

# The Parish of Badshot Lea and Hale

We are one Parish of welcoming and inclusive churches.

Our vision is for the growth of God's Kingdom so we aim to:

- Grow in Spiritual Maturity
- Grow in Numbers
- Grow Younger
- Grow in Community Engagement



**Annual Parish Meeting  
Reports 2025 – 2026**

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# Officers Reports

## Rector

I cannot believe that it has been a year since I took up the post of Rector, here in the Parish of Badshot Lea and Hale. In some ways, it's flown by, and in others, it feels as though we've always been here. The welcome my family and I have received has made it easy for us to call this parish our home. Thank you!

It's been a busy year in the life of the Parish, with plenty of change to keep us on our toes. Stella Wiseman officially stepped down as Parish Administrator in September, and continues to serve as associate minister after completion of her curacy. Emma Taylor has now taken over the role, alongside some paid support from Kris Lawrence. The two of them work incredibly hard and help to keep the parish ticking away.

After a short period of getting to know the parish, I was keen to facilitate a vision morning to provide a chance to communally reflect on what we love about the parish, what works well and what we could do better. What stood out from our discussion was how much we value being a parish that is welcoming and provides hospitality to all. It's one of the things that I am most proud to say we are good at, as it's not always an easy thing to get right. But I've found each congregation is incredibly generous in their welcome and hospitality.

We reflected on how we can value the different traditions and styles of each of the congregations. One thing that drew me to this parish was how different each of the Sunday morning services are. I think it's brilliant that each congregation is able to provide something unique and different, in the way God has made us to be. Something I'd like to do over the next year is explore and encourage each congregation to really take ownership of their tradition and shape services in a way that is going to help them meet with God.

The addition of the Trinity service has helped to continue to broaden the styles and traditions celebrated in the parish, which you can read more about in the Trinity report.

After reflection at the Vision Day on how we may intentionally set more time aside for prayer in the parish, I have started a monthly prayer evening. This is every 4th Wednesday of the month at 7pm at St Mark's. Sadly, there hasn't been much take-up for this, and I would love to encourage more to come along. It's a time for us to gather and pray for our parish, local community, those who have asked for our prayers and the needs of the wider world. It's also a time for us to listen to what it is that God is saying to us, what they may be calling us to do. Please do consider coming along.

In September, the momentous work to restore the tower at St John's began. It had been many months in the planning and the fundraising, so it was a relief to finally get the project

going. Excitement mounted as the scaffolding went up and the work began. As with these things, once the work got going, there were more things discovered that needed doing. Fortunately, with such successful fundraising, most of these jobs were able to be added to the initial project. A huge thank you to Chris Anstey for his skills, expertise and great team. Hopefully, a tower that has stood for generations gone by will continue to stand for generations to come. We were able to celebrate the completion of the work in March with a service of thanksgiving. Members of the community were invited to come see what their contributions towards the fundraising efforts had achieved.

In November, we appointed Sophie Haber as the parish safeguarding officer (PSO). Sophie brings with her a wealth of experience in safeguarding from her time in the police. She has already become a great asset to the team and is keen to make sure that safeguarding is integrated into our culture of the Church community, seeking to protect those who are most vulnerable.

The season of Advent was busy and exciting, with the addition of the 'Christmas Tree Festival', which created a real buzz within the parish and local community. A massive thanks to Christine Brown and the team, who worked nonstop over the full 3 days, to make sure the event was the success it was. You can read more about it in her report.

All three of our carol services were very well attended, despite the torrential rain at St Mark's 'Carols in the Cemetery'. This was a great example of resilience and Christmas spirit, as we moved quickly inside and carols were still sung!

We celebrated the remarkable 70th anniversary of the ordination of our very own, Reverend John Evans! He led us in a marvellous mid-week communion service, which many attended to show their support and celebrate John's lifelong ministry. This milestone celebration marks both a ministry that spans many decades and a chance for us to reflect on the core of John's ministry, one of dedication and humility. Bishop Paul was also in attendance on this special day, and I would like to add to his well-wishes with my personal thanks for John's support over the last year.

After the business of Christmas came the calm quietness of the new year. That's until 1...2...3... PUPPETS! arrived in the parish. This is how we call the puppets up at our Bubble Church service, which you can read more about in the Bubble Church report.

In addition to our young family ministry at Bubble Church, we have also had a fruitful year with our Toddler Group, 'Little Bees', which also has its own report. I want to draw attention to the 'Little Bees Valentines Disco', which was a fantastic day of music, crafts and play. The money raised by this event has bought soft play equipment, a bouncy castle and a sit-on roller coaster for our new children's party packages. These packages consist of event hire, equipment use, and access to a range of themed decorations. Alongside this being an

income stream for the Church, we hope that it will provide the local community with a financially accessible and eco-friendly party option.

As I reflected on in the spring parish magazine, I believe you don't fully know a place until you have experienced it through all the seasons. And on completion of the season of Easter, I have made this round trip and had the first taste of all the worship and activities that this parish enjoys.

I particularly enjoyed the fellowship that accompanied the Lent Lunches this year. I really value the showing of God's love through sharing in a meal, the conversation that flows and also the hospitality that this parish does so well. The Holy Week Meditations were a quieter reflection of God's love, allowing us space to explore Jesus' journey to the cross and really slow down to listen and pray.

You'll be thrilled to know that Reverend Stella Wiseman has now officially been signed off from her Curacy. Well done, Stella! She has worked incredibly hard over the last few years to get to this point. Stella is now going to take on the role of focal minister for St. Mark's, meaning she will provide a consistent presence there, alongside key pastoral support. She will still be present across the parish, but it does mean she'll spend most of her time leading St Mark's on a Sunday morning.

As with all good things, there are some that must come to an end, as things change and people step down.

Richard Myers has now (as of the APCM) stepped down as Treasurer. He has served the parish well over the last few years and has specifically done a very good job of supporting the PCC in making wise financial decisions. I am grateful to him and his support over the last year, and wish him all the best in his book-writing endeavours.

Bob Shatwell is also standing down from his formal duties of being the Health and Safety Officer and Deputy Warden at St Mark's. He shall continue to help in leading sung worship throughout the Parish. Thank you, Bob, for your support and contribution across the parish over many years.

As we look forward into the future, there are some exciting plans I wish to share with you.

I am currently working on securing some funding to refurbish the café at St Mark's, in order for us to open up a community café. This café aims to provide a welcoming space to all within our local communities. We are hoping to keep prices low to ensure it is accessible to all, as this is far more an endeavour to serve our local community rather than raise funds for the Church. We pray that this will offer space to fight isolation, provide an affordable café option, and welcome people into our Church to show that God's love is for all.

Our young family ministry is blossoming, we have a growing young adult community, and our older adults have plenty of social activities on the calendar, also. I am aware that we don't have any teens in our congregations, and aside from supporting the Friday Night Games at the Hale Community Centre, we don't offer any Church Youth Group. I have been invited to a training course called 'Launchpad' by the organisation 'Youthscape', which trains Church leaders to build youth work from scratch. This has been a fantastic resource so far, and I am excited to see how we may reach out to young people in our Parish in the next year.

There is a lot to think and pray about, and I'm aware my report hasn't even scratched the surface of all the things that have happened over the last year.

There are far too many of you to thank. This parish has so many brilliant people in it, and you are all wonderful in everything you do, but there are a few people I would like to personally mention.

