



St Mark's Church, Gillingham

'Living for Jesus, Loving Gillingham, Learning Together'

AGENDA

for the meeting on 19 May 2024

MINUTES

of the last APCM on 21 May 2023

plus

STATUTORY AND ADDITIONAL REPORTS

for the year ended 31 December 2023

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Agenda for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 19 May 2024

- (1) Prayer
- (2) Meeting of Parishioners for the Choosing of Two Churchwardens
- (3) The Annual Parochial Church Meeting of St Mark's Electoral Roll Members
 1. Apologies for Absence and Minutes of the previous year's meeting
 2. Elections
 - a) Appointment of 3 tellers for the election
 - b) Introduction of each candidate standing for election
 - c) Election of Electoral Roll Members to serve on PCC
 - d) Election of Deanery Synod Members – no election this year.
 3. Report on the financial affairs of the Parish (*2023 Annual Report and Accounts, 2024 budget*) (GA)
 4. Choosing of an Independent Examiner of the Accounts for the current year (GA)
 5. The following agenda items should all be covered in the Annual Report or the Additional Reports if not they will be provided at the meeting by the officer responsible.
 - a) Electoral Roll Officer's Report (*Statutory Reports*)
 - b) Report on the Proceedings of the PCC (*Statutory Reports*)
 - c) Report on Fabric, Goods and Ornaments (*Statutory Reports*)
 - d) Proceedings of Deanery Synod (*Statutory Reports*)
 - e) Receiving the Reports from Church Ministries given in the Additional Reports
 6. Activities Update
 7. Vicar's Update Report/update/vision Catharina Olsson Gisleskog (COG)
 8. Closing Prayer (COG)

**Minutes for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 21 May 2023**

The APCM for 2023 was in church at 12.30 pm on Sunday 21 May 2023

The meeting was chaired by Revd Catharina Olsson Gisleskog.

(1). Worship

Catharina welcomed people to the meeting and read from Isaiah 43:19. This was followed by prayer.

(2). Meeting of Parishioners for the choosing of two Churchwardens.

It was reported that Sean Adigun was not wanting to renew his role as Churchwarden and he had been thanked in the service preceding the meeting. Catharina thanked Karen Dyer for all that she had undertaken.

Two people were nominated for Churchwarden, these were Karen Dyer and Frank Howard, who had both been proposed and seconded.

The candidates spoke briefly about themselves.

The meeting unanimously agreed to Karen Dyer and Frank Howard being elected as Churchwardens.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting of St Mark's Electoral Roll Members

1. Apologies for Absence and Minutes of the previous year's meeting.

There were no questions asked about the previous year's minutes. There were no amendments.

Apologies were received from Vince Allen, Promise Anga, Kathy and Steve Burtrand, Becca and Henry Cooper, Margaret Green, Pauline Jackson and John and Ann Townsend.

2. Elections

Catharina asked the outgoing PCC members to come forward - Joel Watson, and Chris Gladwell and she thanked them for serving.

a. Election of Electoral Roll Members to serve on PCC

There were the following spaces:-

4 spaces for 3 years

2 space for 2 years

1 space for 1 year

Sean Adigun, Chris Blewett, Maria O'Hagan, Vicki Onitiri, Emmanuel Orachiri and Promise Anga had been nominated to stand for PCC and they each spoke briefly about themselves.

The meeting voted unanimously to the following:

Sean Adigun,
Chris Blewett,
Maria O’Hagan and
Vicki Onitiri
were elected for three years, and
Emmanual Orachiri and Promise Agna
were elected for two years.

This leaves one position vacant for one year.

b. Deanery Synod

There were 2 spaces for 3 years.

Glyn Allen and Dr Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell were nominated for the vacancies. Both had previously served on the Deanery Synod. They both spoke about themselves.

Glyn Allen and Dr Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell were unanimously elected.

3. Report on the financial affairs of the Parish Church (Annual Report)

The Treasurer said that he hoped that people had been able to look at the Annual Reporting and Accounts for 2022 and also his Treasurer’s Report which brings out the key points in the accounts.

The Treasurer shared a summary of the reports.

He reported that the Financial Statements are at the moment with the Independent Examiner and have not yet been signed off, so everything is subject to that examination although he was not expecting any changes.

Highlights for the year:

General Fund	2022	2021
Total Income	£151,829	£139,504
Total Expenditure	£147,038	£153,044
Surplus (Deficit)	£4,791	(£13,540)
Net Surplus/Deficit after transfers	(£4,180)	(£1,273)
Budget forecast Surplus/Deficit	£7,859	£8,923
Net Deficit excluding CRF transfer	£5,820	(£11,273)
Donations (Voluntary Income)	£120,124	£119,802

GA explained that apart from the General Fund we hold other designated funds the largest of these are as follows:-

Development Fund - £41,255
Pre-school Fund - £14,408
Repair Funds – £34,041
Total in all our funds is £210,386, which is our current assets.

GA ran through the financial highlights of 2022.

Financial Highlights •

- Year End General Fund net deficit of £4,180 compared to budget forecast deficit of £7,859.
- General Fund voluntary giving increased slightly to £120,124. Lower than budget by £1,876.
- 79% of General Fund Income came from Voluntary Giving.
- Designated Away Giving maintained at 10% of 2021 Voluntary Giving.
- £21,843 net Gift Aid tax recovered for General Fund, after accrual adjustments. This includes Gift Aid processed by the Parish Giving Scheme.
- £11,473 (incl. Gift Aid) donated to the Development Fund earmarked for the new kitchen.
- The Parish Giving Scheme was launched in June 2022, with 31 people regularly contributing.
- Parish Offer to Diocese, to cover clergy support, increased by 2% - to £74,334, with 18.8% met by SMI Church.
- General Fund net current asset at year end was 28.5% of 2023 forecast expenditure, with cash reserves of 26.8%.
- £11,324 rent received for the Garden House
- Pre-school had a net deficit of £13,437 compared to a deficit of £35,962 in 2021

Budget for 2023

Expected income for the year is £153,500 and expected expenditure is £172,695, giving a deficit of £19,195. The large deficit is primarily due to increased energy costs. We had been told that the increased energy costs could be 10 times more than previous years. We have renewed our contracts and with the prices that we have been able to secure GA was hopeful that the deficit would not be as high as anticipated as gas prices are beginning to drop.

Most of our income (78%) is expected to come from Voluntary Giving, and the three largest areas of expenditure are staff, buildings, and Diocesan Offer which amounts to 87% of our total expenditure. We should be able to manage our deficit by using reserves, but we need to ensure we keep control on our spending and spend wisely and also encourage the importance of regular generous giving.

GA answered a question from Suzanne Wilkins regarding the percentage of Away Giving which appears to have been reduced from 10% to 7%. GA said that the Away Giving is 10% of our Voluntary Giving, not our overall income.

Parish Giving Scheme.

Ove 31 people have signed up to use the Parish Giving Scheme with over £5,000 a month (including Gift Aid) being given this way.

GA asked people who currently give by Standing Order to consider switching to the Parish Giving Scheme as it helps with the accounting process and Gift Aid Claims. If you would like to give regularly GA wanted to encourage people to do that by signing up to the Parish Giving Scheme. It is easy to set up with no cost to the giver or the church. Details are on our website or by using the QR code at the back of church or speaking to himself or Mike Young our Gift Aid Secretary.

GA said that God has always provided for St Mark's in remarkable ways, and he believed that He would continue to do that through the generosity of people in St Mark's.

The Treasurer recorded his thanks to all those who helped and supported with the financial tasks within St Mark's – Gift Aid Secretary Mike Young, Payroll Management Officer John Townsend, management of Pre-school accounts Alastair Williams, the Office Staff, the offering counting team, banking of cash. Thanks also to the PCC Finance Task Group for their support and guidance throughout the year. He thanked to everyone at St Mark's for their sacrificial giving, that enabled God's work to continue and grow at St Mark's and beyond.

