



**ANNUAL REPORT and FINANCIAL STATEMENTS of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of St Mary's Shortlands for the
year ended 31st December 2025**



Trustees' Annual Report 2025

Report and Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council of St Mary's Church, Shortlands

St Mary's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 of cooperating with the Incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Church buildings, halls and grounds of St Mary's, Shortlands. This year the PCC defined its purpose as "The PCC is a group which acts as Trustees, working alongside the Vicar to govern the church responsibly, spiritually, legally, and financially, while supporting its mission of sharing God's love."

Aims And Purposes

Our Mission is "Sharing the love of God" and we as a PCC place great value on being welcoming and inclusive to all. Our Vision develops our Mission in four key areas: our heart for God; building fellowship and confidence; becoming a community hub; and, in time, becoming prophetic and challenging - the 'go to place' in the community for spiritual support and encouragement.

The PCC aims to reflect our mission, values and strategic objectives in its development of leadership, programme planning, site development and governance of the church.

Key activities in the church are under the leadership of many people, often volunteers, and supported in some cases by paid staff. The main activities of the Church are outlined in the report below. We are also committed to serving our local community with representatives on Deanery Synod, Churches Together in Beckenham, Welcare and Shortlands Residents' Association. The PCC is reliant on volunteers who contribute to various tasks, including maintaining the buildings and grounds, ensuring a warm welcome to our services, decorating the church weekly and especially for major festivals, catering for events, administration and ushering for occasional services. The officers of St Mary's are also volunteers, specifically the Treasurer, the Secretary to the PCC and the Churchwardens.

Our Vision and Mission was adopted at the beginning of 2023, after extensive consultation, under the guidance of our Vision and Mission team. This has given us a strong foundation to build on, and we have a clear sense that there is much more that God is calling us to be and to do. As a PCC we have continued to work on embedding the Vision and Mission values and ensuring we have a healthy culture.

Vicar's Report – Rev. Dave Edmondson

I was licensed to this parish in May 2025. It was such a special service, and I felt truly affirmed and welcomed. My family and I were made to feel part of St Mary's so quickly, and I want to thank you for the part you played in that.

Before reflecting on May 2025 onwards, I would like to thank everyone for the part they played during the interregnum, for both the seen and unseen work that so many people did. There were many who gave so much of their time and energy. Thank you.



Throughout 2025 there has been much to be thankful for. The parade services across the year were full of joy and life. Mothering Sunday, with the pre-school children leading some of the worship, was particularly special for many who attended. It has been a delight to celebrate together at baptisms, weddings, birthdays, and a wide range of special and social events throughout the year. We have also shared the tears and challenges of this year as we have grieved together at funerals and memorial services.

This year I have had the joy of getting to know you, whether at a service, an activity, or informally over a cup of tea. There have been so many community events at St Mary's, including the plant sale, parish picnic, Christmas fair, and many more.

It has been a real privilege to minister alongside you this year. St Mary's is built by many committed people who give their time, money, and talents so that St Mary's can show the love of God in all that it does. Whether you lead ministries, bake cakes, clean gutters, or offer a warm welcome thank you. To those who do both the seen and unseen work, we are deeply grateful.

As we continue to share the love of God across the parish of Shortlands, we are reminded that this work is done together. It takes a whole community, not just one or two people. I would particularly like to thank Glo and Robin our incredible Church Wardens, and Tim our Treasurer for hundreds of unseen hours, along with the ministry team and our paid staff, Claire, Rachel, Elizabeth, and Emma for all they do, especially the often unglamorous but vital work behind the scenes.



I have been encouraged to see that St Mary's is growing. Growth is about more than numbers, but our numbers have been increasing throughout 2025, which has been a real joy. Alongside this, our growth in faith and as a community has continued whether through gathering socially, worshipping together, or studying together.



In my first year as vicar, I have deliberately not sought to bring large-scale change, mainly because there has been no need for radical change. God is at work at St Mary's and has been for some time. That said, there have been some changes: adjustments to services, the regathering of the ministry team, and a renewed focus by the PCC on its purpose. I have spent much of this year getting to know St Mary's and Shortlands, and it has been a joy to see where God is already at work and to consider how we can best serve our parish.

This year the PCC also decided to introduce a single St Mary's logo, as several were in use. This simple and clear logo reflects something of my hope for St Mary's: that we know what makes St Mary's St Mary's, and that we can clearly and simply share the love of God in all that we do. St Mary's itself continues to change as our congregation grows and new people bring different skills, gifts, and personalities.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I am hopeful about how God will continue to move at St Mary's. Throughout this year, the PCC and the Future Generations Project team have been planning and thinking carefully about how best to redevelop our halls and carry out our projects, to future-proof St Mary's and make it accessible and practical for all. I am looking forward to these plans developing further and being able to share them more fully.

