



Showing and Sharing God's Love

**Annual Report
and
Financial Statement
of the Parochial Church Council
for the year ended 31 December 2024**

Incumbent

The Revd Richard Wise
The Rectory
10 Stoke Park Road
Bishopstoke

Independent Examiner

Stephen Collyer

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

St Mary's Church is situated in Church Road, Bishopstoke, and St Paul's Church is in Fair Oak Road, Bishopstoke. Together the two churches serve the Parish of Bishopstoke. The Parish is part of the Diocese of Winchester within the Church of England. The address for correspondence is: The Rector, 10 Stoke Park Road, Bishopstoke. SO50 6DA.

PCC members who have served from 1 January 2023 until the date this report was approved are:

Clergy

The Revd Richard Wise

Chair

Church warden

Cherry Challis

Also Vice Chair

Ex-officio

Margaret Ward (LLM)

Representatives on the Deanery Synod (Ex-officio Members)

Ann Brown

Wendy Harris

Until October 2024

Elected Members

Sibongile Armstrong

From APCM 2024

Pamela Boyes

Karen Caws

Michael Harris

Until October 2024; also Treasurer until December 2024

Carla Hollinghurst

From APCM 2024

Lynda Mumford

From APCM 2024

Jeanette Neale

Shirley Smeal

Structure, governance and management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) are ex-officio.

Objectives and Activities

Bishopstoke PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for St Mary's Church, Church Road, Bishopstoke; St Paul's Church, Fair Oak Road, Bishopstoke; and the Church Room, Stoke Park Road, Bishopstoke.

Other committees may meet and report back to full meetings of the PCC. Membership of these committees is not necessarily restricted to PCC members.

Standing Committee is required by law and consists of the Incumbent, Church wardens and the Officers of the PCC. It sets the agenda for PCC meetings and has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council.

Church membership, attendance and occasional offices

	2022	2023	2024
Electoral Roll	88 (16 not resident in parish)	86 (15 not resident in parish)	90 (15 not resident in parish)
Worshipping Community	99 (15 under 18)	108 (19 under 18)	121 (21 under 18)
Usual Sunday Attendance (adults)	46	49	55
Usual Sunday Attendance (children)	9	7	9
Baptisms	21	16	15
Thanksgivings	2	0	0
Confirmations	0	0	5
Weddings	9	4	3
Funerals	16 (9 in church)	19 (12 in church)	14 (8 in church)

The average of children on a 'usual Sunday' has been based only on those at Church Together. The average number of adults at Church Together services was 38 (34 in 2023), and the average number of adults at Parish Communion was 47 (42 in 2023). The average attendance at Messy Church was 19 adults and 15 children.

The Worshipping Community includes all those who attend church on a regular basis, whether or not they are on the Electoral Roll and including those who come regularly to a Fresh Expression (in our case, Messy Church). (The usual Sunday attendance figure does not include Messy Church attendees.) We have continued to welcome quite a number of new people to our Church over the past year, as is shown by the growth in the Worshipping Community and reflected in the Usual Sunday Attendance.

PCC review of the year

The full PCC had nine meetings during the year. As always, much of the PCC's work is reflected on in other parts of this report. At each of the first six meetings of the year, time was spent considering the Church of England's Prayers of Love and Faith for same-sex couples, and how to decide whether to use them in our services. This eventually led to a congregational survey being undertaken during September. The responses to this were counted at our October meeting and revealed that the congregation was overwhelmingly in favour of using the Prayers of Love and Faith. Health and Safety and Safeguarding are standing agenda items at every PCC meeting. Peta Thornton has continued to be our PCC minute taker, for which we are most grateful.

SAFEGUARDING

Keeping our Church worship, activities and premises safe for everyone in our parish is a key priority for the PCC, as is ensuring as far as possible that those organisations who regularly use our facilities are also able to achieve similar standards.

Safeguarding is a standing item on each PCC meeting agenda and there will be a written or oral report presented for PCC scrutiny. The PCC is the responsible body for Safeguarding for the Parish. Safeguarding in the United Kingdom covers children and young people up to the age of 18 years and adults who are considered 'at risk' or vulnerable for whatever reason. The parish is taking part in the

Diocesan (and national) Safeguarding Dashboard scheme. This evaluates mandatory Safeguarding effectiveness at three levels: Level 1 - Safer Foundations; Level 2 - Safer Activities; Level 3 - Safer Practices. We reached Level 3 compliance, the highest level, in most areas in 2023 and are maintaining this level. This means the PCC has reviewed policies and procedures, ensuring that these are in line with the requirements of best practice and the duty of the PCC to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. Maintaining this Level requires church members and those organisations which regularly hire our premises to consistently and continuously adhere to mandatory requirements and apply best practice in Safeguarding.

