

**ST MARK'S CHURCH, ENGLEFIELD**  
**in the Deanery of Bradfield**  
**ANNUAL REPORT of ENGLEFIELD PCC**  
**April 2024 – March 2025**

## ORGANISATION

### Benefice of Englefield

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>Rector</i>               | <i>The Reverend Julia Myles, Chair of PCC</i>         |
| <i>Parish Office</i>        | <i>St Mark's House, Englefield, RG7 5EP</i>           |
| <i>Bank</i>                 | <i>Lloyds TSB, 1-2 Market Place, Reading, RG1 2BQ</i> |
| <i>Independent Examiner</i> | <i>Mr F W Wells FCA</i>                               |

During the year the following served as members of the Parochial Church Council:

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Wardens</i>                          | <i>Paula Fenwick</i><br><i>Torquil Montague-Johnstone</i>   |  |
| <i>Representatives on Deanery Synod</i> | <i>Paula Fenwick</i><br><i>Torquil Montague-Johnstone</i>   | <i>from APCM 2023</i><br><i>from APCM 2023</i>   |
| <i>Elected Members</i>                  | <i>Daphne Boddy</i><br><i>Peter Hollands</i><br><i>Lorraine Dehn</i><br><i>Peter Haig</i><br><i>Ron Marillier (Treasurer)</i><br><i>Elizabeth Benyon</i><br><i>Richard Benyon</i><br><i>Linda Price</i><br><i>Aldo Guiducci, (Vice-Chair)</i><br><i>Catherine Haig</i><br><i>Penny Savage (Secretary)</i> | <i>from APCM 2023</i><br><i>from APCM 2023</i><br><i>from APCM 2023</i><br><i>from APCM 2023</i><br><i>from APCM 2023</i><br><i>from APCM 2024</i><br><i>from APCM 2024</i><br><i>from APCM 2024</i><br><i>until APCM 2025</i><br><i>until APCM 2025</i><br><i>until APCM 2025</i> |

This report covers April 2024 to March 2025.

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio, co-opted annually or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. The Council aims to maintain twelve elected lay representatives having declined to accept the default laid out in the Synodical Government (Amendment) Measure 2003. Eleven elected members served in the year. The PCC has met five times during the year with an average attendance of 75%. Members of the Standing Committee are the Rector, Churchwardens, Vice-Chairman, Patron, Treasurer and Secretary.

Sunday services are 'streamed' live to the St Mark's community on the weekly email circulation list (approximately 145 people) via a private YouTube link. The average number of hours watched via this link each week is between 3 and 7 with more viewings later in the day or week. The PCC is grateful to Carole Harris who reports hymns to Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI).

The Eucharistic Prayer of Common Worship for each season in the church calendar and the Book of Common Prayer (1st Sunday in the month) are used for Sunday services. A new set of Prayer Books was purchased with the help of donations from the congregation which reflect the change of monarch. The Council ensures that Bible reflections and studies are made known to the worshipping community. A reflection on the Sunday reading written by Aldo Guiducci is included on the weekly news sheet. The church is unlocked each morning

to enable visitors to look around the church. The visitors book records much appreciation of the peacefulness and beauty of the church building.

The Council aims to keep the church in good repair and to monitor the upkeep and appearance of the graveyard in accordance with the latest Diocesan and Parish regulations. The Burials Policy was updated on 16 September and will be reviewed every three years, in line with other policies. Quinquennial work is due to be completed on time in accordance with the Quinquennial requirements.

## **ATTENDANCE**

*(Last year's figures in brackets)*

The 2024 APCM was held on 13<sup>th</sup> May. Statistics for Mission are reported for the calendar year 2024, with Baptisms 11 (7); Marriages 10 (3); Funerals 4 (4). The average in-person attendance was 45 (44) adults, 4 (4) children, with connections online averaging 5 (6). In-person attendance (including children) at major festivals in 2024 was: Easter Day 154 (145); Harvest 93 (114); Christmas Day 172 (190).

This year a completely new electoral roll is being formed, and the PCC has taken reasonable steps to inform every person whose name was on the previous roll. Completion date is 17<sup>th</sup> April and the new roll will be published on 23<sup>rd</sup> April in church. Numbers on the new roll will be reported at the APCM on 11<sup>th</sup> May. Total on roll is **62** (96), **47** (77) of whom are not resident within the parish and **15** (19) of whom are resident.

