

Keeping in Touch

The Newsletter of St Mary's Church
Portchester

No. 43 May/June 2018



West door of St Mary's (drawn by James Hair)

So much happening

For the past couple of years we've published this newsletter bi-monthly, but there is so much happening at St Mary's right now, that we are sending out this edition just a month after the last one. So many people work very hard to provide St Mary's and its parish with a lively and varied programme of spiritual, educational and social events; please encourage us by your regular attendance, support and generous giving.

Data protection law

Last month we said that the April newsletter would be the last you would be hearing from us unless you filled in and returned your privacy consent form. However, this newsletter, coming out early in May, gives us one more chance to 'keep in touch' with you. From 25th May the new Data Protection Law (GDPR) comes into force, and organisations etc. can no longer contact you, unless you give your written consent. We would love to keep in touch, so please fill in your form ASAP and return it to us:

- Hand it in at one of the services
- Put it through the Vicarage letter box
- Bring it to the church office
- Put it in the letter box at the Parish Hall.

The APCM

The Annual General Meetings of the Parish and Church took place on 15th April. Hazel Powlesland and Tony Fuller were re-elected unopposed, as Churchwardens. There were no elections for the PCC as only five were nominated for six positions. Jan Fuller, Keith Phillips and Dawn Traer are returning, and Steve Traer and Billy Bean are both new to the PCC. The accounts showed that the Lord had provided for

our financial needs, and there was a small surplus. Thanks and appreciations were shown to the many who volunteer their services, and even to the paid staff members who go 'the extra mile.'

Other offices filled.

At the first meeting of the PCC after the APCM, the following offices were filled: Lay Chair of the PCC (Hazel Powlesland), Treasurer (Jan Fuller), Secretary (Denise Simmons), Standing Committee (The Vicar, Churchwardens, Secretary, Treasurer and Mrs Vicki Powell), Data Compliance Officer (Jan Fuller), Protection Officer (Jane Baker).

Future Churchwardens

Hazel will have completed five years by next April so cannot be re-elected. Tony has served for two years, but will give thought to his continuing. This means that there will be at least one vacancy for Churchwarden. Over the past few years, we have struggled to find people to be Churchwardens, and for a while Hazel was on her own until Tony stepped in. Rather than scrape about next year at short notice, perhaps some people could now start thinking about whether the Lord would have them take on this important role. If interested, please have a word with Rev Ian, Hazel or Tony, and ask about what's involved. It would be good to have some new blood in this office, rather than re-cycling the same names all the time. We need new people who will command the respect of the whole congregation, and are not part of any old issues from the past.

RECENT EVENTS AND SERVICES

The Easter services were very well attended. We revived the children's service on the Saturday, wondering how many would come (if any!). In the end we had around 60 adults and children in what was a much appreciated service. This has given us hope that we might try this again next year. It would be great if we could build it up to be the Easter equivalent of the 'Christingle'.

'A Different Day'. This was a new initiative organised by Jan and was a great success. We put on a day of activities for older people, bereaved folk or the housebound, and over 40 came for a day of crafts, spinning, film, chat, friendship and fish and chip lunch. We received several cards and letters of appreciation. We are therefore going to put on another two on Tuesday 28th August and Tuesday 27th November. Please put these dates in your diary and nearer the time we will announce how you can sign up for these events.

The St George's Day Meal was attended by over 70 people, and our grateful thanks to Richard and Margaret Andrews for planning this initiative, and to Ron and Lyn Prior for cooking the roast beef dinner. An evening of excellent music was provided by David Cain and friends, and we finished up in 'Last Night of the Proms' style with the hearty singing of 'Rule Britannia', 'Land of Hope and Glory' and other patriotic songs.

Evening Services. It is too often sadly the case that these series start with good numbers and then dwindle to a few. However, this last series on 'Prayer' started with around 30 people attending and grew each week to nearly 50! This shows that there is a real interest in

prayer in the church, and we hope that many of you have been helped to enjoy your prayer life more.

The talks were all recorded, and the **House Groups** will have the chance to hear them and discuss the subject. Rev Ian is preparing a study guide with questions, and this will be the course followed by our House Groups from mid May through to June. If you are not already in a house group, you are welcome to join one even just for this course – or start your own!

