

## **PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT**

### **COVERING THE YEAR JANUARY - DECEMBER 2024**

The PCC continues to hold the vision statement approved in 2023

We celebrate God's love for all by ...

- Extending Christ's inclusive welcome
- Exploring faith honestly with an open mind
- Placing people and planet at the heart of our mission

For most of 2024 we had a full complement of clergy members, three vicars and one curate, with additional support from Ruth Martin, the Reader, to serve the Team. At the end of November Wilma Roest, Team Rector and Vicar of St Mary Magdalene, retired and for the remainder of 2024 we had only three clergy and our Reader. The process of finding a new Rector for the Richmond Team, with pastoral responsibility for St Mary Magdalene, will commence in January 2025. During the vacancy the six church wardens will have responsibility for the Team and the two wardens for St Mary's responsibility for that church.

During 2024 all the normal Sunday, weekday and Team services were held and this continued during the vacancy. Congregation numbers are similar to those of 2023. All services were held in person with some livestreamed for those are unable to attend in person. From September, the regular Said Eucharist on the last Tuesday of every month at St John the Divine became a Eucharist for Healing and Wholeness, with the Ministry of Laying on of Hands with Prayer and Anointing for oneself or others.

Other services included:

- a team service for Ascension Day at St Mary Magdalene, including (for the first time) 'Beating the Bounds', a walk around the parish boundary, lead by the Curate Charlie Middleton
- Corpus Christi, a sung Eucharist and Procession of the Blessed Sacrament
- a festival Eucharist for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- All Souls – a team service commemorating those whom we have lost
- Wilma Roest's last service as Team Rector and Vicar of St Mary's

In January, Team members met with fellow Christians, to eat together and to share in a short act of worship at St John's Hall. The World Day of Prayer, an international, women led, inter-church organisation held its Day of Prayer, at St Matthias in March. In March Beavers, cubs and scouts joined St Matthias for Mothering Sunday, during July the Richmond Sea Cadets with their family and friends joined the Patronal Festival service at St Mary Magdalene and in September the 1st Richmond Scout Group attended the Harvest Festival service at St Matthias.

During 2024 'Prayers of Love and Faith', which are prayers of thanksgiving, dedication and asking for God's blessing for same-sex couples (including covenanted friendships) were approved by the House of Bishops and published. These are for use in regular services, not stand alone ones, and do not include weddings. Their use is in the minister's discretion and no minister can ever be forced to use them. The PCC unanimously agreed that as we are part of inclusive church and in keeping with our mission statement the RTM would use the Commended Elements of Prayers of

Love and Faith. The PCC expressed disappointment that it was not yet possible for its clergy to marry same-sex couples and they looked forward to the day that would be possible.

Bible Studies were held during the year covering the Song of Songs and Hebrews and also monthly reflective art afternoons, 'One hour of quiet creativity', giving the opportunity to respond creatively to various themes within prompts such as Sanctuary and Comfort.

An hour of exploration of what Lent is about and how we might like to keep it was given in February. As this was so successful three more services of this nature followed: 'Exploring the Life of the Spirit', 'Exploring Pilgrimage' and 'Exploring Wild Church'. Also during Lent small house groups met across the Team to read together and discuss the Archbishop of Canterbury's recommended Lent book 'Tarry Awhile', written by Dr Selina Stone. As she did in 2023, Revd Anne Crawford offered gentle reflective walks on Friday mornings during Lent and by popular demand these were continued monthly during the summer and autumn of 2024. In June she led a parish pilgrimage to St Albans to experience the spectacular annual pilgrimage procession, the Eucharist in the ancient Cathedral and Abbey Church and the beautiful Festal Evensong.

Reflection groups were also held during Advent, reading individually and then discussing in groups the Archbishop of York's Advent Book for 2024, Rachel Mann's "Do Not Be Afraid: The Joy of Waiting in a Time of Fear" and George Herbert's poems 'Wounded I Sing'. Meditations on Advent were offered by the clergy on Zoom. Anne Crawford once again created an electronic Advent calendar, sending an image, reflection and prayer each morning of Advent to over 100 recipients.