Catharina thanked the Treasurer for his faithfulness all his work.

4. Choosing of an Independent Examiner of the Accounts for the current year

The Treasurer proposed that we appoint Rob Trice as our Independent Examiner for the 2023 accounts as we have done in the past and the meeting unanimously agreed.

5. Reports

The following agenda items were all covered in the Annual Report that had been previously available.

- f) Electoral Roll Officer's Report (Statutory Report)– *Report by Denise Young*
- g) Report on the Proceedings of the PCC (Statutory Report)– *Report by Vicky Allen*
- h) Fabric, Goods and Ornaments - (Statutory Report) - *Report by Chris Gladwell*
- i) Proceedings of Deanery Synod (Statutory Report) - *Report by Glyn Allen*

Terri Thom asked regarding the Fabric Goods and Ornament report what was happening about the chairs in church.

Catharina said that in her first meeting the PCC voted to go ahead with the kitchen project, but as a stage two we would look at purchasing new chairs for church.

Lynne Martin said that we don't fill all chairs and that we should get rid of some that were beyond repair. Chris Gladwell said that we have to prioritise expenditure and to buy new chairs was about £90 - £100 each so to buy 200 new chairs it would cost around £20,000.

The meeting accepted the Statutory Reports unanimously.

- f) Other Reports from Church Ministries were included in the Additional Reports, and these were previously available.

Graham Wilkins said that David Wilkins had not been asked for a report about Bible Stream. Vicky Allen said that as it was a regular service that was why she hadn't requested a report.

There were no other questions raised about these reports.

6. Activities Updates

Catharina asked Joel Watson the Chairman of the Pre-school to give an update.

Pre-school.

Joel said that we have a long-established Pre-school operating five days a week from the Vicarage Hall. Pre-school is part of our mission in Gillingham. We are the lowest charging Pre-school in the area. We have children from all faiths and it's great to see so many people coming. COVID had a major impact on the numbers coming to Pre-school and the income fell and we have a big loss compared to a number of years ago. We have done a number of things in the last 18 months to make the financial picture better. The school is recovering well under the leadership of Jo Tilley and our numbers are back to what they were pre-pandemic.

The quality of teaching is reflected in a rating of "Good" from Ofsted.

Joel said we are hoping to continue providing a high standard of teaching at a going rate. He asked for continued prayers.

Kitchen Project.

GA informed the meeting of the current funds that we have available for the kitchen project.

Current Status £	
Development Fund balance at end Dec 2022	41,255
2023 donations+ Gift Aid received and due to date	11,000
Keith Sheepwash legacy	25,000
Marshall's Charity grant	20,000
Total	97,255
Less balance of fees in 2023	6,952
Total funds available	£90,303

Glyn Allen said that some people have been giving to the Development Fund for 40 years and he thanked all those who have given over so many years.

Our first estimated cost of the kitchen project we thought it would be around £75,000 but obviously things have become more expensive.

Chris Gladwell outlined the work that would be undertaken. The kitchen would be in the far corner of the church where Foodbank currently have a space. We will also update the current kitchenette and put in cupboards for use for Foodbank. While the new kitchen is being constructed, Foodbank will operate in the prayer chapel area. We will have a new sound desk forward from where it is at the moment.

Drawings have been sent to DAC and we have had comments from them and we have incorporated them. The updated drawings have been re-issued to the two lowest tenderers for their new costing and the drawings will to the DAC for their next meeting in September.

Catharina wanted to thank people that have been part of the project so far. She showed the current drawings of the kitchen from the architect and also pictures of what the kitchen will look like.

There were some questions from the floor. Ernie Mann said that he hoped that necessary things would not be cut out due to lack of money. He thought that further support would be given once people see the work underway. Chris Gladwell said the only thing that had been cut out were two extra cupboards which were going to cost £25,000 which was thought to be too much for those cupboards.

Maria said that if we were going to be cooking for 100 people then we would need a commercial size oven and more.

Chris Gladwell said this had been spoken about this a lot, and if we look at going down a commercial kitchen, this would cost much more. We are looking to cater for what we do at the moment and more but using the church kitchen.

The meeting was asked whether it be possible to re-instate the Coffee Shop that we used to run. The Coffee Shop had been run by volunteers and due to lack of them it was stopped. We do however run Open Church on Tuesday where we serve coffee and tea.

7. Any Other Business

Suzanne Wilkins said that we all meet as a family around the Communion Table. Since the pandemic we no longer have non-alcoholic wine. There are churches in the Church of England that serve non-alcoholic wine. Can we also look at communion for children?

Catharina said it was wonderful to share Holy Communion. Since arriving she has been looking into this and the C of E Canon says we should serve alcoholic wine. Catharina said that you can receive Holy Communion in just one kind.

Regarding children receiving Holy Communion the Diocese is doing a lot of research into Holy Communion for children and we could run a course for children, so they understand why we have Holy Communion. We will discuss this at the PCC.

8. Vicar's Update/Vision

Catharina wanted to thank everyone who had steered the church through the interregnum. She also thanked, Churchwardens, Staff Team, PCC, All Age Team, all other teams.

She thanked those who painted the Vicarage and for the warm welcome she had received.

She said that we will be sad to see Vicki Watson leave in the summer.

Catharina shared three priorities that she had shared with the staff team and PCC.

1. Prayer – we have started monthly prayer meetings.
2. Evangelism – initially in the form of Alpha – people should move on to a smaller group after completing the Alpha Course.
3. Fellowship – we will be going to New Wine as a fellowship in the summer.

Catharina said that we will look at the Fruit of the Spirit in a sermon series after Pentecost.

The meeting closed with Catharina reading again the verses from Isaiah 43 that were read at the beginning of the meeting and also prayer.

Vicky Allen - PCC Secretary

Statutory Reports

Treasurer's Report 2023

Note 2023 Annual Financial Statements are subject to Independent Examination approval.

General Fund

For 2023 financial year, we forecast a budget deficit on PCC unrestricted General Fund of £19,195, which included transfers between Repair and Pre-school Funds. The year finished with a surplus of £7,072 albeit this included an income accrual of £1,760 for unclaimed Gift Aid tax. Overall, compared to budget, our income was higher by approx. £8,000 and expenditure lower by approx. £18,300. The net surplus to budget was £26,268. This was primarily due to higher voluntary giving and lower energy costs.

Donations (Voluntary Income) increased to £127,783 from £120,124 in 2022 being higher than budget by £7,783. Gift Aid tax recovered amounted to £23,362, including the income accrual. Online, contactless and Gospel Night realised donations of £6,208, before Gift Aid tax recovery being applied. Income from the Parish Giving Scheme was £50,497 plus Gift Aid.

The Pre-school funds transfer to General Fund, for the daily use of the Vicarage Hall, was £12,500 and is a useful contribution towards the fixed costs for the building. Income continued to be supplemented by rental for the Garden House of £12,789 for the year, paid by the Diocese to provide housing provision for the Medway Campus Chaplain. Net wedding and funeral fees were £397. We were reimbursed by SMI Church for Jonica Thomas' salary as SMI Administrator.

For expenditure, the total running costs for our buildings were lower than budget by approx. £13,123 due to lower energy costs than forecast. Youth and children, evangelism and printing costs were all lower than budget. Mission Giving from General Fund was £12,000 and based on 10% of donations received in 2023, our General Fund Away Giving in 2024 will be budgeted at £12,800.

This year the PCC, together with St Mary's Island Church DCC, agreed that the Parish Indicative Offer paid to the Diocese, as a contribution to meet both stipend costs for parish clergy and towards other diocesan support costs, would be £73,008 – a 1.8% decrease on 2022. This was apportioned £58,918 for St Mark's and £14,090 for St Mary's Island – I.E., 80.7%/19.3% split.

