

PCC Secretary's Report 2024

This report summarises the PCC's activities in 2024. The PCC held 7 ordinary meetings on Wednesday evenings, usually at Hilary Baldwin's or Harry Kirby's houses, and then from September in the Coffee Lounge at St Mark's. There was also one extraordinary meeting.

Finance

The parish's financial position at the end of 2024 is available on the parish website.

The parish began 2024 in a reasonably healthy financial position, with its parish share for 2023 paid by the end of January 2024 in the window granted by the diocese. Advertising revenue from the Bridge magazine continued to be healthy and was fully paid into our account by early spring. David Bennison and David McCulloch continued to work together on the accounts as Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, with Helen Davison's occasional assistance, depending on her availability.

Fuel costs continued to be a problem for the Treasurers to address in 2024, but during the spring an agreement was made with our suppliers to fix a monthly payment of over £500 / month and steadily reduce our arrears. Although this was still a burden, it proved manageable. The current fuel contracts will expire in early 2025 and the Treasurers plan to negotiate a new contract with more reasonable monthly payments.

After several technical issues in 2023 that continued in the first part of the year, David McCulloch was able to arrange the installation a card reader at St Edmund's. In the summer, with the regular increase of visitors to St Edmund's, the card reader started to receive frequent donations. Over the course of the year, several hundred pounds was given to the PCC, and it is reasonable to think that these donations will increase in 2025.

The PCC agreed in 2023 to increase the charge to those who use our facilities i.e. the Barn, the coffee lounge and the church at St Mark's by around the rate of inflation. This policy continued in 2024 and an increase of 5% for the Barn Hire was agreed, offsetting the decision to allow their unit cost for electricity to stay the same. Some of our hirers stopped using our spaces in 2024, but others took their place. Helen Davison generously gives her time to coordinate our relationship with those who hire our spaces.

The hourly rate for paying the cleaner at St Mark's went up in accordance with the National Living Wage.

Working Towards a New Plurality

In 2024, the PCC continued to work towards the formation of the plurality of East Medina with Whippingham and East Cowes. Led in the first half of the year by our churchwardens, and then by Rev Sandra after her installation in October, work towards this goal moved forward. Our new incumbent made it clear that greater progress towards the plurality's official formation is a priority for her.

Buildings, Land & Fabric

The graveyard at St Edmund's continues to be an ongoing source of work for the PCC in arranging its tidiness and the marking of graves, particularly by the contacting of relatives when a memorial or grave is rediscovered if it has become overgrown. The PCC particularly thanks Mike Broadsmith, Doreen Gazey and other volunteers for their work in cataloguing and maintaining the graveyard and working with funeral directors.

Concern continued to be expressed for occasional journeys by heavy vehicles in front of St Edmund's which damages the private road and could cause damage to the church due to vibration. Discussions began later in 2024 about access along the footpath running between the 2 parts of the graveyard, and exactly who owned this strip of land. The PCC sought to find answers from the Land Registry and the Diocese about which rights the PCC and other

users had.

Stephen and Ann Capps gradually reduced their contribution to the maintenance of the buildings and fabric in 2024 as they spent less time in the parish, but it should be noted with thanks how much they achieved over several years. The high dormer windows continued to be monitored for leaks and re-painting and this requires regular monitoring. The work of the Friends of St Edmund's in contributing towards the maintenance of the building and fabric there is much appreciated by the PCC.

More details on the maintenance of buildings and fabric can be found in the Churchwarden's Fabric Report.

Safeguarding

Steve Beynon continued his essential work as Safeguarding Officer throughout 2024. His Safeguarding Report summarises the great deal he achieved in improving our parish's work in this area. Safeguarding is also very much a priority of our incumbent. The PCC is extremely grateful for Steve for all the work he is doing.

Pastoral Activities

Hilary Baldwin continued her work as a licensed Anna Chaplain as described in the Anna Chaplaincy Report.

The monthly service at Solent Grange continued throughout 2024, led by Hilary, David Bennison and Helen Hopper. Other quite work continued by Margaret King and others, as noted in the Pastoral Report.

Café Communion is now well established on the first Wednesday of the month at 1115am at St Mark's and is a well-supported and valued service, especially for those who find it difficult to attend the normal earlier service time on Sundays. Rev Len Fox continued to lead these services although as he has stepped back from active ministry, Rev Sandra and Rev Jonathan Hall also provided this ministry. Lunch is always provided afterwards. The PCC particularly recognises the hard work of the Café Communion Team to enable this service to be such a success.

Due to other commitments from the organisers, parish coffee mornings ceased in 2024.

However, The Mark's Brothers Men's Group continues to run successfully on the 2nd Wednesday of the month under the leadership of Harry Kirby, and a cooked breakfast became a well-received element of this regular group!

"Stay and Play" sessions continued during term time in 2024. However, as the year progressed, this session became monthly on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 915am. Schools ministry flourished in 2024. This included a regular team visit to Wootton Primary school to lead worship, and visits from the school children to St Mark's for 3 services in the year including their own Christingle service. These services were led by the parish's own lay ministers. After our incumbent's arrival, she also began regular visits to schools across the plurality. These activities are more fully discussed in the Children's Ministry Report.

Miscellaneous Activities

The parish continued to support the School's Hardship Fund to safeguard the accessibility of cheap school meals for disadvantaged children. Regular collections were held at Café Communion, half of which went to support this cause. The parish also supported the Bishop's Lent Appeal charities in 2024, along with Autism Inclusion Matters (a local organisation for autistic people run by autistic people) and the Island Foodbank.

The distribution of the cup at Holy Communion was finally standardized in 2024 with the PCC agreeing that drinking from the common cup should be permitted if a person wished, but intinction by the priest continued to be encouraged and has become the most common

practice.

Jonathan Hall and Sandie Osborne continued as PTO priests for the parish, while Len Fox stepped down his active ministry towards the end of 2024. The ministry of PTO priests continues to be very important in sacramental provision in the parish as, even if with Sandra and Roy's arrival, there is still a great need for PTO priestly support. The PCC expresses its ongoing gratitude to them for their time and ministry.

The PCC noted on several occasions throughout the year how the Church of England's expectations about finding new officers for important positions to monitor health and safety, finance, taking bookings for the church and coffee lounge and safeguarding are proving harder than ever to find volunteers for.

The year ended on a highpoint with the service of Christingle, comfortably the best attended service of the year. The PCC noted how well planned, advertised and executed worship under the leadership of creative and committed lay ministers creates an enthusiasm for churchgoing that is still present despite the shock of Covid. The PCC continues to recognise that encouraging people's desire to seek and find God's presence wherever he comes to us is our prime motivation for the parish's ministry in our local community.

David McCulloch