St Mary's congregation raised £500 towards the annual **Bishop's Lent Appeal**. This money is being given to Christian Aid to help refugees, and those who have played a part in welcoming displaced people into their communities. Some of our Parishes in the Diocese have been active in helping refugee families to settle, and many will have heard about grass roots projects and initiatives.

A charity event was held in the castle grounds on Sunday 29th April. This was organised by a local lady, Penny Tribe, and was to support the charity 'Children with Cancer UK'. Over 3,000 people attended and over £5,000 was raised. At St Mary's at short notice we had a retiring collection that morning towards the charity, and raised over £160.

Building fund updates

Although fund-raising has gone relatively quiet, it is still ongoing, and several events are planned for this year. However, we must make it clear that this fund is only for the heating and porch at this stage – what we are calling "Phase I".

Heating. We are still in discussion with the DAC over this. The present system has been given an Archdeacon's 'temporary license', but this cannot go on indefinitely. The problem is that we like the new system (apart from the domestic radiators on the north side of the Nave), but the DAC doesn't. We are being asked to consider alternatives before any final decision can be made. There's nothing more to report at this stage, but we'll keep you up to date.

Porch. To build a new porch would cost in the region of £100,000. We don't have that sort of money, and wonder if it's worthwhile trying to raise it, when that amount could be better spent on something else. All we were trying to achieve was to get more light into the western part of the building, reduce the draft, and make the entrance less gloomy and more welcoming. Our latest discussion with the architect is to replace the existing glass with clear glass, and to put glass into other sections currently covered by wood. That might achieve our aims at a fraction of the cost.

Phase II. This has been laid aside until we get the heating and porch sorted out, but has not been abandoned. Again we are meeting with the architect to review plans, and would envisage another meeting with the church members to present these to you. Those of you who feel we don't need this, should try coming to our Sunday 10.00am service; try doing something on a Thursday evening, and make the usual round of phone calls to get halls for mid week activities – or simply not try out certain projects because we just don't have the facilities. Please ignore anything you read on social media about the land at Seafeld Road being sold in order to build the extension. This could not happen according to their Constitution, the Trustees have also told us the same. We would be seeking to fund this mainly by grants.

Bells. We are considering a new set of bells even before Phase II. Nothing happening yet, but we'll keep you posted.

OTHER NEWS

Paying by card. With less people carrying much cash with them, and more of us paying for everything by card, the Church of England has launched a national campaign to get every church to use card readers. We have recently purchased one, thus coming into the 21st century! It will be kept in the office and can now be used for making payments for weddings, concert tickets, donations, etc. It might be possible to extend its use in the future.

Car Parking. Parking in the castle grounds is an ongoing problem, but recently it has been noted that St Mary's congregation may not be the main culprit. The gates are open on Sunday mornings to allow those with blue badges and other mobility issues to drive in. However, members of the public, seeing the gates open and cars parked, have driven in. The castle staff are considering closing the gates at 10.20am, but opening them again at 11.00am. We mention this, so that you will not assume that by coming late, you will always be able to drive into the grounds.

'Absent friends'

The congregation of St Mary's has very much grown over the past couple of years; however, the attendance at the 10.00am service, though the church is almost full, has remained more or less the same. Yes, we are slowly increasing by on average by only 5 or 6 each year. (In fact, it's remained the same for the past 10 years!). It is not that

people leave us after a while (although some do – as in all churches); the main problem seems to be that most of our newer friends don't come to church each Sunday, or even on most Sundays! Those of us (of a certain generation) were in the habit of making Sunday 'The Lord's Day' ("Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy"), and weekly attendance at church was considered the norm. If a few more of our people came more often, we would see a great increase on a Sunday morning. We encourage all of our people to 'make Sunday special'. We do all that we can to make St Mary's a good worship experience: generally our preachers are good, the congregation is welcoming, the music is first class, and we sing a good balance of traditional and modern songs. Is there anything more we could do?

A couple of months ago we sent out a questionnaire to all those who had stopped coming, or came only on occasion. Around 80% either returned their form or returned to church! We are pleased to say that no one said they had left the church over any issues, falls outs or disappointment with the Vicar. All said it was due to family, work or health issues, and all retained a positive attitude to St Mary's.