In 2024, the Church of England introduced a related set of five national Safeguarding standards. This is because the House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance is gradually being replaced by a new Safeguarding Code. This code is more explicit that clergy and PCCs must comply with the mandatory requirements but also introduces ongoing quality assurance into our Safeguarding practice. The standards are: Standard 1 - Culture, Leadership and Capacity; Standard 2 – Prevention; Standard 3 - Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk; Standard 4 - Victims and Survivors; Standard 5 - Learning, Supervision and Support. The standards are supported by worksheets to help a PCC measure its progress over a three-year period. Our first review, PCC members together with key Church activity leaders, is scheduled for 8 March 2025 and will focus on Standard 1.

Margaret Ward

WORSHIP

Services

I am very grateful to everyone who has contributed to our worship in any way over the past year, not least Margaret Ward (LLM) and Pat Abbott (BCM Worship) for leading worship and preaching. Thank you to everyone who reads or leads intercessions at our more formal services, and to those who facilitate zones at Church Together.

We used the lectionary readings for almost all the year and continue to use Roots on the Web for resources, which particularly helps with ideas for Church Together. For one of the Sundays of Creationtide (during September) our visiting speaker was Sam Scott, our Diocesan Environment Officer. During December, Bishop Philip came to confirm some people at a Church Together service, and we also had some speakers from Fledge, our Christmas charity.

I am very grateful to all who lead and play for the musical aspect of our worship: Jon Senior and our worship band; Ann Arnold, for her playing at St Paul's almost every week of the year and sometimes singing; Phil Dunford for playing at Parish Communion and most of our weddings and funerals. I am also very grateful to Ann and Jon for their song choices, which invariably fit our Bible passages and themes extremely well. The ad hoc choir for Carols by Candlelight grew even more in number this year and sang incredibly well on just three rehearsals, directed by Ann with Phil at the organ.

We also resumed prayer ministry at two services per month at St Mary's, and for the ninth year running we encouraged people to take part in the global prayer initiative 'Thy Kingdom Come', using prayer journals.

Richard Wise

Children and Young People

Children and young people continue to play a major part in both Messy Church (see p.6) and Church Together. Margaret Ward and Richard Wise ran a group called 'Deeper', with meetings spaced out over two terms, for some young people to think more about their faith, with the possibility of being confirmed at the end of it.

DISCIPLESHIP

Prayer Healing Fellowship

PHF was started by Ethel Scivier ('Eff' to all who loved her) on 7 November 1977. I wonder if she expected us still to be meeting every Monday 47 years later!

As the leader, I am so very grateful to every member for their love, loyalty and support, but especially to Cherry, my deputy; Margaret, who provides the refreshments every first Monday; Ann and Pat, who play the hymns for us. For the first time in ages, I have no deaths to report. Thank you, God! Last August, Ruth joined us from the Methodist Church (as three other members have!), so now we have 14 regular members. We also have five members who are too frail to attend meetings, but we keep in touch with them in prayer, phone calls or visits. Richard brings us Communion three times a year, and we thank him for his love and support.

We collect money every week and support several charities, help people in need, and give to our churches. We have sent 78 cards this year, for all sorts of reasons, so we are fulfilling Eff's wish that we reach out to the community and beyond, showing people that someone cares.

We meet at St Paul's Church every Monday, including Bank Holidays, at 2.30 pm, and finish at about 3.15 pm, after which we have a chat and sign cards. We finish a bit later on the Monday when we have refreshments. Please join us – everyone is welcome!

Sheila Sebborn

Home Groups

Two home groups continued to meet on Tuesday evenings during 2024.

Our home group meets in person at St Mary's, usually on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, and during the year we grew to 11 regular members. We did a course called *Tenants of the King: small group studies to inspire hope for creation* from Operation Noah and then started to work through Mark's Gospel using a study guide that gives us quite long passages of scripture each week. This keeps us moving and helps us to see the 'big picture' of the gospel.