The PCC continued to give a high priority to safeguarding, with officers in each church. PCC members completed the basic safeguarding course provided by the Diocese, plus other courses applicable to their roles in the Team. Due to several instances of anti-social behaviour at St Mary's the possibility of installing CCTV cameras both inside and outside the three churches has been considered and quotes for the cost obtained. However, due to other urgent extensive repair work being carried out in two of the churches this project had to be deferred.

Other issues of importance during 2024 include:

### **1. Meetings**

During the year the PCC met four times and the Standing Committee three in person. Agenda items considered routinely at every meeting included safeguarding matters, Children's and Young Peoples' Ministry, updates on finance and property matters, the Parish Rooms development and the Green Team's ECO activities.

In addition to the above, two extraordinary meetings were held by the PCC. At the first of these, in June, the revised plans for the Parish Rooms and the cost of this project were discussed and approved. At the second, held in November, the PCC met with the Archdeacon and Area Dean to talk through process of vacancy and recruitment of a new Rector and the tasks and opportunities this presents.

## **2. Mission Action Plan**

To implement the Vision Statement shown above a Mission Action Plan (MAP) is necessary. The PCC agreed that the plan for 2023 be continued until the end of 2024 and applied this plan to all three churches as follows:

1. For the coming year prioritise children and young people through...
  - The employment of a children and youth work ministry leader
  - Working with local schools
  - Consider new opportunities to connect with children and families
2. Creating opportunities for learning and growing in faith through...
  - Bible study
  - Advent and/or Lent Lecture series on faith and faith in art
3. Ensuring there is greater awareness of what we can do for the planet and people, through...
  - Targeted preaching
  - Working towards bronze and silver awards for Eco church
  - Making our church buildings a reflection of our environmental theology

Most of the objectives have been achieved by the excellent work done by the CYPM Leader with children and young people, the Green Team's work on ecological issues around the churches and opportunities for learning and growing through faith as described above (Bible studies, Lent Lectures, art and walks). A new MAP needs to be drawn up for the future, but, in view of the appointment of a new Rector who could have his/her own suggestions and ideas for this, the Team continued to comply with the old one.

In addition to the Team's MAP, each individual church drew up their own.

## **3. Children and Young People's Ministry**

Emma Smellie has lead this ministry, helped by the six members of the Children and Young People Working Group, for this full year.

Junior Church for children over the age of 3 years was held weekly at St John the Divine and every second week at both St Mary Magdalene and St Matthias. In addition, throughout the year St Mary Magdalene held services for children up to the age of 8 years on the first Saturday and an all age Eucharist on the first Sunday of each month. Also given were a children's service for Epiphany at St Mary Magdalene in January, 'Exploring Lent' at St Matthias and Stations of the Cross at St Mary's. On Palm Sunday a youth evening was held for pre-teens (8-13 years) followed by activities for them during the summer for food, fellowship and fun. This was followed in the autumn with the launch of a new youth group, the Underground, meeting on the second Sunday evening of each month.

Emma and the CYPM working group looked at the churches' books for children, refreshing the collection and enlarging it with donated books. In addition, contact with local schools and the Richmond Scouts was established and Eaglets, the play group for toddlers and parents/carers exploring a variety of topics, was held weekly at St John the Divine, and was very well attended.

## **4. Schools and Community**

As above, contacts were made and maintained with schools in the parish and also with the 1<sup>st</sup> Richmond Scouts. Children's services were held at St Matthias for pupils from Kings House School and Christ's School during the year and carol services for all schools were held in all churches. The Richmond Team Ministry continued to provide foundation governors to the board of Christ's

Church School. During the summer RTM members visited Christ's School, a visit that was extremely successful and which the Headmistress, Helen Dixon, would like to repeat.

We continued to support and work with local charities, such as Spear, the Vineyard Community Centre and the Richmond food bank for which food products and toiletries were collected at the Harvest Festival. The Richmond Soup Kitchen, operating from St John the Divine, offered soup and sandwiches on two nights a week from November 2023 until April 2024 and recommenced in the autumn of 2024, during which time it saw the numbers of guests rise steadily. The Richmond Team Ministry continued to support the work of Welcare and Christian Aid, as well as the Children's Society with collections taken at the Christingle services.

