



**St PETER'S
& St PAUL'S**
HEXTABLE & SWANLEY VILLAGE

Additional APCM reports 2023

April 2023

- PCC Report to the APCM speaks in overview to the sweep of church life, as separately included.
 - *Other reports to be shared in person.*

Children's, family & youth ministry

. **Sunday Kids and Youth:** Since September, Our Sunday morning Kids and Youth groups have continued and have been exploring topics such as prayer, love, and an adapted version of the youth alpha course. We're also in the process of updating the youth room upstairs to make it a more fun and dedicated space for the 11-18 year olds in our church.

. **Parent's Babies and Toddlers** - Our babies and toddlers group launched in September and has been really popular in the community. We have around 16 families attending each week and new families joining all the time.

. **After School Club** - Our after school club also launched in September and we regularly see up to 40 children and their families from our local schools every week, taking part in a range of crafts, games and other activities.

. **Youth Hang Out** - Our Monday night youth club launched in September and has consistently been growing in popularity ever since. We limit our numbers to 25 each night, which always gets filled up and we have over 45 young people from Hextable on the register. It is a fun and safe space for young people to come and spend time with each other and the leaders who run it and take part in activities and games.

. **Youth Alpha** - Our first youth alpha started in January this year with 7 young people aged between 11-17. It has been an incredibly encouraging time each week with all of them keen to explore faith and ask questions about Jesus with the potential for it to expand further in the future!

. **Schools Work** - I have also had the opportunity to be going into two of the local primary schools each week. Tuesday mornings doing “collective worship” assemblies at St Paul’s and into Hextable Primary on Wednesday afternoons as part of their RE lessons. These are both great opportunities in different ways to talk to children about church, christianity, and Jesus and get them asking questions about who Jesus is, and what faith looks like.

. **One-Off events:** Our one off events such as the Light Party in October, Christmas parties and two Christingles at Christmas and the upcoming Easter Trail and Easter Parties have been great opportunities to connect with local families through these fun events whilst also being able to share a message of Jesus. Many of the families who come along to this are not only church families but those who come along to the babies and toddlers and after school clubs.



Next Door Hextable Café

This report supplements the PCC Report with its more detailed information on the structure, management, and operation of the café. On the 23rd March we celebrated the café’s first birthday and were pleased to welcome many of our sponsors, staff, volunteers, church members and Parish Council representatives to the evening event. Our Board Chair, Martin Andrews, thanked the various groups present for their contribution to our first year’s trading, which has exceeded all our expectations.

We have been so encouraged by positive feedback from numerous sources about our staff, the atmosphere, quality of food and service. We initially opened from Wednesday to Saturdays but from the beginning of January 2023, it has been open from Monday to Saturday with varied opening times and for occasional ‘Sunday Specials’ and other ‘pop up’ events. A huge thank you to all who are helping us in this process. The number of customers has consistently been very good with peak usage mirroring various activities in the building and locally.

The pop-up events such as games evenings, Sunday teas, and the Saturday brunch have proven to be very popular and profitable. These are to continue with possibly two brunch Saturdays a month and other pop-up events such as craft evenings, wreath making for Christmas etc. Importantly the Directors are keen to see more missional use of the café. It's quite clear that many have felt the warmth and love our café offers are expressions of our Christian faith. For some it's been an important first step in crossing the threshold into the church. There are cards available on the counter for people to complete if they would like pastoral support or prayer. The Directors were pleased to hear that Youth Alpha in the café had proved such a success. They hope this might lead to similar programmes in the café for adults and other missional opportunities. The PCC will be considering other missional use at their meeting on the 3rd April. Do let us have your suggestions too.

Financially, we are still in the process of separating accounts from the church, establishing a joint church/café VAT account with HMRC, where's there's more than a year's delay in processing applications, and sorting out other set-up and ongoing costs. Precise figures are not therefore possible at the moment, but we expect to at least break even. The Directors anticipate an annual turnover in the region of £150k going forwards. This is all very encouraging.

This success is largely due our excellent team of 8 staff led by Rachel Woodhouse, Café Manager, and Gemma Bradford, her deputy, together with the many volunteers from the church and community. We thank them for their sheer hard work and their many initiatives in creating this unique community hub at the heart of our villages and church. Please continue to support the café with your prayers and presence and if you can volunteer your services, please speak to Rachel Woodhouse, who would love to hear from you.

David Pearson: Company Secretary – Next Door Hextable Community Interest Company.



Churchwarden's Report 2023: church fabric report.