Richard Wise

Our home group meets fortnightly on Zoom, usually on the first and third Tuesday of the month. We currently have 9 members. Over the year we have looked at Bible Reading Fellowship's *Holy Habits: Following Jesus* and then moved onto a series of studies *Mark for Everyone* written by Tom Wright. The group is established for those who have internet access but may be unable, for whatever reason, to leave home regularly in the evening to join a meeting. New members are welcome to join.

Margaret Ward

PASTORAL CARE

During 2024, pastoral care continued through various channels at both St Mary's and St Paul's. There have been opportunities through home groups, home visits, individual face-to-face and telephone conversations, as well as through the work of the Prayer Healing Fellowship. We also held a couple of meetings for those involved officially in pastoral care to chat through our first risk assessment for this. A very helpful conversation came out of this. We were able to share thoughts, ask questions, and feedback on what we were doing, which people found encouraging.

Mid-week worship and communion services have been organised for Bishopstoke Park, Orchard Gardens Care Home and Stoke Knoll Rest Home.

We celebrated special occasions such as the confirmations in December with cards and good wishes. Handmade sympathy cards have been sent to several bereaved families during the year. Get well wishes and flowers from the Christmas decorations at St Mary's were taken to several people recovering from hospital treatment or long-term illness. Home communion has been taken to several house-bound members of our church community.

Prayer ministry has been reintroduced at some services, and there are always people ready to listen to those who wish to talk in confidence. There is a board in the side chapel at St Mary's for written prayer requests. Do let Richard or one of us know if you would like prayers for yourself or for others. We can also organise a pastoral visit. Let us continue to communicate so that we can support each other.

Ann Brown & Joan Cook

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Events

We had more events in 2024 than for many years. Most of them were to raise funds for St Mary's Urgent Repairs, but it was also wonderful to welcome so many people into the church building. In addition to Café @ St Mary's, which took place seven times during the year, we hosted two Bishopstoke History Society presentations, held two quizzes (run by some of the bellringers, who also formed several teams), had two hymnathons, held a Harvest barn dance and, to conclude the year, hosted The Madding Crowd with their Christmas programme. Prayer Healing Fellowship also held a coffee morning for the Urgent Repairs at St Paul's during August. Thank you so much to everyone who arranged, planned, and provided things such as raffles and refreshments for these very enjoyable occasions.

Richard Wise

Cream Tea

The Cream Tea group held its first meeting on 9 July 2022 and has continued to meet every other month on Saturday afternoons. Originally a women's event, it has since grown into an inclusive gathering that welcomes men and women of all generations to enjoy each other's company over tea and cake, inviting family and friends. The group consistently attracts an average of 30 attendees, occasionally joined by young children and teenagers. The group operates on a donation-only basis, with contributions helping to cover costs and any surplus being split annually between St Mary's Urgent Repairs fund and a donation to a local women's refuge.

Sibo Armstrong

Messy Church

Messy Church continues to take place at St Paul's Church on the first Sunday of each month (except for a summer break in August). Each session begins with an hour of activities (usually around 8-10 different activities to try out), followed by a short Celebration, where we sing, hear a Bible story and pray. We then move into the hall to enjoy a meal together.

The Young Leaders Team continues to meet once a month for pizza and planning, and it's been great having such a fantastic group of young people leading some of the activities at Messy Church!

A huge thank you to everyone who was involved in making Messy Church happen in 2024, whether through planning, leading activities, or preparing and serving the food.

Anne Wise

Open the Book

Open the Book is part of the work of Bible Society. Volunteers take assemblies in primary schools, the major part of which is reading and acting out Bible stories wearing costumes, with a brief introduction and closing reflection and prayer. Our team gives an assembly in both Stoke Park Infant and Stoke Park Junior schools most weeks of the year, but Year 6 pupils cover the assemblies independently in their classes. The team includes two members of other churches in the area and had eight active members during the year. From September all team members were obliged to become Open the Book 'members', with an annual subscription paid by them or their church. This enables each member to receive the resources (The Storytellers' Handbook and The Storytelling Bible by Bob Hartman), which have now been completely rewritten, although we can still use the 'heritage' material if we wish. We have occasionally done this over the past few months.