The General Fund cash at bank and in hand at 31 December 2023 was £56,185. After debtors and creditors adjustment the net current asset was £56,243. This represents a 'reserve' of 33.5% of our 2024 forecast expenditure. The PCC maintained the minimum Reserve Policy for 2023 of £55,000. The Reserve Policy will be reviewed by the PCC annually. Cash reserves are also 33.5% of 2024 forecast expenditure.

General Fund Highlights	2023	2022
Donations (Voluntary Income)	£127,783	£120,123
Total Income	£149,014	£151,829
Total Expenditure	£149,064	£147,038
Surplus (Deficit)	(£50)	£4,791
Net Surplus after transfers	£7,072	(£4180)

Other Funds

The total year-end balance in our Designated Repair Funds was £31,653 with a total of £8,722 spent. A total for all the funds of £5,377 was transferred in during the year.

During the year £35,859 was donated to the restricted Development Fund. We paid professional fees of £5,405 and the fund now has a balance of £71,709.

The balance in the Mission Fund is £8,685 of which £8,520 is provisioned. During the year we donated a total of £2,980 from this fund plus some designated donations.

The Vicar's Discretionary Fund received £1,000 donations with £1,224 discretionary spending. The fund balance is £205.

The India Fund had no income or expenditure and has a balance of £9,707.

During the year there has been no expenditure from the HYCFM Fund (Children and Youth), leaving a balance of £1,250.

The Peace and Hope Fund had no income or expenditure and has a current balance of £782.

The Specific Donation Fund is to receive designated donations. There was no income or expenditure. The fund balance is £7,405.

The Small Funds balance is £76.

The Strategic Development Fund is for the income and expenditure management of SDF projects. SDF funding can be drawn down periodically from the Diocese of Rochester. The year-end expenditure was £6,102, with a drawdown of £7,318, giving a fund balance of £1,630. Further funds will be drawn down in 2024.

Pre-school income from all sources was £115,310 and expenditure £100,848 giving a surplus for the year of £14,462 and a net surplus of £1,962 after transfer of £12,500 to General Fund. This compares to a net deficit of £5,937 in 2022.

The balances in the Legacy Funds are as follows:

Community Development Fund (restricted). For the benefit of the congregation to help those in need - £4,940.

Legacy Development Fund (designated) earmarked towards the new kitchen - £25,000.

Legacy Fund (designated). During the year £433 was spent from this fund, leaving a balance of £9,223.

Fund Balances	Closing 2023	Opening 2023
General Fund	£56,243	£49,170
Development Fund	£71,709	£41,255
Mission Fund	£8,685	£11,854
Repair Funds	£31,653	£34,041
Small Funds	£76	£76
Vicar's Discretionary Fund	£205	£429
Pre-school Fund	£16,370	£14,408
HYCFM Fund	£1,250	£1,250
India Fund	£9,707	£9,707

Peace and Hope Fund	£782	£782
Specific Donation Fund	£7,404	£7,404
Strategic Development Fund	£1,630	£414
Community Development Fund	£4,940	£4,940
Legacy Development Fund	£25,000	£25,000
Legacy Fund	£9,223	£9,655
Net current assets less current liabilities	£244,876	£210,386

The PCC has approved the final General Fund 2024 V1 budget, with a year-end forecast deficit of £10,718 and an assumed voluntary income of £125,000.

I would like to again record thanks to all those who help and support the financial tasks within St Mark's - the Gift Ais Secretary, Payroll Management Officer, the office staff, the offering counting team, banking of cash and management of Pre-school accounts. I also thank the PCC Finance Task Group for their support and guidance throughout the year.

Approximately 86% of our General Fund income is from voluntary giving and we thank God for the sacrificial giving of so many that His work may continue and grow here and beyond.

Glyn Allen - Treasurer

Fabric, Goods and Ornaments

The following buildings, associated land and other related assets are entrusted to us and it is our corporate responsibility to care for their upkeep led by the Churchwardens and PCC. Our responsibility relates to: St Mark's Church, the Old Vicarage, the Vicarage Hall and the Garden House.

The maintenance of the Vicarage is the responsibility of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

The Church

The church has been subjected to a number of routine minor repairs including concerns such as missing roof tiles and blocked drains.

In accordance with Church of England requirements, the Church building was subjected to a five yearly (Quinquennial) inspection by a Diocesan approved Architect during October. The inspector's report made a number of observations requiring repairs to be undertaken, summarised as follows:

Essential Works within the next two years:

Roofs

- *Moss should be cleared from the chancel roof. Branches of the mature tree overhanging the north side of the chancel should be cut back annually and the gutters cleared in this area. Consideration should be given to removal of this tree.*

Rainwater Disposal

- *Clear blocked downpipe on south west corner of south aisle.*
- *Redecorate fascia, ensure the gutter is laid to correct falls and clear moss from the south side of the chancel when access scaffolding is available.*
- *Decorate fascia at the eastern end of the apsidal sanctuary/chancel within the next 2 years to avoid further deterioration.*
- *Replace section of missing gutter to high level central nave on north elevation.*
- *Clear gutters and re-seal joints on north eastern side of the church.*
- *Replace gutter between the creche and the accessible WC and install flashing in this location to stop rainwater being driven into the masonry in high winds.*

Walls and Finishes

- *Replace bricks to corbelled brick and stone abutment at the west end of the south and north aisles within the next 2 years.*
- *The above corbelled sections should be repointed and possibly have heli-bars added to ensure stability.*
- *Repaint vertical movement cracks at the east end of the sanctuary and monitor every 6 months for the quinquennial period.*

Windows, Glazing and Doors

- *Redecorate external west doors within the next 12 months.*
- *Overhaul metal ventilators.*

Ceilings, Walls and Floors

- *Point up external cracks to the northernmost window at the apsidal end following assessment by a Structural Engineer. Tie restraints may be needed.*

- *Clear drains and gutters in corner below easternmost window of the south aisle followed by repointing of internal crack at the head of the arch and base of the cill, to be monitored regularly thereafter.*

Services

- *Carry out periodic electrical test and report.*
- *Carry out test of lightning protection system.*

Essential Works within the next five years

Rainwater Disposal

- *Redecorate fascia and exposed purlins at the east end of the north aisle within the quinquennial period.*

Walls and Finishes

- *Carry out localised repointing and repair in lime mortar to areas listed.*
- *Carry out repointing and repair to the weathering stones of low buttresses on the north west and south west corners of the church.*

Windows, Glazing and Doors

- *Repair/replace broken quarry tile to clerestory windows on the northern side of the nave.*
- *Overhaul metal ventilator to place them back into an openable condition, particularly the one in the choir vestry.*

Desirable/future Work

- *Set up a programme to redecorate the cast iron external saddlebars to ensure future generations do not have to undertake large scale stone repairs to the bathstone if the saddlebars are not maintained.*
- *Replacement of those bricks with severe exfoliation in the high level areas is likely to be necessary in around 10 years time.*
- *The string course below the west window has deteriorated in two or three locations. No work is required yet, however repairs are likely to be needed in the next 10 years.*

Note: It is intended that work on items identified in the quinquennial inspection should commence after installation of the new kitchen is completed. It is anticipated that this should be completed during the first half of 2024.

Church Furnishings

The chairs in the worship area of the church have deteriorated to very poor condition and, as a matter of opinion, urgently require replacement.

The carpet in the church has also deteriorated to a poor condition, being very badly stained.

The Old Vicarage

Some minor maintenance repairs have been carried out during the past year, with nothing of significance outstanding.

Vicarage Hall

Ongoing minor maintenance work has been completed. A request has been raised by Pre-school for the office to be redecorated. It is observed that the floor in the hall should be cleaned and re-sealed during 2025.

The Garden House

The Garden House has continued to be rented to the Diocese and occupied by Lynne Martin who moved in April/May 2017. Arising from Diocese inspection, some significant repairs were required. This work has been completed.

In conclusion:

Thank you to Glyn Allen, who has applied his knowledge, skill, experience and remarkable diligence to ensure that required repairs to all of our buildings, and the new kitchen installation have been carried out promptly and to a high standard.