It has also been a joy to see our children's and young people's work develop, and I am hopeful that this will continue to grow. I am keen to keep making sure our worship and activities are accessible to all. That all of Shortlands can come and know the love of God through all that we do here at St Mary's. We are blessed that hundreds of people use our site every week, and in 2026 the ministry team, PCC, and I are keen to explore how we can better connect with all those who use our church and halls, not simply so that Sunday numbers might grow, but so that all may come to know the love and good news of Jesus Christ.



Thank you so much for your support and prayers throughout 2025. Please continue to pray for me, as I pray for you.

Dave

Worship – Rev. Dave Edmondson

Worship at St Mary's continues to follow a regular pattern, with Sunday Holy Communion at 10.30am, Wednesday services in the Chapel, monthly Choral Evensong and termly evening services led by the Music Group, offering different styles of worship. During the interregnum, I am grateful to Rev. Jane Peters and our Licensed Lay Ministers, alongside visiting clergy for faithfully leading our services.

Since my arrival, alongside Rev. Jane and the Licensed Lay Ministers, there has been a focus on ensuring our worship is accessible and welcoming to all. Wednesday services are now Holy Communion on the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Wednesdays of the month. The ministry team has also reviewed how our liturgy is presented, introducing standalone service booklets for special services and recognising the need to further review our regular service booklets.



Particular attention has been given to family and parade services, where the liturgy has been redeveloped to ensure it is accessible, engaging and relevant to those attending. Music remains central to our worship. We are blessed by our choir, wonderfully led by Claire Tillotson, who enrich our services week by week. We also value the contribution of the music group, who lead at various services and special evening worship, helping us to explore different styles of worship.

Worship is at the heart of St Mary's. As we look ahead, our aim is to ensure it remains central to our life together, accessible, welcoming, and prayerful, so that all may encounter the majesty and love of God.

Governance and PCC Report – Helen Bird

Incumbent: Vacancy (01.01.25 – 05.05.25) Rev. David Edmondson (From 06.05.25)

Churchwardens: Robin Hogg & Gloria Sherman

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England which operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. It is a Registered Charity.

At St Mary's the membership of the PCC consists of the Incumbent, the two Churchwardens, Deanery Synod representatives, and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the Church. All those who attend our services/members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll. This makes them eligible to stand for election to the PCC, and to vote at elections.

This year we will have 3 vacancies for elected members of the PCC: Keith Mills, Sue Slaney and Pat Chase have reached the end of their second 3 year term. We will also be carrying out elections at the APCM in 2026 for 2 Deanery Synod representatives. As our electoral roll fell below 151 last year we will now only have 2 Deanery Synod representatives in accordance with the Church of England's rules.

In particular, we thank those members who are standing down from the PCC this year having served two consecutive terms, as well as our deanery representatives. We also thank Jay Sharma, who stood down as PCC Secretary in May 2025, for her faithful service.

The PCC comprised for the year 2025/26:

Name	Role	Status
Dave Edmondson	Vicar	Ex Officio
Robin Hogg	Warden	Ex Officio
Glo Sherman	Warden	Ex Officio
Tim Dawson	Treasurer	Elected
Helen Bird	Secretary	Elected
Ann-Marie Jefferys	Deanery Synod	Ex-Officio
Glo Sherman	Deanery Synod	Ex-Officio
Jan Boam	Deanery Synod	Ex-Officio
Keith Mills		Elected
Sue Slaney		Elected
Pat Chase		Elected
Catherine Bingham		Elected
Claire Tillotson		Elected
Craig Myers		Elected
Ann Dalton		Elected
Suzie Evans		Elected
Julie Fox		Elected
Toks Taylor		Elected

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. They meet regularly, at least 6 times a year. The PCC takes great care to act in their capacity as trustees for the parish and to help matters run smoothly, whilst always having an eye to future developments.

The PCC has had a busy year and we thank all those involved for their time and contribution. We were delighted to welcome our new incumbent, Dave Edmondson, after his installation in May 2025.

for their commitment and hard work in making each service so effective. We are always interested in hearing from potential new members.

Children and Youth – Rachel Tillotson

Children and Youth ministry continues to grow at St Mary's. It was a delight to welcome so many families to our Christmas services, especially the crib service and Christingle. These were both slightly different to what we have done in the past but were very successful and enjoyed by all. Both Youth Group and Teatime Together are thriving, with several of the same families attending regularly and we have started seeing some of them at other services too. We are also seeing good numbers of families on Sunday mornings regularly attending Junior Church.