Richard Wise

School Pastors

Since September 2021, three active school pastors have patrolled Stoke Park Junior School during lunchtime once a week. Supported by lunchtime supervisors, they have built positive relationships with children. The founding dedicated team is Martin and Shirley from our Church and Sharon from St Thomas' Fair Oak. We are very pleased to have recruited two more School Pastors, Julia and Peta, from Bishopstoke. They are to start patrolling in the spring term.

The team covers Tuesday lunchtimes with two pastors on duty, and has developed strong relationships with pupils, staff, and the headteacher over the past 3-4 years. The school appreciates their presence, showing gratitude through cards and a summer cream tea. The pastors' contributions make a significant difference, providing a friendly, caring presence and addressing playground upsets. Children appreciate and seek out the pastors, who listen, talk, and participate in their activities. Their presence reassures children and staff, emphasizing their positive impact.

Martin Ward

Tots and Tinies

Tots and Tinies is our term-time toddler group at St Mary's on Tuesday mornings for young children and their parents / carers. There are toys and craft activities, refreshments, and a story and song session at the end. We average around 10 parents / carers each week with their children, and aim to offer support and friendship to all who come.

Many thanks to Wendy, Chris and Carla for all their help in running the group.

Anne Wise

Unshakeable

Unshakeable is a group for 11-17-year-olds which meets at St Mary's on alternate Saturday evenings for 'Fun, Food and Faith'. The group has continued to attract a good number, with about 30 young people who come along regularly, many of whom do not otherwise come to any other church events.

Each session has lots of social time when the young people can play games such as snooker, table tennis, board games and xbox, and the ever-popular hide and seek – preferably in the dark! There's usually a cooking or craft activity to have a go at too, and the tuck continues to be very popular! We finish each session with a 'faith' time, mainly working through life issues that are hopefully relevant to the young people in the group.

We had another sponsored walk this year to raise money for World Vision once again. This time we walked a different leg of the River Itchen, from Bishopstoke to Bitterne, finishing at Cobden Bridge. It was a lovely walk once again, and especially nice as it only involves crossing one road! Other highlights of the year were a 'Late Night Film Night', when we fitted in three films before midnight; a return visit to Ninja Warrior, followed by refreshments at KFC; and a great trip to the beach at Southbourne!

Many thanks to Tessa, Brandon, Sibö and Michael for all they do to help run the group.

Anne Wise

Creation Care

Early in 2024, the Eco Team were invited to take part in the Greening Bishopstoke campaign, to which we said a resounding yes, as it was a way to engage the community in making Bishopstoke a greener place to be. Around 25 people from the community became involved and started five groups within the team. 'Waste Prevention', led by Sibö, started a toy library, which opens twice monthly in Bishopstoke, enabling families to borrow toys instead of buying and throwing them away. 'Cycle of the Seed' and 'Space for Nature' set up a community garden and pollinator patch at St Paul's Church and will continue to maintain and expand those this year. 'Energy Efficient Warmer Homes' thermal imaged 50 homes and ran an event to advise people on how to be more energy efficient. We ran community events throughout the year. There is now a core team of around 15 people who wish to continue many of these projects, and we will resume normal Eco Team church activities after the summer of 2025. Our involvement in Greening Bishopstoke will also help us when we continue to work towards our Silver Eco Award. We are still setting up the wildflower meadow at St Mary's each year, and you will see that thriving soon.

Karen Caws

Giving outside the Parish

Please see section G in the Financial Notes for most of the charities we supported last year. In addition to those, we supported Eastleigh Basics Bank in kind and The Leprosy Mission by hosting a stall at some of our Cafés.

Christian Aid

Our parish supported Christian Aid with two major fundraising events in 2024, raising funds as listed below. These amounts do not include Gift Aid. We would like to thank everyone who has helped with fundraising or contributed to the valuable sums raised. This enthusiastic support is so important. The Christian Aid Week Plant Sale at a Café @St Mary's is now part of our regular Church calendar.

- Christian Aid Week focus on rural support in Burundi – £ 897.91
- Harvest Appeal focus on sustainable agriculture in Zimbabwe – £ 533.00

Margaret Ward

BUILDINGS AND STEWARDSHIP

Fabric and Goods

St Mary's

This year has seen further work being undertaken in the churchyard. Maintenance on trees was carried out by the Parish Council, another memorial bench was donated, and a planter was donated in memory of everyone who died during Covid. Bicycle stands were installed to the north of the tower, and a new noticeboard attached to the boundary wall.

