ka Ming Chan (proposed by John Hawkins; seconded by Alison Blunt);
- Stephen Edwards (proposed by Roger Melling; seconded by Alison Blunt).

There were no additional nominations. All six nominees were elected.

8. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

The meeting approved the appointment of Victoria Neil (proposed by Roger Melling; seconded by John Savage; unanimously approved). Victoria is a qualified FCA and lives in the parish.

9. Any other business

- John Savage reported very positive examples about use of the new community halls (Thursday morning sewing circle; a child's birthday party; Barnet Collective – we are partnering with them on food distribution)
- Alan Danson asked about Christian witness: can we find a way for putting children's pictures up in the Church? If there is a need for people for urgent prayer, could an email be sent round to let people know?
- Margaret Cranfield noted that only 12 people attended the Maundy Thursday service, 10 of whom were on the rota to help with the service. She felt that all members of the congregation should make a commitment to attend midweek and seasonal services.
- Alec Corio said that he could provide more detailed figures about attendance on Sundays and other services if requested. Regular and special services on Sundays are building back and growing faster way than mid-week services.
- Steve Harris reported that we have been asking the Council to keep the churchyard safe over the past 18 months, including by raising the tree canopy. Steve asked members of the congregation to speak to new Councillors about the Council's commitment to this work.

10. Adjournment of the meeting until a later date at which financial reports will be available
Under rule M13 of the Church Representation Rules 2022 we have been given special permission for the APCM to be adjourned until no later than September 2023, to discuss the financial statements.

When available these will be provided as an insert to the 2022 Annual Report.

11. Adjourning prayers

12. The meeting ended at 12.15 with the loyal toast to the patron, His Majesty King Charles III.

Conclusion of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 13 August

1. The meeting opened with prayers and welcome.

2. Election of clerk to the conclusion of the APCM

Chris Mears was elected as clerk (proposed by Alec Corio; seconded by Alan Danson; unanimously approved).

3. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies recorded.

4. Annual reports: Comments and questions on the financial statements

Alec Corio explained that these accounts are presented in a different format and under more stringent auditing requirements than in previous years due to the large amount of money that passed through accounts in 2022 related to building works.

He said that there has been a great deal of effort given by various people in the preparation of the accounts; Roger Melling, Chris Yates, Roger Seaton and Victoria Neil - the Independent Examiner.

Roger Melling said that we face an additional payment to Ash for hall construction overrun costs, and that we have also been running an operational deficit for many years. Energy costs have also risen substantially since 2021. He said the Church Council had decided to temporarily pause Parish Share payments in February. He asked everyone to consider their financial giving to the church, and will be preparing a revised budget.

- Andrew Godleman asked why the figures had changed dramatically from those for the previous year. Alec explained that it is to do with the building project.
- Andrew Godleman asked if we could negotiate with the energy companies. He also asked if contributions could be requested from the congregation. Roger replied that a Stewardship Campaign is being planned for.

- Alec said that we are now receiving rental income from the new house. However, this additional income is sufficient to balance increased energy costs since 2021, so the operational deficit remains.
- Heather Melling said that many of the congregation use the Parish Giving Scheme to support the church financially. The Scheme automatically reclaims Gift Aid on donations. The Scheme can automatically increase donations in line with inflation, if permission is given. Heather also stressed that all planned giving is completely confidential. If anyone has any questions or wishes to discuss their giving, please speak to Heather in complete confidence.
- It has been recommended by the Church of England that its members give 5% of their net income to their church and a similar amount to other charities. Margaret Cranfield suggested that any Stewardship Campaign should also clarify what 5% is as, she suggested, some people think that 5% is in fact £5. We must also be aware that, as well as financial contributions, many people give of their time and talents, which are equally important.

5. Adoption of the financial statements

For the accounts to be adopted as an accurate record (proposed by Roger Melling; seconded by Gail Phillips; unanimously approved).

6. The meeting closed with prayer.

1374 Squadron Air Training Corps

I am still privileged to serve as chaplain to 1374 'East Barnet' squadron of the Air Training Corps.

During 2023, the squadron has had 2 further intakes of cadets aged between 13 and 17, and I have led their enrollments. Staffing levels have also increased and the level of ambitions for activities from flight simulator training to shooting is high. Parade nights are very busy as a result!

In addition to enrollments, I've visited the squadron on a monthly basis to conduct 'padre's hour', on a variety of different topics; and to offer pastoral support and a ministry of presence.

In 2023 the focus of padre's hours have been Just War theory; Human Rights; the New Enrollment Promise; and the Air Training Corps values – Resilience, Integrity, Service, Excellence.