Firstly, I would like to thank Dave Walter for the work he did in leading the practical operations of the parish during the vacancy, and for his support during the handover over the last year. He continues to provide helpful and practical advice in the day-to-day running of the parish.

Secondly, I would also like to thank Stella, for her dedication to the parish during the vacancy, and her willingness to serve the people in which I know she has so much love for. I would also like to thank her for her welcome and support over the last year. She has been a wise sounding board for me and I'm looking forward to this new chapter in her ministry, and seeing her flourish into the fine priest God has called her to be.

Thirdly, I would like to thank Kris and Pam. From meeting them when I first came to simply visit the parish, they have been nothing but kind, welcoming and supportive. It is important in a Parish like this to have competent wardens, and it's a relief to have them by my side in serving this community. Thank you both, for your hard work during the vacancy, your welcome to me and my family and your continued passion for looking after these Churches. It makes things a lot easier to have a good team around you.

Finally, thank you to you all. As I said at the beginning of my report, you have made this place easy to call home. Johanna, Leo and I are so grateful to have been fully embraced and accepted into the Parish, and we are looking forward to what the future may hold for us all.

**Lexi Russell**

## Churchwarden – Kris Lawrence

I often wonder what quality Lesley Crawley saw in me when she asked if I would be churchwarden at St George's. and I come to the conclusion that I love the church and have a real passion to see it develop a thriving worshipping community that also serves the community we live amongst. I hold on tightly to our vision to grow God's Kingdom; following our aims to:

- Grow in Spiritual Maturity
- Grow in Number
- Grow Younger
- Grow in Community Engagement.

Although my heart is very much at St George's I do know I have a responsibility towards all three churches as churchwarden and I do whatever I am able to do to support all three. I also delight in the amazing things that each church does for the community and the parish.

Being so passionate about our church has often made me grieve the lack of respect sometimes shown by our hirers and the condition in which they would leave it. However, I can now say that this seems to have improved considerably. This seems to have coincided with our introduction of a deposit which is refunded only if the building is left as we would wish it to be. We have also found a very vigilant cleaner, so I am much happier the church appearance these days. I still have a bit of a problem when things are not put back where they came from and when the children's area just looks like a dumping area for furniture, rather than a welcoming space. However, this sort of thing I am learning to put up with; it is really important that our buildings are well used as they are such great spaces for our community.

The carpark has also caused me grief on many an occasion. Although we used Horizon to monitor the parking in the hope to prevent unauthorised parking, they only seemed to monitor once in a blue moon, so it has not been an effective deterrent. However, I am really pleased that the Automatic Number Plate Recognition system (ANPR) is nearly fully installed, and I believe this will resolve the issue of parking spaces being blocked by unauthorised parkers. Please remember going forwards that you may need to log your registration number on an iPad on entering the church building in the future.

There is only so much that one person can do, and I have really appreciated Dave's support as Deputy Churchwarden. However, the change of service time from 10am to 10:30am is difficult for Dave so he has decided to worship at St John's Church in general. This has led him to step down as deputy churchwarden for which I am very sorry about. However,

Dave is not so far away that I don't feel I can call on him when necessary and I do know that Pam is very happy for the support he is giving to her.

And of course there is still so much support that I don't even need to ask for (and I'm not very good at asking for help!!). I am so glad that we have a service rota as I know all those Sunday morning jobs are taken care of. Every time anything goes wrong e.g. with the sound system, fly tipping etc. someone steps up and says 'I'll sort that'. Chairs are put out and re-stacked. Community pay-back suddenly appear and the grass is cut. The list goes on! I am purposely not naming any names as no one should be left out and I am grateful for every bit of support.

I'm often told that I do too much, but there we have it, as I said above: "I'm not very good at asking for help!!" but if I see something needs doing, I just get on and do it. The important thing is that what I do, I do with a good heart – I do it because I love our church and our church community and want things to be nice.

The 5 year quinquennial inspection has thrown up a few issues that need to be addressed urgently. Some of these have been reported in previous inspections, but financial constraints have led to their neglect. I am keen that we find the finances somehow to address these, else the building is just going to deteriorate further. Just a few things that need urgent attention:

- You may have noticed the water damage around the lobby of the toilets. This is only getting worse and we are trying to understand the issue in order to see how best this can be resolved.
- There is also damp penetration / water ingress to the gable wall around the west north aisle window which we have received some quotations for and hope to resolve this year.
- We also have problems with roosting pigeons depositing significant amounts of guano on to various building features and are investigating solutions to this problem.
- Church down pipes and gutters need replacing/repairing and redecorating.

There have been many highlights this year at St George's: the Christmas Tree Festival, the Fete, Top 10 Hymns & BBQ with the visiting pilgrims and the introduction of Bubble Church. I am delighted to report that Bubble Church is growing in numbers and the families that come along tell us how much they enjoy themselves. But more importantly the children are taking this home with them. We hear reports of children pretending to be the puppets, popping up and down when they are called. Bubble Church re-enactments happening at home to the family. 'Amen' become an important part of bedtime routine etc. We are changing lives and enabling children and their parents to generate an awareness of Jesus and a faith journey. This is a generation ready to hear the word and I am excited to see the growth happening in the parish with this initiative.

I am delighted that retired priest Rev Keith Bristow has moved into the area and joined our ministry team, we offer you, Keith, a very warm welcome!

Oh – I will mention one more name! Lexi!!! Oh yes, another highlight of the year! Lexi is a breath of fresh air and I believe she is just what we were asking for when we put our profile together. Thank you Lexi for taking the plunge to come to this small corner of Surrey with your lovely family Johanna and Leo. It's been wonderful getting to know you all and get to understand the way you work. The past year has flown by, but it's been very exciting and we look forward to many years to come.

I end with a question for each of you. Do you have a passion for your church/your parish and our mission in this place. If so, I would advise you to consider prayerfully whether you too could be a churchwarden or deputy churchwarden – I believe that passion is all you need and we would love you to join the team.

### **Kris Lawrence – Churchwarden at St George's Church**

#### Churchwarden – Pamela Marsham

I took on the role of Churchwarden at the end of October 2023, simply because it was felt that, following Alan and Lesley's retirement it was important that all three churches had Churchwardens. I have continued in this role and I have been incredibly fortunate in that I have continued to have a lot of support from Clive and June Jasper, Dave Walters, Bob Shatwell and also Richard Myers. Kris Lawrence has also been extremely supportive. I thank them all very much.

The year started with us still in the time of vacancy and a little worried as to what the future held for us as we had had no applicants to take on the role of Rector of our Parish. The Revd Stella Wiseman continued to be responsible for spiritual, religious and pastoral matters and together with our retired clergy – the Revd John Evans, and also our lay leaders we were able to continue holding services at each of our churches every Sunday. We managed to ensure that we held a communion service somewhere in the Parish every week and where it was not possible to hold a communion service we had a lay led Service of the Word.

Following the advertisement that went out in February we had an informal visit from a candidate which resulted in her applying for the position and being accepted for interview. At the interview on 26<sup>th</sup> March it was agreed to offer her the position which she accepted. That person was the Revd Lexi Russell.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025 the Revd. Alexa (Lexi) Russell was installed as Rector of the parish. We were all delighted to welcome her, Johanna and baby Leo to our Parish.