A big thankyou to Barry Hills and Dammy Oyinloye for their ongoing commitment to caring for the buildings – keeping them clean, well maintained and the gardens tidy.

Frank Howard

Proceedings of the PCC

The PCC meets monthly apart from August and December in 2023 when the Standing Committee met. Each meeting begins with a bible reading, reflection and prayer.

The format of the meetings is generally the same, with:

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Review and approval of the previous month's minutes.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Finance with a run down on the current financial position and projections going forward.
5. Sub Committees (called Task Groups). Each PCC member is assigned to a Task Group which meet and report back to the PCC meeting. These being:
 - **Human Resources** chaired by Vicky Allen.
 - **Premises** chaired by Chris Gladwell and after the APCM in May by Frank Howard.
 - **Finance** chaired by Glyn Allen.
 - **MLTG** also chaired by Glyn Allen.
 - **Pre-school**. The Chair of the Preschool gives updates to each PCC meeting. During the year the chair was firstly Joel Watson and then Alastair Williams.
 - **SMI Church** Carolyn Facey has given updates regarding St Mary's Island Church.
 - **Strategic Development Fund**Updates from these roles, funded by the Strategic Development Fund, have been received by the PCC each month and their own reports can be found under Additional Reports.

Gospel Plant Leader - (Mayowa Oyinloye)

Community Pastor - vacant

Community Missioner - (Chris Curtis) who also oversees the work of Mayowa.

Any urgent matters that need to be dealt with between PCC meetings are considered by the Standing Committee, and their recommendations put to the PCC. The Standing Committee is made up of the Vicar, Churchwardens, Treasurer, PCC Secretary, and an elected member from the PCC.

Staffing

As reported in the 2022 reporting, Catharina Olsson Gisleskog joined the church in October 2022 and took up the Chair of the PCC in November 2022.

Vicki Watson continued as Vicar's PA/Operations Manager and during the year she gave in her resignation, as she was going to be moving out of the area. We were sorry to see her go and wish her God's blessing in her new home.

In June we advertised for a position of part time Church Administrator and members of the Standing Committee interviewed four applicants. Siobhan Bolton was the successful applicant and began work in July with a hand-over period before Vicki Watson left.

Eve Martin has continued as a part time Administrative Assistant.

PCC business

Some other areas covered during the year:

- New church door and noticeboards were bought and installed.
- Ways to celebrate the King's Coronation
- New members of the PCC were welcomed in June and all PCC members were encouraged to Pray, Prepare, Come and Commit.
- The Fire Risk Assessment was discussed, and members of the PCC underwent Fire Training.
- The PCC had an Away Day in October at Hartlip Retreat Centre, with a facilitator Andy Saunders from the Lighthouse Ministries. The PCC looked at the following:
 - Time to Build.
 - Let's Celebrate.
 - Who we are and where have we come from.
 - To boldly go – sharing thoughts on:
 - Our Community Engagement.
 - Our Worship Nurture and Discipleship.
 - Sharing Jesus.
 - Who does God want us to be?
 - What do we want to be.

The work of the PCC requires commitment from its members of ability and time. All of the work is undertaken on a voluntary basis, and I want to thank all members for their commitment and prayerful consideration of all the decisions made.

I appreciate your prayer support, as we continue and take responsibility as charity trustees for good church governance.

Vicky Allen - PCC Secretary

Electoral Roll

Electoral Roll Report 2024

The Electoral Roll for St Mark's Church Gillingham on 4th May 2024 is as follows:

The number on the Electoral Roll is currently **167**.

There were 148 on the Electoral Roll in May 2023.

Since then, 3 people have left or moved away and 2 have died.

24 people have applied to join.

The Electoral Roll for St Mary's Island 2024

The number on the Electoral Roll is currently **57**.

This is as follows:

There were 53 in 2023.

One person has moved away, and 2 people have died.

7 people have applied to join.

Total Electoral Roll number for St Mark's Parish stands at 224 (201 for 2023).

Denise Young - Electoral Roll Officer

Deanery Synod

Gillingham Deanery Synod is convened and normally chaired by the Area Dean – Brian Senior. It consists of all clergy licensed to a benefice within the deanery and elected lay members. The Deanery Synod's purpose is to discuss key issues within the church's ministry and mission, being an interface between the PCC and Diocesan Synod.

The Gillingham Deanery comprises eight parishes.

St Augustine's

St Barnabas

St Luke's

St Mark's (and St Mary's Island)

St Mary Magdalene

Holy Trinity

St Margaret's

South Gillingham Team Ministry

St Mark's and St Mary's Island currently have three lay representatives (the number is determined by the size of the Electoral Roll). One of these is taken up by a representative of St Mary's Island and the other two are filled by people representing St Mark's. Glyn Allen and Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell represented St Mark's and Sally Bloor St Mary's Island. Catharina Olsson Gisleskog was the clergy representative. Gillingham Deanery Synod met three times this year.

Some of the agenda items were:

- Election of Deanery Synod Officers. Some of the positions were not filled, including the key role of Secretary, and this post remains unfilled. Glyn Allen was elected to serve on the Standing Committee.

- The point of the deanery was discussed, and legal responsibilities were explained. Consideration was given as to what we can do better together as a deanery than we can do apart. It was felt that we need to explain the function and raise the profile of the deanery in the parishes.
- St Mark's hosted a meeting on the theme 'to foster communities and build relationships across the deanery.' Each parish gave a presentation that described their church and their mission action plans. This was to learn about one-another's situations, and better understand one-another's opportunities, priorities, and frustrations.
- Deanery Synod Financial Report update.
- Reflection on an earlier Medway Joint synod meeting with Bishop Johnathan.
- Statistical analysis of the deanery in terms of congregation size and financial resources. How can these resources be best used going forward?

Glyn Allen - Deanery Synod member

Additional Reports

Alpha

In 2023 St Mark's ran two Alpha courses. The first was held from January to March in the Vicarage with 14 participants and four on team Ernie Mann, Jane Bannar-Martin, Seun Adigun and Catharina Olsson Gisleskog. It was exciting to see a few new members join the church after the course, and we delighted in the full immersion baptism of one of the participants. The Holy Spirit Day was held one Saturday in the Baptist Church.

The second Alpha of the year was held in the Old Vicarage from September to November. The course had ten participants with 6 on team: Siobhan Bolton, Mayowa Oyinloye, Ben Maskell, Jane Bannar-Martin, Richard Tolhurst, and Karen Dyer. The Holy Spirit Day was held one Saturday in the Old Vicarage.

In both Alpha courses, every evening started with a home cooked meal, followed by the Alpha video, concluding with conversation in small groups. Many thanks go to the faithful intercessors and chefs for Alpha. Every week two or more individuals prayed for the course. Members of the church and of the group volunteered to cook.

Advertising via the [runalpha.com website](https://runalpha.com) attracted participants who had no prior connection to St Mark's. We also advertised through Facebook, Instagram, and the Alpha Banner on the railings outside church.

Catharina Olsson-Gisleskog

Audio Visual and Technical Report

In the past year not much has changed other than bits on dais and getting things prepared for the kitchen being built. This included setting up a basic system (laptop connection to projector and Speech Mics) that can be operated easily when there is no technical team available from the front of the church.

As it has been for the past few years, we still have a very limited team and would welcome more volunteers to help with sound, projection streaming.

Chris Blewett, and Mic Aldington

Byron Lodge

Early in 2023, our former curate Revd Amanda Maskell, now vicar of St Augustine, appealed for support to provide Christian ministry at Byron Lodge. The care home is situated on the corner of Byron Road and Rock Avenue and, by mutual agreement with Revd Liz Cox, Amanda agreed to take responsibility for the home although situated in the parish of St Barnabas.

