

**SAINT MARK'S PARISH CHURCH
ALMA ROAD, REIGATE, SURREY**

**(Registered Charity No. 1134121)
www.stmarksreigate.co.uk**



**DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
CROYDON EPISCOPAL AREA
ARCHDEACONRY OF REIGATE**



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

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THE VICAR'S LETTER

Dear friends,

The year 2023 was marked by a gradual numerical increase in attendance at worship at all services. Apart from the 10am Eucharist, attendance now exceeds numbers in 2019; the 10.00am service has seen a very slow growth and by the end of the year was approaching pre-pandemic numbers. The number of regular worshippers online has been static, and research has shown that this is valued by those unable to attend church because of infirmity.

On the first Sundays in January, February and March, all services were held in the Hall so that the Church was not heated on these Sundays as part of our aim to reduce our carbon footprint. November and December were also included. In February the bird netting to the Belfry was replaced and the internal spaces in the Tower were professionally cleaned to remove pigeon guano.

Lent, Holy Week and Easter were celebrated in full with good attendances. In May we once again had the Rogation Sunday walk "Beating the Bounds" by a small group of walkers. At the APCM Ben Read and Louise Wallis were elected for a further year as Churchwardens. Terrence Hancock and Mel Crighton continued as PCC Secretary and Treasure respectively, and I thank them all for their wise counsel and support. In May we also joined in with the Coronation celebrations of King Charles and Queen Camilla.

Community Lunch was restarted in the Spring and attendance has increased month on month. My thanks to Paul Selvadurai and the team of volunteers for their hard work. However, with this, and other areas of church life, we are finding it difficult to find willing volunteers. We are not alone in this as many churches and charities have been struggling in the same way since the Pandemic. This will remain a challenge in 2024.

In July we held a family barbeque at Messy Church which was very busy. So many people volunteer to help with Messy Church ably led by Rachel Potter. In October we held an all-age Harvest Thanksgiving Service followed by a Harvest Supper.

Over the summer we carried out improvement works to the Hall which included sanding and sealing the floor, redecoration of the walls and woodwork in the Hall, Foyer and Toilets, and in October replacing the flooring in the Foyer. Hall use has increased over the year.

Our services for All Souls', Remembrance Sunday, Advent and Christmas were well supported and followed the pattern of previous years. I am grateful to all the volunteers that deliver our Christmas and Easter cards giving details of all our services.

In December the Winter Night Shelter run by Renewed Hope resumed after a break of several years. It quickly showed that there is a real need for shelter and housing in this area.

There are so many people who work behind the scenes, and I thank them all. The parish would not function without the hard work of our Parish Administrator and my PA, Alexia Hartman. She works far more than her contracted hours and is always available to help. My thanks to her, especially as she has now taken on the responsibility of being Deanery Secretary and PA. The Ministry Team consisting of me, Reverend Reg Grant, Ian Archer, Sarah Cousins and Susannah Dyde works as a unit. My thanks to them for their hard work and support.

We look forward to the next year. The Church is the people that gather together at our various services and we will be looking to see how we can make more connections between our different congregations.

With my best wishes.



THE READERS

Readers are lay people from all walks of life, who are called by God, theologically trained and licensed by the Church to preach, teach, lead worship and assist in pastoral, evangelistic and liturgical work. It is a historic lay order of ministry that dates back for over 150 years.

Ian Archer, Sarah Cousins and Susannah Dyde are privileged to be Readers in St Mark's. Between us we cover many areas of ministry in the church.

Ian preaches and spends a considerable amount of time visiting the sick and the housebound and taking them home communion. He enjoys visiting everyone on his electric scooter and is rarely put off by the weather.

Sarah preaches, co-leads the Craft and Spirituality Group and runs SMART for the retired members of our congregation.

Susannah preaches and leads many Family services and Messy Church services. She also leads a Home Group, the Thursday morning Prayer Meeting and T-Time Tales for the younger children.