Alec Corio

Barnet Collective

Barnet Collective is a group of local people who have witnessed the hidden poverty and isolation that exists within our borough, and have come together to explore creative solutions.

We try to model and nurture the creation of a network of small locally rooted 'cells' of one or more of the following types:

1. Dignified deliveries of food and essentials to people who fall through the gaps of existing provisions, such as some foodbanks.
2. Community allotments, food gardens, fridges and kitchens.
3. Food Co-operatives,

We have been in operation since 2020 and registered as a charity in 2021. Our long-term vision is to see a multiplication of these small mutually-sustaining and self-managed 'cells'.

We currently deliver a weekly crate of food to approximately 45 households locally, in addition to a group of careworkers, and a fledgling co-operative. Some recipients are also actively involved in our project providing the sustained assistance necessary to keep it running week after week.

We obtain most of this food from the Felix Project which distributes food otherwise destined for landfill. Thus, our project also contributes towards lessening food waste.



Since the spring 2023 we have been pleased to work with Alec to start using the small hall at St Mary's Church for our Thursday afternoon food packing and distribution activities, and to use the vestry to host our Community Fridge and Freezer.

To identify individuals and families for food deliveries, we engage with referrals from and build relationships with local schools, social workers, home visitors and community organisations. We work closely with these organisations, who already have existing relationships with individuals and families, but who may not have access to food. In this way, we hope to offer a sensitive and dignified response to food insecurity. As our network grows, so will our ability to reach those who would otherwise remain isolated.

We are very happy to be working with St Mary's, and look forward to speaking to any church members who would like to know more about us.

Karen Kiil

Chipping Barnet Foodbank

Firstly, a very big thank you to my predecessor, Christine Watson, for all her hard work and commitment as our church representative at Chipping Barnet Foodbank. She made taking over this role so much easier, for which I am grateful.

In 2023 the Foodbank provided food for over 6500 people, a 30% increase on the previous year. The most common reasons for people to come to the Food bank include: low income and not coping with the rising cost of essentials, mounting debt, unexpected sickness, benefit issues, domestic violence and housing insecurities.

You may be interested to know East Barnet residents were given the most support from the Foodbank, followed by Underhill and Barnet Vale.

To meet these growing needs, there have been some big changes and exciting developments at the Foodbank, including the appointment of a Manager, a Campaigning, Advocacy & Organising Lead, and a Signposting Lead. It has also been a great plus to the Foodbank to be able to reopen the Cafe area again (after covid restrictions) twice a week. Here the clients can be offered refreshments while waiting to process their vouchers and access the new services available, namely the Signposting Lead, a CAB advisor, IT support and reps from charities like the Shaw Trust (who help people back into employment).

I have been blown away over the past year by the generosity of the folk at St Mary's Church, by either your monetary or food donations each week to the Foodbank for which I thank you all. On record now, we have made it on to the top 30 donors to the Foodbank (in fact we are now the 15th highest!) which I think is fantastic for such a small church. I feel truly privileged to be a part of this service, that brings essential practical help, support, and hope to many very needy people in our locality.

Debbie Windeler

Christian Aid

On a chilly January evening, Kelly Sykes-Fassett and I attended the lighting of the Beacon of Hope by The Rt Revd Dr John Sentamu at Southwark Cathedral, which launched Christian Aid's work for 2023. Two days in March were then devoted to zoom meetings – a Changemakers' Conference and Christian Aid regional meetings – at which the theme for Christian Aid week 2023 was introduced, and supporting materials, ideas and events were discussed. The chosen theme for Christian Aid week 2023 was 'pigeon peas' – which required some explanation for all participants: pigeon peas are a hardy staple food crop in many parts of Africa.

May 14 – 21 was the official Christian Aid week, which kicked off with the London Freedom Walk, a sponsored 10k walk from St. James, Piccadilly to St. Paul's Cathedral. Sponsored by members of the congregation, the St. Mary's team of Alec, Kelly and her husband Grant, and I enjoyed a lovely walk on a sunny Spring day. A 'pea-green' themed Super Hero party was held for children and families one week-day afternoon, and on the final Sunday of the week we held a 'Hap-pea' bring and share lunch, during which Kathy Childress from Christian Aid gave a talk.

Together with donation envelopes which were available in church and distributed in the neighbourhood, these events raised £1026.75 for Christian Aid week 2023.

In November I also attended the last in the series of the St. Martins in the Field's autumn lectures, which was sponsored by Christian Aid and delivered by Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations.

Gail Phillips

Community Halls

Since St Mary's gained the use of our new community halls in January 2023, I have been forming a group of volunteers to oversee their operation, and I am grateful that Gail Phillips and Roger Melling have been assisting with this throughout the year. I was also delighted that Elizabeth Graham was able to assist us by taking halls bookings for most of 2023, but sadly she has now had to step back from her role. In addition, Victor Chan joined this group early in 2024.