## **ACTIVITIES during the year**

The PCC is confident that the congregation and local community are kept informed of church services, the school news and village events. A weekly news sheet (emailed to over 145 people), the website and Parish News provide up to date information on local issues, events and church news. Posters on the noticeboards advertise major services throughout the year. The Rector's sermons are posted on the website and YouTube, and news/events are posted on the St Mark's Facebook page.

Sunday Club is held in term time but the vestry is available for very young children each week. Colouring boards are prepared each week, but children are encouraged to go through to the vestry. A brief prayer starts the session followed by an engaging practical craft or play while the leader explains the Bible story. The Advent/Christmas season, Harvest and Mothering Sunday involved the children at different points where possible. The PCC is grateful for Saffy O'Sullivan and her team for this vital ministry.

The Rector takes a weekly assembly at Englefield Primary School and the Headteacher brings the School Choir to sing at the family services, eg Harvest, Mothering Sunday, Carol service. James Bamforth (previous school parent) was appointed Foundation Governor for Pangbourne, Sulham and Englefield to replace Chris Gittins, whose one-year term of office ended. Chris continues more appropriately as LA Governor and Chair.

The Rector took a three-month sabbatical (December-February inclusive) which the Diocese encourages for every ten years of ministry, the Rector having served for over 11 years). This sustained period away from normal duties promotes professional development and personal enrichment. The Reverend Alan Gates covered the three months as officiant and preacher on Sunday mornings, Christmas services and some school assemblies. The PCC and congregation were very appreciative of his ministry together with his wife, Margaret.

## **Special Services**

**Harvest** donations of food items went to the West Berkshire Foodbank and monies collected were given to PACT where match funding was available.

**'Remembering Loved Ones'** was held in November. It is a prayerful time of reflection when a candle is lit as each name is read out.

**Christmas Carols by Candlelight** was well attended, with mulled wine and mince pies served afterwards.

**Nativingle** (a crib service) was once again very popular with families and the PCC is grateful to Liz Wirth at the Village Stores for supplying 100 oranges and all the sweets for the Christingles which were assembled by a small group, mainly volunteers from Sunday Club. Richard Smith ensured the candlelit services were held safely and in accordance with our insurance policy.

**Ash Wednesday** reflection, prayer and ashing was the Rector's first service on her return

The PCC is grateful for its Deanery Synod representatives who report on a regular basis. Deanery events, including Let's Talk Theology (online during winter months) continue and are advertised to the church community.

The Spiritual Development Group (SDG) is a Deanery-wide gathering at which Carol Boulter is our representative. It oversees the 'Let's Talk Theology' gathering which meets monthly online in the winter, and at St Mary's Sulhamstead in May-October. Events included a one-day retreat in July led by Revd Peter Dewey at the Alnutt Almshouses at Goring Heath; in October a talk entitled 'An Exploration of Islam's Spiritual Tradition' was given by Imam Monawar Hussain; 'Why interfaith understanding is important in Today's World' by Emeritus Professor Eleanor Nesbitt was the talk given in March.

**Remembrance Sunday** observed two minutes' silence at 11am during the service. The speaker was Richard Benyon who spoke movingly of his experience visiting veterans who were being cared for by the charity, Help for Heroes.

We were pleased to welcome the Archdeacon of Berkshire, the Venerable Stephen Pullin, as the celebrant for the final service of the Rector's Sabbatical.

The Rector has been co-leading Sunday Evening Worship on the last Sunday of the month with Rev Martin Davy at Holy Trinity Theale to which members of St Mark's are invited.

The church was used by a film company in the summer in conjunction with places on the Englefield Estate.

## **MANAGEMENT**

The Safeguarding policy is reviewed annually and the relevant volunteers are reminded to keep training up to date using the Diocesan on-line modules. The Council is grateful to the Sunday Club leaders, the Safeguarding Officer and Parish Verifier for their support of this important area. DBS checks are made every 3 years. The Rector takes the role of Recruiter for DBS checks.