Ian Archer, Sarah Cousins, Susannah Dyde

THE SERVERS

Once again the serving team have done an excellent job this year. Our numbers are low, but most services are supported by one or two servers. On rare occasions we have even managed a "full" team of three or four!

An enormous thank you to everyone, and especially for those who serve at the 8.00am and mid-week services.

We would be happy to welcome new members onto the team. No experience necessary! Even once a month would be greatly appreciated. Just come and say hello after a 10.00am service.

James Tanser, Sacristan

SUSTAINABILITY AT ST MARK'S

The Sustainability Committee continued to focus on energy efficiency this year, but also started to look more widely at other sustainability projects.

Green Sundays have continued, with services on the first Sunday of winter months held in the hall to reduce carbon emissions, save money, and raise awareness of the Church of England's commitments to reach Net Zero by 2030. St Mark's has also **switched energy provider to Octopus Energy** for the Hall gas supply and for electricity supply to the entire site. This has resulted in a 7081kg reduction in CO2 emissions – the equivalent of planting 3541 trees.

The Committee has explored options to install **Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers** in the car park, with a view to optimising 'excess' energy provided by the solar panels during the day, when electricity use on the site is lower. The right installation model could also potentially generate some income for St Mark's. Some complications around feasibility as well as upfront

costs have so far made this proposal impractical to progress, but the Committee will continue to explore any suitable opportunities as the EV charging market develops.

Beyond energy efficiency, the Committee has started to look at opportunities for St Mark's to move towards becoming a **zero waste** church. This would primarily improve sustainability but could also over the longer term reduce some costs as well. The Committee has contacted a local organisation that provides products made from more sustainable materials, and in returnable packaging, and is currently working with them on developing a list of groceries and cleaning products that we could source from them. In addition, **green guidelines** are now being used in the gardens, meaning that weedkiller is only used on paths, and all plant improvement methods are now sustainable.

The progress made on sustainability this year contributes to the **Eco Church** credentials that St Mark's is working towards and we hope to be in a position to obtain silver status next year.

Sophia Oliver

CRAFT AND SPIRITUALITY GROUP

This year we have continued our monthly meetings in members' homes, beginning and ending with prayer. New members are always welcome, not only knitters. If you do any kind of craft that can be held in your lap, then do come and join us.

*Cherith Baldry
Sarah Cousins*

ELECTORAL ROLL

If your name is on the Electoral Roll then you are entitled to vote at the Annual Parish Church Meeting and in this way to feel much more a part of St Mark's Church. Once you reach your sixteenth birthday you are eligible to make an application. The only stipulation is that you must have been baptised, though not necessarily confirmed. You need to live in the parish to go on the Roll immediately, (please ask me if you have any doubts about where the parish boundaries lie) or if you live outside the parish and have habitually worshipped at St Mark's for six months. You can apply by filling in the simple, self-explanatory form available from me or from the Parish Office. Completed forms should please be handed to either myself or to the Parish Office.

The Roll is normally on display in the church and contains only names. It is open until two weeks before the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, when it will be closed for revision.

At the beginning of 2023 we had 164 names on the roll. During the year six have sadly died and one new name has been added. The roll at 31 December stands at 159.

So as to keep the Roll as up to date as possible I would be grateful to be told of any changes in address, or people moving away from the parish, as I do not always hear of these details immediately.

*Terrence Hancock
Electoral Roll Officer*

SOCIAL EVENTS

Although we do not have a formal Social or Events Committee at present (something we hope to re-establish in 2024) many volunteers came together to prepare food and refreshments for the various events at St Mark's.

In May we celebrated the King's Coronation with Afternoon Tea enjoyed by over sixty people followed by an All-Age service in Church. Thanks to everyone who made cakes and scones and to those who served the tea and helped set up and clear away afterwards.