Portchester Stroke Club held a special lunch on 2nd May to celebrate their 30th anniversary. This was started by Nell Wycherley who is still involved today. It was begun mainly by members of St Mary's, and the church today still provides most of the volunteers and helpers (Nell Wycherley, Colleen Webster, Ann Hawker, Judy Sherry, Samia Hubble). Special guests at the lunch included the Mayor of Fareham (Geoff Fazackarley), Councilor and Mrs Price, Rev Ian Meredith, Richard and Margaret Andrews, and others from national stroke and voluntary groups. This is a fellowship group which arranges inspirational speakers and days out for those recovering from a stroke. It meets

fortnightly at Assheton Court. Contact Nell if you know someone who would benefit.

MAY EVENTS & SERVICES

Evening Services

Now that Rev Ian has finished his series on prayer, Derek Johnston, one of our Readers, will be teaching a four part series starting on 20th May (Pentecost Sunday). This will be entitled “More than conquerors: a call to radical discipleship.” There are posters on the notice board with the subtitles, and each teaching session will be preceded by a worship service. Please join us for the first one “Pentecost Praise.” The final evening service for this session will be on 17th June, and we will start again in September.

Healing Services.

These are held in the evenings, on the second Sunday of the month. We have already had two, and those who have attended, and have received prayer, have included many who can testify that the Lord has really touched them, healing has begun, and situations have changed. We are, therefore, going to continue with these on 13th May and 10th June. Rev Ian, Derek Johnston and Vicki Powell will be pleased to anoint with oil and offer prayer in the north transept after the services, and Hilary Dawson is available if you would like to chat about a problem. We will not be holding these services in July and August, but will consider starting again in September.

“THY KINGDOM COME” (Archbishop’s Prayer Initiative)

The prayer initiative began by Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has now become an annual event and is growing among many churches. It is part of a nationwide prayer move which many organisations and churches are taking up. With so much prayer, we know that God is on the move! Things are happening.

This time of extended prayer is happening between Ascension (10th May) and Pentecost (20th May). At St Mary’s we will be part of this national initiative through:

- **Prayer Walking** on 5th May when we will ‘beat the bounds’ of the parish for Rogationtide, this time going along the western and northern boundary of the parish. We will stop at six points to pray for and bless Portchester and Port Solent.
- **Morning and Evening Prayer** (at home). We will be providing those who want one, with a free booklet and a St Mary’s Prayer Letter to enable you to pray at home during that week, either in the morning or in the evening or both.
- **Day of Prayer – Thursday 17th May**, when the church will be open all day either for you to pop in and pray silently in the pews, or to join us in the north transept where on the hour, a different person will lead an hour’s prayer time. Details are on the notice boards.

Still on the subject of prayer, Sally Nguyen has opened her home for a monthly ‘**Prayer for the Persecuted Church**’. We have already had one meeting, and those present felt it was worth while doing again. We are meeting on the 2nd Friday of the month from 2.30pm – 3.30pm at

Sally's home – 10 Portchester Heights. All are welcome to attend. Many of us in St Mary's already pray for the persecuted church through our involvement with The Barnabas Fund, Open Doors and Christian Solidarity. Next meeting on **11th May**.

Ascension Day Eucharist. Ascension Day is on Thursday 10th May, and this year we are hosting a special Eucharist at 7.30pm which will be attended by friends from the other churches in Fareham Deanery. There will be a 40 person choir and incense will be used. The celebrant is our Vicar, Rev Ian, and the preacher is Rev Susan Allman, Area Dean of Fareham.

Pentecost Sunday when we remember the Holy Spirit coming on the early church, this year is on Sunday 20th May. At the 10.00am service, we always encourage people to wear as much red as possible. This is the liturgical colour for the day, and represents the red flame of the Holy Spirit. Other events to celebrate 'the birthday of the Church' will include:

- 1.00pm Churches Together picnic in the castle grounds
- 1.45pm – 2.15pm Churches Together Open Air service (Wedding at 2.30pm)
- 6.00pm 'Pentecost Praise' in the church.

