ST MARY'S CHURCH, COPYTHORNE - ANNUAL REPORT OF PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

Aim and Purposes

St Mary's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend John Reeve, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St Mary's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit with reference to guidance regarding the advancement of religion for the public good. We try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish
- Missionary and outreach work

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of the Church of St Mary.

Electoral Roll: As of March 2025, we had 56 people on the electoral roll (35 living within the parish and 21 living outside of the parish). Many thanks to John Harrison who has responsibility for updating the Roll.

Worship and Prayer

At St Mary's, there is a service of Holy Communion held every Sunday at 9.30am, except for the second Sunday of the month, when there is a non-eucharistic service 'Heart & Soul'. There is also a Morning Prayer service held every Thursday at 9am, except for the Thursday before Heart & Soul, which is a communion service. These sessions are attended by 8-10 people each week. We are grateful for Russ Earnshaw and the other organists who support with playing the keyboard for Heart & Soul.

The choir has formed an integral part in the leading of worship. They have performed many varied anthems during Sunday morning worship from traditional choral repertoire to compositions by contemporary composers. A new congregational setting of the Eucharist has been introduced. Our thanks go to Adrian Taylor, our Musical Director, and all choir members who have been so faithful in both practice and in attendance on a Sunday morning. Adrian's contribution to the musical life of the church has been immense – his leadership of the choir and his capacity to develop our provision of worship by his choice of material and the qualitative output from our choir team has been hugely beneficial. A rich variety of organ voluntaries conclude morning worship including works by JS Bach, Dubois, Howells, Lefebure-Wely and Bedard. We are particularly grateful to Roanne McCoubrey and Julia McKinley for their support in organ provision throughout the year. We are grateful to Ann Fraser for conscientiously ensuring the organist/keyboard rota is fully functional throughout the year. Ann also organises the readers rota for Sunday Communion services as well. Our thanks go to all the readers, intercessors, and those who assist with the chalice and everybody who assists in the preparation of the church for worship.

The Remembrance Service took place outside at the War Memorial and was very well supported by local organisations and the community. The joint Benefice Patronal Festival services in September again demonstrated the make-up of the benefice.

An All-Souls' Memorial service was held on a Saturday afternoon in November and this provision worked well for bereaved families.

Our Christmas services included Carols by Candlelight, which was held the Tuesday before Christmas at 5.00pm (the day before Christmas Eve). This proved to be successful as significantly more people attended from the community. Following the re-opening of St Matthew's Netley Marsh, we hosted one Christingle service on Christmas Eve for which the Church was full, with attendance right across the generations. The Midnight Communion Service again saw an increase in attendance on last year.

Several additional services were organised to mark key times in the church year including an evening Reflective Service for Passiontide and a sung Advent Reflection service, for which the choir sang prepared items to complement poems and devotional prayers at both. We also held a traditional choral Evensong for Harvest.

There is a monthly Tuesday evening Bible Study group led by John, with 5-6 people attending from both benefice churches. This has been a group which has welcomed those who are new to faith and/or exploring the meaning of the faith journey for themselves.

There are twice monthly Meditation Spa sessions led by John, with a maximum of 14 people at each session. These sessions introduce and practice prayer exercises and are attended by members of both benefice church communities, and members of the wider community with ages ranging from 17- 80 years age.
The day-time home group was re-introduced this year and mainly meets at Mary Drake's home, which is much appreciated.

Due to the extensive restoration works at St. Matthew's, Netley Marsh, all the weddings scheduled at Netley Marsh in 2025 were re-located to St Mary's. This arrangement proved very successful with each wedding providing very positive feedback of their experience. Also, many funerals which would normally have taken place at Netley Marsh took place at Copythorne. The invoices for all the funerals, cremations and burial of ashes have been issued by Amanda Taylor, and our thanks go to her for this invaluable service.

The pew sheet is distributed in church every Sunday and our profound thanks go to Bill Littlecott for ensuring this is ready and available each Sunday morning.