In October our Harvest Supper was again held after the monthly family service with over 70 people of all ages socialising together whilst enjoying cottage pie and chocolate or lemon tart with vegetarian, vegan, gluten free and dairy free options. Thanks to everyone who was involved in preparing and cooking the food as well as setting up the tables, arranging flowers, serving food and drinks and of course washing up and clearing away afterwards.

A team of volunteers prepares a hot meal for around 50/60 people as part of the monthly Messy Church services allowing families to enjoy quality time together.

Coffee and biscuits were served after the All Souls service in November giving everyone time to reflect and remember loved ones.

In the run up to Christmas the parents of Holmesdale and Micklefield children were offered tea and coffee before watching the nativity performances and they were very grateful to be able to come in from the cold and enjoy a warm drink.

Once again our Christmas Carol Service attracted a large congregation and we served mulled wine and mince pies to around 100 people in the hall afterwards.

Thank you to all who have volunteered this year to make these events a success and give our church community the chance to join together in social activities. Special thanks go to Nigel Perkins for organising coffee each week and to all the many helpers who volunteer giving everyone the opportunity to catch up with friends after the weekly service.

All these social events require a team effort and it would be great to be able to arrange more events in 2024. If this is something with which you would like to get involved please get in touch with me or any member of the Parochial Church Council.

Melanie Crighton

MUSIC AT SAINT MARK'S

At the 10.00am Sung Eucharist on Sunday mornings St Thomas Mass setting written by David Thorne is used. This is a particularly good setting for congregational singing and indeed is now used by many churches in preference to settings by John Rutter and Richard Shepherd.

We are very grateful for the help provided by members of St Mark's Singers. This was particularly welcome on three special occasions during the past year – Easter Sunday and the Carol Service in December.

I am very grateful to David Lear who plays the piano at the monthly Taizé service and to Toby Garrod who looks after the music on the 2nd Sunday morning of each month giving me an opportunity for a Sunday "off duty".

Other musical events take place too. Cantamus have made a couple of appearances during the year as have the Dunottar School Choir. We had four visits during the year from the St Mary's Choir who came to sing Choral Evensong for us. Very rarely do we get an opportunity to hear the choral music of the great English composers – William Byrd, Thomas Weelkes, Charles Stanford, Edward Elgar to mention just four. So it is good that St Mary's come along to give us a chance to hear music sung to a cathedral standard.

St Mark's Singers

St Mark's Singers has now been established for over eight years. We meet on a Monday evening and welcome anyone who enjoys singing. We have a range of abilities from former cathedral choristers to those who have never been in a choir before. We now have over 20 regular attendees and sing once a month at Sunday Eucharist. We sing a range of music from traditional pieces to spirituals and gospel, and this year we have again been singing some secular music for non-service performances.

We entered the Reigate and Redhill Music Festival again this year in May and were awarded merit plus for our performances of 'Love Divine' and 'Yesterday'.

In September we took part in the SMOATathon singing a range of pieces which were warmly received – Love Divine, Something Inside so Strong, For the Beauty of the Earth, He will hold me fast, The Prayer, And so it Goes and finished off with a medley of O When the Saints.

Many of us joined the choir for the funeral of our dear friend Janet Burns who sang with us for several years and had been a member of St Mark's Church choir for over 40 years. The service included Ave Verum which was one of her favourites.

At Christmas we sang at the Carol Service and at the First Communion of Christmas on Christmas Eve.

In 2024 we will again be entering the music festival and hope to be able to put on a concert later in the year.

We would love to hear from anyone, young or old, who would like to join us. Please contact either Toby Garrood (tobygarrood@aol.com) or Mel Crighton (colmel.crighton@gmail.com).