Some progress has been made in the need for a ladder in the bell tower which complies with Health and Safety regulations, and there is a little work still to be done on the clock, which we hope can be done very soon.

We did a lot of fundraising during the year for the external works identified in the Quinquennial Inspection (QI) report (the 'Urgent Repairs'), and we are now in a position to apply for some grants from bodies which give sizeable amounts. Following advice, the PCC agreed that it would be best to apply for grants for the total specification of the work, even if we end up doing it in two phases. The need for this to be done as soon as possible was demonstrated by some crumbling brickwork in the bell chamber, due to gradual water ingress. As anyone who enters the church can see, the plaster and paint on the south interior wall is also in a dreadful state, due to water ingress.

St Paul's

Regarding the future of St Paul's, surveyors from Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) are still looking into the possibility of using the £400,000 earmarked for it, in particular to provide an additional entrance and toilets for the hall, so that the two parts of the building might be used completely independently. For this to be done, however, the building as a whole needs to be in a sufficiently good state. It also requires a completely new roof, partly because the cheap tiles used when it was built in the 1960s are too heavy for the structure, causing cracks in the walls.

For this reason, we only undertook essential maintenance during 2024. We have not responded either to the electrical inspection undertaken in 2023, which revealed that a lot of work needs to be done, or the Quinquennial Inspection report from the same year. At the end of 2024, we were due to have a new external door for the hall, as the current one was liable to open or break at any moment.

The whole premises is cleaned once a week, and we continue to pay for regular upkeep of the grounds. We are very grateful to Greening Bishopstoke for making some of the grounds much more attractive and nature friendly (please see p.8.)

St Paul's continues to be much valued by community groups and other hirers, despite its condition.

Church Room

The Church Room continues to be used for both church and charitable storage.

Thank you so much to everyone who helped with building matters during the year, including Cherry Challis and Wendy Harris, our church wardens, and all who clean the churches. We are also very grateful to the Parish Council for all their maintenance work in St Mary's churchyard and Old St Mary's churchyard.

Richard Wise

Financial Review

Summary

The Church's finances in 2024 remained sufficient to cover running costs, and we have made good headway on fundraising towards St Mary's urgent repairs. We will need to apply for grants this year to help with the costs, and continue our fundraising efforts. Phase 1 works were originally quoted at £122k including VAT (*which may not be recoverable from 2026*), but we need to get new quotes, and based on information that the PCC has received this year, the order of the works is likely to change. Works cannot commence until sufficient funds are in place. Our many successful events so far and other efforts raised a total of approximately £10k in 2024. We have also allocated £60k of the Fabric Fund to the urgent repairs, so the total amount available at the end of 2024 was £76k. Projected works to redevelop St Paul's, being mostly unfunded, is in suspense, as is the re-ordering of the vestry space at St Mary's. Our Reserves policy is to cover 3 months' running costs – after planned increases to Reserve and Fabric funds, unrestricted funds at £10.9k (2023: £2.9k) have increased. Voluntary income showed a large increase this year – largely due to a good response to our appeals to raise money for the urgent repairs – **to safeguard our buildings, and related missional work, continued prayer and action is needed by us all to raise or generate funds, and index-link our giving to keep up with inflation.**

On the separate document is our Statement of Financial Activities for 2024 with a breakdown of the Income and Expenditure Account as represented by General Funds and Reserves, and Funds Designated or Restricted for specific purposes. Monies are mostly held in HSBC, and Cambridge & Counties.

Income

Voluntary giving in 2024 increased by around 16% (restricted funds giving increased by 64%, compared to general giving, which was 8%). It is comforting to see an above inflation increase in general giving on top of the additional generosity from our efforts to raise funds for the urgent repairs. Donations comprise approximately 83% of our income, mainly from parishioners regularly giving. Income from fundraising, lettings and building society interest increased notably – total income amounting to about £105k (2023: £90.4k). Statutory fees income decreased again this year due to fewer church weddings. We were blessed to receive a legacy of £2,000 this year from the estate of Jane Lush. **We receive no state funding.**

Expenditure

Total spending of £66.5k seems to show a large decrease (2023: £74.6k), most of this decrease being due to lower capital spends this year, as very few works were completed while we plan for the large repairs that are coming up. St Paul's running costs showed a noticeable drop this year as well, which is likely due to differences in winter temperatures from year to year. The Common Mission Fund (CMF) request reduced this year to the 2022 level to £37k (2023: £40.6k). CMF represents over half of our unrestricted spending – contributing to Richard's stipend, housing costs and training, and supporting mission here and elsewhere (see www.winchester.anglican.org/common-mission-fund/).

