

# **WHAT ST MARY'S CHURCH (DOWNE) HAS BEEN DOING DURING 2022**

*Including organisation reports 2022*

## **Churchwardens Report**

Churchwardens are responsible for the fabric and contents of the church, the maintenance of the churchyard and ensuring that services are offered and conducted in accordance with canon law.

It is difficult being the sole churchwarden and I am hugely grateful to Caryn Newell for her support and all she does in respect of the above as you can see from her buildings and churchyard report. We have met with the architect to discuss our requirements for the improvements to the vestry and provision of a WC. He is now working on plans so the process is ongoing.

I would like to thank John and our curate Rachel ministering to us in many different ways during 2022, planning and organising our services, for their leading and teaching and their faithfulness in prayer and ministry to us. I also wish Rachel many blessings and much happiness for the whole Archer family as she takes up her role of Rector of St Matthews, Mossley Hill in Liverpool. I pray God richly blesses her ministry.

I meet regularly with the vicar to discuss many aspects of day to day church life and would like to convey my thanks and gratitude to Barbara, our administrator for all that she does to help me with ongoing admin tasks.

It's true that those attending our services are small but understandably so as many of our church family have health issues but we are truly blessed to all who contribute their time and skills to ensure our church continues to be a friendly caring and welcoming church that brings honour to God.

I'm truly grateful to the flower arrangers, bell ringers, Hilary and Carol for our meditation group, to Kevin for playing the organ at our services, to John our Treasurer and of course to all our PCC members.

Chris Isbell

## **Churchyard and Buildings**

The churchyard gate that was taken away for repair in February 2021 was finally restored in August. This was only after Councillor Jonathan Andrews took up the case for us. However, the new post did not match the one that was taken away and was too thin, so the gate did not close. Councillor Jonathan Andrews got back in touch with Idverde and they added a piece to the post, so the gate now closes. However we still have the issue that the post is not the same as the old one. Councillor Jonathan Andrews continues to chase on our behalf to get a replacement post that matches the old one.

Parts of the churchyard wall are crumbling and some of the fencing is falling down. This was reported to Bromley Council and Idverde but to date repairs have not taken place. Councillor Jonathan Andrews has also taken this up on our behalf and has advised that Idverde "will seek advice from LBB Property for these works to be undertaken". We are still awaiting the outcome of their conversation.

The following maintenance took place during the year:

- February - lightning conductor test

*cont'd/...*

- April - tuning of the organ
- August - tuning of the organ. This appears to have been an error on behalf of F.H. Browne & Co. Investigation is underway to find out why they serviced the organ for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time
- November – boiler service. Service was late in being booked in due to an oversight by Caryn
- November – inspection/maintenance of the fire extinguishers
- November - organ blower service

Caryn Newell

## **Pastoral Visitors Team for Cudham and Downe**

The team was set up in November 2021 and continues to support members in the local community.

We have regular monthly team meetings and at the present time are in contact with approximately 30 people of all ages.

The principals set up in our training document guide us in our work.

- To visit the sick, those in hospital and the housebound
- To support the dying and bereaved
- To offer prayer and Holy Communion if requested
- To visit newcomers to the church and those who no longer live in the area
- To offer a listening ear

Team members also take the opportunity to make face to face contact when delivering Christmas and Easter gift bags.

Although we advertise our service and have posters displayed around the local area our main contacts have been through word of mouth.

For more information telephone: 07942 354533, email: [pastoral.team@pcd.org.uk](mailto:pastoral.team@pcd.org.uk)

## **Christian Meditation**

The Christian Meditation group meets in St Mary's Church on the first and third Thursdays of each month. We follow the method taught by John Main, an English Benedictine monk. You can find out about this on <https://www.wccm.uk>

We listen to a CD by one of the teachers of WCCM, then we practise silent meditation for 25 to 30 minutes. There are usually about 3 to 6 of us. We were very glad to have Rev Rachel Archer as one of the group from 2021 until she left to go to her new parish early this year, where she hopes to teach the method to her new parishioners.

You are very welcome to join us. Please see the church notices for the relevant dates.

Hilary Knight

## **Homegroups**

During the year homegroup resumed in person (as well as on zoom), and a small but prayerful group meet each Wednesday evening at Sue's - we've looked at prayer, held special courses during Lent and Advent, and most other weeks focused on the bible reading from the previous Sunday. Homegroups are a great place to ask questions you might have following our Sunday Service, and I encourage you to join us.

Rev John Musson

## **Electoral Roll**

April 2023 saw the yearly revision of the church electoral roll at Downe. Those listed on the roll as members can participate in the governance of the church and can vote at Annual General Meetings. The roll now stands at 46 members of which 33 are residents and 13 are non-residents, 1 less than last year with Bridget Robbie's passing.

