

**SAINT MARK'S PARISH CHURCH
ALMA ROAD, REIGATE, SURREY**

**(Registered Charity No. 1134121)
www.stmarksreigate.co.uk**



**DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
CROYDON EPISCOPAL AREA
ARCHDEACONRY OF REIGATE**



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022

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THE VICAR'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

The year 2022 was the first year for three years where society, including the Church, began to feel "normal" again. After a couple of years of lockdowns and restricted activities, we had the freedom to plan our services and events as we wished. As the year progressed, more activities were resumed. By the end of the year, there was still more to be done, and 2023 will see more activity.

At the beginning of January 2022, Bishop Christopher invited me to take on the added responsibility of being Area Dean of Reigate in addition to being Vicar of St Mark's. This followed a consultation by the Bishop in the deanery as to whom he would appoint. Bishop Jonathan commissioned me in this role in one of the last duties he fulfilled as Bishop of Croydon before his retirement in March 2022. It was fitting that his last episcopal duty was linked with St Mark's, as his first episcopal duty was at a Confirmation Service at St Mark's in March 2012.

In February 70 solar panels were installed on the hall roof together with three large batteries to reduce our electricity use from the grid and to help us move towards our goal of zero carbon emissions by 2030. More lights in the Church were converted to LED, but there is still more to do. New remote heating controls were fitted to the hall heating to enable us to reduce our gas usage as well. On the first Sundays in January, February and March, all services were held in the hall so that the Church was not heated on these Sundays to save further carbon. These Green Sundays were liked by many in the parish but not by all. The PCC reviewed this experiment and agreed to extend this for the winter of 2022/23 by extending the Green Sundays from November to March on the first Sunday of the month.

Lent, Holy Week and Easter were celebrated in full for the first time since 2019. In fact, Revd Reg experienced the St Mark's way of marking Palm Sunday and Holy Week for the first time – and of course he came to St Mark's as Assistant Curate in 2019! One notable change to Holy Week was having Messy Church in the morning of Good Friday. This worked extremely well and so may well be repeated in future years. This provided a complete contrast to the traditional Good Friday Liturgy of the afternoon. Easter Sunday was a joyous celebration of the Resurrection.

In May we had the Rogation Sunday walk "Beating the Bounds" by a small group of walkers. At the APCM Ben Read and Louise Wallis were elected for a further year as Churchwardens. Terrence Hancock and Mel Crighton continued as PCC Secretary and Treasurer respectively, and I thank them all for their wise counsel and support.

At the beginning of June we joined in with the national celebrations of HM Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee by having an afternoon tea, planting a tree in the hall garden as part of the Queen's Jubilee Green Canopy and holding an all-age celebration service. In September we learned of the death of Her Majesty and as we prayed for the repose of her soul, we gave thanks to God for her many years of devoted service to this country and the Commonwealth, and we prayed for King Charles and all the royal family as they took on new roles and responsibilities.

In July we held a family barbeque at Messy Church which was very busy. Messy Church has gone from strength to strength with so many involved in many ways to make it possible. In October we hosted some Norwegian visitors at Messy Church and they have taken back with them ideas as they establish Messy Church in Norway. We are always happy to help others just as we have received help ourselves. In October we held an all-age Harvest Thanksgiving Service followed by a Harvest Supper.

Our services for All Souls', Remembrance Sunday, Advent and Christmas were well supported and followed the pattern of previous years. We have continued to live stream the 10.00am services and the quality and reliability has generally improved, although there are occasional problems. Choral Evensong with the Godfrey Searle Choir from St Mary's resumed in the autumn.

As we look to 2023, more activities will be happening including the return of Community Lunch. For all these activities we are blessed with a real community spirit at St Mark's where people are willing to volunteer and help others. However there is always more that can be done. The Ministry Team consisting of me, Reverend Reg Grant, Ian Archer, Sarah Cousins and Susannah Dyde works as a unit. My thanks to them for their hard work and support.

There are so many people who work behind the scenes, and I thank them all. The parish would not function without the hard work of our Parish Administrator and my PA, Alexia Hartman. She works far more than her contracted hours and is always available to help. My thanks to her, especially as she has now taken on the responsibility of being Deanery Secretary and PA.

We look forward to the next year. There are various building works planned so it will be a challenging year financially but should ensure that we will be secure for many years to come.

With my best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin', written in a cursive style.