As Vicar of St Barnabas, Revd Liz Cox took back spiritual responsibility for Charing House Care Home when Covid restrictions were relaxed adding to a large number of care homes in that parish thus resulting in her appeal to Amanda. In turn, the Revd Amanda Maskell knowing our history with care home ministry, asked Catharina if St Mark's could assist in the ministry there.

In March 2023 a meeting was convened between Revd Maskell, some potential members of the new team and staff members of Byron Lodge to agree a strategy for services and ministry. A monthly service was agreed, being held on the fourth Thursday of each month starting at 11.00am. The inaugural service took place on April 27, 2023. God certainly answered my prayer for guidance about whom I should ask to join the team. Currently we have three people from St Mark's, one person from the United Reformed Church and two people from the Baptist Church plus, of course, the Revd Amanda Maskell who attends when other duties allow. All involved are very much team players and committed to the ministry there. I cannot speak highly enough of them.

Along with the monthly services are four services of Holy Communion in the year taken every third month, with the Revd Amanda Maskell taking two per year, alternately with the Revd Pam Tolhurst, Minister of Gillingham URC, each taking the service according to their tradition. Various roles in the monthly services are taken by all members of the team such as leading the service, leading the confession, intercessions, opening and closing prayers, Bible reading, a short talk and closing benediction. We had our first Carol Service in December at which other residents we had not previously seen attended. After the services, team members chat with the residents to build links and friendships.

The residents largely suffer with various levels of dementia, so whilst attendances vary, there is an encouraging core of 'regulars'. One feature we have to get used to are 'late arrivals' joining from the halfway point right up to the finish or beyond. One or two residents who are largely confined to their room request a visit which are met by two or three members of the team when the main service has finished. When communion is involved, that is administered as appropriate, taking guidance from the staff according to any medication restrictions.

During the time we have been there, we have built up a good relationship with the staff, especially Marianne, all of whom have welcomed us, facilitated our visit and at Christmas and Easter provided refreshments for the team.

It would be good if the ministry at Byron Lodge could become more into the consciousness of St Mark's for supporting prayer. Whilst our team of six is sufficient for the current demands of the ministry, things never remain static so if this kind of ministry in Christ's name appeals and you have an interest in joining us, please speak to me to find out more, without obligation.

Graham Davis Co-ordinator, Team Byron

Cricket Team – for St. Mark's & St. Mary's Island

Although we managed to play 4 games in 2022, getting a team together proved difficult in 2023. We don't have quite enough playing members from St Mark's and St Mary's Island, and always rely on being able to conjure up a few extras to make up the eleven. In 2023 we managed only one game which was against Old Roffensians, but we did manage to avenge the previous year's defeat. At the moment we don't have any fixtures planned for 2024, and without the input of Saju, the future of our church cricket team looks uncertain.

Guy Jackson.

Dementia Cafe

The dementia cafe is currently operating out of the Old Vicarage, but we hope to move back into the church in the near future.

We average around ten guests each session and also have an excellent team of volunteers. We open on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month.

There are hot drinks, snacks, activities such as quizzes, bingo, singing and games, including bowls and skittles. We have special themed sessions at Easter and Christmas

We have visits from social care agencies and the Admiral nurse.

We received a donation of £200 from one person who raised money from a musical evening for three local dementia cafes.

We invite people to make a contribution when they attend the cafe. Our only regular outlay is for milk, snacks and specific events, and have been supported by local shops with food items.

Thank you for your continued support.

Paul Harris

Diocesan Synod

The Diocesan Synod is the main policy-making body of the Diocese and the forum for discussion of issues important in diocesan life. It debates matters referred from deaneries, PCCs and individual Synod members and contributes to the General Synod – the policy-making parliament of the Church of England. Each deanery in the diocese elects a number of clergy and lay representatives every three years.

Glyn Allen was elected by Gillingham Deanery Synod in 2020 to fill a casual vacancy and re-elected in 2021 for the new triennium. The Synod met three times during the year. From 1 January 2022, Glyn has also served as a member of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) as a Deanery Synod representative.

The Bishop of Rochester, Jonathan Gibbs, gave the Presidential address at each of the Synods and re-affirmed the three themes of Change, Grow, Serve which he believes to be important in helping fulfil the Diocesan Called Together vision in the coming years.

In his addresses Bishop Jonathan said:

On Living in Love and Faith, how deeply conscious he is of his, “responsibility as Diocesan Bishop to both uphold the historic teaching of the Church and to be chief pastor to all the people of this Diocese, whatever their sexuality or their views on matters of sexuality.”

“Recognising how difficult and uncertain things are at present, I would urge everyone to hold their nerve, to hold together and to remain committed to seeing through the LLF process in the coming months.

“There is still much to be said and done, and there are still many questions to be answered.”

He reflected upon his first year as Diocesan Bishop and spoke of the 'dedication of clergy and lay people' he has found in every corner of the Diocese, and how much there is to rejoice in and be encouraged.

At the same time, he recognised the challenges and opportunities facing the Church and society, particularly around the cost of living.

Bishop Jonathan took the opportunity to reflect upon some of the huge challenges facing the world and the Church at this time, and to unpack some of the thinking that is helping shape the development of the Diocese's Called Together vision.

Synod was also introduced to Patti Russell, who has been appointed as the new Diocesan Registrar and welcomed her as she was sworn into the role.

A summary of each Synod and a copy of the Bishop's address can be found in the Diocese of Rochester weekly publication 'The Digest' immediately following each Synod meeting.

The main agenda items during the year were:

- Presidential addresses from The Bishop of Rochester
- Diocesan budget
- Living in Love and Faith
- General Synod reports
- Safeguarding updates
- Presentation of Annual Reports and Accounts
- The Environment and Sustainability
- Children and Young People's Fund
- Generous Giving during the Cost-of-Living Crisis
- Sharing Good News
- Young People and Vocations
- Annual Report and Accounts
- Strategy and Vision Update
- Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy

Glyn Allen
Diocesan Synod Member

Flower Arrangements and Displays Team

Firstly I must thank the team members:- *Jane Bannar-Martin, Siu King Hunter, Pauline Jackson, Ruth Howard, Mayowa Oyinloye, Vicky Onitiri, Janet Waters, and Gabriele Goddard* for their faithfulness in turning out regularly on a rota basis to decorate the church. Not forgetting Judyth Shillsju. Let us all give thanks to God for their willingness to use their creative gifts in this way. Our thanks also go to Ann and John Townsend for their willingness to come along and encourage us, clear up behind us, ply us with cups of coffee etc. and also in providing much needed greenery. Lastly my thanks to my husband, Ernie, for letting me attack the shrubs in our garden and also for acting as my general dog's body!

The team very much continue to enjoy providing floral displays throughout the year. We tend to work in pairs except for the big occasions – e.g. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest and the making of posies for Mothering Sunday when we work together as a whole team. As has been our custom we made daffodil posies for Mothering Sunday which were distributed amongst all the ladies in church on that day and some were delivered to those who were/are house bound.

We are continuing to use silk flowers, which are remarkably lifelike – in fact I actually caught someone smelling them because they thought that the flowers were real.

Wherever possible we use fresh greenery. We plan to change the pedestal arrangements once a month.

Janet Mann on behalf of the whole team.

Foodbank

(Please note that the report submitted covered the period 1 April 2023 – 1 April 2024)

Medway Foodbank has been running well over the period of this report.

We have had one new Foodbank join us, The Harvest Centre Strood

St Marks Foodbank has temporarily moved internally whilst the new kitchen is being installed, we will move into the old kitchen and crèche area when ready.

Here are some brief statistics for St Marks/Medway Foodbank; St Marks Foodbank is one of the nine centres within Medway Foodbank.

Foodbank Centres	No. of parcels	No. of adults fed	No. of children fed	Total no. fed
Medway Foodbank	4,330	7,012	6,134	13,146
St Marks Foodbank	754	1,088	880	1,968
Totals	5,084	8,100	7,014	15,114

During this period Medway Foodbank fed 15,114 people in Medway. The number from St Marks is 13.02% of the total.