Thank you to all those who support Junior Church, preparing and leading on Sunday mornings, the Youth Club Team, those who regularly lead and support Teatime Together. Finally, a huge thank you to the congregation of St Mary's for supporting Rachel in all she is trying to do to increase family participation at St Mary's.



Baby and Toddler Group – Sue Harrison

The toddler group at St Mary's Shortlands is thriving. We had an Easter puppet service which was well attended. Our summer party was a great success with probably about 60 children attending (it was difficult to get exact numbers as people came and went during the day). The bouncy castle and ball pond contributed to the fun on a lovely sunny day. We had 49 children and 38 adults to our Christmas Service with a puppet nativity.

We usually have 35-45 children attending in the morning (9.30-11.30) and at least 20 children in the afternoon (12.30 - 2.00), We encourage our pre-school children and parents to stay to have a packed lunch with us after picking up. We have a lot of grandparents and childminders in the morning but recently have had quite a few mothers with small babies which is a bit of a change and lovely. The afternoon group tends to be more parents, mums or dads with older children. We are usually alright for volunteers in the morning but for the afternoon group it is more difficult to find constant help. It has been the same volunteers for a very long time, but our regular group of childminders can be very helpful if we are a bit stretched.

We run a system that does not require any booking as operating in the back of the church gives us plenty of space. Setting up and putting things away is quite time consuming.

Schools – Rev. Dave Edmondson

Since I have joined St Mary's I have sought to continue and deepen our relationships with the two schools in our Parish: Highfield Primary School and Harris Academy Shortlands. It has been a delight to welcome both for visits and lessons around the Christian faith. We hosted both of their Christmas Carol performances for year five and six for Highfield and key stage two for Harris. This was the first time Harris hosted their carol concert at St Mary's. I have delivered assemblies in Harris and links with both schools are deepening.

Discipleship – Rev. Dave Edmondson

Discipleship lies at the heart of our life together at St Mary's Shortlands. At its simplest, discipleship means learning to follow Jesus more closely in the whole of life. It is about being shaped by prayer, scripture, worship and service so that, day by day, we grow more into the likeness of Christ. Discipleship underpins everything we do; it is not an optional extra, but vital to who we are as a church community.



There are core aspects we seek to nurture: worshipping together, learning together, praying together and serving others. Our Sunday services and Wednesday Communion remain central moments where we gather around Word and Sacrament. Alongside this, we recognise that discipleship is something each person must take responsibility for themselves. The habits of prayer, reading the Bible, reflection and faithful living and service are practices we each choose to cultivate.

Discipleship can be helped by supportive groups and courses. Earlier this year before I joined there was a Lent group and this Advent the Advent

Course 'They Sang' offered space to reflect more deeply on preparing our hearts for Christ. We are thankful for our two homegroups, where faith is explored in conversation and friendship, and for the Take Time group, which provides a gentle, reflective space for prayer and discussion. It is encouraging to see steady growth in these areas. My prayer is that we continue to deepen our commitment to Christ, supporting one another as we grow in faith together.



Take Time – Cathy Myers

The Take Time second Saturday Christian meditation group has been running monthly throughout 2025. Take Time is centred on an Ignatian style visualisation. This is always based on a passage from the Gospels and is an opportunity to imagine oneself in the unfolding scene, near to where Jesus is.

The meditation always ends with Jesus inviting the listener to draw near and to share whatever is on their heart or mind. Afterwards, there is a chance for everyone to reflect on their encounter with Jesus and to share in fellowship over a warm drink.

In lots of ways, it is a Bible study with no biblical knowledge required, and the sharing afterwards is designed not to make distinctions based on how much everyone knows about theology.

Usually, Take Time is attended by 10-15 people including some people who are new to St Mary's or who attend other local churches.

Cathy (Myers) is delighted to have been joined by Glo, Suzie Evans, and Caitlin in leading the meditation group. She is also very grateful to Jo Eade, Sara Hope and Sue Harrison for helping with refreshments. The meditations are conceived and written by a Methodist minister.

More information on Take Time at <https://taketime.org.uk/>

Catherine's House Group – Catherine Bingham

Our House Group meets fortnightly on Tuesday evenings at Catherine and Adrian's home. No preparation or knowledge is needed, and there is no requirement to attend every meeting – people are welcome whenever they can make it.

We find that reading the bible together, talking about what we have read, sharing the thoughts and questions we have, deepens our understanding and helps us support each other in our faith.

This year we looked together at Colossians and Esther and spent a couple of sessions getting an overview of the Prophets. We followed the Lent course "Rhythm of Life" and members of the group joined the Advent course "They Sang" run by Rev. Dave.

Ann-Marie's House Group – Ann-Marie Jefferys

Our Online House Group has been running for 3 years and has ten members. We meet once a month on Zoom, on Monday evenings and all are welcome to join us!