THE READERS

Ian Archer has been a Reader at St Mark's for over 41 years, so the older members of our congregation have heard his voice for a long time. His hope is that he can spread God's message better each time he is called to do so. He is now an aged widower so perhaps has more time on his hands than many so long as his health is good. Much of his time is spent visiting the sick and home-bound with Communion every two weeks, which they seem to appreciate, and he enjoys their company as they do his. On one occasion Ian conducted a Funeral Service of one of these former church friends. For fun he provided some scribblings for the Church magazine, so all in all he has had a busy but happy year in 2022.

Sarah Cousins has had a year peppered with ill health, but she has continued to head up SMART for retired people in the community, enabling monthly meetings and pastoral work behind the scenes. She also preached on a number of occasions.

Susannah Dyde has kept busy primarily with leading Family Services and Messy Church worship, both of which have grown in popularity in 2022. She also preaches at morning services and leads T-Time Tales with her husband, Keith. She leads the only Home Group in existence in the church. It has eleven members who meet both in person and on Zoom every fortnight to study the Bible together. Anyone is welcome to join this group.

Ian Archer, Sarah Cousins, Susannah Dyde

THE SERVERS

While much of life has returned to normal through 2022, numbers in the church remain at lower levels than before the pandemic. Adaptations made to support the broadcast of services on line have also impacted the need for servers, for example the Gospel procession now has only the deacon with no one else holding the book.

The serving team itself is reduced in size, with a loyal small team providing one or two servers to the Sunday services. Thank you to all of that team who have worked so hard to keep our services flowing.

Looking forwards to 2023, as numbers in church continue to expand, we would welcome new members to the serving team. We will look to continue to adapt and grow with the church as a whole, offering our service to help St Mark's support the community.

James Tanser, Sacristan

SUSTAINABILITY AT ST MARK'S

The Sustainability Committee has built on the work achieved in the previous year to deliver carbon savings in 2022/2023 and to help St Mark's move towards the 2030 Net Zero goal.

The solar panels installed last year have enabled us to generate electricity on-site, significantly contributing to a reduction in energy from the National Grid and the cost of electricity. We have also continued the programme of replacing lightbulbs with energy efficient LEDs. Energy bills are calculated on the basis of calendar years and the pandemic affected energy use at St Mark's, so the most accurate comparison is between usage in 2022 and usage in 2019. In 2019 we used around 27,000 kWh of electricity from the grid and in

2022 we used 9300 kWh. This is a 65% reduction in electricity use from the grid, and reduces the church's annual carbon footprint by 3.2 tonnes in 2022 compared to 2019.

We also made progress in reducing the amount of gas used for heating. This has been through a combination of measures including Green Sundays in the hall once a month in winter, turning down the thermostats, installing thermostats that can be adjusted remotely to enable a more finely tuned temperature response, and grouping events together where possible to use energy for heating more efficiently. Again, the most sensible comparison is between 2019, when gas usage was just over 200,000 kWh, and 2022, when usage was just under 130,000 kWh. This is a reduction of around 37% and reduced our carbon footprint by 14 tonnes.

A reduction of around 17 tonnes of carbon significantly reduces our overall footprint, which was around 45 tonnes and is now under 30. We have had a number of problems with the solar batteries over the last year, so have not been able to benefit from selling energy into the grid, which would have generated a small income for St Mark's and enabled us to offset some more of our carbon footprint. We expect the batteries to function better in 2023 following various fixes that have been arranged with the installer and anticipate a further carbon saving to be generated from the solar panels.

The committee has discussed options for installing Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers in the car park, which could draw on the solar panels to provide a renewable energy source for charging EVs. We have made preliminary enquiries about possible models and associated costs. We have also looked at pricing for individual portable seat heaters and expect to begin a trial with the heaters to understand how we might reduce the level of gas heating required if the seat heaters prove to be effective. Finally we have begun to consider zero waste options with respect to the products and food we buy (for instance buying cleaning products in containers that can be refilled rather than recycled or thrown away) which would reduce waste and our indirect carbon footprint.

We have been approached over the year by other local churches interested in learning about our experience installing and using solar panels. We have shared our experiences and a number of local churches are now looking at installing solar panels. St Mark's also featured in an issue of "The Bridge" (Southwark Diocesan Newspaper) which highlighted examples of churches making progress towards Net Zero goals.

Sophia Oliver

KNITTING AND SPIRITUALITY GROUP

This year we have continued our monthly meetings in members' homes, beginning and ending with prayer. We welcome new members Dorothy Piejus and Jill Bingham.