Throughout the year, the halls have been used weekly for church events and hospitality around services. We have also used their spaces for meetings; as a base for our work with Barnet Collective; to establish the successful Sewing Circle; for study sessions and Lent groups; to hold children's outreach parties; to host Bring and Share lunches with speakers and the Harvest supper; for Table Top Sales; to have the Christmas Fair; and for our grand community coronation tea party.

The halls have also been rented for private and commercial hires, including parties hosted by members of the community; East Barnet Residents Association meetings; Barnet Labour Party private meetings; and a regular Tai Chi group.

In the coming year I would hope that we will advertise the halls and their facilities further, and therefore attract a small additional number of regular community and commercial hires. That will build up community use of the halls, and therefore grow the church's community outreach as well as our financial stability. In addition, it would be helpful to increase the size of the Halls Management Group into 2024.

Alec Corio

Fundraising Events at St Mary's

St. Mary's was able to start the year in our brand new hall by holding an 'opening' lunch for the community, attended by over 100 people. Shortly after, we held a family Pancake Party to celebrate Shrove Tuesday, when some parents 'christened' the new cooker and produced a steady flow of pancakes for all to enjoy.

Our biggest social event in 2023 was in May when, thanks to the award of a grant from Barnet Council, we were able to hold a free Coronation Tea Party for the community in honour of King Charles III. Local councillors and our MP attended, along with 120 members of the local community. In between toasting the new monarch and sampling the delicious goodies, the children were encouraged to sow the wild flower seeds in the churchyard, just before the commemorative rowan tree was planted. And the sun shone beautifully!

Through the year, we have held three Table Top Sales, one Plant Sale, two Quiz Nights and three children's parties, from which £2028 was raised for church funds.

I would like to thank very much the 'faithful few' for their continuing generous help, without which these events could not take place.

Gail Phillips

Music at St Mary's

The ending of pandemic restrictions and completion of the community hall building works has enabled the musical life of the church to return to greater strength in 2023.

The perseverance and commitment of our Church Choir deserves our heartfelt respect. They have continued to sustain the tradition of live vocal music in our services, and their skills and repertoire have both been developing well since the Covid-19 pandemic.

My greatest joy has been the steady growth of Young Voices – in number as well as in their skills. They have been learning how to read music, and elementary vocal technique, with great enthusiasm. In order for the tradition of choral music to continue at St Mary's Church, we will require a new generation of singers to join our ranks: Young Voices is just the beginning of that process.

On 26th February and 16th July, Alec introduced an enjoyable afternoon of congregational singing: *These are a few of my favourite hymns.*

We also introduced another congregational setting to our sung Eucharists: The St Helen's Service. This allows us to reflect a better sense of the seasons of the church's year in our worship, and it will be used in festive times and on feast days. We were delighted that the composer, Joanna Forbes l'Estrange, was able to attend our service on 25th June to explain and rehearse her setting with us all, and then talk with us about her work as a singer and composer – and her coronation anthem – over a Bring and Share lunch.

Special services, such as the opening of the community halls, Easter, Advent, and Christmas, were also enhanced by the presence of instrumentalists, and were all very well attended.

Alan Danson

Pioneer Ministry on the North London Business Park development

Throughout 2023, monthly prayer walks have continued on the North London Business Park site, involving ministers of local churches and some lay people too. Members of the congregation at St Mary's have attended these prayer walks occasionally, alongside members of other local churches.

The ministers have also worked to deepen the relationship between Comer Homes Ltd and CWC Livewell, in the hope that a community space within the new housing development could be devoted to an increase in local healthcare amenity. Comer's willingness to offer this kind of provision was an encouraging addition to their ongoing processes of planning and planning appeal. If an increase of amenity could be guaranteed, then this would obviously benefit and reconcile both the existing residents of Brunswick Park and new residents of the housing to be built on the Business Park.

Livewell has a unique approach to this kind of provision, since they have proved that it is possible, in a financially sustainable way, to co-locate GP services with social referral programmes that boost public health more generally. We have pushed forward planning for how a centre in our local area might operate in a very creative way, working out how to include the regular involvement of the churches in order to provide spiritual care – a kind of community chaplaincy – operating in an integrated manner within this kind of centre.

At the end of 2023, we were informed that Comer would include the offer to provide space and a shell for a centre of this kind in their planning appeal. That appeal was refused. The planning inspectorate inquiry that occurred early in 2024, as a follow up to that decision, has also refused Comer's appeal. In the light of those decisions, local government will have a duty to make alternative arrangements for an increase in amenity to serve the existing and residents of the area.