Stewardship

Financial giving is a sacrificial, rewarding, expression of your faith and worship. Please consider giving regularly via the Parish Giving Scheme, Standing Order or weekly envelopes. We recover tax paid through Gift Aid. Please contact us for forms and details of these, or about leaving a financial legacy. You can also give online (please see www.cofebishopstoke.com/giving-to-our-church).

Thank you to Mike Harris for his years as treasurer and for the thorough handover he has completed to allow me to step in to the role this year. Thanks also to our Independent Examiner Stephen Collyer, and to all who helped to run our church's finances – notably Wendy Dale, Sheila Sebborn, and our Gift Aid Secretary Natasha Redfern.

Carla Hollinghurst

THE BELLRINGERS' GUILD

At the beginning of the year there were 30 members of the band at St. Mary's: Nick Butler, Sandra Caro, Peter Cates, Sally Cates, Julia Clarke, Matthew Dancy, Alex Dicks, John Dodd, Richard Eames, Robert Eames, Allen Guille, John Hallett, Ben Knowles, Sean Langton, Ann LeMarechal, Kay LeMarechal, Roy LeMarechal, Stephanie LeMarechal, Helen McCormack, Alasdair Mead, Janet Morris, Alison Parker, Barry Pointer, Fiona Pratt, Amanda Sheppard, Emily Sheppard, Elizabeth Skinner, Stephen Wise, Graham Wright and Kristine Wright. Sadly, after a short illness, John Hallett died on 7 April. He had been a Bishopstoke ringer on and off since 1966. We hosted the Winchester District AGM on 10 February, and Steph was elected chairperson.

Demonstrations

Sunday 12 May was Bell Sunday. After ringing, a group of the ringers attended the pre-service social gathering, chatted with the congregation, and showed some of our scrapbooks and certificates from the previous day's striking competitions. On 12 June, Alasdair brought his Scout group; and on 28 September, Stephen brought the Church youth group.

On Friday 10 May, Roy and Allen ran a quiz in church, raising money for St Mary's Urgent Repairs. Many ringers entered teams as well as other members of the church. Over £1100 was raised. Another quiz on 15 November raised £610.12. The ringers entered a team (The Clangers) in the Anglers fortnightly Wednesday quiz. Our position varied from first to last but, at the end of the year, we were the overall winners.

This year's outing was from 31 May to 2 June. We visited 14 towers in the Hertfordshire area. On the Saturday we had a walking tour of St Albans where we rang at all four city towers, including the cathedral.

Just two weddings had bells this year.

The bells were rung half-muffled several times: on 27 October, a peal of Grandsire Caters for the All Souls' service, with over half the band aged 20 or younger! On 10 November for the Remembrance Sunday service; and on 11 November, a peal of Grandsire Caters for Armistice Day.

20 quarter peals were attempted on Thursdays and 1st Sundays, mainly by Bishopstoke ringers. Methods varied from Plain Bob Doubles to Erin Caters and Little Bob Royal. None were lost! Two local band peals were rung. On 19 May, Doubles & Minor at Stockbridge was successful. On 28 September, Plain Bob Major was rung as a compliment to Elizabeth & Vaughan on their 40th wedding anniversary.

Guild striking competitions were held on 11 May. In the 6-bell competition at Arreton we came 2nd out of 9. In the 8-bell competition at Carisbrooke we came 2nd again out of 6 teams. The following week we entered the Winchester District striking competition at Houghton and came 2nd yet again. Finally, on 8th June, Bishopstoke ringers made up half the District team in the Guild inter District striking competition at Curdridge, and we came 2nd – again!

The bells were rung 6 times by visiting bands with the W&P youth group making several Sunday afternoon visits.

Attendance on Thursdays and Sundays has been good. Stedman 7, Cambridge S.8, Bristol S.8, Grandsire 9 and Little Bob 10 are often rung on Sunday mornings.

