

Cudham and Downe Churches, 2024 reports for APCM

*St Peter and St Paul, Cudham and St Mary, Downe
May 2025*

Cudham Churchwardens' Report

2024 was a year of two halves; the first half we had a vicar, the second half we didn't, saying goodbye to Revd John Musson after 14 years as our incumbent and as he moved to a new position in the Diocese of Durham. As a result, as Churchwardens, our responsibilities have grown as we endeavour to maintain 'business as usual' at Cudham church.

Our areas of responsibility, in general terms, are the care of the fabric and contents of the church, the maintenance of the churchyard and the conduct of services. Since John left we are working very much more closely with the Churchwardens at St Mary's and depend a lot on our very efficient Parish Administrator, Barbara Sheret. In the absence of an incumbent, Mike's role has increased as Chair of the PCC and Diane has taken on responsibility for finding cover for our services and those at St Mary's. In this respect we are hugely indebted to the mainly retired clergy who travel to help us. We would also acknowledge the input from Kim Curle, Licensed Schools and Families Evangelist, supported by her husband John, especially in respect of Cudham School and with some services in the churches. We also acknowledge the hard work of the PCC Treasurer and Secretary and thank all members of the PCC for serving on it.

The fabric of the church building is sound, though there will always be repairs needing doing and redecoration throughout is everyone's desire. An eye is kept on the issues raised in the Quinquennial Inspection (the next one is due in 2026) and the desire to make improvements in the church remains.

The annual checks of the fire extinguishers, the servicing of the heating system, and the tuning of the organ, have been carried out, and the monthly checks of the emergency lighting in the South Chapel and Tower effected, along with the annual 3 hour test by the electricians. The rainwater goods (gutters, valley gutters and downpipes) have been checked and cleared out, but moss from the roof slopes combining with needles from the large Scots Pines along the boundary is causing a particular nuisance at the narrow outlet at the western end of the northern valley, necessitating more regular clearing. Volunteers clean the church, whom we would thank through this report, alongside those who creatively decorate the church with flowers.

The clock, unfortunately, is not working. It was installed in 1934 so clearly needs more than just servicing, which will cost more than £10,000.

Maintenance of the churchyard is still being carried out by a band of volunteers with various numbers turning out for the monthly Working Parties and between times as necessary; our thanks to these people, as they save us, as a Church, a huge expense. The contractors who have been working in the fenced area have completed the project so the whole churchyard is one again. This work has nigh on exhausted the Churchyard Fund.

As Churchwardens we are trustees of three charities – the Ecclesiastical Sarah Wood and Cudham School Trusts, along with the incumbent, and the Parochial Thomas Stringer Trust, with two representatives appointed by the London Borough of Bromley. The 2 historic trusts are basically dormant, whilst the Cudham School Trust funds the maintenance of the old headmaster's house attached to Cudham School, which is let out, and provides supporting resources for Cudham CofE Primary School.

The Church Log Book and the Terrier and Inventory are available for inspection.

Diane Kemp and Mike Manthorpe

Downe Churchwarden Report

I report that St Marys now has two churchwardens as Kevin Custis and I were admitted to our positions on June 17th by Archdeacon Allie Kerr

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

In all honesty we are just about able to do that and owe a huge debt of gratitude to Caryn Newell for her support and all she does in respect of the above, as you can see from her churchyard and buildings report. She ensures the church is cleaned, replaces all the spent candles and in many other ways that are often taken for granted.

She also oversaw the replacement boiler which was dedicated in a service on February 11th, 2024.

The main thrust of this report is the fact that Rev John Musson resigned. His farewell service took place on July 21st leaving us in a state of vacancy.

As stated in the annual report, the PCC's of Cudham and Downe have met jointly with Archdeacon Allie Kerr and the process of seeking a new incumbent has begun with a Parish Profile submitted to her and the bishop for approval. We are awaiting updates.

To be transparent we are just about holding our own, with our limited numbers and resources, due in large part to the huge help and support of Diane Kemp and Mike Manthorpe, churchwardens of St Peter and St Paul, Cudham, and to Barbara Sheret our administrator.

Through Diane's concerted efforts to arrange cover (fulfilling our duties in accordance with canon law) we have been blessed by the ministries of several retired clergy and lay ministers, which our congregation, albeit small, have greatly appreciated.