In the future the churches – including St Mary's as one of the parish churches covering the area – will need to consider again how best to minister in a ward with a rapidly increasing population with a distinct new housing estate, if that kind of amenity is not an option and yet the need for reconciliation, presence and community-building remain acute.

Alec Corio

St Mary's Sewing Circle

At the start of 2023 we launched a 'Sewing Circle' in our new community halls. The group began with an exploratory, democratic meeting to determine whether or not this would be a good idea, and if so, how it should be run.

The group is now well established, and open to the whole local community on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, from 10am to 1pm. A donation of £5 is suggested for each attendance. By year end, 32 people had 'enrolled' in the circle, with attendance varying between 12 and 17 each session. Donations amounted to £1265 for the year and make a contribution to halls running costs and church funds.

Over the months, a variety of additional skills have emerged – embroidery, lace making, crochet, and a range of crafts – so if anyone wants to try something different, there is always someone who can help, even if you want to make a guard’s bearskin! And if you are just seeking inspiration – that’s available too!

If you would like to come along one day, we would be delighted to see you and welcome you to the circle.

Gail Philips

The Quilting Project

During the lockdown period of the Covid epidemic, when everyone’s movements were severely restricted, Debbie Windler had an idea: why not ask people in the community to make a ‘patch’ illustrating the effect of Covid on our lives, and the resulting contributions would be made up into a wall hanging.



Very slowly the patches started to arrive, and were carefully put aside until life returned to normal. The patchwork quilt was duly assembled, and since early 2023 has been hanging in the church by the North door. Names of all contributors are listed on the reverse side of the quilt. Have a look!

Gail Phillips

St Mary’s Church of England Voluntary Aided School

The past year has been another eventful one for the community at St Mary’s School. In March 2023, the school was inspected by Ofsted, who recognised how our Christian ethos contributes toward the children’s ‘personal development’ and ‘behaviour and attitudes’. Both of these areas were deemed to be ‘outstanding’ by inspectors.

The report describes how ‘staff take every opportunity to celebrate diversity and to teach pupils about the views and experiences of others. Staff support pupils exceptionally well in understanding the importance of inclusion and respecting different cultures, beliefs, and values’. It also states that, ‘pupils are taught about important values such as democracy, forgiveness and resilience.’ The inspection also celebrated our commitment to individual needs, particularly to children who have various vulnerabilities.

Every term, we take an opportunity to ‘look beyond ourselves’ which reinforces the importance of service to others, whether this is contributing to the local food bank and Homeless Action in Barnet, singing at Goodwin Court, or writing Christmas cards to vulnerable adults through Barnet Age UK. We reflect on these activities in our Collective Worship services, and through other links with St Mary’s and Brookside Methodist Church.

We have also taken time to look at the human impact on God’s World and participated in a Christian Aid project on Climate Justice – we even had our own exhibition of posters, some of which were chosen to exhibit at the Houses of Parliament ahead of COP28. Our commitment to God’s creation has spread as far as Madagascar too! In October, we raised funds to plant 278 trees in an area of deforestation on the island. This project will support local farming and habitats, and over the coming years, our trees will remove an estimated 85.62 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

This academic year saw the introduction of a brand new school vision, capturing the essence of the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31–32), which is the theological underpinning for all that we do.



‘Care, Grow and Flourish in God’s Loving Hands’

Our Christian foundation, which this expresses, is undoubtedly our strength. From this comes our aspiration to live life in all its fullness, to care for one another, all people everywhere, all God’s creatures and this wonderful planet.

Rooted in God’s love, our ambition is for our nurturing ethos to enable all members of our school community to thrive and flourish. We tend to the academic, social, moral, physical and spiritual needs of our school family so that we grow into confident, respectful, aspirational and active citizens of our ever-changing modern world. We do all of this in God’s trusted and loving hands.

We started 2024 with ‘Hope-anuary’, which was an initiative led by a group of children in Y6, who wanted to launch a whole school event to give hope to others. Outcomes included acts of kindness such as making bird boxes and bug hotels, washing up at home, volunteering their time for others,

learning signs of peace, and taking unwanted gifts and toys to a children's ward at Barnet Hospital. Every class now has a hope based 'class promise' to commit to for the remainder of the year.

We continue to pray for each other, our school families, our community and our church.

Maria Constantinou
Headteacher

Stephen Edwards
Chair of Governors

Together in Barnet

Following the pandemic, night shelters returned to their former arrangement, where a number of faith groups provide accommodation for homeless people on different days of the week.

Our local shelter returned to East Barnet Baptist Church on Saturday evenings for the winter period. St Mary's was able to provide some assistance to the Baptist Church who organised the shelter.

Roger Melling