St. Peter's:

We've had a few teething problems with the annexe, most notably the underfloor heating not working during the coldest months of the year which meant we were unable to use the Upper Room or chapel. This has now been fixed. The heating system in the main hall is also on its last legs and despite the best efforts and many hours put in by John Turnbull, we will need to consider replacement soon.

We have a new roofer who has made temporary fix to the leaking flat roof above the lounge at St. Peter's, and will strip back and replace the whole thing in the spring.

The new chairs arrived in December, which have been a blessing to everyone who sits on them and some of the old chairs have been donated to local charities that needed them.

In February this year the PCC agreed to accept a quote for the refurbishment of the old schoolhouse kitchen and toilets, and work will begin on this in April.

Huge thanks need to go on record to John Turnbull and Mandy King, who have continued their tireless work at St. Peter's, installing CCTV throughout the site and the carpark lighting, amongst many other jobs and fixes that crop up. Their willingness to drop everything and come to our aid when we're stuck is just brilliant, and we honestly don't know what we'd do without them!

St. Paul's:

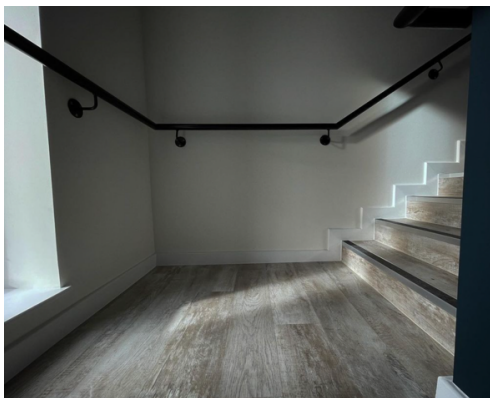
As last year, would like to put on record our thanks to David and Pauline Pearson, and Vivian and Barbara Ramsey who do so much in the stewardship and care of St. Paul's, and to Jane Roberts for the beautiful flower arrangements. Also thanks go to Andy and Liz Lawrence who assist Johnny so brilliantly with burials of ashes at St. Paul's.

There are several issues at St. Paul's that need attention, namely the woodpecker holes in the bell tower, the dodge electrics and the roof is in need of repair, especially on the south side. These are all on the radar and a plan of action will be needed before the next quinquennial inspection.

There are also plans proposed by Vivian Ramsey to have the clock restored to working order.

All fabric, goods and ornaments are present and correct.

Sue would like to give her personal thanks to so many people who help out at the drop of a hat when she calls, volunteer on our church teams and generally help keep our church running. You know who you are, thank you so, so much.



Life Groups

These are small to medium-size communities who meet to be in God's word and with each other. Sometimes real life becomes a challenge, so meeting in a smaller, safe and secure relaxed groups helps. These are midweek daytime and evening settings with content accompany a deeper engagement with Sunday's teaching.

Each week or fortnight the group meet, cover the sermon-based questions, pray and check in with each other. Life Groups have continued to progress well over the past year. Be in touch if you'd like to know more either direct to David & Jeanna Rebel in their valued coordination of this area, or via our church office.



Pastoral Care Team

It has been good to serve the church and Parish residents by prayer, support and in practical help, throughout the year. The number of requests for prayer and for help in other needs has risen sharply, compared with previous years. Liz Warwick, one of the team members, has kept a close eye on the statistics which show that we prayed on average for 27 people or issues each month in the year to 28 February 2023 compared to 18 the previous year. There has been a steady increase throughout the year.

The majority of requests, which arrive via Sue in the church office, are for healing prayers for family members and friends. Some are part of the church, but not all – we will pray for anyone requesting it. We have seen some amazing recoveries following accidents, healing from physical or emotional issues, mental illness and following surgical procedures. God is good! We continue to pray on for those grieving the loss of a loved one, the end of a marriage, the grief of a family situation, for the lonely, for those awaiting surgery for serious conditions.

Sometimes, people in the community or the church need support in other ways. This year, with the co-operation of the Church and Community Compassion fund, we have been able to give financial help to some needing basic necessities for living. Others have received furniture, bedding and kitchen utensils/ equipment. We do thank those in the church who have given food/goods in emergencies or donated money to the Compassion Fund. The total amount of monetary gifts over the year was £3704 and 47 people have benefitted from the compassion fund.

The Pastoral Care Team comprise Angela Chapman, David Corbett, Johnny Douglas, Karen Ledger, Anne Philpott, Debbie Sams, Liz Warwick and Pauline Pearson (Pastoral Care Team Co-ordinator). We promise to pray promptly when requests are made and will respond quickly in other situations. Please do ask us to pray! All requests are circulated to the team on a secure Whatsapp thread so that those who are able pray immediately and others add prayers as they can. You can contact us via the church office or on our direct email – pastoralcare@stph.org.uk.