During the whole of the vacancy we continued to maintain our churches. At St John's our major concern was that during 2025 it was discovered that there was a problem with the stonework and a danger of stone falling from the tower. As a result we were unable to use the tower door or ring the bell. Fencing was put up around the area to stop people from going too close to the tower.

We needed to raise almost £40,000 in order to carry out the necessary repairs. There were appeals for donations and several fund raising events were held. Janet Martin worked very hard contacting organisations and applying for grants. We are truly grateful to Janet for all her hard work and also to the many individuals and organisations who made many generous gifts during 2025 with the result that the St John's Bell Tower was able to be repaired and work was completed in January.

More stone work still needs to be done and also work on the down pipes from the roof. Hopefully this will stop the damp ingress in various parts of the church. We also urgently need to have some work done to the roof of the Sunner Room. In addition to all this our boiler is definitely showing its age. It was installed, I think sometime in the 1980s, so it is old. It may not now be possible to get spare parts for the boiler should it break down. Our gas bills are extremely high considering that normally the church is only in use on a Sunday and on a Thursday, so either we have a major fault or this is simply because the boiler is so old. The figure that we have been quoted to install a new boiler and complete all necessary work that goes with its installation is in 5 figures. All this means that we are going to have to raise a lot of money to complete all this work. If we get a bad winter and the boiler fails completely then it will be very cold in church.

A few years ago the pews were removed from the North side of St John's in order to open up the space and make it more versatile in the way it could be used. We now have tables and chairs placed in that area and so we are now able to use this space for other activities and had an Epiphany lunch at the beginning of January in order to raise money for the repair to the tower.

Our new venture – "Knitting for good causes" also takes place in this area. This space could also be used after church on a Sunday and also, hopefully on other occasions as well. If there are big services then the space can be easily cleared and chairs can be put out. The charity "Reskilled", who took the long 17foot pews that we had, have made some of them into a bookcase which is at the Cathedral and also into the bookcase which holds the hymn books behind the back pews in our Nave. As it is made of wood from our pews it fits in perfectly. You may remember that Reskilled is a charity that was set up to help to develop the skills and raise the confidence of people who were unable to work for various reasons.

Wood was placed over the tiles in the North Aisle in order to make the floor even and reduce the amount of trip hazards. Unfortunately that wood is now in very poor condition, it is showing signs of wear and is no longer completely even, and is therefore becoming another trip hazard. We are considering various options as to what we do with regards to the flooring in that area.

Our Christmas Carol Service was again the highlight of the year. It was wonderful to see the church full of happy people. I think that every seat was taken. We were also delighted to welcome the head, plus some members of staff and the school choir from William Cobbett School who came and sang for us and also read a couple of the lessons.

During the year we also welcomed children from William Cobbett School, and Tootsies Nursery who both held services in the church. Students from the University of Creative Arts have used our church for some of their filming activities.

“Community Payback” have continued to help us by mowing the grass during the summer and also painting the gates and the seats in the church yard. They have also done a little more work on the floor.

### **Pamela Marsham – Churchwarden St John’s Church**

#### **LLM with PtO Review**

I am pleased to report that I am now officially an LLM with PtO – that is I have received the required “Permission to Officiate as a Lay Minister (Reader) in the Parish of Badshot Lea and Hale” from the Bishop of Dorking and Acting Bishop of Guildford. Halleluiah! That means I can carry on doing what I have been doing since I was first licensed 10 years ago.

So I continue to lead the Arts at St Mark’s group (see further report).

I enjoy preaching and leading services. Ideally, I like to reflect on the readings for about 2-3 weeks before beginning to write. I consider how they speak to current events and whether there is anything particular to our parish which resonates with the reading. Only then do I feel I can share God’s love in an engaging manner.



*A section of my bookshelf (St Mark artwork by Beki Phillips)*

Music is a huge part of my life which I love to share with anyone and everyone. I'm pleased to be a member of the parish music team.



I continue to create the Prayer Page for our church magazine. I use my own photographs and generally write the prayer, that way I know that we are within the copyright laws.

I will continue to support the parish of Badshot Lea and Hale in whatever way is appropriate and I thank the community for their support and fellowship.

## **Lesley Shatwell**

### **PCC Secretary**

Understanding the importance of the work the PCC committee puts into the care of the parish at the APCM in 2025 I agreed to continue in the role of PCC Secretary.

I chose not to have voting rights.

During the period of January to December 2025, under the leadership of the PCC Lay Vice Chair Dave Walter in the period of interregnum until June 2025 and from then on the new Rector of the Parish The Reverend Alexa Russell there were:

- Eight PCC meetings
- One Meeting of the Parishioners
- One APCM

### **At the May APCM**

- Two Churchwardens were duly elected for the three parish vacancies
- Two Deputy Churchwardens were duly elected

- Five members from the electoral roll were nominated and voted for as serving members of the PCC
- The Parish has one elected member to serve at 'Deanery Synod'
- The rest of the PCC is made up of Ex-officio members

I would like to thank all those who stood down from the PCC in 2025 for their service.

Thank you to those new members who were duly elected and those members who continue to serve.

**June Jasper – PCC Secretary**

## Farnham Deanery

The Deanery held a Parish Needs Process [Parish Development Day] on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025 . The topics that parishes need to be developing are Community, Diversity, and Discipleship.

At 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 meeting, there was a presentation on Encouraging and Training New Leaders by Revd. John Valentine, Dean of the Diocesan Local Ministry Programme.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025, Bishop Andrew addressed the meeting, and then separate groups discussed practical steps to develop Discipleship, Family and Children [as a part of Diversity] and Community Engagement. Notes of the ideas discussed were circulated after.

**Richard Myers**

## Electoral Role

The Church Electoral Roll now has 73 parishioners (15 of these are not resident within the parish.) Two names were added during the year and two were removed. Figures cover period up to 5<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

**Gemma Brown**

## Health and Safety

This will be my last H&S report as am finally retiring from this position in May 2026. I actually indicated I wished to retire some years ago, I think in 2019. However, Alan persuaded me to stay on until a replacement could be found.

Then there was then COVID, which would tax anyone trying to do this job and, given my research background, I was probably best qualified to deal with. I found myself reading research reports and modelling air change rates for churches, based on the latest available

information. The diocesan and government web sites were of little use as they were often months behind a field where progress and best practice changed rapidly.

There was then the announcement of Lesley and Alan's retirement, and it would have been churlish to step down then.

However, it is apparent that no one is likely to offer to take on this role as long as I'm doing it, so I'm following (my wife) Lesley's increasingly trenchant suggestions and stepping down. In all fairness, considering the number of things that could be done, compared with what I actually have done, this is long overdue. Another, less jaded person is needed in the position.

The main thing I have done in this role over the last 12 months is to ensure we are compliant with the latest fire regulations at St Mark's. Following an inspection by the fire brigade last year, it was apparent that our procedures on fire alarm testing and checking extinguishers and emergency light were not up to date. In particular I have instituted a weekly test of the fire alarms in the community centre and a six-monthly test by an external, qualified engineer of the fire alarm and emergency lighting system.

You may be gratified to know that it's all working fine!

**Bob Shatwell**

### Lay Training Pathways

We currently don't have anyone within the parish on a Lay training Pathway.

However, we still have Kris Lawrence as an authorised worship leader, along with Pamela Marsham as a Lay Assistant Minister. Kris, Pam and Richard Myers are all authorised preachers and all three regularly assist in the leading and preaching of services in the parish.