New members are welcome, not only knitters. If you do any kind of craft that can be held in your lap, then do come and join us.

*Cherith Baldry
Sarah Cousins*

ELECTORAL ROLL

If your name is on the Electoral Roll then you are entitled to vote at the Annual Parish Church Meeting and in this way to feel much more a part of St Mark's Church. Once you reach your sixteenth birthday you are eligible to make an application and the only stipulation is that you have been baptised, and not necessarily confirmed. You need to live in the parish to go on the Roll immediately, (please ask me if you have any doubts about where the parish boundaries lie) or have habitually worshipped at St Mark's for six months if you live outside the parish. You can apply by filling in the simple, self-explanatory form available from me or from the Parish Office. Completed forms should please be handed to either myself or to the Parish Office.

The Roll is normally on display in the church and contains only names. It is open until two weeks before the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, when it will be closed for revision.

So as to keep the Roll as up-to-date as possible I would be grateful to be told of any changes in address, or people moving away from the parish, as I do not always hear of these details immediately.

Terrence Hancock
Acting Electoral Roll Officer

SOCIAL EVENTS

This year has seen a return to some of the events that we enjoyed on a regular basis before the pandemic. Although we do not have a formal Social Committee at present (something we hope to re-establish in 2023) many volunteers came together to prepare food and refreshments for the various events at St Mark's.

In June we celebrated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee with Afternoon Tea enjoyed by over sixty people followed by an All-Age service in Church. Thanks to everyone who made cakes and scones and to those who served the tea and helped set up and clear away afterwards.

In October our Harvest Supper was again held after the monthly family service with over 70 people of all ages socialising together whilst enjoying cottage pie and chocolate or lemon tart with vegetarian, vegan, gluten free and dairy free options. Thanks to everyone who was involved in preparing and cooking the food as well as setting up the tables, arranging flowers, serving food and drinks and of course washing up and clearing away afterwards.

We also have another group of volunteers who prepare monthly meals for Messy Church. This involves cooking a hot meal for around 70/80 people each month and is always very well received by the children and parents alike.

In the run up to Christmas the parents of Holmesdale School children were served tea and coffee before the nativity performances and they were very grateful to be able to come in from the cold and enjoy a warm drink.

It was fantastic to have such a large congregation for the Christmas Carol Service and there was a real buzz in the hall afterwards with over 100 people enjoying mulled wine and mince pies. The last time we had been able to do this was 2019.

Thank you to all who have volunteered this year to make these events a success and give our church community the chance to join together in social activities. Special thanks go to

Nigel Perkins for organising coffee each week and to all the many helpers who volunteer giving everyone the opportunity to catch up with friends after the weekly service.

All these social events require a great team effort and in 2023 we plan to re-establish a Social Committee to coordinate these events and hope to be able to organise even more. If this is something you would like to get involved with, please get in touch with me or any member of the Parochial Church Council.

Melanie Crighton

MUSIC AT SAINT MARK'S

Now that the Sung Eucharist has returned at 10.00am on Sunday mornings we have used the St Thomas Mass setting for the Gloria and Agnus Dei. In the latter part of 2022 we added the Sanctus and Benedictus. There are other sections of the service, Gospel Acclamation, Sursum Corda and seasonal Acclamations which will follow when possible.

Although St Mark's Church Choir is now very small in number, we are most grateful for the help provided by the members of St Mark's Singers. This was especially welcome on three special occasions during the past year – Easter Sunday, Memorial Service for HM Queen Elizabeth II in September and also the Carol Service in December.

I am very grateful to David Lear who plays the piano at the monthly Taizé service.

Once again, we have been delighted to welcome the Godfrey Searle Choir to sing Choral Evensong on two occasions towards the end of 2022.

Terrence Hancock
Organist & Choirmaster

SAINT MARK'S PARISH MAGAZINE

The parish magazine in 2022 has continued to be distributed predominantly online with paper copies available on request. This has supported St Marks environmental ambitions to save paper. Furthermore, the amount of colour imagery used in the magazine has decreased to reduce printing costs.

There have been twelve editions, sent on the Thursday before the 1st Sunday of the month. The format has remained largely similar year on year varying between 24 and 32 pages in length.

The content has a regular format including a book review, recipe, puzzles, news from the Church of England and a letter from the Vicar, as well as input from SMOAT and church news when available.

The magazine has also been an outlet for environmental information and education, as part of the church's ambition to achieve and maintain the Eco Church award. It has enjoyed the support of regular contributions from Harry Ingram and Ian Archer. The editor passes on great thanks to both for their entertaining and thought-provoking inputs.