This year we completed the weekly Lent course 'Rhythm of Life' where we looked at the events of Jesus' life whilst considering our own lives in terms of resting, creating, sharing, encouraging and celebrating. We celebrated the 1700th Anniversary of the Nicene Creed by completing the Pilgrim Course on the Creeds and completed the Advent Course 'They Sang', both of which helped us to see our weekly services in a different light, helping us to better understand our liturgy. Besides studying the Bible, we support each other on our Christian journey.

Nachos and Natter - Rev. Dave Edmondson

In the Autumn, Debbie Speller and myself started a group which meets on the fourth Sunday of the month at 6pm in the Chapel. This is specifically for those in secondary school. We eat Nachos and talk about an aspect of the Christian faith. Our numbers are not huge but our conversations are deep and encouraging.

Archivist - Kay Coleman

I was pleased to be appointed the church archivist last year but am still really learning what the role involves.

I very much enjoyed leading the VE/VJ Day displays, commemorations and tea party with a lot of help from Helen Bird, Robin Hogg, Cecilia Willatt, the Flower team, Craft and Chatter and the Café team.

We had found an incomplete Remembrance book designed by a local resident who was an artist and thanks to the Friends of St Mary's this was able to be beautifully finished by F G Marshall. Betty Rider generously paid for a case to be made to hold this book, also made by F G Marshall. This now stands in St George's Chapel.



During the 100th WW1 commemorations I researched all the soldiers named in the WW1 book of remembrance. Since finding the partly finished Remembrance Book I have been researching the lives of all the casualties of HMS, Civil Defence and Civilians named in it. The results of my researches, together with those of the WW1 casualties, are now on a shelf in the Church Office for anyone to read. I have since discovered that there are names on our war memorial that were not included in the WW1 Book of Remembrance and I intend to research these at a later date.

Dave and I will keep investigating the potential of an honour board to be placed in the church for those killed in WW2 and named in the new Remembrance book. Research is needed into what exact permissions are necessary and we hope to achieve this as soon as we can.

Glo Sherman and I worked together to catalogue and sell a quantity of old furnishings which did not fit anywhere in the church and were believed to have never been part of St Mary's fabric. This raised the sum of £500 towards church funds.

My next project is to start a Church photograph album commencing with the photographs from Dave's installation. Then I intend to start cataloguing and filing our many old records and memorabilia. I will also familiarise myself with the keeping of church baptism, wedding and funeral records and liaise with the Bromley Archives concerning the old St Mary's records that they are storing for us and where they will be kept when the new library opens.

Flower Team - Cecilia Willatt



For a long time, the decorating of St Mary's Church Shortlands has been an important part of our community. Our team is made up of people with many different skills, all enthusiastic to make the Church look welcoming and beautiful, from the little table vases on the Café tables each week, to the many decorations put up for the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Harvest, or making up the bunches of daffodils for mothering Sunday, to special displays for occasions like the VE Day commemorations.

Anyone is welcome to join us as there are many different skills required, but no experience is necessary and help is always at hand. On a weekly basis, we usually have a pedestal at the front, by the pulpit, and a welcoming arrangement either in the south porch or on the table just as you enter the Church. On some weeks there will be flowers placed by the book of remembrance; these are requested for an anniversary in remembrance of a loved one. We also place flowers in the little chapel at the side of our church; this space lends itself to a smaller arrangement.



I feel it is a privilege to be part of the team that looks after the Flowers at St Mary's. Adding fresh flowers to a building shows that someone has recently been there to spend time and care to beautify the Church, and to welcome people.



Fabric and Maintenance - Robin Hogg



We continued to follow an agreed plan to address the findings of The Quinquennial Review of the Church at the end of 2022. We are now preparing for our next Quinquennial in 2027.

Work has been carried out to address many of the high priority issues, including work on repairs to the roof and the retesting followed by removal of asbestos in the Basement of Church House. The Hall was found to be asbestos free. Maintenance has included the upkeep of the grounds and work on the lighting and heating in the church. We

are grateful to the teams of volunteers who carry out much of this work. A detailed report on the Fabric and Ornaments for 2025 is circulated separately.

Mission Of the Month – Susie Shelton

For many years the church has nominated and supported many worthy causes close to the hearts of the congregation and the wider parish. In October each year a meeting is held to decide which charities will be supported the following year. The meeting is open to all those who are interested in this aspect of our outreach, not just those who are nominating a particular charity. A different charity is supported each month, and the aim is to have a mix of local, national and international charities each year. Some are supported annually, including The Children's Society (through the Christingle service) and Welcare in Bromley. Others are supported every few years or as "one offs", and the charities do not have to be Christian, but many are. Some have a particular resonance with individuals because of a family connection with loved ones having need of a charity's input, such as St Christopher's Hospice or the Chartwell trust (cancer care).