Throughout this period local organisation offering free food has worked closely together to support those in need in our communities.

Churches are so well placed to offer clients a warm and loving welcome, as well as being able to signpost to activities going on at local churches.

The ability to offer prayer in person is also a vital part of the work of the Foodbanks across Medway. It is a privilege to be able to offer this to people who may have never been in a church before and who may have never had someone pray with them. It underlines the value of each individual and they are valued by us and by God in the midst of their difficulties.

As an organisation, Medway Foodbank remains so grateful for the support from local churches that help us by hosting Foodbank centres, by collecting food for us and by donating finances. We are facing huge increases in our overhead costs, and it is a struggle to keep stock levels in line with the increased demand.

Our project manager is working on linking all churches together in Medway in corporate prayer to support and pray for all clients and volunteers.

We look forward to a time when Foodbanks are no longer needed in the UK but until that time we will be in our communities working with those in local churches to support those in need.

Ruth Lindsay: Medway Foodbank Project Manager
Paul Smith: St Marks Foodbank Manager

Ladies Group

We meet every Wednesday at the Old Vicarage, with a range of 10-14 ladies in attendance.

The sharing, as you can imagine is lively and fun.

The 4th Wednesday until Easter was for games but we have now changed to Bible Study and included any gentlemen who wish to attend. This is also very lively. We have followed Revelation and various Parables led by myself and two other volunteers.

We have 19 still on our WhatsApp but some ladies are from other Churches for example St Mary's Island and Parkwood. For the last two August breaks we have continued throughout the month and will do so this year, meeting for drop-in, coffee and cake and one Wednesday (a fine day) we are planning family picnic at the Old Vicarage.

We continue to grow spiritually and feel very blessed by God for the lovely and depth of thought by all who attend.

A special thank you to Sandi Chapman who spends time planning the worship music and is my right-hand woman and encourages me and all who come. Thank you also to Mayowa for standing in when Sandi is unable to come.

I would like to thank all our attendees for making Wednesday mornings such a joy and such fun with laughter and lots of tea, coffee and biscuits also thanks to the men who come on the 4th Wednesday to put a different perspective for us all to consider. Thank you everyone who comes for your love and amazing support.

Jane Bannar-Martin

Medway Campus Chaplaincy

As always, I am extremely grateful for the people who come alongside me in my Chaplaincy Ministry. For Pauline, Jon and Barbara at TABLEtalk, plus Denise and Frank at World Café. *Please pray for Frank, who is currently out of action with some health issues.*

Over the calendar year 2023, we ran a number of trips for students, including: Oxford, Cambridge. Brighton and Canterbury; plus the Passion Play at Trafalgar Square and, more locally, Medway Lights Night, the Sweeps Festival and Dickens Christmas Festival. All of these events are an opportunity for relationship building, as well as giving students the chance to experience more of life in the UK.

Both World Café and our Bargain Corner continue to run well. During the spring '23 term we hit an all-time record at World Café, serving 206 students with a hot drink and light snacks in the space of a two-hour period. Thankfully, those numbers have not remained and, consequently, we're all feeling a little more sane. For those who don't know, our Bargain Corner is an excellent and extremely effective sustainability project through which we help prevent stuff going to landfill, selling cheap pre-loved kitchen items, bedding and clothing to the students and then using the money raised to subsidise student events. So, it's WIN! WIN! WIN!

Pastorally I remain busy helping students through personal, financial and academic stress; plus issues such as bullying, bereavement and cultural or faith related issues. Please pray for RR, a student who has experienced life-changing health issues over the past 18 months.

For me, personally, there are two main highlights. Firstly, our weekly TABLEtalk, which I have been running now for a total of 20 years (both in Paisley, Scotland and here in Medway). Since 2011 alone, we have welcomed **646** students from **75** different nationalities to our TABLEtalk events, with many of those becoming regulars.



Secondly, our monthly Sacred Space event, which began in September 2022. This is a gathering for Christian students and we meet on the first Sunday of each month for a meal together and a topical Bible study. These times have been truly blessed by God and we've become a close little community.

My sincere thanks to those who support this ministry in prayer and through words of encouragement.

Lynne Martin

Men's Breakfast/Curry Nights

We meet once every 3 months. We eat out and have discussions too. There is a turnout of between 23 -35 men. We also invite guests speakers to give a talk during the meals. Men's breakfast has been a great success every year.

Men find the atmosphere easy to relate with and a safe space for them to interact and get to know others, beyond the walls of the church. We also have men that are not members of St Marks joining and engaging too.

Dammy Oyinloye

Mission Links Task Group (MLTG)

The Mission Links Task Group (MLTG) is a sub-committee of the PCC responsible to oversee support of our Mission Partners through prayer, pastoral care, and financial support. MLTG recommends to the PCC how to allocate our Mission Giving (10% of our previous year's voluntary income), and other mission giving from individuals to the Mission Fund.

We continued to meet regularly throughout the year on Zoom.

We have continued to support financially and in prayer Katy Barnwell (Wycliffe), Tim and Tricia Barrow (SIM), Carrie McFarlane (Nehemiah, Mission India), Francis and Diane Dognon, (France), Simeon and Hyndman's Trustees (our Patrons), Tearfund, The Creation Care Project, The Bishop's Charity Poverty and Hope, The Mike Campbell Foundation, Fishermen Trust India and the work of Asha and Nelson Arul in Penang, Malaysia. We supported the El Campello Christian Community in Spain in prayer.

Locally we donated to the Night Shelter, providing a place to stay overnight, food and support for the Homeless in Gillingham from January to March. We supported Family Trust who work in local

schools. We supported the “Let Loose Concert” which took place in Gillingham High Street in July 2023. Foodbank uses St Mark’s Church on Thursdays from 1-3 pm and Saturdays 10-12.

We made regular contact with our mission partners during the year and enjoyed receiving news from them. Using ‘Prayer and Praise’ we have invited the congregation to pray for our mission partners. We are grateful to Kath Burtrand for facilitating prayer through Prayer and Praise. We had visits some from our mission partners in 2023 Margaret Weston who shared about the El Campello church in Spain, Peter Kettle from Poverty and Hope, Carri MacFarlane Nehemiah Mission India.

We are grateful to Colette Wentzel and her team who raised money in addition to the amount the church gives to TEARFUND monthly by a sponsored walk, and a quiz night.

We can let you know how to receive updates from our mission partners direct, particularly if Homegroups or individuals would like to support a mission partner. There is also information and links on the church website.

Tim Barrow stepped down from MLTG and we thank him for his contributions to the group over several years.

Please continue to pray for our Mission Partners.

The team in 2023 - *Glyn Allen - Chair, Charmaine Jones and Colette Wentzel, Jess Mahdavi-Gladwell, Dammy Oyinloye, Catharina Olsson Gisleskog -Vicar, Denise Young -secretary.*

Denise Young on behalf of the team

Music Worship

Ben, Mayowa and I would like to thank all of you at St Marks for the support you have given us over the last year. Throughout 2023 the three of us, along with Graham, have continued to lead the music worship between us. Thank you to all who have joined with us in playing and singing to lead the church in worshipping God together. I would particularly like to thank Janet Walters for playing the organ for us, ensuring that this continues to be part of our music experience.

However, although we have had some new singers joining us, over the year we have continued to see a reduction in the number musicians available to be involved and to play for services. This has led to a high demand on those of us who do play. We would love to see some more musicians offering their gifts to enable us to have a band to play at more services.

Towards the end of 2023 Graham’s health deteriorated and he was unable to carry on doing all he would like to do in leading worship. However, he continued to support us and play with us for as long as he could, even when he was feeling very unwell. He insisted he would still organise the music for the Christmas Day service from his hospital bed and took great pleasure in watching the service. We thank God for all Graham’s gifts in music, for his faithfulness in leading worship, and for his support and encouragement he gave to so many of us in our worship journey over the years.