Fashion Show. Following the success of last year, the Edinburgh Woollen Mill will be returning to St Mary's on **Wednesday 16th May** at 2.00pm. It's not just for the ladies this year as there will be male models! Tickets are £5 (from the office) which includes a cream tea. As well as providing a social occasion, this will also be a fundraising event for the building project.

Market Outreach

For the past few years, each summer we have had a stall at Portchester market on Wednesday mornings. We will start this again on **Wednesday 23rd May** from 10.00am – 12noon, and finish in September. These have been very successful and have been a great means of catching up with friends and also making new contacts. Please pray for the success of this. Although we have a regular team, anyone is welcome to join us, but please don't spend all your time chatting to one another and standing in front of the display board!

Tea Room.

We realise that we often have to make appeals for help, and this year is no different. We desperately need more volunteers, even if you could just spare a couple of hours a week. We are particularly busy on Thursdays when the lunchtime concerts are on, at weekends, and during the months of July and August. This ministry raises a lot of money for the church, as well as providing a means of refreshment to those who visit the castle and church. Many interesting conversations are held and friendships made. Please consider this, and if interested, phone Judy Sherry on **02392 324772**.

Coffee after church.

Another area where we are short of volunteers is in helping prepare and serve tea and coffee after the 10.0am service. If we can get enough help, we can make a rota, and you would only be called on every so often. Please contact Hazel Powlesland if you can help.

Illustrated talk: The Bible and the British Museum.

On **Friday 11th May**, Mark Hendley, a church leader and committed Christian as well as theology graduate who gives tours of the British Museum, is coming to the church to put on an illustrated talk. This will

be in two parts with refreshments in between, so we are starting at the earlier time of **7.00pm**. Normally there would be a cost of £5 to hear Mark's talk, but instead of charging, we will have an offering basket and invite you to contribute whatever you can. Our grateful thanks to Bryan Jerrard for organising this, and from whom you can get more information.

Men's breakfast.

The speaker at the Men's breakfast on 12th May at 8.00pm will be Alf Gapper who will speak on "My spiritual journey so far." Our numbers are slowly growing with new members coming, but we can always make room for more. The speakers for the next few months are:

- June 9th Ken Tomlinson who will speak on his experiences with the Fleet Air Arm
- July 14th Rev Simon Brocklehurst from St James' Church, Southwick.

We will not meet for August, but will recommence in September. Any man wishing to be a speaker, or if you can recommend someone, please speak to Rev Ian or Brian Kay.

SERVICES AND EVENTS IN JUNE

Ladies Night. Friday 1st June 6.30pm for 7.00pm in the Parish Hall. Tickets are £5 and include a three-course meal. The speakers this year will be Jeanette Hayward talking about "Walking in faith with cancer" and Jill Phipps who started "A Different Day" in Portsmouth (which we have also done at Portchester), and will be talking on "Ministry of Cake."

Monthly Theology Group will be on Thursday 7th June when our Vicar will be the speaker on “What is truth?” It was the famous question which Pilate asked Jesus, and is probably more relevant today than ever with the advent of Facebook and “Fake News.” But how do we discern what is truth – in life, the Bible and in religion generally. We meet in the Parish Hall from 10.30am – 12noon. (Coffee from 10.15am)

Annual Archdeacon’s Visitation

Each year our Churchwardens take their oath and are re-admitted into their office by the Archdeacon, acting on behalf of the Bishop. It is a combined Deanery Service with Gosport and Fareham (at St Mary’s, Alverstoke on Tuesday 19th June). However this year, due to holidays, our Churchwardens cannot make that service, so the Archdeacon has given them permission to attend the Bishops Waltham Deanery service on Wednesday **13th June** at 7.00pm in All Saints Church, Botley. We hope there will be a good contingent from Portchester attending.

Newcomer’s Meal. Each year we have had the pleasure of inviting those new (or returning) to the church, to a special fellowship meal. The next one will be on **Friday 22nd June** 6.30pm for 7.00pm at the Parish Hall. The meal will be followed by an illustrated presentation on the life and work of St Mary’s Church (you’ll be surprised how much we do!) All those who have started attending in the past few months will receive an invitation, but if you are in this category and don’t receive an invitation (or know someone) please contact Rev Ian.