Thanks are due to Terrence Hancock and Malcom Toye for proof reading support throughout the year. And also thanks to Alexia Hartman for magazine distribution.

The magazine has recruited new advertisers this year and now has eight advertisers at the back of the magazine in various formats from one-quarter page black and white ads to full page colour. Thanks to Jane Artis for continuing to facilitate advertising requests.

In January 2023 I handed in my notice after three years and a new editor is yet to be found.

Helen Starmer
Editor

YOUTH WORK AT SAINT MARK'S

PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

The Parent and Toddler Group started up again in April 2022. There was an expected slow start but after almost a year the group has had several newcomers each month and has also gained numerous regulars who continue to praise the service it provides to the community. In December the group hosted a successful Christmas Party for the children (and parents/carers) with Father Christmas in attendance. The group of course could not be possible without the kind and continued help of volunteers such as Judith Parkes, Deborah Pelekani and Timothy Warren, to name a few.

Alexia Hartman

T-TIME TALES

T-Time Tales runs for half an hour after school every Wednesday during term time. Mothers and nannies come in with their children and are welcomed with a cup of tea and a biscuit and drink for the children. Susannah and Keith Dyde tell a Bible story and lead them in energetic singing to the accompaniment of Fr. Martin on the piano. It picked up slowly after Covid, but we were pleased that many of the same children returned to us.

Susannah Dyde

MESSY CHURCH

Following a challenging 2021 for Messy Church get togethers, in January we cautiously began to plan for the months ahead. Covid cases were once again high, so we started the year with a café style Messy Church in the hall, a first for St Mark's Church! Families were seated at their own tables, a safe distance from each other. Father Martin encouraged us all to explore the story of David and Goliath, aided by a life-sized paper representation of Goliath. Children were able to enjoy related crafts at their family tables and many left with DIY helmets and shields. The kitchen team did a fantastic job of providing snack packs and drinks to minimise contact between families.

In February Covid infection rates were thankfully lower, so we were able to return to the regular format of crafts and activities in the hall and a service in the church followed by a meal together. Susannah and Keith led an engaging service on the story of the lost coin. Children went home with both a good understanding of the story, and tummies full of chocolate!

Following positive feedback of Good Friday Messy Church meet ups at the Parish Rep meeting, we decided to give it a go. Children enjoyed putting together Easter gardens, making cards and completing a treasure hunt. The cards were then delivered to other members of St Mark's Church along with bunches of daffodils.

We were able to hold a summer party in July w for the second year in a row. The sun shone, and a fantastic time was had by all. There were lots of fun activities including a thank you tree with messages from the children about what they were thankful to God for. This was put up for display in the church. Following the activities, we all enjoyed a delicious BBQ in the garden together.

Autumn Messy Church sessions proceeded well and in December we celebrated Christmas with a star nativity trail, Christmas themed crafts and activities in the hall and a festive nativity performance by the children in the church.

The craft fun, family worship and wonderful meals during this year were only made possible by the brilliant group of ever enthusiastic volunteers, always keen to give their time and creativity. A special mention to the young volunteers, who confidently lead crafts and activities on numerous occasions. They were very popular with the children. Enormous thanks to you all.

Rachel Potter

THE PARISH OFFICE

I am very pleased to be based back in the office for a full year after the lockdown restrictions during the pandemic.

Communication with the parish continues to be mostly online via email. The Parish Magazine remains available online and physical copies are also being sent to those that have requested this. Even with the significant ever increasing paper costs, we are still managing to keep printing costs at a low. We continue to offer our printing services (at a cost) to a few local churches.

This year saw a couple of changes regarding hall bookings. We updated the terms and conditions of the hiring agreement which also included a slight price increase. Hall bookings for children's birthday parties are increasingly popular, with many families returning year after year.

Fr Martin and his teams' support is ongoing and along with his knowledge of all things technical, the office continues to run smoothly. If there is anything you need, please do contact me via email or on the phone, as I am always happy to help where I can.

Alexia Hartman
Parish Administrator

PARISH SAFEGUARDING

After undertaking the appropriate training, I have been appointed the Parish Safeguarding Officer. My aim is to continue to provide an environment that is welcoming and respectful and enable any safeguarding concerns to be raised and responded to openly, promptly and consistently. All Parochial Church Council members will also be undertaking safeguarding training and undergoing DBS (disclosure and barring service) checks.