As we move forward we would ask that you pray for the music worship at St Marks, and for what God might want this to look like in the future. Please pray for the right people to become available to help lead us all in worshipping God together.

Kathryn Thom

Open Church

Open Church over the years has got better at serving the community where people have come regularly on Tuesdays to have a chat and have tea, coffee and cakes and the numbers have increased.

On a Tuesday we have between 15-28 people who come, and we've had lots of feedback how it has blessed them.

It has been a privilege to volunteer with the team that has made it a success each week and a blessing to the community.

Dammy Oyinloye

The Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team set up in 2021 continued, overseen by Catharina our vicar, who attends meetings and liaises with Denise Young.

The members of the team are now Denise Young, Paul Smith, Janet Aldington, Jane Bannar-Martin, Sandi Chapman, Valerie Flick, Vicky Onitiri, Dammy Oyinloye and Trevor Dyer.

All members of the team had to apply for the role and complete safeguarding training and a DBS check. Most members of the team have now completed the diocesan Caring Concerns training course. We hope to run the course again in 2024 and members of the congregation are welcome to join the sessions if they have an interest in Caring Concerns.

Each member of the pastoral team has between 3 and 8 contacts.

The initial contact is a confidential phone call monthly to offer a listening ear and prayer. The original vision is that everyone in the church who wishes, would have someone who contacts and prays for them on a regular basis. This can be via a homegroup and/or the pastoral team.

The team members meet 2/3 times a year to support one another but obviously not to discuss contacts due to confidentiality.

Siobhan Bolton supports with administration. Kath Burtrand still prays for the team.

Val Flick and Ernie Mann take communion to members of the church who are housebound. This has very much been appreciated by the recipients.

We started with 58 people on our list to have a pastoral contact in 2021. 33 are currently active. 11 on the original list of 58 are attending home group but no longer have a pastoral contact as they feel homegroup is enough support. This means 44 out of 58 on the original list are receiving homegroup support and /or pastoral support. The other 14- have moved away or are not attending St Mark's. They have been followed up and Denise knows the reasons why they are no longer on the list. Two people have died.

If you don't have a pastoral contact yet and would like one, please speak to Denise Young or Paul Smith and they would be delighted to give you a form.

If you want to contact the Pastoral Team, then please contact the church office, or speak to Paul Smith or Denise Young in church or email Denise at denisemaryyoung@gmail.com

Thank you.

Denise Young

Peace & Hope (formerly Faith & Light)



Peace & Hope is a church community for adults with a learning disability and their families and carers.

As a team we try to share our faith in a relative and multisensory way.

We meet in the Vicarage Hall every other Saturday morning. We take a break at Christmas and in the summer.

This year we have been aligning our talks with the themes

in church.

We finished the year with a Christmas party with party food, plenty of joy and laughter!

Karen and the team

Prayer Ministry Teams

The prayer ministry has worked very well, we have 10 people in the prayer ministry team and one new person coming on board. Sadly a few people have left due to various circumstances, such as health and other commitments, but I would like to thank them for their service to prayer ministry.

It was lovely to meet up at the Vicarage Hall in September 2023 where we welcomed guest speakers John and Gillian Ryland. We listened to their experiences and teachings as well as giving us practical and spiritual support with prayer ministry and an opportunity to put it into practice in a safe environment. There were over twenty people from St Marks that attended this event. We plan to have another meeting in September 2024, which will give us the opportunity to develop our prayer ministry, connect with others and socialise.

I really want to thank all who have given their precious time to pray for others in the Church Family and offer time, compassion and a listening ear.

I know the prayer chapel area hasn't been very comfortable or inviting for people to come up to pray, but we have made the best of the situation, this will change soon, when the kitchen is finished and the foodbank is moved. I hope that we have a presentable and inviting area for the congregation to feel comfortable to pray.

I would like to ask everyone who is in the pray ministry team to wear a badge to show they are in the prayer ministry team while in church, so people can approach them and feel safe and confident to pray with them. This is something I will need to discuss with my prayer family.

Cindy Reeve-Vigour - Prayer Ministry Leader

Small Groups

St Mark's three Principles:

1. Living for Jesus 2. Loving Gillingham 3. Learning Together

Small Group's Mission Statement:

"Small Groups are at the heart of St Mark's Church. They are the place we are able to build deep long-lasting friendships, to learn together and grow spiritually, and to offer pastoral support to one another on a regular basis".

We have now reduced to four Home Groups, and a Ladies Group. With one ad-hoc group meeting to explore a ten-week course on the book of Romans led by Ernie and Janet Mann. The Men's Group and Trio's are overseen by Dammy.

Regretfully the Home Groups have diminished. There are x4 Home Groups led by: Frank Howard and Janet Walters, Richard and Jane Tolhurst, Paul Smith, and Kath and Steve Burtrand, accommodating x40 people. The groups have been following their own chosen Bible study or followed the Sermon Series, through questions provided by the Vicar.

Despite raising the profile of the Home Groups with pamphlets and talks during Sunday Services, there has been only a few enquiries for places.

Richard and Jane Tolhurst offer to lead a group was warmly welcomed. Thank you. We still need people to volunteer to lead new Home Groups. The difficulty appears to be lack of parking at new venues and safety with going out at night around Gillingham.

The Ladies Group thrives with 22 people on their books and they enjoy fellowship together under the guidance of Jane Bannar-Martin on a Wednesday morning at the Old Vicarage.

I thank each of the leaders who have lovingly persevered in their leadership of their groups, supporting individuals and walking in the footsteps of Christ.

Val Flick Small Group Co-Ordinator

Tear Fund



First and foremost we give God all the glory, through Him all things are possible.

My thanks and appreciation to Ike and all our volunteers who joined and assisted in the successful fundraising efforts.

Many thanks to our church family who were fully engaged in both fundraising efforts. Without your

participation these would not have been possible.

The Creation Care Project Tearfund 5K walk held in Capstone Farm Country Park (September 2023) raised a total of £485.00.

The Big QUIZ night at the Vicarage Hall (November 2023) raised £415.29.

Everyone was instrumental in helping St Mark's Church fundraise a total of £900.29. (Tearfund Charity org- Big Quiz Night 2023 raised a total of £90 000) visit tearfund.org for more up to date information on fundraising events.

All funds have been paid directly into Tearfund account by bank transfer and by the JustGiving page which was set up for the fundraising day.

Tearfund update Report for St Mark's Church Gillingham 2023: The Creation Concern Project India

- 1 725 people were directly impacted and an estimated 3 890 have benefited indirectly.
 - 338 leaders from 18 villages in Northeast India were trained on project management, planning and implementation for work which focuses on environmental care.
 - 208 community members took part in activities focused on environmental care (ran by community- based organisations) information was shared about climate change and 150 trees were planted by the local people.
 - 695 Farmers were trained on Climate- Smart Agriculture techniques e.g. SALT, composting, pest management and rain harvesting etc.
 - 75 Farming federation leaders were trained on environmental care, climate adaptation measures and climate smart agricultural techniques which allows them to be part of programme management.
 - 40 federation members were supported in networking in ways which help maximise the impact of their work to ensure ongoing technical assistance and support.
 - 160 community members took part in activities run by the federation e.g. cleaning drives etc.

Contribution made by St Mark's Church through away giving and fundraising are very valuable to this project and we can see first-hand the benefit it provides to communities in need.

Moving forward in 2024

Fundraising events to look forward to:

- Tearfund 5K walk in aid of Creation Care Project walk at Capstone Farm County Park; September 2024.
- Big Quiz Night; November 2024.

Proposals will be submitted to MLTG for PCC approval within the next few months.

It is a privilege and an honour to be part of a church family who is passionate to help those in need.

Colette Wentzel Tearfund Ambassador

Trio

The Trio the numbers have dropped to 2 trios (6 people) and the 6 people still meet once every two months. I look forward to relaunching it back to the congregation in a few months.