**Lexi Russell**

# Worship

## Trinity

Back in October we launched our new 'Trinity' service on Sunday afternoons at 3pm.

The tone of the service is a very informal and relaxed, with contemporary worship songs.

There is a good congregation size with 15-20 people coming most weeks, along with a core group of families.

The service format is flexible, but most weeks follows a welcome with time of opening sung worship, a reading and reflection followed by open discussion, prayer and a closing time of sung worship.

I hope and pray that this is a service will grow, develop and mould to the meet the spiritual needs of those who want to know more about the God who loves them so deeply.

**Lexi Russell**

## Bubble Church

We launched our new Bubble Church service at the beginning of this year, based at St George's.

It's a service aimed specifically at young children and their families, with an easy to follow, predictable format. Each family sits on their own 'Bubble' which has a bag on it that has the reflective activity, later on in the service.

We start by welcoming everyone to the service and singing. We have a time of confession and thankfulness. We hear a story from the Bible, followed by a short reflection and activity, before finishing with another song and optional invitation for prayer after the service.

There are a core group of families which have been coming most weeks it runs, and we are starting to see more families also come along. Each week we have been inviting families from Little Bees, and slowly there are some families that have taken up the invitation.

It's really helping us be able to build a strong family and young children ministry, that we hope will continue to grow.

My pray is that as the children grow, we will be able to continue to offer a ministry that is accessible for them and provide them with a strong foundation of faith that will stay with them the rest of their lives.

A huge thank you to the Bubble Church team for their hard work and dedication in getting this all off the ground. We are still finding our feet, but seeds are being sown and the shoots of growth are starting to appear.

**Lexi Russell**

### Wednesday worship

Sadly, Wednesday is now the only week-day on which The Eucharist is celebrated in the parish. The Rector has asked me to preside regularly, and a handful of worshippers gather at noon at St Mark's church. From time to time the sermon is given by one of our Occasional Preachers. During Lent, preaching usually follows an annual study course published by USPG, a mission society the parish supports

**John Evans**

### Farnham Mill Nursing Home

Care of the elderly has been exercised by a family who began such work in the parish where I was then ministering over fifty years ago, and who now own this recently built Home as well as others in nearby parishes. A weekly pastoral visit enables me to meet new residents, encourage in faith and prayer those who find life difficult through sickness or dementia, and minister the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Anointing as appropriate. I welcome calls, which do not happen frequently, from staff and families, particularly to those who are nearing the end of earthly life. Parish musicians and choir members enthusiastically lead a monthly "Songs of Praise" occasion which sometimes gains a response from unexpected residents and staff.

**John Evans**

### Contemplative Prayer Meeting

Prayer is a relationship – a being together with God who knows us, our needs, our fears, and who loves us.

Prayer doesn't need to be a struggle or a list of requests. It is much simpler. It can be simply sitting silently with God.

This is what we seek to do in the contemplative prayer group meeting which takes place every Wednesday at St Mark's Church at 3pm.

Contemplative/centring prayer is a silent form of prayer which can take place alone or in a group. The person or people praying remain silent and usually repeat in the mind a word or phrase such as 'Maranatha', an Aramaic word which means 'our Lord, come', or 'our Lord has come', depending on where the emphasis is placed. Some people prefer to use an image rather than a word.

The idea is that the word or image centres the mind and encourages it not to wander or flit from thought to thought, as human minds usually do, but instead just to be as we are in front of God. We don't ask anything of God, we simply are there.

On Wednesday afternoons a group of us sit together in St Mark's and spend 20 minutes in this form of silent prayer. We then drink tea, eat biscuits and chat. It is relaxing, refreshing and a highlight of my week.

Anyone is welcome to join us.

### **Stella Wiseman**

### **Choir**

“How good it is to sing praises to our God “. Psalm 147.

The aim of our parish choir is to enhance our regular, weekly worship.

Every Sunday throughout the year, come rain or shine, members of our parish choir sing at the services held in our churches, with commitment, sincerity and dedication.

We have also sung at numerous weddings and funerals. We sing regularly at Farnham Mill nursing home and have sung at various fundraising events.

We sang at a wonderful celebration service in June, to welcome Reverend Lexi to our parish.

We had a very enjoyable afternoon voting for and singing our Top Ten Hymns.

We sang at the Harvest Supper and for the switching on of Badshot Lea lights at Christmas, as well as carols in the garden at St. George's church.

We had a wonderful, traditional Carol service at St. John's church when we were joined by the choir from William Cobbett school.

We had a delightful and different carol service at St. George's church, among the trees, as part of our first Christmas Tree Festival, where we also decorated a tree and were joined by the Badshot Lea School Choir.

Since last May we have been very saddened by the death of Carolyn Weston.

Carolyn loved to sing, she always looked so happy when she was singing and her infectious enthusiasm encouraged everyone to join in!

She was a faithful and long-standing member of our choir and other choirs.

Carolyn was also a very good friend. We miss you.

Sadly, we also miss Roger Sanders who died earlier this year.

Roger was a very accomplished musician in the army, and played saxophone in his group 'Saxooma', which entertained us on numerous occasions. For many years Roger played the saxophone or piano every Sunday for services at St. Marks Church.

Roger was also a good friend, and we miss you.

I would like to say a big "Thank you" to the numerous organists, pianists and musicians who play for our services and enhance our worship every week and are prepared to change their plans and stand in when needed - sometimes at short notice!

Thank you to Mary Klymenko, Barry Hall, Joy Cobb, Sue Lampard, Sam Martin, Bob and Lesley Shatwell, and Roger Sanders.

Another "Thank you" to Mary who also takes the choir when I am away.

If I have missed anyone I apologise.

Our parish choir, about sixteen in number meets every Monday (except public holidays) at St. George's church at 6pm and sing for an hour. We enjoy vocal warm-ups, tongue twisters, rounds, traditional and modern songs and the favourites from our hymn book. We enjoy preparing anthems to sing each week during Advent and Lent.

I invite anyone to come along on a Monday evening and give us a try. We have had three new members recently.

No audition is required and music reading is not necessary.

Recently six of the choir have completed the Royal School of Church Music 'Voice for Life' course, book one. This is written to help develop singing skills and understand more about the music we sing. They have now progressed to book two.

This is not compulsory!

Enthusiasm and a joy of singing together is, however, compulsory!

Thank you to everyone who comes to sing in the choir, you continue to make Monday evenings a treat for me!

**Margaret Emberson**

## Musicians

We have been unusually lucky with musicians in this parish. Last year, despite the recent demise of Frances Whewell, we still had seven musicians available for services. Unfortunately, in the last year this number has dropped to five.

### Roger Sanders

Roger was a professional saxophonist, initially with the Army in Aldershot. He died on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Whilst the saxophone was his first instrument, his father taught him to play the keyboard and it was in this role that he played at St Mark's for several years, accompanying myself and Lesley. He told me that his father was particularly insistent that he learned all the chord patterns in all keys, so he could accompany singers and other musicians. In this role he was invaluable. In preparing the music each week, I just had to indicate the chords above the melody line that I played and he was away (possibly with a little grumbling)! His life was celebrated in a very memorable "wake" at the Army golf club on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March. I will miss playing with him. His wife, Jean and daughter, Katie, continue to come to St Mark's and are very valuable members of the community.