Alexia Hartman
Parish Safeguarding Officer

SAINT MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST (SMOAT)

April 2022 marked the occasion of our first live fund raising event since before the start of Covid19, and it was a pure delight to get back to normal and being able to share the enjoyment of a live event with our supporters!

2022 was a bumper year for us and we were able to give away £24,050 to twelve projects in eleven different countries. This includes £9,000 given to the Christmas Appeal 2021. We received a bequest from one of our most loyal supporters, David Barrell, and this had helped significantly in the amounts we have been able to give.

In March we held another SMOAT@Home event, making and delivering chocolate brownies on the occasion of Mothering Sunday. We were able to give £1,500 to Wonder Foundation. The money given has helped to establish a mentoring programme at Sorawell Professional Training College in Yaounde, Cameroon. The aim of the project was to provide fifty young women with accredited training so that they will have the opportunity to leave poverty for good, benefit their local community and progress in the hospitality industry.

In April we held our first live event for two years – a Bingo afternoon! As usual, it was very well attended and enjoyed by everybody. We were raising money for BRINOS to support the purchase of a portable suction machine and two portable audiometers. We were able to send them £1,250 which enabled them to buy these machines.

Then, in September, we held a BBQ Brunch in the garden of Louise and Ken Packer. The weather was kind to us and the event attracted a good number of people who enjoyed a hearty breakfast. We were able to give £2,500 to Hope Health Action, which part funded a critically needed solar powered generator at a leading hospital in Northern Haiti.

All other money given away was funded by regular giving and supported the following projects:

We gave £1,000 in January to Doctors for Nepal for much needed equipment for their trainee medical staff.

In September, £2,200 was given to Educaid to fund a back-up generator for the Rolal Secondary School in Sierra Leone. We were able to pay for the generator in full which will help the solar power not to be over-burdened and therefore more reliable and cost effective.

Then in October 2022 we gave £1,600 to Empathy International to fund a cohort of eight girls to participate in their established 'Dignity' young women skills programme. This provides intensive high skill residential training over two months to young village women so they are able to make and repair clothes. On completion, each woman is gifted a foot-powered 'Singer' sewing machine along with items needed to start a business in their own village.

In December 2022 we gave money to four organisations as part of the Big Give: £1,500 to IT Schools in Africa, providing digital skills training in Malawi; £1,500 to Legs for Africa, an organisation which refurbishes prosthetic legs for reuse in Ghana; £1,000 to Well Boring towards the construction of bore holes and wells in Kenya and The Gambia; and finally, £1,000 to Our Moon Education towards the building of a learning forum at a residential college in Chibombo, Zambia. Each of these four donations will be doubled through the Big Give.

Once again, can I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported us throughout the year. We couldn't do it without you!

Barbara Perkins
Chairman

SAINT MARK'S AFTERNOON RETIREMENT TEAM (SMART)

SMART is a social group for older people to meet and enjoy a varied monthly programme, in the church hall or on occasional outings. SMART is open to all aged over 65 in the community, so you do not have to be a member of St Mark's to come. Smart is run by Sarah Cousins, a Reader at St Mark's, and a retired NHS mental health chaplain.

Highlights of the year were not one but two trips out for tea at Priory Farm, as well as the familiarity of well-loved carols at Christmas hosted by Richard Salmon with Reverend Martin Colton on the piano.

SMART could not happen without the staunch support of Frances Wood, Sue Hill Smith and Marion Wall who give generously of their time and are always available ensuring that all the essential things get done. My thanks also go to Tina Read and Richard Salmon who regularly give lifts to bring folk to the meeting.

Sadly we said a final goodbye to Kathleen Bretherton, Kathy Bristow, Diane Callen, Betty Grunwell, Kay Metcalfe and Georgina Sparver, all of whom contributed to the life of Smart in their individual ways. May they all rest in peace and rise in glory.

We always welcome new members. If you would like to help with giving lifts, without which we cannot run, or are interested in any aspect of SMART, please come and have a chat!

Sarah Cousins

OTHER ACTIVITIES

FOODBANK

We have continued to support St Matthew's Foodbank by collecting food and toiletries that are delivered to the Foodbank. The collection point has continued on the Vicarage doorstep. As the year progressed the demand grew as the Cost of Living Crisis deepened but unfortunately we have also seen a drop in donations. Some have responded to our appeals but as most people feel a financial squeeze, those at the bottom suffer the most. We pray that all who come for help and support will receive it.

Fr Martin