I repeat last year's closing paragraph that I am saddened and concerned by the declining number attending our Sunday services but understand 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

Downe Churchyard and Buildings

In February the new gas boiler was installed. As part of this work, we had a timer control panel installed in the vestry which allows us to programme the heating properly.

CES undertook the 5 year electrical system test and inspection in October. Unfortunately, the system was deemed unsatisfactory and there are a number of items that need correcting to bring it up to a satisfactory level. These works are scheduled to take place in February 2025.

Repairs to the high-level cast iron guttering to Tower took place in November, as it had become loose and was hanging down.

The repairs to the metal fencing on High Elms Road side of the churchyard were undertaken in March. However, the wall has still not been repaired. In December Idverde advised that LBB Properties Department had been out to look at the condition of the wall and had confirmed that some areas of flint walls are in need of repair. The team are going to approach contractors, that have been undertaking similar works at other LBB properties, to get a quote for repair works.

In November, Idverde also undertook work in the churchyard to:

- Clear the ivy from the churchyard including the graves
- Remove the saplings from the churchyard
- Remove/trim the brambles, bushes, etc that are growing out onto the pavement

There is still more work required and hopefully this will continue in 2025.

The following maintenance took place during the year:

- January - lightning conductor test
- April - tuning of the organ
- October – 6th month service of the new gas boiler
- November – inspection/maintenance of the fire extinguishers

Caryn Newell

Deanery Synod

The Deanery Synod met three times in 2024, at St Giles, Farnborough in February, here in Cudham in June, and at St Mary's church, St Mary Cray, in November. I attended all three meetings and reported in full upon each of them to the PCC.

The focus of February's meeting was Safeguarding. The guest speaker was Emily Gillespie, Bromley's Safeguarding School Nurse, who has served in this capacity for around 10 years, dealing with children aged between 5 and 19. She was joined by her colleague Karen Harcombe, Specialist practitioner School Nurse and PSO at St Mary's, Green Street Green. Clearly Emily's work has a slightly different slant to that of Safeguarding officers in Churches and as I understood her the young people she encounters have been through several stages before meeting with her. Alarming she has dealt with 'hundreds' of referrals during her tenure. Safeguarding, though, is everyone's responsibility.

Children and Youth in Church was the subject of June's meeting, which was introduced by Kim Curle highlighting what we do with and for the younger generation in our Benefice. There followed three presentations :

Caroline Rous made the first, speaking about the work of the Spinnaker Trust, which operates in primary schools in London and the South-East delivering Collective Worship and RE lessons. She highlighted the fact that she and her fellow workers are the first contact the vast majority of children have with people of the Christian faith.

Brigitte Sewell is CEO of Youth for Christ, which works with secondary age children and supports and equips Churches which, as she said, "recognise the importance of sharing Jesus with the next generation". She commented in particular about the poor mental health of many children at school today.

The last to speak was Laura Webster, who is Children and Young People Mission and Ministry Advisor for Bromley and Bexley Archdeaconry. She expounded (at length) upon the resources the Diocese has for those working with children in the Church, focusing on the Diocesan vision of Change, Serve, Grow.

At November's meeting the guest speaker was Liz Mullins, Diocesan Generosity Adviser. In post for only a couple of years she has overseen the label of 'Stewardship' changed to 'Giving'. Liz promoted the Parish Giving Scheme, highlighted the increasing use of digital and on-line giving and drew our attention to seeking legacies. Liz's final suggestion was that preaching generosity is not just for the vicar and his sermon; it comes into every aspect of Church life and, indeed, our individual lives.

At each meeting, after the main speaker, there is a short time to share news from around the Churches in the Deanery. Of particular note were that the income of the Diocese was down £4million from what it was in 2014, the comings and goings of clergy, and the names of those who will be representing our Deanery on the Diocesan Synod.

All are welcome to attend Deanery Synod meetings as guests and I would promote it as the best way to keep abreast of what the Church is doing, locally, in the Deanery, at Diocesan level and even higher up.

Diane Kemp

Electoral Rolls

May 2025 saw the complete revisions of the church electoral rolls at Cudham and Downe (every six years), and new rolls were compiled. Those named on the rolls as members can participate in the governance of the church and can vote at Annual General Meetings. 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

Cudham - the roll stands at 35 members of which 23 are residents and 12 are non-residents. Barbara Sheret, Electoral Roll Officer

Downe – the roll is now 33, of which 27 are residents and 6 non-residents.