Deanery Synod

The Deanery Synod met three times in the year with thanks to Malcolm Fiddes and Mary Drake, who are our lay representatives on Deanery Synod and who attend the meetings and report back to the PCC.

Mission

We are privileged to have two church schools – Copythorne C.E.C. Infant School and Bartley C.E.C. Junior School. In both schools we have engaged and pro-active Foundation Governors who work on the church's behalf to ensure the Christian character of the schools is maintained and given opportunity to flourish. We are particularly grateful to the staff team in both schools – for their dedication and commitment to the children. Mat Bowen the executive headteacher of the Oaks Federation, left for another appointment in July 2025 and Karen Stonehouse, the headteacher of Bartley Junior School, retired in April 2025. Our thanks to both Karen and Mat for their leadership and commitment throughout their time of service. We wish them the very best in the next stage of their journeys. Will Hodge was appointed headteacher at Bartley, and he took up this role in April 2025. Mary Flynn is currently the interim executive headteacher for the Infant Federation. We wish both Will and Mary the very best as they seek to nurture and progress the provision of Church School education in our parish.
John leads worship regularly in the two schools and assists in the curriculum provision when appropriate. His contribution to both schools is appreciated.

We were delighted that Copythorne Infants held their Nativity in church again. Copythorne Infants visit the church regularly for Family School Worship and our thanks to Diana and Angela for providing refreshments for the parents who attend these services.
The ecumenical 'Open the Book' Team performed in all the church schools in the benefice, once each half term. This provision is highly appreciated by the schools.
A benefice walk was organised in late April to walk through Tatchbury bluebell wood. Twenty people from the two benefice churches enjoyed the adventure of climbing stiles and the immersive quality of the bluebell wood.
We organised an 'Autumn Bazaar and Games' fundraising and social event which was held at the Parish Hall and at which the Stanley's Own Scout & Guide Band performed, and we took part in the Village Show organised by the Bartley Horticultural Society.

Ecumenical Relationships

In January, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the United Service was held at St. Mary's. The Walk of Witness on Good Friday morning was again organised from Cadnam Methodist to St. Mary's Copythorne. There was an ecumenical gathering with Cadnam Methodist Church at the Parish Hall for an outdoor service for Pentecost. This year there was a shared Harvest Supper which incorporated the churches of Cadnam, Copythorne and Netley Marsh. The event included entertainment and we extend our thanks to the Netley Marsh catering team for the enjoyable meal and their hospitality.

Pastoral Overview

Pastoral provision is largely managed through John's ministry among us. Home communion is taken to parishioners who are not able to access church on a Sunday. During the course of the year several people (Cyril King, Mike Page, Freda Nossiter, John Gould, Phyllis Rogers) who had significantly contributed to the life of St. Mary's and its service to our community died. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen. Their service to the church community was extensive, faithful and profoundly appreciated.

Safeguarding

The Parish adopts the diocesan safeguarding policies to ensure in practice and policy the church is adhering to best practice.

The PCC has complied with the requirements imposed by the code under section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016.

Safeguarding is reported on at every PCC meeting, and appropriate training is encouraged. Our Parish Safeguarding Officer is Gill Howard, and we thank Gill for all her work in this role.

The Church building & churchyard

The churchyard continues to be looked after by volunteers, especially Clare and Owen Mills, who take it upon themselves to tidy and maintain the grounds. The Community Service Team visit the churchyard on Wednesday and Friday when their diary allows. Two churchyard clear-up mornings were held to help with the maintenance and care of the churchyard. These coincided with seasonal church decoration and tidying of the interior of the church. Special thanks to those who make and provide food for these occasions and especially to Angi Scriven for her extensive endeavors in this regard.
Further improvements have been made to the lych gate that adjoins the Scout car park and the church driveway, including planting around the lych gate, the installation of new gate posts and the fitting of two hinged gates. We are grateful to Ian Craig who has carried out and coordinated this work with support from Owen Mills and others.