Those nominating a charity usually become its "rep", acting as the liaison between the charity and St Mary's, writing a short article for SPAN plus providing information on the charity board at the back of church. With recent charities as varied as The Leprosy Mission, Mines Advisory Group, the McCabe Educational Trust, and continuing support to ABCD (Action around Bethlehem Children with Disabilities), it is important that St Mary's continues to help those in need both at home and abroad.

Pastoral Team – Sue Harrison

There are 6 members of the pastoral team who meet on a Monday at 4.30 to discuss church members with physical, mental or spiritual needs and pray for them. Home communion is offered monthly by a licensed pastoral assistant usually accompanied by a pastoral visitor. This year it has been offered to 3-5 individuals. We also have offered a monthly service at Durham House led by Jan Boam with a sing along carol service in December and a carol service with readings and poems at Blenheim court.



Pastoral needs are often picked up at the mobility class, craft and chatter and the café. Follow up for these is part of the ministry as well as being aware of church attendance.

Deanery Synod – Ann-Marie Jefferys

Beckenham Deanery Synod continues to move and grow the Anglican churches and Christians. Our reps are Gloria Sherman, Jan Boam and myself. In March, Rev. Richard Jones (Christ Church & St Paul's Anerley) became the Area Dean of Beckenham, after Canon Jeremy Blunden's (St George's) term of office ended. This year as a deanery we welcomed two new clergy: Rev. David Edmondson (St Mary's), Rev. Nicholas Pucenot (St John's Beckenham). Also, Rev. Jessica Smith, (Holy Trinity with St John's, Penge) joined the Deanery Synod Standing Committee.

In our March meeting at Christ Church Chislehurst, we met with the Bromley Deanery to hear Bishop Jonathan talk about the Vision and Strategy of the Diocese. He laid out the diocesan strategy and vision, building on 'Change, Serve and Grow' to give hope to all our churches. The underlying message was of growth at parish level, and being missional in all that we do, underpinned by seeking first the kingdom of God. Rev Richard Jones was commissioned as the Area Dean of Beckenham.

As part of our Deanery focus on Worship and Encouragement and to experience different styles of worship, represented across the Deanery, we held services inviting PCC members to attend as well as Deanery members. In June we held a service of Holy Communion at Christ Church Beckenham, and in October, a service was held at St James' where a Mass was held for St Edward the Confessor, following the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Both services were followed by refreshments and a time to socialise with Christians across the Deanery.

St Mary's continues to play a part in the Deanery with Glo Sherman on the Deanery Synod Standing Committee, and on Diocesan Synod.

Craft and Chatter – Jan Boam

This is a small group of 'crafters' who meet on Tuesday mornings in the Friends Room. We also have additional members who usually craft at home as they're unable to attend the sessions.

We primarily knit and sew seasonal items to sell at Easter and Christmas. In addition, we have a small number of cards and prayer cloths on sale in church throughout the year. The proceeds usually go into the general church funds unless specified for a particular project.

The group regularly produce non-sale items such as hats and teddies for the Mission to Seafarers, blankets for Moldova and occasional items for the charity of the month.

Over the years we have been grateful to receive donations of wool, fabric and haberdashery items, even a sewing machine, to supplement our purchased materials. In fact, far too much for our small group to use so we have been able to share with other organisations such as the Bethlem Hospital, the Beckenham Quilters, Twam (Tools with a Mission) plus other local charities.

Mobility – Jan Boam

The Mobility Group is an exercise group for seniors founded some thirteen years ago. Although set up by a Personal Trainer/Physiotherapist, we now classify ourselves as a 'self-help' group as there is no professional present (apart from a retired physio). The exercises are all recognised and approved by physiotherapists and many members have been encouraged in their participation by their own doctors.

The first part of the routine takes place seated for approximately 30 minutes, some exercises with balls and resistance bands, this is followed by approximately 10-15 minutes of balance work. The group then separately follow a circuit around the church, again involving balls and bands plus weights for an additional 10-15 minutes.

After all this exercise, the group gathers together at tables and chairs for well-deserved tea and cake. The members are asked to make a voluntary contribution of £3 per session. After minimal deductions for cake ingredients the Tea and Cake Fund is distributed to charities of the members' choice plus donations to church funds towards heating and electricity expenses.

The acknowledgement letters from the recipients are posted on the charities board in church. The members are a very caring and supportive group who are a credit to St Mary's.