Terrence Hancock
Organist & Choirmaster

SAINT MARK'S HOME GROUP

A Church Home Group is a group of people who are keen to learn more about the Bible and to experience the fellowship and friendship that can come from meeting regularly together. We meet every two or three weeks on a Thursday evening and have a party at the end of every term! We start with a welcome cup of coffee, courtesy of our hosts, Nigel and Barbara Perkins, and then we are lead in Bible Study, following a Study Guide, on a book from the Bible. The discussion that follows is lively and enables us to question what we believe and to ask and answer questions. We end our meeting by praying for each other and for the church and the world. We are a completely mixed bunch of people of all ages and we gain a tremendous amount from listening to each other and contributing to the discussion. We also become great friends and are there for each other in times of trouble.

I would highly recommend that everyone signs up for a Home Group. It can be at any time of day, depending what the members want. If you are interested, please tell Fr Martin.

Susannah Dyde

SAINT MARK'S PARISH MAGAZINE

The Parish Magazine has continued to maintain a primarily digital format in 2023, with printed versions distributed on request. The content structure has remained consistent with the last few years including News from the Church of England, Church News, articles and stories, a book review, readers recipe and puzzles.

In 2023, the magazine gained the support of one new advertiser and sadly lost the support of another. One advertiser changed their advert design at the end of 2023. Four pages of the magazine are now taken with advertising. Continued thanks to Jane Artis for managing the magazine advertising.

The magazine has continued to benefit from the support of articles and stories from Harry Ingram and Ian Archer. Thanks to both for providing interesting and thought provoking content every month throughout 2023.

For 2024, the St Marks Parish Magazine, will benefit from a new editor, as Alexia Hartman has taken on the role, replacing me after five years.

Helen Starmer

YOUTH WORK AT SAINT MARK'S

Parent and Toddler Group

The Parent & Toddler Group seems to be growing from strength to strength. We now have a healthy number of regular attendees and a few new attendees each month. The group hosted another successful Christmas Party for the children (and parents/carers) which included singing and storytelling by Nicki Day and Graham Humphries as Father Christmas. Unfortunately, due to work commitments we have lost some wonderful volunteers and are struggling to replace them. Thank you to Timothy Warren for his support on Monday mornings with setting up the hall.

Alexia Hartman

T-Time Tales

T-Time Tales has been slowly picking up since Covid. We now have a small but regular group of very enthusiastic children, and their parents or nannies, every Wednesday afternoon after school. The children, mostly from Holmesdale School, rush in and head straight for the biscuits and drinks. Then while Alexia Hartman serves the adults with cups of tea the children start singing songs, led by Susannah and Keith Dyde and accompanied by Fr Martin. They hear a story from the Bible accompanied by slides and then sing more songs, which become progressively livelier and more energetic. Half an hour later it's all over and they rush home for tea with cries of, 'Good bye. See you next week!'

Messy Church

2023 was another eventful year for Messy Church. Thanks to an enthusiastic and creative bunch of volunteers, there was a wonderful variety of activities and crafts on offer. As in previous years, these took place alongside the services and delicious meals provided by the talented team in the kitchen. Scavenger hunts around the church and edible crafts including biscuit spiders and sweetie flower bouquets proved to be particularly well received by the children. We were also able to decorate the church with some of their artistic creations.

The Good Friday Messy Church was as popular as ever and we were lucky to have some teenage volunteers who brought great energy to the session. Volunteers found lots of ways to lead crafts and activities to tell the Easter story in an innovative and engaging way.

The summer party was a fun get-together and a chance for families to catch up before the holiday break. The kitchen team put on a delicious BBQ in the garden and the sun shone for us. Children were invited to plant a seed in a DIY pot and water them over the summer using decorated tetra pack watering cans.

Christmas Messy Church went well although due to a reduced number of volunteers we kept it simple and sadly weren't able to do a nativity. Thankfully there have been a few new volunteer sign ups more recently so we are looking forward to planning a few more things in 2024.

A special mention to Stephanie Lawrence who has taken on the role of welcoming families to Messy Church every month. Thank you. With a recent increase in the number of families attending Messy Church regularly, we are looking forward to getting to know them better. Huge thanks as always to a wonderful group of volunteers. These important sessions just wouldn't have happened without you.