Trip to Stanstead Park. On Saturday 23rd June, Bryan Jerrard will be arranging the annual trip for our senior members to Stanstead House, Blossoms Café, for a cream tea. Drivers and always needed, and if you would like to come or know someone, please speak directly to Bryan.

Lunch time concerts. The summer series begins on Thursday 28th June and goes right through July and August. Each Thursday at 1.00pm there is a concert at St Mary's with an incredible variety of singers and musicians. These are free, but with a retiring collection. Don't forget that you can also buy lunch (filled rolls) at the Tea Room on these days. Our grateful thanks to David Cain for arranging these concerts. Details on flyers and notice board soon.

ALTERNATIVE SERVICE – STARTING IN JUNE!

For over a year now we have been discussing this possibility. A few months ago the house groups considered it; the PCC and Ministry Team have chewed it over, and despite some nervousness, we feel we need to launch out into the deep and start these.

The idea behind it is to create an alternative service to the 10.00am Parish Eucharist for those who find that particular service starts too early, goes on too long, and is a bit more formal than they are happy to engage with. We are particularly wanting to attract families and those on the fringe of our church and those not currently worshipping with us, who perhaps attend churches outside Portchester.

The style will be more informal, the songs will include contemporary ones, and traditional hymns (with a new arrangement in some cases). It will be 'liturgy lite' and is planned to only last one hour. It will be more children and family friendly, although the children will have their own activity for about 30 minutes during the readings and sermon, etc. We are looking for some people to help run the children's group. We don't want to ask our current children's workers who are already

stretched with the 10.00am, so if there are any new people out there who would like to form a rota, please speak to Rev Ian.

There were some concerns which we hope to address. The 10.00am service will not be 'rushed' but we do think we can tighten up on some areas, and by saving the odd minute here and there, could make this service shorter. People will not be rushed with their coffee. Those who go into the New Room are encouraged to continue there, and we also hope that some of the clergy and Readers will not go into the later service, but will hang around for the fellowship and pastoral conversations after the 10.00am service.

Those who like to have their coffee in the church rather than the New Room, are welcome to either stay in church while the new service is on, or go to the New Room, which might be a bit quieter by then.

The new service will be called, for the time being, "**The Later Morning Service**" and will be from **11.30am – 12.30pm**. The music will be provided by our new 'music group' and helping to lead this is Pauline Gennings from Holy Rood Church, Stubbington. When we put the advert in '*Pompey Chimes*' for an assistant Director of Music and Worship Leader, Pauline was the only one who responded! She has been attending a few services at St Mary's, along with her husband Jeff, and those who have got to know her, have found her a delight, and one in spirit with us here. One of Pauline's fellow musician friends from Holy Rood, Rob Martin will also be helping us. All known musicians in the church have been invited to be part of this, and we hope we will have so many that we can have a rota – or eventually two groups. As well as musical instruments, there will be vocalists and worship leaders needed. Several of you attended our initial meeting on 14th April, and we will be contacting you shortly about being part of the rota.

In addition, we will need PA, sound and video help, stewarding and welcoming, setting up, clearing away, coffee afterwards, etc.

On 12th August, after the service, there will be a Barbeque and family games, and this might lead to a regular 'bring and share' lunch after the service, which might also help those who want to get home earlier for lunch.

We have prepared an invitation flyer, and a copy of this is included with this newsletter. Please use this to invite anyone you think might be interested.

Of course, some who have attended the 10.00am service might also want to stay on for the 11.30am service, and you are welcome, even if it makes a long morning for you. Although we are looking to create a new congregation, we are hoping there will be an overlap, so that some of the Ministry Team, musicians, singers and congregation will feel free to dip into both or either services.

Car parking. We realize that parking will be an issue that day. We are asking the Council if they would open the field by the land gate, which they often do for overflow car parking. This would only be for those attending the 11.30am service, and a car park steward would be appreciated. The car park would only be open for about 2 hours.

This will not be a 'free church service' in a parish church, and so those who dislike the Church of England might not be happy with everything, as we will not be compromising our integrity. There are plenty of 'free church' services available around this area. It will still be recognisably 'Anglican' but with a lighter and more informal touch, and although not a full blown 'charismatic' service, will reflect the renewal movement which from the 1960s has brought so much blessing into the Anglican Church and also St Mary's.