Roy LeMarechal

THE WIDER CHURCH

Deanery Synod

Eastleigh Deanery Synod met three times during 2024 with Richard chairing the meetings as Area Dean. Danny Stupple resigned as Lay Chair due to illness after serving for 9 years. His elected successor, Carol Kidd, from St James', West End, introduced herself at the October meeting. During October, our Assistant Area Dean, Revd Dr Sarah McClelland, moved to take on a parish in Jersey.

Speakers included the Diocesan Environment Officer, Revd Sam Scott, who came in June to encourage church communities to consider their attitude to creation, the preservation of the environment and the use of energy in church buildings. Sam outlined resources that are available to help churches aim towards reaching carbon neutral by 2030, as pledged by the Church of England.

In October, the Bishop of Winchester, the Right Revd Philip Mounstephen, who had taken up his ministry officially in January, came to speak about his vision for the Diocese. He suggested that a sense of community is the most important thing in a flourishing church. He emphasised that there was already much to be thankful for in the Diocese of Winchester and he saw that his ministry would be based on 'heritage' which would inspire for the future, 'healing' and 'hope'. His four main priorities will be:

1. Clergy wellbeing in the midst of a changing role.
2. Ministry development in all areas and age ranges, recognising the gifts of people and encouraging the increase of chaplaincies and lay ministry.
3. Looking at strategies to develop healthy, growing churches.
4. Looking at equality, diversity and inclusion.

Finance was mentioned at each meeting. By October, our Deanery had collectively paid 75% of the Common Mission Fund request and this was on schedule to hopefully be successfully completed by the end of the year. However, it was reported that there could be a Diocesan increase of £ 26,000 for 2025. Most of the parishes in the Deanery contributed £30 as requested to Deanery expenses during 2024.

News from the Diocesan Synod included that there was to be a review of aspects of the Common Mission Fund. We also heard that all the Diocesan offices were now back at Old Alresford Place.

New incumbents were appointed at Hamble and Hound, which would now be a united benefice, and Chandler's Ford. Rhiannon King was welcomed to the Diocese as the new Bishop of Southampton in November.

News from each parish was shared, including thanksgiving that in Bishopstoke the church Eco team had been asked to lead the local Greening Campaign. In some parishes links with local schools had been strengthened, and several people reported that their congregations had been growing steadily. However, challenges reported included financial difficulties and necessary building repairs. Each meeting ended with an opportunity to pray with others for each parish, for the gospel to be shared with more children and young people, and for the concerns of the wider Diocese.

Ann Brown

Churches Together

The Churches Together in Bishopstoke, Fair Oak and Horton Heath group has continued to meet but decided during the year to reduce our number of meetings to once per term and make information sharing and prayer our main foci. We are open to these leading to working together whenever something appropriate arises, and we shared our Ash Wednesday service at St Mary's with members

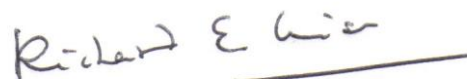
of St Thomas' and Fair Oak Family Church, as St Thomas' new heating was being installed during that week.

There has been a change amongst the Bishopstoke churches. In 2023 the Evangelical Church sadly ceased their worship and activities in Stoke Park Road, and members moved to other churches. About a year later, the building was rented by Junction Church in Eastleigh, and they have started some meetings on Sunday afternoons. We have not yet had a conversation with them in terms of how we might possibly work together or share worship in Bishopstoke.

However, our long-standing relationship with Bishopstoke Methodist Church continues. Once more, we shared the open-air services on Good Friday and Easter Day, and our united Pentecost service was an all-age celebration at Bishopstoke Methodist Church. We also continue to pray together at the Methodist Church most Tuesday mornings of the year, and anyone is most welcome to come along.

Richard Wise

**Approved by the PCC, and signed on their behalf by
Revd Richard Wise (PCC Chair)**



April 2025

**PARISH OF BISHOPSTOKE
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
St Mary's Church, Bishopstoke
Sunday 28th April 2024**

MINUTES

The APCM was held at St Mary's Church. Revd. Richard Wise presided over the meeting attended by 29 people.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ann Arnold, Joan Cook, Brian and Annette Dodd, Phil Dunford and Janet Henderson.

2. Election of Churchwarden

Cherry Challis was proposed by Joan Cook and seconded by Marjorie Young. Following a show of hands, Cherry was re-elected as Churchwarden with no dissent.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2023

Copies of the minutes of the last meeting were made available and circulated prior to the meeting. The minutes were approved by a show of hands and will be signed off as an accurate record by Richard Wise.