### Tim Sturt

Tim is an experienced organist, who mainly played at St John's but would also contribute at the other churches when required. He was a valuable member of the sub-committee who selected the hymns (vide infra). Tim had an accident whilst on holiday in the Netherlands which resulted in serious head injuries and a lengthy stay in hospital, initially in the Netherlands and later in this country. The most recent news is that he was discharged from hospital on 24<sup>th</sup> March and moved to Ashton Manor nursing home in Wrecclesham. He continues to make slow progress. We all send our prayers and best wishes to him, his wife, Rachel and family and hope his slow recovery continues.

Our thanks to the rest of the musicians who continue to give their services to each church:-

Mary Klymenko  
Sam Water  
Margaret Emberson  
Lesley Shatwell  
Bob Shatwell

### Rota

I arrange the rota of who is playing where and when according to the musicians' availability. Mostly Mary plays for St John's, Margaret for St George's and Lesley, and Bob for St Mark's,

with Sam filling in when needed. However, I try to move people around a bit to give everyone some variety.

### Hymn choosing

This done about every six weeks by four of us:-

Margaret Emberson

Kris Lawrence

June Jasper

Bob Shatwell

I generally prepare a table of what was done on the equivalent ecclesiastical date both three years ago and last year, to give us a starting point, and Kris and June have the required liturgy and suggested hymns from the back of the hymn book (“The Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New”, HON), readily at hand. We meet on a Monday morning about every six weeks. During the tenure of Alan and Lesley, we had a set repertoire, which was a subset of this book, but as time goes on we increasingly pay less attention to this. We are also introducing some newer hymns, although the logistics of getting the words to the congregations whilst two of our churches do not have modern audio-visual facilities, is something of a problem. The discussions can be quite far reaching on the musical merits of the hymns and the relevance to the gospel readings of the day. I consider my role is largely to curtail discussion in order to ensure we get five hymns for each week, in the preferred order, and finish the meeting having sorted out at least eight weeks’ worth of services.

I then transfer the hymns and rota to an extremely useful spreadsheet that Kris prepared giving the details of each service in the parish.

**Bob Shatwell**

# Outside Organisations

## Bishop Sumner Education Foundation

Bishop Sumner was Bishop of Winchester from 1827 until 1869. As was his wish, after his death in 1874, he was buried in Hale churchyard. He is remembered especially for his interest in education.

The Bishop Sumner Educational Foundation (BSEF) was established by the investment of the parish share of the proceeds from the sale of the local church school. The fund is intended to assist with the education of individual students under the age of 25 whose residence is within the bounds of the ancient parish of Farnham with priority for the ecclesiastical parish of Hale.

Under the chairmanship of Badshot Lea and Hale's Parish Rector the BSEF is administered by a Board of Trustees comprising of:

- Two Churchwardens
- A representative of Badshot Lea and Hale Parochial Church Council
- A representative of the Waverley District Council
- A representative of Surrey County Council
- Two co-optative trustees

Under the leadership of The Reverend Alexa Russell (Chair) who the trustees were pleased to welcome, to BSEF in September 2025 following a period of interregnum, there were

- Two BSEF meetings

During the financial year (2024-25) the Bishop Sumner Educational Foundation awarded £1,515 in grants to 18 local school pupils in need of financial help who without this support would 'miss out' or fail to be included.

The grants were used to supply residential and day trip experiences.

Inevitably the purchasing power of grants able to be made each year has diminished and the trustees suggest that successful recipients of help, who have become established in a career or others in the community, may wish to assist the fund.

Donations to the BSEF would be especially welcome and would enable the board to help future students who will face ever increasing costs.

For further information follow the link below:

<https://badshotleaandhale.org/the-bishop-sumner-educational-foundation/>

Email: bishop.sumner@gmail.com

Telephone: 07807 881311

Thank you.

June Jasper – Secretary to the trustees

# Outreach

## Adult Study Groups

### Home Group

The group which meets weekly in Upper Hale continued to try to improve its knowledge of the Bible and of each other. We meet from 2pm to 3.30pm on Thursdays. For the first half hour we talk about the week we have had, and after that we turn to the written word. In 2025 we studied commentaries on Thessalonians and the Psalms, the Archbishop of York's Lent Book, a book by the Bible Reading Fellowship on the relationship between the Bible and science and nature and a series of Advent readings. From time to time, we make use of a book of stand-alone Bible studies designed for home groups. We are currently [May 2026] reading Job with the aid of a commentary in the Cover to Cover series.

**Richard Myers**

### 20-30's Home Group

As of February 2026, I have led a group of young adults in a weekly online 'zoom' home group. The group is for those in their 20s-30s across the parish, and we currently have 10 members, with an average of 6 attending each week depending on availability. The evening zoom format aims to be inclusive of those who work, and those with small children doing bedtime.

The sessions include both bible studies, and topic-based discussions related to theology and faith on a personal and community level. We have enjoyed discussing some of the fundamentals of theology, drawing on resources from a range of different voices to aid in an intersectional understanding of faith. Each week, we have used a different lens or reflective practice to study scripture, including exploring feminist commentaries and liberation theology. This all sounds very academic - however in practice we have been using 'bottom - up' thinking, starting with the absolute basics of what is being said, using videos and children's bible resources to build a foundation of understanding before broader conceptual discussion. The intention behind this, is to make this home group accessible to those who may have never opened a bible. It also leaves space for those who have had more experience to return to fundamentals, and re-examine their prior understandings in new ways. We end with a time of support and prayer, and share resources that we have found helpful in our own faith lives.

We have had fantastic discussions in these sessions so far, and there is a really lovely group tone of encouraging growth and curiosity in each other. This home group adds to the 'growing in spiritually' goal from the parish mission statement. We are also building a community of young adults and young parents who are finding fellowship and support in one another. In addition to the home group, we have arranged some social meet ups, because although the zoom is very convenient, nothing beats 'in person' company!

## **Johanna Russell**

### **Clothing Giveaway**

The Clothing Giveaway has been running for more than 18 months now and the way it has grown has rather taken us by surprise.

It is run in conjunction with Hale Community Centre and Fridge, and every Monday, apart from Bank Holidays and a couple of weeks over Christmas, we open St Mark's between 9am and 11am, and people come in to select clothes and shoes which they may take totally free. The clothes and shoes are laid out on tables and hanging on rails and we have everything from tiny baby clothes to suits for large men. And they are very popular. We regularly give away several hundred items of clothing, as well as some homewares, nappies etc.

The items are donated by local people and every week we take in bags and bags of clothing. Some are no good – they arrive dirty and/or torn, and though we can wash and iron some, we do not have the capacity to do that regularly or in large amounts. Most are in good condition and very generously given. Some even have their labels on and have never been worn.

Any clothes we cannot use are bagged up and collected by a volunteer from Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice which receives money for these from an organization which can recycle them.

We also run a café which serves free drinks and cakes/pastries. The food comes from the Hale Community Fridge.

### **Why we do this**

The Clothing Giveaway helps people. No-one needs to be referred, they can just come, but some of the people who come are having a tough time and need support. When we support people we are being neighbours in the way Jesus told us to be.

The café gives people a place to meet others and chat and that's good for mental health. We have food which comes from the Community Fridge and would otherwise end up in landfill.

And it is good for the planet! We are trying to encourage people not to throw clothes away and not buy new all the time. We are called upon to care for the planet too. It's a key part of the church's mission.

Here are a few of the sobering facts about clothing waste.

According to Green Heart Collective, in 2019 just 9% of clothing was recycled and 12% reused.