SPAN – Heather Wills

SPAN (Shortlands Parish Newsletter) is published 11 times a year and, thanks to the efforts of a dedicated band of collators and deliverers, is delivered to every home in the parish. This enables us to share the love of God with the local community, as well as promoting events and activities taking place at St Mary's and in the area.

A small editorial team, including the vicar and members of the PCC, collaborate to identify, produce, edit and proofread content, and Elizabeth in the Parish Office turns the pictures and articles into the finished product.

Each edition includes faith-based reflections from the vicar or another member of the ministry team, provides information about the church's mission of the month and promotes special services and events. Advertisements from local businesses on the back page contribute to the costs of production.

During 2025 we enjoyed David Linstead's articles and photographs about local flora and fauna to look out for in each season, and included several articles in the lead-up to and following the church's commemoration of VE Day. Memories provided by church and community members continue to be featured as occasional articles.

This year, the opportunity was taken to update SPAN's design, using St Mary's new logo. SPAN continues to welcome articles and photographs relevant to the local community.

Website and Social Media – Rev. Dave Edmondson

Over the past year we have developed a new logo, with the support of the PCC, bringing together elements of our existing designs into one simple, clear brand. Our hope is that this creates a consistent and recognisable identity across everything we share, reflecting both our history and our vision for the future.

We have also started to redevelop and clarify our website. A huge thank you to Heather and Elizabeth who do so much behind the scenes. This is still a work in progress, but the aim is to make it more welcoming, easier to navigate, and clearer about our services, groups and events. There is more work to do, and we look forward to continuing to improve it over the coming year.

Alongside this, we are seeking to grow our online presence. Activity on our Facebook page is increasing, helping us connect with our community more regularly, and we have recently launched a new Instagram account to reach a wider audience.

Please do follow, like and share; it's a simple but valuable way to support the life and witness of St Mary's.



Community Café – Fiona Bratt

I took over the coordination of the Community Café in September 2025. I would like to thank those who had previously run the café and their ongoing support.

The Café is held every Wednesday morning from 10:30am to 12:30pm. A number of people attend the 10am service in the Chapel beforehand. We try to run the Café 52 weeks a year although we decided not to open on Christmas Eve this year and we will not be open on Christmas Day next year.

We have around 40 people attending the Café each week and are delighted to welcome new people, who sometimes come in having seen the signs outside. We provide fresh baked cakes and biscuits with Fair-Trade refreshments. We try to acknowledge and celebrate significant birthdays with cake and a card.



To improve the signage and make ourselves more visible we put in a bid to the Shortlands Residents Association for a grant of £200 towards signage. This was granted in September, and we purchased a feather flag which we now put out to advertise that we are open, alongside our previous signs. We also post on social media to advertise specific weeks.

Our volunteer rota of servers and bakers involves over 20 people, mainly coming from St Mary's congregation but also from the community at large. The Fair Trade stall is available at the Café on the 3rd or 4th Wednesday each month.

Electoral Roll – Helen Bird

Every 6 years, the parish is required to set up a new electoral roll and this last took place in 2025. The number on the roll as at the last APCM was 145 people. At that time, it was noted that 68 people were resident within the parish and 77 resident outside.

During the year, 17 names have been added to the roll, and five names have been removed after those members died. The Electoral roll now stands at 157 with 76 resident within the Parish and 81 resident outside.

Safeguarding – Pauline Lambourne

Following a very useful meeting recently between Rev. Dave, Robin and myself we agreed to include ourselves as a church in the Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard Scheme. With enormous help from Adrian, we transferred all the safeguarding details of all those needing Diocesan Safeguarding training onto the computerised Dashboard scheme. The Dashboard system is very useful at monitoring training needs and highlights any deficits which need to be rectified.

Following on from our Dashboard input there were a number of gaps in training which were highlighted by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. Most of these were in relation to Domestic Abuse training and this is now being addressed.

Earlier in the year we had a very successful and enjoyable learning session as part of the PCC meeting where we discussed in groups a variety of various safeguarding scenarios and put our points of view in how the particular issues should be addressed. We all learned a lot from this exercise, and this is something we should do again.

Safeguarding is not just checking up on people to ensure that they are up to date with training, although this is important, but more importantly to use your training to remain vigilant and to act on any situation or experience you feel unhappy about. Rev. Dave and myself will do our utmost to ensure that any issues which are raised will be dealt with speedily and in confidence and with kindness and understanding.

Disclosure and Barring Service Report – Robin Hogg

DBS is the Disclosure and Barring Service, which requires checks to be carried out on all staff and volunteers working with Children and Vulnerable Adults. A certificate is issued if the check shows the individual has no convictions recorded that would prevent them carrying out a role. These have to be renewed at a frequency dictated by the Church of England.