Health & Safety is reported at each PCC meeting and the Council is grateful to Paul Myles for his sound advice and attention to this area. One of the Health & Safety inspections highlighted erosion of gravel around areas of the pathway which could lead to serious mishaps and therefore additional pea gravel was laid. A bi-annual H&S walkabout is done with a member of the PCC. The top of the ramp leading to the toilet and the step immediately outside the choir vestry door are prone to being slippery in wet weather and are therefore cleaned regularly. Headstones which are noticeably leaning receive a 'push test' annually but to date none have posed concern. Fire extinguishers receive an annual inspection. All church portable appliances were safety tested with replacements made if needed.

The Churchwardens and Heating Sub-committee continue to liaise with the Englefield Estate and the Diocese in relation to replacing the current boiler which is nearing the end of its lifespan, although the annual inspection in October found it is functioning adequately for its age. Alternative 'green' options identified so far do not meet the benefits of the current system. An energy audit by Inspired Efficiency has been arranged for 1<sup>st</sup> April.

A new gauge for the oil tank has made it easier to read oil levels. The condition of the tank is inspected monthly by the Englefield Estate. There have been difficulties with regular billing from the energy supplier SSE which frustrates the monitoring of electricity charges. Having a Smart meter is not viable as it would require Wi-Fi connection which is not available during the week.

The Technical Team, Peter Hollands, Paul Myles and Ronan O'Sullivan, provide a much appreciated quality of sound in church and the online streaming service each Sunday morning. The video mixing station has now moved from near the priest's vestry door to being in front of the organ console. This frees up the chairs close to the vestry door for use by families with young children. The team has installed an additional church socket for camera and IT equipment to minimise the amount of extension cables from the pulpit down the length of the church. The kitchen (choir vestry) circuit has been split so that kettle & coffee machines are

powered independently to the technical power supply. Unfortunately the hearing loop wiring has been often disabled by vermin. Pest control measures are maintained and the wiring is repaired when necessary.

The six regular bell ringers meet on Tuesday evenings and Sunday mornings. New recruits are always welcome. The Tower is open for the annual Bradfield Ringing Course in August which helps to encourage new ringers. The Reading Branch holds several practices during the year at Englefield with ringers from different Towers to improve their skills. These are always popular and finish with a pub lunch. In 2025 the bell ropes should be replaced as they date from 2000, and generally last about 20 to 25 years depending on their use. The Tower fund helps to cover the costs of maintenance.

The Council is grateful to the ladies who provide the wonderful flower arrangements in church during the year and particularly at festivals. The volunteers who serve a delicious array of refreshments after the service are very much appreciated, as is the rota organiser. All those who serve on the rota are thanked for their faithful involvement with the church services throughout the year. The Council is grateful for the organists who play on a well established rota basis. The organ is serviced twice a year. Following her full-time appointment in Thatcham from May 2025 the PCC and congregation showed their appreciation to Gill Blythman for her wonderful playing with a bouquet of flowers at her last service in St Mark's in March.

The Council aims to provide 10% of its unrestricted income, averaged over any three year period, to specific outreach appeals. Donations were made to CAP, PACT, Embrace the Middle East and MNDA. Good stewardship of St Mark's is encouraged amongst the congregation and community. The QR code linking to our *JustGiving* page, the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS), and a 'tap to donate' terminal in church offer additional means to the traditional ways of giving. Members of the PCC participate in Ride & Stride for the Berkshire Churches Trust. The Royal British Legion, the Children's Society and Christian Aid were supported at Remembrance and Christmas respectively. Lorraine Dehn has kindly offered to assist the Treasurer with charities liaison and research.

Our parish share will remain the same for 2025 at £25,455 (the overall increase for the Deanery is 1.3%). Englefield was again willing to give up its community support allowance of £17,760 for the benefit of other parishes in the Deanery whose need is greater.

The 2024 Accounts as certified by the Accounts Examiner show that the Church is in a viable financial situation, with adequate provision made for major expenditure on Fabric, notably the replacement heating boiler. The accounts show a net surplus for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 of £2,767. Oliver Bodger is shadowing the Treasurer to fully familiarise himself with the treasury function for which the Council is very grateful.

Signed ..... Date .....