According to Earth.org:

- The fashion industry contributes 10% of global carbon emissions (as much as the EU). The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has added that these emissions could increase by 60% by 2030 – that's only four years away!
- 85% of all textiles go to dumps every year.
- The fashion industry is the second-largest consumer industry of water. Making one cotton shirt takes about 700 gallons, a pair of jeans 2,000 gallons.
- Many clothes contain synthetic fibres and microplastics which get into the oceans and waterways.

So, the Clothing Giveaway and café is good for people and for the planet. I sincerely believe it is one of the ways God is working in the community.

Of course, this all takes time and effort, and we couldn't do it without volunteers. Several people from the parish help regularly: Kay Eastman, Sylvie Burrows, Anne Boyman, Prue Horne and Lana Stott with others popping in now and then. The rest do not come to church but are still part of the church family: Mandy Steer, Sue Hockey, Kathy Harrington, Sonia Roberts, Steph Trappitt, Amanda Trappitt, Lorraine Lawrence, Michelle Wilkie, Kym Ritchie and her son Ryan who has been volunteering for his Duke of Edinburgh Award. Some are there on Sunday to set up, some on Monday, some on both days.

All these volunteers are amazing, and I do invite you to consider if this is something you too could join in with. There are some weeks when, because of illness or holidays, we do not have enough people to set it out or run it and the work falls on too few people. This is especially true of Sunday afternoons when we set up

Please do consider whether you could help, even if just once a month.

**Stella Wiseman**

## Hygiene Bank

*Keeping clean shouldn't be a luxury should it?*

If you, or anyone you know, are struggling to afford vital items such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, washing powder, tampons, nappies and the like, let us know. We can help as we are now an outlet for the Hygiene Bank.

It should not be the case that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people are living in hygiene poverty, so that they do not have the money for a tube of toothpaste or a bar of soap, or have to choose between buying food and sanitary towels. Yet this is the reality for around 4.2 million adults in and 1.1m children who are living in hygiene poverty in Britain. That's four children in every classroom. The number is rising too: a report by the charity [In Kind Direct](#) reported that 46% of teachers have now seen children bullied because of their hygiene issues.

That's why the Hygiene Bank exists – to support those who, for whatever reason, cannot afford vital items such as soap, shampoo, nappies, tampons, sanitary towels, nappies washing-up liquid, and the like.

We have supported the Hygiene Bank for a long time – the bank used to store things in the garage at The Rectory, before the garage was deemed unsafe and knocked down – and we have a collection bin at St Mark's. Now we have a supply of items to give away to anyone who needs them.

Having access to hygiene products can be life-changing. The Hygiene Bank reports on children who can return to school because they now have deodorant and clean clothes thanks to washing detergent; and adults who had become isolated because of not being able to wash who are now regaining a social life and are able to apply for work.

People needing products may fall into one of several categories. The Hygiene Bank lists these as:

- Those who are already vulnerable under the statutory duties of health, social care, housing, emergencies, etc – eg an elderly person in need of social care to live at home.
- Those who are at immediate risk of moving into one of those statutory categories – eg a person experiencing domestic abuse who might become homeless, or the victim of a crime.
- Those who are at risk of wider types of vulnerability where preventative activity might stop them becoming vulnerable in the statutory sense – eg older people currently in good health, but socially isolated; people on low incomes who might be at risk of household or food insecurity.

There are a lot of vulnerable or potentially vulnerable people in and around Farnham. However prosperous an area might seem appearances can be deceptive.

Please do let people know that they can come to us in confidence for items they need. Please also donate by putting items in the yellow bin at St Mark's or leaving them at the back of the other churches, clearly marked 'Hygiene Bank'. You can also donate or ask for help contacting Stella via the details at the end of the article.

**What you can give:** new, unused, in-date personal care and household cleaning essentials. These include toilet rolls, sanitary wear, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, washing-up liquid, j-cloths, disinfectant, body wash, hairbrushes, tissues, nappies, continence wear, hair ties, razors, sponges, make-up. We can also accept hairdryers, electric styling products and shavers, but they must be brand new, in their original packaging and pre-fitted with a UK plug.

We can accept open packs of nappies and individual or open packs of period pads as long as the pads are wrapped. We can accept cloth nappies and period pads.

**What you can't give:** For health and safety reasons, we cannot accept opened, half-used or products past their best-before date. We also can't accept health supplements and vitamins; body slimming and weight loss/gain products; over-the-counter medical creams, ointments or products. A good rule of thumb is: if you use something in your own personal hygiene or home-cleaning routine, chances are someone living in hygiene poverty will appreciate it too.

To find out more or to offer or ask for help for yourself or someone else, contact me on [revd.stella@badshotleaandhale.org](mailto:revd.stella@badshotleaandhale.org) or 07342 508164.

For details of the Hygiene Bank, visit [thehygienebank.com](http://thehygienebank.com)

## **Stella Wiseman**

### Social Groups and events

#### Christmas Tree Festival

In December last year for the first time, St George's hosted a Christmas Tree Festival. The objective was to raise funds for both the church and a chosen charity, while also working to bring more people from our community into our church.

Our chosen charity was Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care as we felt it served all members of our community and we very much wanted to support their wonderful work.

We invited local charities, schools, groups, and businesses to decorate a tree representing themselves and they did such an incredible job! We had just under 50 trees exhibiting and the variety of trees was incredible!

We ran the festival over the course of 3 days inviting in visitors, who donated to their favourite trees. As the community had created the trees, we felt it right that all of these donations should go to Phyllis Tuckwell.

All three of our churches very generously contributed to raffle hampers and a selection of other prizes. Visitors were invited to purchase tickets, and the raffle did very well indeed! We also had refreshments available during the festival opening times. Thanks to the tireless work of our volunteers this was also extremely successful and raised significant funds. The funds for the raffle and the refreshments all went to the work of our churches.

All three churches worked together to staff the festival. We had some wonderful entertainment including singing groups, Morris Dancers and musicians. There was also a very fun visit from Father Christmas and his team on Saturday morning which the children very much enjoyed. On the Saturday we also had a few carefully selected craft stalls selling gifts and cards.

The Festival concluded on the Sunday evening with a Christmas Carols service amongst the trees. It was a magical evening, a truly beautiful occasion and very well attended and enjoyed by everyone!

Everyone enjoyed the festival and we all felt it was very successful in meeting our initial objectives. Work for the 2026 festival is already underway!

**Christine Brown**

## Fete

Despite it being early in June, the weather did not look too promising for the fete in 2025, so we decided to take the fete indoors this year. This did need us to be quite inventive regarding the space available, however on the whole, it was a really good move.

Having the majority of the fete inside meant that much of the set-up could be done on the Friday evening, reducing the amount of time people were working on the Saturday. It was commented that the fete felt much cosier, and yet it never felt overcrowded. Some positioning of the stalls were not quite right (e.g. the toys and games were rather hidden in the choir stalls) and more seating needed to be available as people were sitting in the café for extended periods meaning other customers could not be seated. However, in the majority all agreed that moving inside was a good move and, with a few tweaks, a model that should be repeated going forwards.

We even managed to have our entertainments happening inside – including the usual Maypole dancing lead by Gemma Ball Badshot Lea Village Infant School, Brodie Mauluka, Farnham and Aldershot Karate Club and The Parish School of Dance.