Dammy Oyinloye

St. Mark's Pre-School

St Mark's Pre-School continues to be a busy, happy setting. Pupil numbers continue to be strong throughout the academic year, often with waiting lists for spaces. The Pre-School continues to be well led by Jo Tilley and she is ably assisted by a strong, experienced team of practitioners.

Jo and the team continue to strive towards excellence and continue to reflect on changes of expectations for settings as set out by government policy.

Jo and her team work extremely hard and we should be proud to have such a successful setting within the church.

Jo continues to build links with the church through the support of Catharina and Chris Curtis.

We are thankful for the support of the PCC and wider church community for the on-going contributions in making the Vicarage Hall a welcoming space for our children.

I also want to thank Joel Watson for his time as Chair for the Pre-school during his time at St Mark's Church. I am also grateful for Paul Curtis who has stepped up to be the Treasurer at the Pre-school which has enabled me to take on the new role of Pre-School chair.

Alastair Williams - Chair Preschool Governing Committee

Parent and Toddlers

The Parent and Toddlers group meets once a week in the church hall on Wednesday afternoons during school term time. This provides an outreach into the community where parents with their children can meet in an informal social atmosphere to enjoy free play with the toys provided, as well as organised craft activities.

The afternoons are led by myself, Chris Curtis and Frank Howard. Much enjoyed by parents and children are the refreshments which Frank provides. A big thank you to Ernie Mann who caused much excitement when he attended our Christmas party complete with big red suit and curly white beard.

Numbers fluctuate from week to week; we currently prepare for around 14 children and 12 adults. This represents a slight decrease in numbers attending because many of our older toddlers started school during 2023. We have however had an influx of very young toddlers and some new parents. Our numbers are about to increase further with two of our mum's expecting new births in the next few months.

The doors are open to many who would not normally enter church premises and has led to some parents becoming regular church attenders. Parents tell us that they enjoy coming to Parent and Toddlers because of the friendly, relaxed, atmosphere and the sharing of God's love for all.

Ruth Howard

Report for Children's ministry

Children's Church

Children's Church has continued to thrive in 2023. We gained several new volunteers which boosted our ratios and made running sessions more enjoyable for everyone. The number of children attending Children's Church fluctuates from week to week. If every child attended on the same week, we would have approximately 20 children. As this rarely happens, we usually have between 9- 14 children each week.

This year the Children's Church team attended training on teaching children with Autism and others with additional learning needs. We were able to implement some of the ideas we have learnt to make our environment as safe and inclusive as possible.

Ideally Children's Church would take place in or near the church building. This would increase the confidence of new families to drop their children off and allow us to contact parents more easily if we needed their assistance.

At the end of 2023 I made the decision to step away from leading Children's Church. Karen and Katie Dyer have taken on the leadership role and I know God will work through them to continue to do amazing things with our Children's ministry.

Christine Curtis

Youth Group

At the beginning of 2023 St Mark's Church joined forces with St Augustine's Church and set up and ran a Youth Group for secondary school aged youth.

The group met once a month offering a wide range of activities such as: BBQ in the Vicarage Garden, Film Night at St Augustine's, Ice Skating, Swimming at Maidstone Leisure Centre, and Bowling.

A total of up to 15 Youth have been part of the group with eight young people on average from St Mark's and seven from St Augustine's. Revd Amanda Maskell, Alastair Williams, Lucy Williams, Per Olsson Gisleskog, and Revd Catharina Olsson Gisleskog have led the group.

Catharina Olsson-Gisleskog.

Strategic Development Fund (SDF)

Gospel Church Planter

Gospel Plant is going accordingly through the grace of God. It's been a very tumultuous past year but God has been faithful in seeing us through.

The Gospel band, which consists of members from different denominations, has new members join. The service has different guest speakers and singers attend.

The Community Choir and Kids Choir are also going well, although numbers have declined incredibly due to various factors. We plan on advertising more in future if this is feasible.

Thanks to everyone involved.

Mayowa Oyinloye

Community Pastor

This post was unfilled during 2022.

Community Missioner

2023 has been a fun, full and busy year. It has seen the start of a new monthly Messy Church at St Mary Magdalene, holiday clubs at St Barnabas, and a weekly Parent Toddler group at St Barnabas. Messy Church continues monthly at St Augustine, and 5 times a year at St Mark. Numbers fluctuate on a monthly basis with the highest numbers attending during school holidays. However, the average number of attendees has increased.

Holiday Clubs run at all three churches and are always well attended.

I continue to run a Kingsquad at Oasis Skinner Street School weekly and a Bible Club at St Augustine's weekly.

I also assist with the running of the Parent Toddler group at St Mark.

We have seen growth in our Messy churches and Holiday Clubs from our parent toddler groups, and a real sense of community is growing in all the groups.

In 2023 Oasis Skinner Street school attended the church for an Easter programme, a leavers service, a harvest programme, a Christingle service, and their Christmas Carol Service. A class also came to look around the church in conjunction with their RE lesson.

I continue to sit on the HUB council for the school to assist with any extracurricular needs the school has.

I also attend St Mark's preschool throughout the year, offering short biblical teaching and crafts. There are also many individual events I run or assist with throughout the year.

If you are interested in specific events, or number of attenders, please contact me and I can make the information available.

Goals for 2024 include:

- Continuing all the current groups that run.
- Nurturing, and training volunteers to run groups once my contract finishes next year.
- Encouraging families who attend groups, to assist with areas of leading groups. This is already beginning to happen as parents volunteer to cook for Messy Church, help on craft tables. or stay to clean up after Messy Church.

Christine Curtis

St. Mary's Island Church (SMIC)

The lay leadership team continues to uphold the life and work of the church. Numbers have been increasing and several new people have found the church and started to make it their home for

worship. Many of the members participate in the preparation of our services week on week and we are truly blessed to have such a talented group of musicians and singers to lead our worship. Our highlight has been the addition to our leadership team of Shirely Rogers. She brings so many gifts and skills.

Sunday School classes are well attended and the children are enthusiastic participants, making straight for the activities prepared for them by Nickie.

Messy church is well attended not just by the church family but by the island community and takes place once each term. On the same weekend the newly established youth group meets on a Sunday evening for fellowship and study. Little Fishes continues to thrive with over 150 children on the books. We receive many positive reviews from those that attend.

Several church members support the Scouts Group that meets on a Thursday evening and the Youth Club that meets on Friday evenings at the Community Centre.

Ladies' evenings are held on the second Friday of each month and well attended by ladies who enjoy a variety of activities and enjoy the cakes! Meetings are held at Atlas Place, which are much appreciated by the residents.

This amazing church we worship at, has so much diversity and appeals to a great many people. We must not lose that by trying to do too much with one formula but there is no doubt that it is on Sundays where we shake things up, it is totally God-inspired, spiritual and amazing!

We thank the Lord for all His goodness and provision. May we continue to thrive as the Church on the Island, creating spaces for our community to encounter Jesus.

Carolyn Facey (Church Secretary)

St. Mary's Island School (SMIS)

St Mary's Island school is anchored at the heart of the community, St Mary's Island is a vibrant Church of England Primary School aspiring for excellence in all areas. Safe in the knowledge that they are anchored in God, with a strong Christian ethos to serve and support all who come to the school to flourish and live life in all its fullness.

St Mary's Island Voluntary Aided Primary School and Nursery is a popular primary setting striving to provide the highest quality education for the children who attend. The school is situated at the heart of St Mary's Island, Chatham Maritime and can cater for 690 children aged 3 -11.

The Governors and Headteacher ensure that the resources and staffing levels meet the diverse needs of all children, both within and beyond the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Miss Rogers from St Mary's Island Church has begun to lead worship on some Thursdays. Revd. Catharina continues to lead on some Thursdays. Family Trust has led worship this term.

The school is anticipating a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools that through its vision and practice, the school is living up to its foundation as a church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. The school is supported by St Mary's Island Church and several members are employed at the school.

Carolyn Facey