Safeguarding

Both PCCs continue to adopt the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Guidance policy. This specifies that the care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all.

Risk assessments have been completed by those leading events in order to comply with Safeguarding and Health and Safety requirements.

Our new Parish Safeguarding Officer has now been safely recruited and hopes to be in a position to take up the role in June 2025.

In the absence of a Parish Safeguarding Officer, I have ensured DBS renewals have been requested and officers have been notified when their training requires renewal. As in previous years, some have found the time to complete this and others have not.

I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has undertaken these additional obligations. It should ensure we have the confidence and skills needed to care and support children, young people and vulnerable adults and to recognise and respond to abuse.

Denise Angell
Lead Recruiter

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 2024:

- 13th February – a Messy Pancake Party in Cudham Village Hall.
- 29th March on the theme of Easter at Cudham.
- 28th May on the theme of the Fruit of the Spirit at Downe.
- 7th August, on the theme of Olympics and Superpowers at Cudham.
- 1st November, an All Soul's Light Party at Downe.

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Attendance varied during the year, with an average of around 23 children, parents/carers and helpers, of which several do not attend church on a regular basis. The most popular session was the All Soul's Light Party with 33 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 (before he moved) 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 and an Easter egg hunt were provided! A donation box was made available; and donations have increased this year although these did not cover the costs of the hall hire (at Downe) or craft materials overall.

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, Karen Lockley, Mike Manthorpe, Kim and John Curle and Barbara Sheret, who all help on a regular basis as well as, Kate Brignall, Diane Kemp, Amelia and Ava Mackay who have given a hand too.

Denise Angell
Children's Parish Representative.

Sunday Club at Cudham

Sunday Club was held throughout the year, meeting most 2nd to 4th weeks of each month (except during the summer holiday break) with All Age Worship being held the first Sunday of each month. The average number of children that attended is about three, although sometimes we have had many more! The leaders have the experience to adapt the ideas for the children they have with them, whether it be one child or many.

We have continued to use 'Roots' resource material, which enables the learning to be in line with that used for the adult service.

Karen Lockley, Kim Curle and myself, have led the sessions. Kate Brignall and Bridget Law have continued to help. My thanks to all these people who plan, teach and deliver such fun and engaging material for the children. We are still a helper short, so if you would like to find out more about this valuable and rewarding role then please do get in touch!

At Christmas, several children (joyfully including several from our local community that don't attend Sunday Club) performed the Bible Society's Instant Nativity: Shiny Bright Sparkling Light. This entailed some audience participation and once again proved to be great fun.

Denise Angell
Children's Parish Representative.

Pastoral Visitors' Team for Cudham and Downe

The committee met five times during the period January to July, initially under Ann Johnson's leadership, until she stood down in March, following which Rev John Musson assumed the leadership. Ann had headed up the work of the committee as the Pastoral Team Co-ordinator since its inception and the committee acknowledged the excellent work she had done pastorally in the parishes and by her leadership of the team. Prior to his departure from the Benefice in July, John Musson appointed John Curle as the Pastoral Team Co-ordinator and under his leadership the committee comprising five members met three times between September and December.

The meetings have followed a regular pattern: always opening and closing with prayer, we deal with matters arising from the previous meeting, and this is followed by reviewing those on our pastoral list which comprises people in the benefice with whom we are in contact, either on an ad hoc or regular basis. Confidential records are maintained of people's wellbeing, any caring concerns and any action points required. This may include requests for Home Communion which are undertaken by two members of the team trained in this capacity; and may also include visits where there is sickness or bereavement.

Our regular meetings also include a review of any special activities since the last meeting, such as Warm Welcome or Holiday at Home events (see also the separate report) and considering proposals for future occasions; as well as Safeguarding issues, ensuring team members are up to date on their training, including Domestic Abuse Awareness; and other training – Bereavement Care and First Aid courses were attended by two team members online and person-to-person. A Quiet Day 'Finding Stillness in our Heart' at Crowhurst Christian Healing Centre was attended by team members in May – an opportunity to receive and reflect on the input from the Chaplaincy Team.