Of course there were things happening outside. Christine Brown was keen that we had a pet show as part of the fete, and as long as I was not expected to organise this, we were happy with this idea. Christine took this on and it proved to be a real hit and a great attraction – definitely to be repeated next year!! We also had the BBQ and Badshot Lea Bloomers outside which both proved to be as popular as ever.

As always, I am so grateful for the generosity of everybody's time, energy, gifts, donations, goodwill, smiles, and money that make an event like this so successful, as well as the prayers that underpin all our efforts – and we had an abundance of all. So, a massive 'thank you' goes out to everyone who played a part – no matter how great or small!

So, our fete this year underwent a few changes – but they were changes that worked well so we should never be fearful of change! Not only did everyone have a great time, but the amount raised for parish funds was one of the best ever for a summer fete – so well done everyone!

I am hopeful that we will hear the cry of "Oyez, oyez, oyez!" again on 13<sup>th</sup> June this year if the Town Cryer helps to open the fete once more. We are looking forward to a repeat of the Pet Show with the added attraction of interactive animal experiences with Pony Pals trained therapy animals.

**Kris Lawrence**

### Social Committee

The 'social committee' is a group of people representing all three churches and is completely open to anyone that wants to come along to help plan, share their great ideas, offer to help or just get an insight into what we are considering. We tend to meet 3 or 4 times a year to plan, organise and review the various social events that we run.

We aim to meet in November to look at the year ahead and plan what events we would like to happen. We try to avoid running more than one event each month. This is both so as not to overload volunteers, but also to try to get a good number of people attending each event. We aim to run events that might also appeal to people that are not currently part of our worshipping community as we want everyone to know that they are always welcome.

Our social events also are a great help towards our fundraising and are generally run to raise funds for the Parish although they may also be targeted towards a specific church fund or charity.

Events last year included:

May: Plant Sale (our most successful ever!)

June: Fete

July: Jane Austin Day

Aug: Top Ten Summer favourites with BBQ and a group of pilgrim visitors

Oct: Harvest Supper

Nov: Badshot Lea Light switch-on (in combination with BLVIS)

Dec: Christmas Tree Festival

Jan: 12<sup>th</sup> Night afternoon tea

Feb: Little Bees Valentine Event

Feb: Lent Lunches

Mar: Beetle Drive

April: Quiz

As well as craft fayres in June, September, November and March.

I would like to thank everyone who helps in any way to make our social events such a success and welcome anyone to bring fresh ideas into the mix in our future planning.

**Kris Lawrence**

### Craft Market and Kitty Milroy Murals

The Craft Market at St Mark's took place four times in 2025 – March, June, September and November – with its usual mix of stalls, live music and a café, and a hard-working team including Bob and Lesley Shatwell, Jean Sanders, Katie MacDonald, Alison Ridgeon, Chriss Green, Nick Seversway and Jacqui Searle. Some are organising and playing the music, some are baking and/or running the kitchen, some put out and later take down tables and banners, and Jacqui helps me with the admin.

Of course, until late last year we also had Roger Sanders there every time, playing the saxophone with Saxooma, and we miss him hugely. We are very grateful to Saxooma that they still play for us. We are also grateful to those of you in the parish who bake cakes for the café, and those of you who come and browse the stalls.

The November market is always the busiest, but we had a dip with the June 2025 one so decided to drop the June one for 2026. In any case, it would have taken place the week

after the Parish Fete. So, our next one is on September 19<sup>th</sup> and will have a cosy autumnal theme.

### **Kitty Milroy murals**

The markets are also a time when people come especially to see the Kitty Milroy murals, those extraordinary and beautiful works of art which the parish is privileged to have. As well as being important in the development of mural art in the UK, they were Kitty's song of praise to God, and we want as many people as possible to enjoy them for as long as possible. Because of this, the money from the café goes into an account to pay for the upkeep of the murals and their environment. All the money from selling pitches to stallholders goes into parish funds.

Finally, a huge thank-you to the many stallholders who sell at the markets and who have also become part of our church community even without attending services. Their creative skill awes me every time and they mean that I can shop locally without worrying about whether my purchases were made in poor conditions and flown half-way round the world, then to be packaged and delivered by overstretched workers on minimum wage.

Shopping at the St Mark's Craft Market is good for the environment, for local business and for the soul!

### **Stella Wiseman**

### Groups

#### Arts at St Mark's

# Arts at St mark's





Arts at St Mark's is proof that everyone who enjoys making art is good at art. We are mixed ability and we meet at St Mark's, twice a month on the first and third Thursdays of the month (10.00 – midday). Everyone is welcome.

## **Lesley Shatwell**

### Connections

Connections continues to be a popular group and is well attended each week. Although the group is supposed to start at 10am there are often people sitting down with a cuppa and a slice of cake well before that, so keen are they to come along!

Since we introduced a donation pot, attendees have seemed to take a greater ownership of the group and are keen to help out. We have needed to introduce a rota for people to provide cake as some weeks we had so much cake we could not move!! And everyone always helps with the tidying up at the end of the session, for which we are very grateful. Val has also shown her talent as a great (and sometime hilarious) Bingo caller.

There is usually a church activity in the hall on the Monday evening before Connections, so to reduce our workload to set up, we now have tables and chairs left out for us – every little helps!

Although we don't look to provide 'special' events, we were fortunate to have the Farnham Malting's "Doorstep Duets" drama group come along to entertain us at the end of one of our sessions. Many of the connections group enjoyed staying on for this and a number of other people from the community also came to watch. We are hoping to have the Doorstep Duets come along again this year and will make sure they are advertised well so you can all come and experience their work.

The connections group are very caring towards one another, noticing and asking about regulars that are not present and generally looking out for one another.

So, the chat, laughter, quiz, bingo, jigsaw etc continue alternate Tuesday mornings – do come along and join us if you are over 50 and free!

## **Kris Lawrence**

### Knitting for Good Causes

On Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April, "Thursday Coffee morning" morphed into "Knitting for Good Causes". So far we have a group of 13 people who gather in St John's in the Community Space in the church and knit. We had people there from each of our three churches and also some who did not normally attend our churches, it is a community activity, anyone

from our community is welcome. This is a form of outreach. Jesus taught us to care for one another – not just people in our own family or our friends, not just people in our own churches but all people. Knitting for Good Causes is an activity where we are trying to support those who need our help. It is also a time when we can meet together, chat, drink tea and coffee and knit.

We are a mixed bunch as some are experienced knitters and others with little idea at all of how to knit, but they are learning. The experienced knitters are able to help those of us who are learning.

So – what is all this about – what are we knitting and why?

Originally we had been holding a Thursday Coffee morning on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month but only had a regular group of 4 and occasionally no-one turned up. It didn't really seem to be going anywhere and I felt it was because it had no focus.

There is a charity called BLISS and one of the things they do is knit clothes, bonding squares and blankets for tiny premature babies. We have joined up with BLISS and any garments that we knit will go to them and they then distribute all the items to hospitals.

When a baby is born prematurely the parents are not prepared and the clothes needed are smaller than those needed for full term babies, so even if the parents have some things ready – they will be too big.

In addition to the baby clothes we also knit fidget muffs. Patients with dementia tend to fiddle with things. They can become agitated and fiddling with things helps to keep them calm. Children with autism also tend to fiddle with things and so these muffs help them as well. Fidget muffs are knitted muffs onto which are sewn a variety of objects that can be fiddled with. They are also brightly coloured and so all sorts of odd pieces of wool can be used.