A lunch was held during Lent for the Bishop's Lent Call to raise funds for projects in our diocese as well as those in Matabeleland (Zimbabwe) and Jerusalem.

Dr Chris Hower continued to hold his 'Understanding Islam' courses at St Mary Magdalene.

The Richmond Synagogue and Richmond Council invited the RTM to the annual Holocaust Memorial Day civic service held in January.

The Mayfair was held again in 2024. St Mary Magdalene had their traditional stalls in the churchyard raising funds for the Richmond Soup Kitchen and music and dancing was performed given by various groups inside the church. The Friends of St Matthias held their usual BBQ on the Green, selling top quality burgers and sausages, as well as a cakes.

## **5. Risk Control**

The register of risks drawn up by the Risk Working Group was reviewed and updated every six months to ensure all relevant risks were identified and mitigated. The updated register was approved by the PCC which holds overall responsibility for risk management.

All PCC members completed a simple skills assessment, in order to identify the balance of skills across the Committee and to show any areas which may be under-represented. It was also decided to ask the congregation to complete a skills assessment as it is known that many of them have skills which would be of great use and value to the churches. These people would not be expected to join the PCC, only to act as advisers/consultants.

## **6. Eco Church**

All three churches have joined the Rocha Ecochurch Scheme and as the end of 2023 all had achieved Bronze awards. The Green Team, a group made up of clergy and congregation members from all three churches, met every few months to plan how to work toward and achieve silver status in the Scheme and also to ensure we care for God's earth irrespective of external awards. News of the Team's progress and activities and the passing on of ideas for caring for our planet was given in a quarterly newsletter to the congregation. Contact was made with local green leaders and advisors about eco-activities in the Richmond area for advice on what we could do both as a church and individually to be green.

Various group activities during the year include: picking up litter, various activities for Green Week in June (including a plastic-free lunch), asking everyone to walk/cycle to church, to use public transport/share a car on the Sunday after International No Car Day and, during Bike Week, setting up a car-share scheme. In addition, unwanted books, cds, sewing and haberdashery items have been sold, not only recycling these items but raising funds for charities.

## **7. Communication**

Communication between the clergy and congregation members was primarily via the RTM's website, the weekly emailed newsletter and 2 quarterly items - the ECO Green Team's newsletter (as above) and the 'Team Talk' magazine. Clergy also emailed congregations when there was news to share.

## **8. Music**

The music for church services has been beautifully arranged and led by the organists and choirmasters. In January Seb Gillot took over as the Director of Music at St Mary's and Bernard Robertson continued as organist and choirmaster at St Matthias, assisted by Mark Laflin. Ben Hunt remained as organist at St John the Divine until September. In September Andreana Chan joined St Mary's as Assistant Organist.

In June, at the Diocesan Festival of Choirs, members of the choir of St Mary Magdalene joined choirs from other churches in the Diocese to sing Evensong at Southwark Cathedral and in November joined the choir of St Elizabeth of Portugal for a special performance of Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*. Recitals were held on the first Saturday of most months at St Mary's Magdalene, as well as the annual Christmas singalong with the Honorary Artillery Company Band. A recital of music for Passiontide was given by the Howell's Singers in March at St Matthias and at St John's a concert was held in June and an evening of tango music in November.

The Choral Foundation at St Mary Magdalene continued to provide generous scholarships for choral and organ scholars, who gave a series of recitals, showcasing their talents during the year. The Foundation is being expanded to provide additional mentoring opportunities for some of the scholars. It also supports the new children's choir, launched in September for those aged 7 – 13 years. This meets on Thursdays after school for singing a fun and eclectic mix of music across all styles and ages.

A retiring collection was taken at most recitals to help fund the Foundation. Support for music at St Mary's has also come from the Ouseley Church Music Trust, who have awarded a grant to the church.

## **9. Arts**

A Baptism Card Art competition was launched for cards to be given on the day or anniversary of Baptism to both adults and children. The competition was open to all ages and many beautiful designs were submitted, with winners from all churches.

On the feast day of St Mary Magdalene, Monday 22 July, RTM members were invited to attend the National Gallery to view paintings of the patron saint.