COMING UP - DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

July 8th – Sea Sunday (8am and 10am)

July 13th – Barn Dance in the church

August 12th – Barbeque and Family games (12.30pm)

August 27th – High Tea in the church, or outside if nice (2.00pm)

August 28th - ‘A Different Day’ in the church (10am – 4pm)

September 7th – Good News and entertainment with Steve Legg
(details later)

September 13th – Alpha Course starts (6.45pm)

September 29th – Harvest Supper (6.30pm)

October 12th Concert with Portsmouth Cathedral Boy Choristers
(7.30pm)

October 26th – ‘Poppies Red and Cornflowers Blue’ – World War I
Concert and theatre (7.30pm)

November 3rd – All Souls Service for the bereaved (3.00pm)

November 10th – Portchester Remembers (10.15am)

November 11th – Special Portchester Commemoration to mark
centenary of the end of World War I at the castle and church:

- 10.00am Armistice Day service
- 5pm Service in church (youth emphasis)
- 6.00pm Barbeque and outdoor entertainment
- 7.00pm: The Last Port, Fire Beacon and Bell ringing (part of nationwide project)

November 16th Friends of St Mary’s Concert “West End Singers”

November 24th Christmas Fayre

November 27th – ‘A Different Day’ in the church.

November 30th – American style ‘Thanksgiving Meal’

War Memorial. Many of you will be aware that a group made up of church and community members has been meeting to create an

additional war memorial in the church for those killed in action during World War II. Our first idea was rejected by the DAC who have asked us to re-consider. We have put in a revised application, and hope this will be accepted. If it is, this will be the 'icing on the cake' for our community war and peace commemorations this year. We will hold a special service and will be inviting a well-known person to unveil. We are approaching local councils and businesses for funding for this. A commemorate booklet is also being produced.

New Area Dean of Fareham

We are pleased to announce that our Vicar, Rev Dr Ian Meredith, has been appointed by the Bishop as the new Area Dean (Rural Dean) of Fareham. Ian succeeds Rev Susan Allman who retires from this post in May. This is normally a five-year appointment, which means that as well as continuing as our Vicar, Ian has extra responsibilities now in the Deanery. Area Dean includes chairing the Deanery Synod and monthly Clergy Chapter meetings; visiting other churches in the Deanery and meeting with their clergy and people; having charge of churches (along with their Churchwardens) during vacancies.

He will be commissioned into this role at a special joint Fareham and Gosport Deaneries service, at St Mary's Church, Alverstoke on Tuesday 19th June 7.30pm, details of which will be announced soon, and we hope that a good number from the congregation will come along and support him.

Rev Ian writes

I am very honoured to have been asked by the Bishop to take on this role. However, I am also a bit nervous, because I hardly have enough time to do all I need to do at St Mary's! But as is often the case, 'ask a busy person.' I will only be able to do this, and continue as Vicar with

your support and patience. I need the Ministry Team, Pastoral Assistants, House Group leaders, and other volunteers to take on more roles and take initiative.

We currently have no Curate, and for various reasons I have not applied for one for 2019, so we are likely to be without one for a few years. This is another reason why I need more of you to help me.

In particular, I would like to encourage some more of you to become **Pastoral Assistants**. We have a good team of eight of these who meet monthly with me to review the congregation and provide pastoral care for the sick, housebound, or people just going through a difficult time. Do you have compassion, empathy, and a loving heart to see people cared for in our church, and be prepared to take on some responsibilities. Training will be given and a CRB check will be required.

We don't need any more Sunday service preachers (we have plenty!) but we do need people who feel they have **a teaching ministry**, perhaps for Sunday evenings and mid week discipleship. In particular we are always looking for **new house group leaders**, and seeking to form **new house groups**.

Once again, many thanks for being a wonderful congregation and parish to minister to! Yes, some of you are challenging at times (as I am!) but with a little patience and a lot more love, kindness, encouragement (hard to do) and less criticism (easy to do), we will, with the Lord's help be able to build a caring, discipling, proclaiming church to serve Portchester and beyond for many years to come, and to see God's Kingdom grow.