Discussion has also covered supporting a Summer Tea Party hosted by the pupils of Year 6 at Cudham CofE Primary School to which those of more senior years and others on our pastoral visitors list are invited – a valued intergenerational time where the children are trained in welcoming and serving guests and in chatting to them. Additionally, we arrange the refreshments, and any pastoral/prayer support needed following the annual All Souls' services in Cudham Church and St Mary's Downe.

Of special note was the generous donation of £2,000 from The Morris Foundation in March, given to the church for specifically supporting the pastoral work in the Benefice for: Social Lunches for the elderly; Training for the Pastoral Team; Resources used by the Pastoral Team; and the Easter and Christmas Gift bags.

Of equal note was the donation of £250 from Magali van der Merwe (Rochester Diocese Lead Community Engagement and Social Action Adviser – CESA), for the purchase of equipment that would help with our Warm Welcome and Holiday at Home events. For example, coffee dispensing flasks were proposed although we are now researching the purchase of a coffee machine. We write regular reports in both the Cudham Parish Magazine and the Downe *Time* Magazine, which provide information on our current pastoral care endeavours in our villages and maintain a reminder of our ongoing readiness to provide a listening ear, a shoulder to lean on or chat about a caring concern. A member of the Team is always on hand to pray.

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A regular task each year includes making up Easter and Christmas Gift Bags with appropriate seasonal gifting which are delivered personally to approximately thirty people, mainly singles, also a few couples, in both parishes who may be housebound or have other particular needs. We are encouraged by how these are always gratefully received, and we pray demonstrate a positive and caring image of the church.

In our Anna Chaplaincy roles we attended regular Bromley hub meetings; an Anna Chaplaincy Study Day at St Martin's Church, Maidstone in July; a day with Julia Burton-Jones (Anna Chaplaincy Lead for Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses) who visited us on location in Downe village as part of her visits to Anna Chaplains in Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses marking the Ten Years of Anna Chaplaincy in Kent; we also took part in the on-line Anna Chaplaincy Gathering in the Autumn; and to end the year we hosted a Quiet Day with Advent theme at Cudham Church for Anna Chaplains and Friends.

John Curle, *Pastoral Team Co-ordinator*,
and Kim Curle (*and both commissioned Anna Chaplains – spiritual care for older people*)

Schools and Families' Work in Cudham and Downe

The weekly pattern of leading Collective Worship in Cudham CofE Primary School on a Tuesday morning and Downe Primary School on a Thursday morning was maintained during the Spring and Summer terms with us alternating weekly on a rota basis with Rev John Musson. For the Autumn term we continued the weekly pattern of taking Collective Worship in both schools, meaning that since the Benefice entered a time of Vacancy, we have been going into both schools each week.

Downe Primary School had a new Head, Mr Ferguson, in September who was enthusiastic that we continue to go into school every Thursday. And Miss Askew headteacher at Cudham CofE Primary School requested that we keep up the momentum of weekly worship at Cudham by going into school every Tuesday but moving the slot from the morning to the last period of the school day.

We have continued to follow the Collective Worship themes produced jointly by the Diocese of Canterbury and the Diocese of Rochester. We prepare the Cudham session for a Tuesday and, as appropriate, adapt this for the session at Downe on the Thursday. We have a gathering prayer, explore what the Bible has to say, supported by PowerPoint visuals or short animated videos, encourage reflection through questions and answers, sing a worship song and close with a prayer.

Both schools held their Easter celebrations in church. Cudham School's service was largely activity based with Easter crafts for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in St Katherine's Chapel. Downe School's service followed the more traditional format led by us with pupils doing the readings and prayers and our sharing the Easter Story through the Bible Society animation "Three Friends and the Miracle Man".

We were delighted to receive pupils from Downe Primary School who came to sing at our Warm Welcome event in Downe Village Hall in March radiating Easter joy to the guests. Then in December the children of the Glee Club from Cudham Primary School came to sing carols at the Warm Welcome Christmas Special held at Cudham Parish Hall, staying on into the afternoon to take part in the craft activities alongside the guests.

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I was pleased to be invited to take the service in Downe Church for the crowning of the new May Queen. This was a great opportunity to get to know some of the pupils and their families through attending the after-school rehearsals and being a part of the celebrations on the day. Being a presence at village events such as the annual Duck Race, and switching on of the Christmas lights in Downe, together with leading the open-air service at Christmas Tree Farm for St Francis of Assisi Day, regularly taking the worship at *Messy Church* and undertaking baptism preparation visits to families are all ways in which we have been able to build connections between church and school and local community.