4. Receiving of the Annual Report

Copies of the Annual Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was approved by a show of hands, and was proposed by Cherry Challis and seconded by Jeanette Neale as a true account of 2023.

5. Receiving of Accounts and Independent Examiner's Report

Copies of the financial statements, but without the Independent Examiner's Report, had been circulated beforehand. They were proposed as acceptable by Sheila Sebborn and seconded by Martin Ward.

Mike Harris, Treasurer, encouraged all to read the summary of accounts. He also explained that unusually, the financial report is still in draft; this is due to awaiting confirmation of the Gift Aid claim which he has had to estimate for the time being.

6. Report on the Electoral Roll

This year, we have 90 people on the electoral roll, with 15 living outside the parish. This represents 4 people joining the roll.

7. Election of Parochial Church Councillors

There were four nominations for the Church Council: Carla Hollinghurst was proposed by Margaret Ward and seconded by Wendy Dale; Lynda Mumford was proposed by Wendy Dale and seconded by Jeanette Neale; Karen Caws was proposed by Julia Bancroft and seconded by Karen Smeal; Sibb Armstrong was proposed by Karen Caws and seconded by Jeanette Neale.

All four were elected by a show of hands without dissent.

8. Election of Sides people

St. Mary's: Julia Bancroft, Edna Brown, Karen Caws, Wendy Dale, Liz Farrington, Jeanette Neale, Karen Smeal, Shirley Smeal and Martin Ward.

St. Paul's: Joan Cook, Janet Henderson and Marjorie Young.

All were elected on a show of hands.

Jenny Rogers has decided to stand down and Margaret Bishop is taking leave of absence for the time being.

9. Appointment of an Independent Examiner

As far as Mike Harris, Treasurer, is aware, Peter Cates is still willing to act in the above role. Therefore, Peter Cates was approved for a further year on a show of hands.

10. Any other business and questions

(i) Terrier and Inventory:

St Paul's – nothing added or removed

St Mary's

- Added - the bench in memory of Peter Clarke
- Added - the bike stand
- Added - the new notice board on the boundary wall
- Removal of the oil tank for the bike stand

(ii) Expressing thanks to those on the PCC and the new councillors. To Ann and Wendy on the Deanery Synod and to Margaret our Licenced Lay Minister (LLM). Thanks also to Cherry for all her work and for being willing to stay for another term as Church warden. Special thanks and flowers were given to Wendy Harris as she steps down as Churchwarden.

(iii) Peta Thornton asked whether we had a replacement for Wendy yet. Richard explained that no-one has offered as yet, but this can be deferred until someone does, and they can be voted in at an extraordinary general meeting at a later date.

(iv) Karen Caws asked whether the grant offered by Eastleigh Borough Council for St Paul's could be used for St Mary's instead. Richard stated that this was not possible as it is specifically granted to improve St Paul's for the community.

(v) Richard took the opportunity to remind everyone present of what has been happening with regard to the St Paul's refurbishment and Eastleigh Borough Council's help.

- Even modest improvements would have to involve an additional entrance and toilets in order to provide a contained area for the pre-school.
- Surveys have shown the building to be unsound due to inappropriate roof tiles. Cherry reported that four years ago that the cost to replace the roof alone was £120,000.

Mike Thornton asked if it could be sold with the money put towards St Mary's restoration.

Richard said this is one possibility.

(vi) Cherry Challis asked what is happening about the Church Room in Stoke Park Road.

Richard said that at present it is a storeroom but if money became available it would be good to redevelop the site for a church office, with kitchen and toilet facilities. The Church Room site has a covenant on it, which would make it difficult to sell to raise funds.

(vii) Sheila Sebborn asked what the fundraising amount stood at presently. Mike Harris will give Richard a figure for publication in next week's Welcome sheet.

(viii) Richard Wise was thanked by Martin Ward for all he does in the parish.

The meeting closed with prayer.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2025

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Election of Church wardens
3. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024

2024

4. Receiving of the Annual Report
5. Receiving of Accounts and Independent Examiner's Report

2025

6. Report on the Electoral Roll
7. Election of Deanery Synod member
8. Election of Parochial Church Councillors
9. Election of Sides people
10. Appointment of an Independent Examiner
11. Any other business and questions