Rachel Potter

ST MARK'S COMMUNITY LUNCH

The Community Lunch team and event grows from strength to strength, with now a regular attendance of circa 60 people including helpers. Additionally, the number of drivers has increased, which now allows for us to have back up drivers. However, we still rely on one pair of cooks for all meals, which is unsustainable, and so the search continues for more volunteers.

The use of social media i.e. Facebook has helped with bringing more attention and interest from the wider community and we will continue this regular update on this channel.

From a financial perspective, although the accounts for the year are not completed, I am confident that we make enough money by charging £7.50 per head to mean we can give Christmas gifts and Easter eggs and still break even. I'll review this position with Mel in the coming months.

Finally I would like to thank everyone involved in this activity as it genuinely brings so much joy to the people in our Community.

Paul Selvadurai

THE PARISH OFFICE

Communication with the parish continues to be mostly online via email. The weekly News Sheet is emailed every Friday and a link to the Parish Magazine is emailed once a month with a small number of parishioners receiving hard copies.

We have managed to continue to keep our printing costs low with most of our printing coming from other local churches and groups.

Even with the slight price increase to our hall hiring rates our hall bookings for children's birthday parties continue to be popular. We have also had a few new regular hall hirers which has filled up some gaps in the hall calendar. We also continue to have smaller groups who return once a year to hire the hall for their AGM.

It was another busy year in the office which could not have been as smooth running as it was without the continued support from Fr Martin and his team.

Please continue to contact the office via phone, email or in person if you have query or need support.

Alexia Hartman
Parish Administrator

PARISH SAFEGUARDING

St Mark's is committed to providing an environment that is welcoming and respectful to all. We continue to strive that all safeguarding matters raised will be dealt with in an efficient and appropriate manner. Volunteers at St Mark's Church are expected to complete DBS checks and safeguarding courses therefore communication between myself and various group leaders at St Mark's remains vital to ensure these are carried out where applicable.

Alexia Hartman
Parish Safeguarding Officer

SAINT MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST (SMOAT)

In 2023 we gave away £21,500 to 12 projects in seven different countries. This amount includes £8,500 given to the Christmas Appeal 2021. We also received a modest bequest from one of our long-standing supporters.

The spread of countries we have given to this year has not been as wide as last year. However, we consider many factors when we are deciding which organisations and projects to support. Basic need is one of the top influences. This will explain the smaller spread. This year, we have also given to five new organisations to us. We take enormous care to make sure the organisations are legitimate and meet our remit and part of this process is forging good, personal relationships with those organisations so that we can keep communications open at all times and seek complete transparency.

In March we held our ever-popular Beetle Drive which, once again, was very well attended and enjoyed by all ages. The organisation we were supporting was Project Uganda, one of our long-standing partners. Like many charities, they struggled through Covid and all their work ceased until recently. We were able to send them £1,500 towards a rainwater harvesting project in one of its schools in Uganda. It is all too easy to take for granted the plentiful supply of water we have in this country. The rainwater harvesting system erected at the school will not only provide clean drinking water, but it will also improve sanitation and limit the spread of disease.

We ran another SMOAT@Home afternoon tea in July and delivered scones all over Reigate and into Redhill. The event was on the day of the Men's Final at Wimbledon and it is hoped that people were able to watch the tennis whilst eating a beautiful homemade scone! With the proceeds, we sent £1,500 to Cecily's Fund, an organisation new to us which had taken over one of our partners, Kaloko Trust. With the money, they were able to provide books and educational provisions to two schools in the Kitwe District and Luansobe in Zambia.

In September we held a SMOATathon, a wonderful event filled with hours of continuous music and entertainment. We were able to send £2,000 to the Tea Leaf Trust, another new organisation for us, to provide training to 378 students who would then go on to teach English to 4,000 students in 73 centres in Sri Lanka.