More Knitters will be very welcome – you don't have to attend church to join us – we meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of each month at St John's church from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

**Pamela Marsham**

# Youth and Children

## Little Bees

Great things are happening at Little Bees, the friendly group for 0 to 4yr olds and their carers.

As well as a craft activity every week we have soft play equipment, sensory activities and lots of toys.

Everyone enjoys some refreshments and a sing song at the end. The numbers have grown and lots of new families have joined, some of which have begun to come to bubble church.

We took part in the Christmas tree festival at St George's entering our own Christmas tree with bee decorations.

We held a very successful Valentines party at St George's with bees as the theme which was great fun and raised a lot of money which has enabled us to buy new equipment.

We have plans for more exciting activities in the future.

### **The Little Bees Team.**

## Friday Night Games

Friday Night Games started off as a table tennis club in 2019, closed during Covid, evolved into a 'youth club for all ages' once we reopened in 2021, and continues to evolve.

After a break in the autumn, we reopened as a joint project with Hale Community and Youth Centre, meeting every Friday apart from school holidays, one week in St Mark's and the next in the Youth Centre. Any age is welcome at St Mark's (primary age children must be accompanied by an adult) while it's for 11-18s at the Youth Centre.

One of the great benefits of this being a joint project is that we are working together with others to serve the community. We are also making the church an even more accessible place for people, and one of the Youth Centre's workers helps at Friday Night Games at the church and I help out when it is the Youth Centre's turn.

After some uncertainty, young people have been turning up and the week before I sat down to write this report, a group of them spent almost the whole two hours in the church, engaged in imaginary play in which they were took turns to be judge, jury members, defendants, witnesses, counsel for the prosecution, and even victims in a series of courtroom dramas. While some of the over-18s did jigsaws or played table tennis, several

of us found ourselves drawn in as witnesses, jury members or even a murder victim and his identical twin brother... It was a joyful, if somewhat unexpected, evening. We also ate pizza.

We have been very lucky to have been chosen to receive £1,000 from Farnham Town Council to help us buy some more equipment – board games especially suited for neurodivergent young people, a table football table – and pay for food, marketing and use of the space. It looks like the games night is here to stay for a while.

## **Stella Wiseman**

### **Good Friday Children's Workshop**

We had a very enjoyable children's workshop at St Mark's on Good Friday.

15 children aged between 2 and 10 attended with great enthusiasm.

We began with a lego film telling the story of Good Friday and Easter which they loved.

Then they divided into groups for the activities. Some went into the kitchen to make Easter nests' whilst others worked with Jaqui making a Van Gogh inspired banner for church.

There was a group sewing wallets which would have a little bible story inside at the end and some adding flowers to a wooden cross.

Parents and parishoners joined us for a short very lively service at 11.00 when the children brought in things they had made and talked about the significance of them.

We finished with coffee and hot cross buns

### **Open the Book**

“ Bringing the Bible to life for every child in every primary school”.

This is the aim of the Bible Society, and it is our aim when we present Bible stories in our local primary schools.

This is the eleventh year a group from our parish has been visiting Folly Hill Infant school, Badshot Lea Infant school and Tootsies nursery.

We visit regularly during school term time to present stories from the Old and New Testaments and have introduced hundreds of children to the timeless stories from the Bible.

We have a team of five enthusiastic, committed and resourceful story tellers -, Tricia Carter, Kris Lawrence, Bob and Margaret Skinner from Bethel Baptist Church and me! Helen Walter helps when she can.

We were all extremely saddened when one of our team, Carolyn Weston, died last May. Carolyn was a dynamic member of our team. She loved being with the children and they responded with enthusiasm to her infectious happiness.

Thank you Carolyn, we miss you very much.

We meet regularly to prepare the stories, using drama, costumes and props, and often include children from each school, which they enjoy very much.

We also meet from time to time for lunch or afternoon tea or morning coffee.

This year we decorated a Christmas tree to represent our group at the Christmas Tree Festival held at St. George's Church last December. This was a wonderful occasion.

We consider it a privilege and delight to be invited into our local schools to re-tell the ancient stories from the Bible.

Thank you team - you are all brilliant !

**Margaret Emberson**

## Appendix 1 Safeguarding

### Please read before PCC meeting along with the related attachments

1. **The Parish Dashboard has reached 86% progress.**
2. **Please review and approve the policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders** (I recommend reading pre meeting for quick decision on the day).
  - At the time of writing this report, PSO only has access to the photocopy version as attached. If a printable format cannot be sourced by the date of the meeting it will be signed later but please note in minutes that it was approved/discussed by the PCC.

### 3. Church Activities Risk Assessments

In progress, pending document access. No PCC action required.

4. **Outstanding Training as of 03/04/2026** - There are 14 people who require training now and 1 person due soon.

Please review this list of volunteers to ensure reminders will only be sent to current volunteers. Please also note their current role:

- Angela Hall (Please remove as standing down from PCC)
- Anne Boyman: Previous 'Adventurers leader' but group no longer active
- Possible candidate for 'Churchwarden' at St Mark's if voted in at the 2026 APCM
- Bob Shatwell (Please remove as standing down as Deputy Churchwarden and Health & Safety Officer)
- Bob Skinner (Open the Book Volunteer)
- Dave Walter (Please remove)
- Jacqui Searle (PCC Trustee)
- Jo Taylor (PCC Trustee)
- June Jasper (PCC Secretary and Choir Leader at St John's)
- Kay Eastman (Little Bees)
- Kris Lawrence (Churchwarden)
- Lesley Shatwell (Licensed Lay Minister)
- Margaret Emberson (Open the Book and Parish Choir Leader)
- Margaret Skinner (Open the Book)
- Pamela Marsham (Churchwarden)
- Richard Myers (Home Group Leader)

- Sophie Haber (PSO)
- Sylvie Burrows (PCC Trustee)
- Tricia Carter (Open the Book)
- Trish Tiddy (Little Bees)

Please also add

- Johanna Russell (Little Bees)
- Emma Taylor (Parish Administrator)

## 5. Optional webinar training for leadership team

### Neurodiversity and the church

#### Wednesday 15 April 2026, 12pm-1pm

“Helping your church become a fully welcoming and accessible community for neurodivergent people of all ages and their families”.

Please contact PSO for link to register.

## 6. **DBS - we are officially working with MSW as our new DBS check provider.**

There is currently 1 DBS check pending, we are waiting for the parish payment cards to be sent to enable us to pay the fee before this can be processed.

### **Sophie Haber**

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Bishop Sumner Education Foundation .....	22	Home Group.....	24
Bubble Church.....	16	Hygiene Bank.....	27
Choir .....	18	Knitting for Good Causes .....	34
Christmas Tree Festival.....	28	Lay Training Pathways.....	15
Churchwarden – Kris Lawrence .....	8	Little Bees .....	36
Churchwarden – Pamela Marsham .....	10	LLM with PtO Review .....	12
Clothing Giveaway.....	25	Musicians.....	20
Connections .....	34	Open the Book.....	37
Contemplative Prayer Meeting.....	17	PCC Secretary .....	13
Craft Market and Kitty Milroy Murals.....	31	Rector .....	4
Electoral Role.....	14	Safeguarding .....	39
Farnham Deanery.....	14	Social Committee .....	30
Farnham Mill Nursing Home.....	17	Trinity .....	16
Fete.....	29	Wednesday worship .....	17