Prayer

God has blessed us with such a variety of ways we can meet with Him in prayer. Over the last year we have been renewing and refreshing our prayer life:

We reintroduced our pre-service prayer time - an exciting opportunity to pray for the service and listen to what God may want to share with us.

Our early morning Wednesday prayer at 8am Wednesdays continued to be a powerful time of prayer for the needs of the church and people we know and love. This now meets in person in the Café at NDH.

Our contemplative prayer meetings continued to meet at St Pauls on Tuesdays at 10am.

In May we held our first creative prayer experience linked with Thy Kingdom Come, which included a personal prayer journey, praying for people meet with Jesus, for healing, our community and the world.

In January, our sermon and Lifegroup series focused on renewing and refreshing our prayer life, using The Prayer Course as our foundation.

In March we started our first quarterly "Presence" prayer and worship meeting - an opportunity to pray for local and national/global needs but also to allow space for God to move, which He did on this occasion after having prayed for children and young people.

Over the year we have been moving forward towards relaunching a Prayer Ministry Team. This has included a 3 session training series, developing a Policy and Core model for Prayer Ministry and a recruitment process. The policy and core model document has been agreed in general by the PCC, subject to one further clarification. This will enable us to re-establish a team in the coming year.

Thanks to Angela Chapman, Sally Minett and David Pearson in particular for their ideas and expertise in the development aspects around prayer and to Lifegroup leaders, the Pastoral Care Team, Angela Willard (Contemplative Prayer) and many others for their ongoing commitment to prayer. With thanks, Steve Webster



Quiet Space

The Quiet Space group meet at St. Paul's every Tuesday morning between 10 –12 am. We start with a cuppa and chat then someone does a short 'lead in' (usually a psalm or scripture) to 30 minutes of silent, contemplative prayer. During this time we either sit separately in the church or go outside. We then meet together with another cuppa and share any thoughts we may have had. It is often interesting at how God has led us and spoken to us as individuals and as a group.

If you would like to join us you will be most welcome, Angela Willard



Vicar's Report

The life of God's kingdom requires weakness...

I have encouragement almost hourly in the life and ministry of our authentic, vibrant and growing church family. Beyond in the initial priorities in my first five years, we are further growing into the possibilities of what it means to be a community church in this precious patch of NW Kent. The reach of Sunday life, community presence, huge opportunities through our occasional offices, connections, care and compassion alongside the presence and ongoing potential of Next Door Hextable make a kingdom-shaped difference, everyday.

Some of the highlights of the last year are:

- Increased health and hunger in the Holy Spirit.
- Growth and newness in existing and new congregational life.
- Growing into the life, presence and potential of the Annexe and cafe.
- Variety and vitality in worship, deeper word & wider renewal of community life.
- Women's ministry being reimagined and restarting later this month.
- Men's ministry growing with events throughout the year.

- Lifegroups continuing to grow and new groups are established regularly.
- The preaching series has been varied and challenging preaching input with new and guest preachers.
- Much life, growth and encouragement at St Paul's in our 0830 and new midweek congregation.
- Other regular pop-up events and services that reach new people and widen our capacity
- Growing new voices, leadership and service across our parish witness.
- Congregations are consistently seeing new life, with others joining our church family.
- Wonderful children's, family & youth ministry in our church, community and school spaces.
- Numbers continue to rise with engaging positively and thriving.
- Youth Alpha was a pioneering and vital first: there'll be much more!
- Endless first conversations and connections beyond cold contact...
- Life Groups continuing to progress with life and fruitfulness.
- Continuing opportunities for huge community & network impact through christenings, weddings & funerals.
- Vividly knowing God's felt presence: signs of awakening!
- Continued impact and discipleship life through preaching and pastoring.
- Preaching team leaping forward... with new voices adding lots!
- Ordination pathway for future vicars, spiritual direction and chaplaincy with up to four candidates atm.
- More than eleven other churches consistently served through our Overflow congregation.
- We're about to make two key part-time appointments in site caretaker and worship co-ordinator.
- Invitations for continued community leadership in our school communities, with staff and leadership support, and regular input with regional government.
- It's lively and brutal: both the best and worst of times!
- *More salvations, health and growth are desired.*

Don't let weakness, flesh or the unknown scare you. **God doesn't want us to be strong, so much as Him our strength.** And yes weakness is always uncomfortable, yet it was the way of Paul... See 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 for more!

I am thankful for you...

Your brother in Christ,
Revd Johnny Douglas