Roles covered by DBS at St Mary's include:

- Sufficient members of the Choir to ensure chaperoning of the junior choristers
- Helpers at Junior Church
- The Leader of the Flower Team
- Licensed Lay Ministers
- Pastoral Team members
- Parish Safeguarding Officer
- PCC members
- Sacristan
- Helpers at Toddlers
- Helpers at Youth Club

At the start of the church year there were 38 post holders that held a DBS certificate. Under the “3-year rule”, which was introduced in January 2022, as at 31st December 2025 there were none that were awaiting renewal.

Over the year we have also added a further 6 new DBS certificate holders, including the 3 new members of the PCC. Clergy DBS is held by the Diocese.

Risk Register – Robin Hogg

The PCC, having introduced a Risk Assessment document and evaluation procedure in 2022, has reviewed and kept the risk assessments up to date.

The PCC must identify, review and manage the risks facing the Church and the Risk Register currently lists 23 risks. For each one there is a rating of severity and likelihood, mitigation actions have been identified and a team or individual tasked with responsibility for managing the risk.

This Register was last reviewed by the PCC in May 2025 and will be reviewed again as soon as the new PCC is in place in 2026, or as and when one of the risks changes or a new risk is identified.

In addition, the PCC and its sub-committees ensured there were up to date Risk Assessments in place for such events as: the Parish Picnic, The Remembrance Service, the Christmas Fayre and the Christingle Service.

Jumelage – Gill Dawson

In 2025 we celebrated 30 years of sharing fun, friendship and faith with our French friends in the Parish of St Francis of Assisi in Douai. A small group of them came to Shortlands and enjoyed home hospitality, we celebrated the Eucharist together along with the Mayor & Mayoress and our local MP. On Saturday afternoon we visited Hever Castle and enjoyed a cream tea together. Three of our friends stayed on so they could be present at the installation of our new Vicar Dave. They brought us a beautiful gift of a stained glass window to mark our 30 years of Jumelage, a picture of St Francis which now hangs in our church.



With dwindling numbers and everyone getting older, a decision has been taken that the annual visits are no longer practical. But the personal friendships which have developed over the years will continue, and visits may still take place for special events, such as the installation of their new Priest, Pere Felice, in September when a small group from Shortlands visited Douai. There is still a close link between our 2 parishes, and a video celebrating the life of Pili, one of the longest standing members of the Jumelage who recently died, was shared with all who remembered her and condolences sent to Douai from her friends in Shortlands.

Pre-School – Christine Hall

During our Spring term we had a visit from ZooLab, who came in with some insects and animals for the children to learn about and touch and hold if they wanted to. Susie Shelton came in and played her flute for the children, a staff member played the saxophone and we were invited into church by Claire Tillotson to play the church organ. We sang in Church on Mothering Sunday and went on a spring walk around the church grounds to look at nature. We enjoyed a puppet show in Church and some of the older children sang easter songs at Durham house.

During our Summer term we went on our annual train trip to Beckenham Place Park. We held a taster afternoon session for all of the new families joining us. Forest play started in April. The children were invited to bring in their pets for a visit so that we could all learn about them. We had live caterpillars at pre-school which we watched hatch into butterflies before releasing them. Pat came in and planted potatoes which we watered and watched grow, when ready we cooked and ate them. We said goodbye to 29 children.

During the Autumn term we welcomed 19 new children. We introduced 'Rainbow Drops' to pre-school, it is a program designed to support self-regulation in the Early Years. We took the children on an autumn walk around the church grounds. Some of the older children sang Christmas songs at Durham house. We ran a toy table at the church fair, held a Christmas party for the children with an entertainer and a visit from Father Christmas, thank you to Derek Cooper. We finished our year with a nativity service in church.

Sidespeople and Welcoming – Gloria Sherman

St Mary's is a church that places great importance on being welcoming to those who join us for worship services. Generally, the first person one meets when coming to our services will be one of the sidespeople. However, before welcoming those who attend our services, working with wardens and deputy wardens, the sidespeople are busy preparing the church for the arrival of those coming through our doors. Their duties include collating and then giving out orders of service, pew sheets, hymnals, and other papers that are used in the service. They assist in helping people to and from the altar for communion, collecting and counting the offering; generally preparing the church for worship, helping during the service, and then putting it all away.

They are a very dependable team of volunteers who play a big part in making our worship accessible to all of us, especially to those who are new or visiting for the first time.



Towards the end of the year, as we discussed additional ways in which to be welcoming, we launched a Welcome Team. The initial team includes those who have been at St Mary's for many years, some who are finding new ways to serve, and some who are very new to us. During 2026, this team will share their experiences and ideas to help us focus our welcoming spirit even more.