The first Sunday of the month Worship Together at Cudham Church has been a new way of welcoming all ages to an informal service with emphasis on hospitality and fellowship where creative activities, 'table talk' and light refreshments are all part of the worship experience.

A highlight of the year was preparing five candidates for Confirmation including three of our young people one of whom John Musson and I had prepared for baptism earlier in the year (who went on to be confirmed at a service at St Mary's Green Street Green on 13th October). It was a privilege to organise the special Confirmation Service held at Cudham Church when three of our candidates along with a large group from All Saints Orpington were confirmed by Bishop Simon on the morning of Sunday 22nd September. One of our candidates was baptised on the day as well as being confirmed, her two young children having been baptised earlier in the summer. We praise God for all those who made their commitment of faith, and for the infant baptisms that took place during the year.

In conjunction with members of the Pastoral Visitors' Team, a Summer Tea Party hosted by Year 6 pupils at Cudham CofE Primary School for senior members of the community who may be lonely, or generally housebound was held in the school hall in June to which the Deputy Mayor of Bromley, Councillor Jonathan Andrews was in attendance. The children were able to learn about offering hospitality and a warm welcome through their serving and conversation starters. Guests appreciated too singing from the school's Glee Cub and kindness shown and interest taken in them by the children. The event was a great success.

At the end of June, we were pleased to welcome Year 5/6 pupils from Cudham School to the Bromley Schools Festival held at Bromley Parish Church where we were leading *Messy Craft* workshops over the two days.

A School Leavers' service was held at Cudham School at the end of the summer term at which copies of the Scripture Union book 'It's Your Move' were presented to Year 6 pupils moving on up to secondary school, a gifting from the church. Similarly, at Downe where the school service was held in church and we said goodbye to Miss Dolan the Head Teacher.

We were pleased to provide a *Space to Breathe* event for staff at the beginning of their Autumn Term INSET day at Cudham School. An opportunity for fellowship, light breakfast refreshments, reflective creative activities, sharing of any prayer requests, and gifting to teachers. This for staff wellbeing and support. We also provided *Space to Breathe* type activities at the Summer and Christmas school fêtes at Cudham.

We also organised the Harvest and end-of-term Christmas services for each of the schools in Cudham Church and St Mary's Downe respectively, at Cudham working with the Worship Leads, rehearsing with the readers and pray-ers, and younger children forming the Nativity tableau; and at Downe, liaising with the Head Girl and Head Boy and facilitating others to be involved, all in regular conversation with the Head and class teachers concerned.

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We have met regularly with Laura Webster: Children and Young People Mission & Ministry Advisor, Bromley & Bexley Mission and Ministry Development, and were part of the planning team organising *Messy Cathedral* in Rochester in April. In addition to attending the occasional Network Day, I was pleased to attend the Children, Young People & Family Ministers' Retreat at Ashburnham Place in May, half-funded by the diocese.

Kim Curle

Licensed Schools and Families Evangelist

and John Curle

'Warm Welcome' and Other Events

Originating from the national Warm Spaces initiative and a £600 grant from Rochester Diocese in Autumn 2022, we have been able to build on the momentum of success achieved by the first four events held in 2023.

Warm Welcome days in 2024 were held in March, in Downe Village Hall and December: a Christmas Special in Cudham Parish Hall; with a Holiday at Home for those of more senior years, in July; and a Summer Tea Party at Cudham CofE Primary School, in June.

At the Warm Welcome event in March guests were invited to coffee and hot cross buns from 10.30. Lunch comprised basket meals bought in from the George & Dragon. Children from Downe Primary School provided the entertainment, singing beautifully and Easter crafts were available throughout the day, as well as quizzes. The day closed with tea and cakes and guests being gifted with a cream egg and Easter card handmade by pupils at Downe School.

Under the auspices of the Pastoral Visitors, a Summer Tea Party hosted by Year 6 Leavers was held in the hall of Cudham CofE Primary School in June to which those on our pastoral visitors list, mainly housebound and elderly, and others, were invited together with the Deputy Mayor of Bromley, Councillor Jonathan Andrews. A memorable afternoon was had by all.