All other money given away was funded by regular giving and supported the following projects:

We gave £1,000 in February to Afrinspire to fund the building of a shallow well and latrines at Chibondo School in the Lunga region of Zambia. We acted as match funders as part of the Big Give.

In August we gave £1,000 to Workaid to fund the development of infrastructure for vocational training in three rural schools in Zambia.

£1,000 was donated in October to Team Kenya (another new organisation for us) to provide STEM education for a girls' empowerment project in Ndhiwa, Kenya. This was part of the Big Give, so our donation was doubled by match funding.

We gave £2,000 in November to East Africa Children's Project to help finance the build of a dormitory in a school in Uganda; we gave £1,500 to African Promise (another new organisation for us) to provide funding towards the cost of a school garden project in

South East Kenya; we gave £1,000 to Rainforest Saver (another new organisation for us) for inga alley cropping, which facilitates farming in Cameroon; and finally we gave £500 to Deki (another new organisation to us) towards the building of healthcare hubs in Togo. The latter two projects were also part of the Big Give.

As you can see, the majority of the money we give away is from our regular givers to the tune of around £11,000 (we top up all fund-raising events too). If you don't already, please consider giving regularly, it makes such a difference to what we are able to give.

On that note, I will take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported us this year. Without you, we wouldn't be here!

Barbara Perkins
Chairman

SAINT MARK'S AFTERNOON RETIREMENT TEAM (SMART)

SMART is a social group for older people to meet and enjoy a varied monthly programme, in the church hall or on occasional outings. SMART is open to all aged over sixty-five in the community, so you do not have to be a member of St Mark's to come. Smart, is run by Sarah Cousins, a Reader at St Mark's, and a retired NHS mental health chaplain.

The highlights of the year were not one but two trips out for tea at Knights' Café Betchworth, as well as the familiarity of well-loved carols at Christmas hosted by Richard Salmon with Fr Martin Colton on the piano.

SMART could not happen without the staunch support of Frances Wood, Sue Hill Smith, Bruce Cousins and Marion Wall who give generously of their time and are always available, ensuring that all the essential things get done. My thanks also go to Tina Read and Richard Salmon who regularly give lifts to bring folk to the meeting.

Sadly, we said a final goodbye to Alec Parish, who for many years helped with driving each month and was an unfailingly cheerful and encouraging team member. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

We have welcomed several new members this past year and are always happy to welcome more new members. Or if you would like to help with giving lifts, without which we cannot run, or are interested in any aspect of SMART, please come and have a chat!

Sarah Cousins

DONATING TO THE WORK OF ST MARK'S

All donations made to St Mark's are gratefully received and are so important to enable us to carry out our ministry and to run and maintain our buildings. Although we rely substantially on the time and talents of many volunteers, ensuring the various activities of the church run smoothly, the financial obligations of our church are over £200,000 per year.

Regular Giving

Regular donations are so important to enable us to plan for the coming year in the knowledge that the funds will be available when required. We aim to raise around £90,000 per year from regular donations including Gift Aid. To make regular giving easier we have joined a national scheme supported by the Diocese - the **Parish Giving Scheme** (or PGS for short). We receive 100% of your donation and Gift Aid is automatically claimed for us which reduces administration. More information can be found on our website. **Please consider making a regular donation via the PGS using [this link to join](#):**

If you already donate regularly by standing order we are hoping that you will make the switch. If you would prefer to join by telephone or post then please contact me for details.

Gift Day

Each year in May we have a period of Annual Giving which provides an opportunity for everyone to consider how they can contribute to our church and we aim to raise around £25,000 each year. This amount is needed to supplement regular giving, collections at services and other income.

One off Giving

One off donations can be made on-line through our give-a-little (please see our website) or at services using the card machine or in cash/cheque. We do incur finance charges for donations made in this way so please consider a regular donation through PGS if you can. Thank you.