Future Generations Project – Tim Dawson

The Future Generations Project (FGP) is looking at how we can make our buildings the best they can be to deliver our mission statement. This means making sure that they are fit for purpose, accessible and future proof. The governance is carried out by a Steering Group that reports to the PCC. The FGP comprises several projects each with a team leader, who sits on the Steering Group. The projects are as follows:

- Hall development: The Church Hall, which is in constant use, is suffering subsidence and heave and has no insulation. Although it has been underpinned in the past, the problem still exists and insulation cannot easily be added. Replacement with a new hall would solve both problems. We are investigating options.
- Ramps: The church has steps in the Church and steps from the nave to the chancel. This makes it difficult for people with limited mobility to easily get into and around the Church. We are looking to improve access.
- Solar panels: We are looking at how we could use solar panels to reduce our electricity cost and work towards net zero by 2030.
- Tea Station: We have a temporary tea station at the back of Church, but we need to replace this with a permanent one. We are looking at options.
- Storage: We have limited storage in church for items such as tables and chairs. We are looking at how we can resolve this problem.
- Audio: There are areas of the Church where it is difficult to hear. We are investigating how to upgrade the system.

Fair Trade – Cecilia Willatt

St Mary's has been registered as a Fair Trade Church for nearly 20 years now.

Through this time, I have worked as a volunteer fair trader. To meet with the criteria of being a Fair Trade Church, we run two monthly stalls one after the 10.30 service on a Sunday and one with the Wednesday café. The stall is stocked with a variety of Fair Trade goods, including many food items, jams, dried fruit, olive oil, pasta, teas, coffee, and of course not forgetting the delicious chocolate. We also sell household items and gifts.

Wherever possible we supply Fair Trade refreshments, so the delicious tea and coffee you drink at the café is Fair Trade. We Hold special events during Fair Trade Fortnite, and once a year we have a "Big Brew" to raise funds for the charity Transform Trade.

Eucharistic Assistants – Mark Fox

The Sacristan and a team of Servers (or Eucharistic Assistants) are involved in assisting the priest presiding at services and supporting the congregation in celebrating together and sharing the love of God. At every communion service, the assistants prepare the Sanctuary, support the vicar and the ministry team during the service and afterwards, ensuring that everything runs smoothly. Since everyone is welcome at the Lord's Table, the assistants assist the vicar in distributing the bread and wine to all members of the congregation, both at the altar rail and in the pews for those less mobile.

In addition, one of the team may also act as Crucifer for services where there is no communion, such as parade services and Choral Evensong, or be asked to read the Gospel. Supporting worship at St Mary's in this way is very rewarding, a privilege, a responsibility and an excellent way of meeting people. The highlight of the past year was the team's involvement in the Induction and Installation of our new vicar, Dave, in May. We also added to our team during 2025, but more help is always appreciated. If you would like to find out more, please approach one of us who would be happy to discuss the role in more detail and offer you the opportunity to work shadow. New members are always welcome – no previous experience is necessary!

Financial Giving and Finances – Tim Dawson

You will see from the financial statements that we made a small loss £2,832 on our General fund. This is the fund that pays the day-to-day running costs of the church. Unfortunately, Stewardship income has not kept pace with our rising costs, hence a small loss. We have implemented some cost saving measures and these should benefit us in 2026. We are also focused on growing our Stewardship income.

Our restricted funds can only be used for specific types of expense. We hold three restricted funds. The first is for repairs to the Church Hall and the second is for repairs to the Church. The third and final restricted fund is for our Future Generations Project (FGP). We transfer £6,000 a year into each of the two repair funds but not to the FGP which is funded by specific fundraising activities or donations. Fortunately, this year we have received bequests of £21,000 for the FGP.

In 2025, we have also spent £17,000 to remove asbestos, found in our boiler room; £4,400 repairing the roof over the organ loft, which had failed in a number of places; £12,000 to install a new heater at the back of church, to replace the two heaters removed from the middle of the nave; and £3,200 on a new water heater for the Church Hall. These expenses have been charged to the Church and Hall repair funds respectively.

Meanwhile, we have taken steps forward with plans for the Church Hall and are looking forward to hopefully being able to share plans later this year. We spent

£7,000 in these investigations last year, which have been charged to our restricted FGP fund.

Looking ahead, our focus on Stewardship will hopefully yield results and allow us to break even on the General fund. We will also be spending more money on our Future Generations Project as we have a number of projects to help make the church more flexible and as futureproof as possible for both the congregation and the local community.

Report approved by: Rev. David Edmondson

Signature: 

Date: 18.04.2026

Reports Below

1. **Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31st December 2025**
Treasurer: Tim Dawson
Independent Examiner: Graham Smedley
2. **Fabric Report – Robin Hogg**
3. **St Mary's Preschool Accounts**