The Holiday at Home at the end of July was an opportunity for those who might not normally get away to spend a day in friendship and fun. On this occasion we bought in fish and chips from Salisbury's, Biggin Hill which proved very popular. Again, guests were invited to join in a variety of crafts and participate in a big quiz with quizmaster. Following afternoon tea, guests were able to choose from a selection of 'Thoughts' booklets on topical subjects, to take home.

At our Christmas Special, also in Cudham Parish Hall, we were grateful to local caterers Fayre Do's who provided a marvellous festive hot meal and pudding. And to Tesco Orpington who donated mince pies, soft drinks, biscuits and cakes. We were delighted to welcome children from the Glee Club at Cudham CofE Primary School who sang a medley of carols and then had permission from the head teacher to stay on into the afternoon to come alongside the guests as they took part in the Christmas crafts and other activities on offer. Before afternoon tea, we were treated to an instrumentation of carols by our teenage helpers, Amelia and Ava, on their French Horn and trumpet. A truly intergenerational feel to the day was achieved for which we are thankful. A springboard for future events where hospitality, friendship and fellowship are at the heart of our mission, ensuring a safe, warm space where guests feel at home and welcome.

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None of the above would be possible without the teams of helpers who have given of their time and talents. Be it putting out tables and chairs and clearing up afterwards, serving refreshments and chatting to the guests, or assisting with transport, we are grateful to all who have come on board to show their encouragement and support, including the guests themselves many of whom have been to all the events.

Finally, we are indebted to the Morris Foundation and the Diocese of Rochester for funding received which has meant that we have been able to offer the Warm Welcome and Holiday at Home days free of charge (donations welcome). We pray that the generosity this affords will be a blessing to others and an outward sign of God's love and our churches' caring concern.

Kim and John Curle
(Commissioned Anna Chaplains – spiritual care for older people)

Homegroup

Homegroup meets at Sue Everest's home on Monday afternoons. For the first half of the year, they took place weekly apart from during school holidays. With John and Helen Musson leaving in July, the meetings have continued whenever possible on a fortnightly basis, with usually 5 people.

We have followed study guides on different themes, although more recently we have looked at the reading from the previous Sunday in order to explore more of what our visiting preachers have shared. We welcome anyone who wants to grow in their faith to come along.

Mike Manthorpe

Christian Meditation

A group of us meet on the first and third Thursday every month in the church at 10am. We listen to a CD of a short talk and meditate in silence for half an hour, using the method taught by John Main, an English Benedictine monk. Please see www.wccm.uk

You are very welcome to join us, even if you have not practised meditation before. We will show you how it is done!

Hilary Knight

Prayer

With Revd John Musson's departure as of August 2024 the decision was made to hold a time of prayer on the first Tuesday of each month in St Mary's, Downe at 10am, which began in November. We would encourage you to join us.

Housekeeping at Cudham

Cleaning

Since my report for the APCM 2023 nothing has changed as regards keeping the main body of our church clean and respectable, suitable for welcoming visitors. Ann Johnson and Sue Nettlefold spend many an hour doing so, and to them a huge thank you. However, the Upper Room, the West Vestry and the general back area are seldom being cleaned so a third person to help would be welcome.

I mentioned a Spring Clean last year, but it didn't happen. It would be good to organise one early in 2025.

Flowers

The Flower team continues as before - myself, Brenda Holbrook and Emily Halifax, plus Kate Webb and Sharon Peake when their hectic lives permit. Thank you, one and all.

The cost of flowers continued to rise with fewer stems in any bunch for the same money, however, the church does look so much more welcoming with a few arrangements so the team continues to snip and trim and make the flowers last as many weeks as possible. As ever, if anyone could help on the odd occasion it would be appreciated.

Other Jobs

I continued to see to the day to day tasks which are needed to keep the church running -putting out the rubbish, purchasing supplies, from coffee to bin bags, floor cleaner to port, and ensuring there are loo rolls and hand towels in the WC. My thanks go to the others who help – Mark for the monthly testing of the emergency lights, Phil for minor repairs, Barbara for keeping the notice boards up to date, Norman for supplying the biscuits for our refreshments after services. All are unseen jobs until they are not done. Thank you everyone.

Diane Kemp

Flower Arranging at Downe

Seven Ladies volunteer to arrange flowers in the church, and work on a rota.