## **10. Administration Staff**

At the end of October we welcomed a new Property and Facilities Manager, John Rushe, who is very experienced in property management. This meant the administration team was finally complete again, with John Palmer as Parish Administrator, Denise Mahony as Bookings Administrator, John Rushe as Property and Facilities Manager and James Nicholson as Verger. In November Ruth Martin, our Reader, started acting as a temporary line manager for the paid staff, easing the burden for church wardens and clergy during the vacancy.

## **11. Finance and Property**

Our efficient financial systems have been maintained and regular up-to-date information given to the PCC and Property and Finance Committee.

The Parish Giving Scheme, proposed back in June 2021, has proved successful, although take up was and has continued to be slow. Only 75 people have joined the Scheme since it was launched, several of whom are new donors. It would be very helpful if more of the regular donors would switch to this Scheme. Otherwise, giving by congregation members was made by standing order, envelopes or cash during services or by using the electronic machines installed in all churches for donations by card.

RTM's Parish Support Fund Pledge for 2024 was £340 000, an increase of £10 000 on the amount pledged for 2023.

Charitable Giving (Away Giving) continued to be allocated on the tradition of tithing, i.e. giving 10% of the voluntary income received, and in 2024 this amounted to £19,000. 80% of this total was donated to church based charities and societies and 20% to secular ones, this secular allocation covering local charities, rather than those run nationally. In addition, societies with which congregation members are either involved or benefit from were prioritised. A further aim was to give a higher proportion to charities working overseas (65%) than to those working at home (35%). The PCC confirmed the away giving for 2024 following the recommendations of the Away Giving Group which, in turn, considered requests from members of the congregations.

The monthly reserves policy was maintained to hold a 3 month's reserve, in unrestricted cash funds.

Early in 2024 the revised plans for the Parish Rooms development were approved by Richmond Council and planning permission given. Work on the Parish Rooms has now started and is hoped to be completed early in 2026.

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE and MANAGEMENT**

### **Parochial Church Council (PCC) Membership**

Members of the PCC are *ex officio*, co-opted or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. The following members and officers served during the year:

#### **Clergy**

The Revd Canon Wilma Roest, until 30 November 2024  
The Revd Anne Crawford  
The Revd Joseph Moore  
The Revd Charlotte Middleton

#### **Secretary**

Margot Gallie

#### **Treasurer**

David Bartlett

#### **Reader**

Ruth Martin

### **Churchwardens**

Anthony Bell - from 19 May 2024  
John Buckingham  
Gill Doling - until 19 May 2024  
Sally Gill  
Alison Hall - from 19 May 2024  
Emma Meredith - until 19 May 2024  
Fiona Morgan  
Mary Ricketts

### **Elected Members**

Stephen Brown  
Renee Fletcher – until 19 May 2024  
Alison Hall - until 19 May 2024  
Arabella Hobson - from 19 May 2024  
Helen Kelsey  
Catherine Kozeluh - from 19 May 2024  
June Wiszniewski – from 7 June 2024

### **Deanery Synod Representatives**

Martin Brecknell - from 19 May 2024  
Mary-Margaret Cimino – until 19 May 2024  
Renee Fletcher - from 19 May 2024  
Fay Johnstone  
Thomas Kelsey  
David Powell

### **Committees**

The PCC operates through a number of committees, which meet between the full meetings of the PCC.

#### **Standing Committee**

Standing Committee has the power to transact PCC business between meetings. It is made up of the clergy, churchwardens and parish officers.

#### **Property and Finance Committee**

This committee has the responsibility to review and monitor expenditure on Fabric and General Funds and to work with the parish architect to prioritise fabric repairs. It reports to Standing Committee and the PCC.

#### **Church Committees**

The three churches in the parish each have their own committee. These meet to discuss matters of particular concern to the individual churches and report to the PCC.

All new PCC members are given a Trustee Welcome pack which includes RTM's Mission Action Plan, trusteeship guidance notes from the Charity Commission and Church of England (plus link to the Church of England's trustee video tutorial), RTM's governing documents and the previous years' report and accounts.

### **CHURCH ATTENDANCE and ELECTORAL ROLL**

Average weekly attendance for our churches in 2024 was:

	St Mary Magdalene	St Matthias	St John the Divine
Electoral Roll as at 19 May 2024	188	67	75
Congregation average, including children	123	45	57