The floral decoration of the church has continued to be overseen by Sheila Littlecott, and this group includes several people who live in the parish but do not attend Sunday worship. We continue to be hugely grateful to Sheila and the volunteers who provide such a lovely service for us and the wider parish.
There is a regular rota for cleaning the interior of the church. Our grateful thanks to all those who serve in this capacity as it makes a real positive contribution to the experience of the church for all generations.
There is also a regular rota for serving refreshments after the Sunday morning service. This offering is much appreciated by all those attending and provides an opportunity for fellowship and socialising in an informal way.

Our Church Online

We continue to try to make St Mary's accessible and available to those searching online and/ or trying to reach out and communicate with us online. Our thanks to Amanda Taylor and Ian Craig for supporting us in this area.
Our church Facebook page continues to grow sharing news and photos and now has 93 followers.
St. Mary's 'A Church Near You' page continues to be updated to share details of regular, special services and events, and has had 10,908 page views during the last year.
Our thanks also go to Matthew Craig for continuing to maintain the St Mary's website.
We continue to encourage supporters of St Mary's to sign up and support our church when shopping online via Easyfundraising (easyfundraising.org.uk). Using this site, when shopping online, raises funds for St Mary's at no extra cost to you. St Mary's has 8 supporters and £537.94 has been raised so far in total.
Our weekly newsletter continues to be issued online, and this includes parish notices, a message from John, and a service of worship including bible readings, prayers and hymns. Each week, John puts this newsletter together and Ian Craig issues it via email.

The PCC

The PCC met five times across the year. The PCC has 7 members. Our grateful thanks to Derek Baulf, Treasurer, for running our accounts and producing the financial reports, and to Elizabeth Wingham who supports as Assistant Treasurer. Thanks also to Amanda Taylor, PCC Secretary, and for all members of the PCC, who oversee the work and scope of the church.
We are extremely grateful to Ian Craig who has continued to serve as our Churchwarden.
New members of the PCC are very much encouraged and welcomed. It is a real benefit to the business and management of the church to have as full a range of people serving in this capacity.
This year, when Phyllis Rogers passed away in December, we lost a long-serving member of the PCC and former Assistant Treasurer. We were pleased that Mary Drake was able to finish the kneeler that Phyllis had recently started and we recognise the contribution that Phyllis made to the life of our church.

Financial Review

It has again been a challenging year for our finances and, as a result, our expenditure exceeded our income by £2,635.
Our income has been falling whereas our costs have been increasing. We were fortunate once again to receive additional income from weddings and funerals whilst the renovation work at St Matthews was taking place. We shared half of that income with St Matthews.
We are extremely grateful for the receipts from the congregation, whether it be through the Parish Giving Scheme, standing orders, internet payments, various envelope schemes or by contributions in the plate at the church entrance.
The £1,231 from fundraising was very welcome – thank you to all who helped and contributed. Sadly, we are not raising as much from this source as we have in previous years so any new ideas would be gratefully received.
At the end of 2025, we had £24,544 in our bank accounts, of which £3,792 is in restricted or designated funds.

Reserves Policy

Our Reserves Policy was reviewed in February, and it is our aim is to keep 3 months running costs in reserves (£11,000) and an additional reserve for potential essential maintenance work (£5,000). Thus, £16,000 in total.
Our policy regarding reserves is reviewed every 2 years.

Administrative Information

St Mary's Church is situated in Romsey Road, Copythorne. It is part of the Diocese of Winchester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Vicarage, Ringwood Road, Woodlands, Southampton, SO40 7GX.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

PCC members who have served from 1 January 2025 until the date this report was approved are:
Incumbent - Revd John Reeve (Chairman)
Churchwarden - Ian Craig
Lay Representative on Deanery Synod - Malcolm Fiddes
Lay Representative on Deanery Synod - Mary Drake
Treasurer - Derek Baulf
Secretary - Amanda Taylor
Elected members:
Bob Dillon
Gill Howard (Parish Safeguarding Officer)
Phyllis Rogers (until December)