The arrangements from Christmas were finally cleared from the church in preparation for Candlemas. Ash Wednesday was on February 14th and there were no flowers in church until Easter, however flower posies were made for Mothering Sunday on March 10th.

They all help at Easter, Harvest and Christmas for which we are very grateful and appreciative.

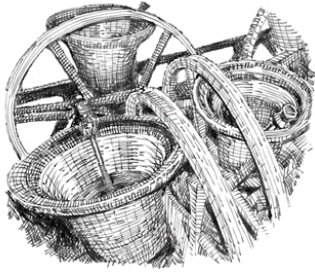
We helped with flowers for the May Queen service on April 28th, then decorated regularly every weekend through the summer and for Harvest service on September 29th.

Christmas saw the usual festive decorations with Christmas Tree, Bows and Candelabra, crib, knitted nativity and candles, all ready for carols by Candlelight Service on December 22nd.

If you could volunteer to help the flower ladies, men also welcome, please let me know, as none of us is getting any younger, in fact we NEED help! No previous experience necessary

Hilary Knight

Cudham Bellringers



This report is mostly the same as last year's report as nothing much has changed.

We continue to share practice nights with Downe and pool our ringers between the two towers. We are also grateful for the help of ringers from Sundridge, Bickley, Hever and Brasted and West Wickham who regularly help us out. We ring at Cudham on the first and third Monday, the second and fourth at Downe and we don't ring on any fifth Mondays or bank

holidays. Start time 7pm until 8:30pm.

There has been no change in the condition of the Bell chamber, so I have included the paragraph from last year's report verbatim. "More wildlife than ever seems to have our spire as their habitat. Two long eared bats have been seen more than once, so it is likely that there are more in residence. There is evidence of bird nesting materials and currently the smell in the ringing chamber would indicate that there is decaying material that needs to be dealt with. The insect infestation made up of varying species make any maintenance a deeply unpleasant experience so there is a shortage of volunteers for this task. The insects now also inhabit the ringing room which also makes ringing at Cudham quite unpleasant." I have been up and cleaned the bell chamber more than once during the year, but the detritus is quickly replaced. The ringing chamber has to be cleaned on each visit.

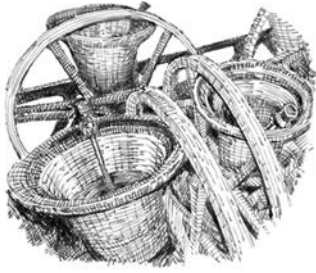
Of the six new ringers that we had, two moved away. One has decided that it isn't a hobby for them, one has been troubled with ill health and injury and the remaining two are making good progress although one has a broken wrist so they are not currently able to ring. It is becoming harder to find ringers and our practice nights are often cancelled due to low attendance.

Our ability to train new ringers is limited as teaching ringing is quite a different process to actual ringing and so we lack the expertise to make best progress, although we haven't had any enquiries for new learners this year. It is difficult to ring for national events as all our borrowed ringers are ringing in their home towers.

We rang for two weddings this year, one in Cudham, one in Downe. The new bell rope has been fitted to the number 4 bell and is satisfactory. We hope to order 9 more ropes with synthetic tops which will hopefully be long lasting.

Alison Wilson
Tower Captain

Downe Bellringers



This year has continued much in the same vein as the last few years, with practices being held weekly on Mondays with Cudham (1st and 3rd in Cudham, 2nd and 4th in Downe).

Due to a lack of ringers we were not able to ring for the 1st Sunday of the month services in the later half of the year.

Numbers are still low, so we are thankful for the support we receive from other Towers. Our learners are progressing though unfortunately 2 have decided to give up and 1 has had an injury. The remaining 2 learners are now able to ring for competently and so we hope to have them elected as full members of the KCACR in 2025.

During the year we also rang for the following:

- Easter Sunday
- National ring for peace on the 80th anniversary of the D-Day
- Wedding on 23rd August
- Remembrance Sunday
- Carol Service
- Christmas morning
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Once again, I would like to thank Alison Wilson for all her support, organisation and training. Also Jon Fry (Cudham) and Rob Hodgetts (Bickley) for their help in training the learners.

Caryn Newell
Downe Bell Ringers

The PCC's extends sincere and grateful thanks to all the church memberships who work so very hard to make our churches 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, especially in this time of vacancy. Thank you everyone.