A copy of the privacy notice, which details how member's data is held by the church in keeping with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), is available on notice boards and the benefice website [www.pcd.org.uk](http://www.pcd.org.uk)

Chris Isbell

## **Messy Church**

Messy Church is a form of church for all ages that involves creativity, celebration and hospitality.

Messy Church met on 5 occasions during 2022:

- 15<sup>th</sup> April, on the theme of Easter at Cudham.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> June, a Jubilee party at Downe,
- 30<sup>th</sup> August, on the theme of Pilgrimage at Cudham,
- 28<sup>th</sup> October, a Halloween Light Party at Downe,
- 29<sup>th</sup> December, on the theme of Christmas and Epiphany at Cudham.
- In addition, at the last moment, we had to cancel the event on 18th February 2022, on the theme of Love, at Downe, due to a dangerous storm which was accompanied by a Met Office red warning of not to travel!

Attendance varied during the year, with an average of around 14 children accompanied by their parents or carers, of which the majority do not attend church on a regular basis. The most popular was the Halloween Light Party with 22 children in attendance. We continue to have a core of regular attendees although there are usually one or two new families at each session. It is a delight to potentially be introducing them to a life with Jesus Christ.

Rev John Musson, Rev Rach Archer or Kim and John Curle led all age worship on each occasion, and it was marvellous to be able to offer an amazing buffet and refreshments at all these events once again, with the exception of Good Friday when hot cross buns were provided! *cont'd/...*

A donation box was made available, however, cash donations were small and did not cover the costs of the hall hire (at Downe), food or craft materials. However, some groups brought a contribution of food as a donation instead which is always welcomed.

The arts and crafts are prepared by myself and we have several regular helpers that help facilitate, talk with attendees or help with food and refreshments. An enormous thank you to Bridget Law and George, Karen Lockley, Kim and John Curle, Sue Everest and Barbara Sheret, who all help on a regular basis as well as Mike Manthorpe, Kate Brignall, Marita Gibbs, Chris Isbell, Alison, Luca and Gabes Tomeo who have given a hand too.

Denise Angell  
Children's Parish Representative.

## **Prayer Chain**

Is a group of people who pray for special needs when asked. Any prayer request is phoned through to myself and I will then send the request around our group who will pray. All prayers needs are kept confidential. I would like to thank all those in the prayer chain for praying for the needs of people.

Pat Morbin

## **Flowers**

A regular Team of 6 ladies arranged flowers in the church each week, except for Lent. There used to be more of us, but due to ageing etc, the numbers are depleted and even more so when one of the ladies has a knee replacement or a bad back or a stroke, or an accident, breaking a bone! If anyone would like to volunteer to help, please let me know! (hilaryhones@hotmail .com)

In addition to the regular weekly flowers, we help with wedding flowers, funerals and special displays for Christmas, Easter, May Queen, Harvest, and posies for Mothering Sunday. At Christmas we display a crib and other decorations, or at Easter, an Easter Garden.

I must add that we all enjoy doing whatever we can, and we know that it is appreciated, from the remarks that people make.

Hilary Knight

## **Bell Ringers**

The year did not get off to a very good start with the sad news that Bridget had passed away. Our practice night on 10<sup>th</sup> January was dedicated to Bridget. It was lovely to have Bridget's family and friends in attendance to hear the tenor bell being tolled in her memory. We also rang for Bridget's Funeral.

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, Samuel Sleath was approved as a full member of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers (KCACR).  
*cont'd/...*

In February Downe hosted the District Ringing Practice.

March saw the return of Sunday ringing in both Downe and Cudham. This was made possible by the help of ringers from Hever. However, due to the low number of ringers, we are only able to ring on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month.

Practices continued to be held weekly on Mondays with Cudham, again this has been made possible by the support from Hever and other towers.

In April we were able to restart the learners' sessions and it was wonderful to have two of the pre-Covid learners back with us. We also rang on Easter Sunday.

There was a wedding in Downe in August and we were able to pull together a band to ring both before and after the service.

September saw the sad news of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. On September 10<sup>th</sup> we rang in celebration of the succession of King Charles III. On the day of the Queens funeral Paul Alexander, Samuel and I took turns to toll the tenor (fully muffled) for the hour leading up to the funeral service.

Also, in September we gained two more learners. Then in October a further two joined us. This means we now have six people learning to ring.

In November we rang for Remembrance Day and in December for the Carol Service and on Christmas morning.

It has been so lovely to be able to ring again and I am so grateful from all the support we have received from Alison Wilson, without her there would not have been any ringing in Downe.

Caryn Newell  
Downe Bell Ringers

The PCC extends sincere and grateful thanks to all the church membership who work so very hard to make our church the worshipping, witnessing and welcoming community it is, and their help and support in so many ways throughout the year is greatly appreciated and valued.  
Thank you everyone.