Mel Crighton,
PCC Treasurer,
Email treasurer@stmarksreigate.co.uk

A LASTING GIFT FOR ST MARK'S CHURCH

Leaving a legacy

Legacy gifts can make a huge difference to churches. Each year, gifts in wills, ranging from £100s to £100,000s are received. Faithful witnesses leaving generous legacies have enabled churches to invest in their buildings, pioneer new ministries, and sustain a welcoming presence in their communities.

Why should you write a will?

Writing a will means you choose:

- How you would like to share your property and possessions;
- Who you would like to look after any children under the age of 18;
- How to support any charities or churches that are important to you.

Without a will, these decisions will be made according to pre-ordained rules, and by the courts, which may be different from your wishes. Leaving a will gives you peace of mind and lifts a burden from loved ones after you are gone.

To make it easier the Church of England has partnered with Farewill, the UK's favourite will-writer, so anyone can write a simple will online for free, in as little as 30 minutes. You can find out more by visiting <https://farewill.com/southwarkdiocese>.

We strongly advise seeing a solicitor for more complicated wills, or for people wishing to review their existing will or add a codicil.

A gift for future generations

After you have made provision for your family and friends, we hope you'll also consider leaving a gift in your will to St Mark's. A legacy is a valuable expression of how meaningful a church has been during your time there. It's a way to give thanks - a lasting testimony to the faithfulness, goodness and generosity of God.

The policy of the PCC is to use legacies to help fund additional mission or development projects in the parish, whether buildings, equipment or staff. Circumstances change over the years, so church members are encouraged to leave legacies for the general purposes of the parish. The PCC will discuss the most appropriate use of the legacy in the light of current projects and the donor's known areas of interest in the church (for example, children and youth, music, buildings).

You may also receive tax benefits for including a gift to St Mark's in your will. A gift in your will to a charity is free of inheritance tax and may also reduce the amount of tax payable on the rest of your will. [Find out more here.](#)

Please consider leaving a legacy to St Mark's.

Mel Crighton,
PCC Treasurer,
Email treasurer@stmarksreigate.co.uk

OTHER ACTIVITIES

FOODBANK

As the Cost of Living crisis continued, the St Matthew's Foodbank has found it challenging to meet the need. More people are using the Foodbank for the first time, yet donations have dropped. Added to this, the storage units at St Matthew's had to be removed. We have continued to collect food and toiletries that are delivered to the Foodbank. The collection point has continued on the Vicarage doorstep. We pray that all who come for help and support will receive it.

Fr Martin

WINTER NIGHT SHELTER

The Winter Night Shelter is operated by the charity Renewed Hope to offer a safe place to sleep for local homeless people during the coldest months of the year, with a cooked evening meal and breakfast. It runs from mid-December to late February or March and moves between different churches in Reigate, Redhill and Horley. It is staffed by volunteers, many of whom are based at the churches. St Mark's has been hosting the Shelter since the winter of 2015/16.

Following a three-year break when central government provided local authorities with sufficient funds to bring everyone in off the street, initially to reduce the spread of covid-19, there was a need to re-start the Shelter for the winter of 2023/24. This report covers our sixth winter of hosting when St Mark's church hall was the venue on 6 Friday nights from 15 December 2023 to 19 January 2024.

This winter, the Shelter hosted around 30 guests for at least one night. Some stayed over 30 nights. Some of the guests had only just become homeless, so the Shelter saved them from spending any nights on the streets. At St Mark's we hosted around 4 to 6 guests in

December, increasing to 7 guests by the time we finished hosting in January. This was similar to the overall average of 6 guests across all venues.

For each night that the Shelter operated, there were 21 duties that needed to be filled by volunteers, giving a total of 126 duties at St Mark's. Once again, volunteers were forthcoming to take on almost all of the required roles so everything ran smoothly.

We are indebted to all of our volunteers, but especially to our supervisors whose roles carry the most responsibility. As always, all the volunteers seemed to get a lot out of their involvement with the programme and the guests were certainly very grateful for the accommodation and welcome we provided.

Nigel Perkins