



St Mary Islington Annual Report 2023

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Vicar's Report



In 2023 we launched our vision of Calling Islington Home. This vision is a bold reminder of our vocation as the people of God in this place, at this time.

It is underpinned by our values of commitment, caring and being connected.

As part of this, we refined our mission strategy. This takes our vision and values and allows us to make them a reality. The foundations on which all of these are built are those of prayer, being a good employer, care for creation and good safeguarding.

We also completed the transition of services from Mary's to St Mary's in 2023. This was a strategic investment in our organisational structures to allow us as a church to plan for growth in discipleship, evangelism and social impact. I am grateful for those who invested a lot of time and prayer in this process - especially Helen Mylam and the rest of Mary's trustees. I am also thankful for our dedicated and hardworking staff team who allow us to be a caring, connected and committed Church.

The Heart of Islington project officially drew to a close in May of 2023. This project was a key strategic investment in our buildings and site and will allow them to be a tool for mission and ministry in our community for many years to come. It was made possible by generous gifts from congregation members, grants from various organisations especially Cloudesley, and the hard work of many people - in particular Anthea Nicholson. I am grateful for the investment of time and resources that allowed this project to be a success.

Vicar's Report

Highlights of the year included the St Mary's Festival. This wonderful event celebrated its 10th anniversary and this year had a particular focus on care for creation. My thanks go to our outgoing Festival Director, Patty Kostkova, our Comms Lead, Imogen Erskine and all the wonderful volunteers who helped make it such a success.

We have seen numbers grow at our regular Sunday services, especially the numbers of children and families. We welcomed over 1700 school children for school visits. We saw several thousand people join us for our Christmas and Easter services. We especially rejoiced as our wonderful curates, Rev. Josh and Rev. Freya were ordained as priests, along with 25 other deacons, here at St Mary's in June 2023.

I am grateful for all those who pray, serve and give to support the work of St Mary's. St Mary's has also been blessed by legacies that have been left to the church and this year received a gift from the estate of Kathleen Read, a longstanding and faithful member of St Mary's. Legacy gifts allow us to continue to invest in growing the church and this legacy has already allowed us to advertise for a full time Children and Families Minister to work alongside Chloe, our Youth Minister. If you want to find out more about leaving a gift in your will to St Mary's please email give@stmaryislington.org.

We all have a part to play through serving, praying and generous giving, as together, we are calling Islington home. As we look ahead, we can be encouraged by what God is already doing and expectant about what God will do in the life of St Mary's and of our community. Do continue to pray for St Mary's as we seek to follow Jesus and become more like him.

Rev. James Hughesdon
Vicar

Our Year in Numbers

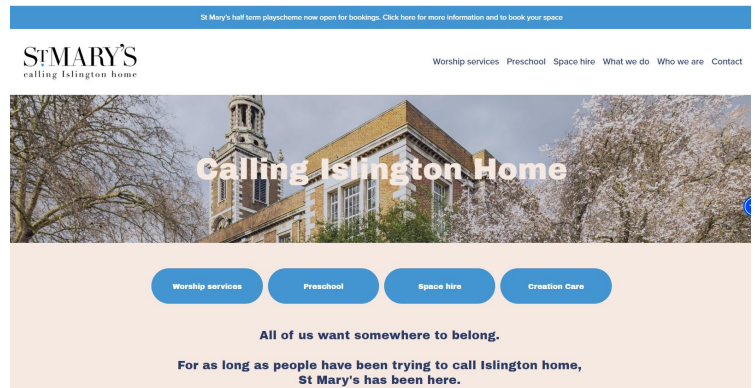
Visits from the Bishops of London
and Stepney



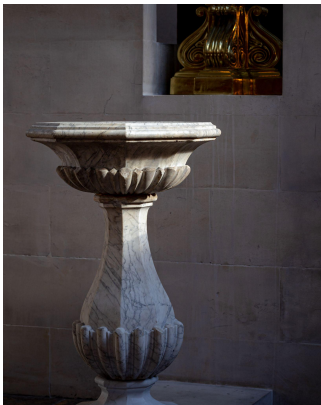
One new mission strategy, logo and relaunched website

ST MARY'S

calling Islington home



Nine
baptisms



18,900 Facebook page reaches and 1,100
Instagram page reaches
6,700 Facebook page visits and 1,100
Instagram profile visits
653 Facebook followers and 940 Instagram
followers

One Priesting Service



Four weddings and nine funerals



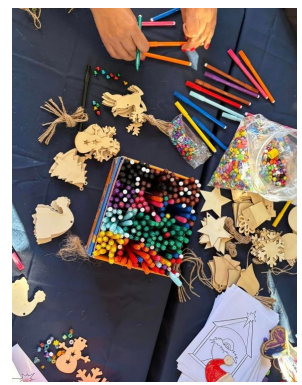
Our Year in Numbers



1000 bulbs planted
on Bulb Sunday



Two bouncy castles +
three face painters +
2000 visitors +
500 scones eaten =
one Family Fun Day



We hosted our
second annual light
party

The PCC met seven
times in 2023



100 midweek groups hosted at St Mary's
312 bowls of hot soup and rolls served
1500 slices of cake made and eaten
3250 hot drinks served

Our Year in Numbers

Over 1000 visitors to Christmas Fair
1676 attendances at Christmas services
1500 mince pies and festive drinks served



At least fifteen items of coverage in local media

Islington Tribune

From the House of Lords to the house of the Lord – ‘priesthood is political’

Married couple are among those ordained at Upper Street church

Friday, 23rd June 2023 – By Izzy Rowley



47 school visits
with almost 1500 school children

198 on our electoral roll

129 different user groups hosted sessions across the site and we hosted 27 birthday parties

One renovated courtyard garden and 22 freshly painted doors in our Neighbourhood Centre

147 services in church with 9765 attendances

St Mary's Preschool

St Mary's Preschool: The Preschool was transferred to St Mary Islington PCC on 1 April 2023 from SMICP. Six staff went through the legal transfer process (TUPE process) and two staff gained new permanent contracts. The Preschool Ofsted process was completed and registered with a certificate of approval from 9 June 2023. The Preschool Manager is now the nominated person for the childcare department. The Preschool was rated green following an audit by the Local Authority traffic light rating.

Great improvements have been made to the courtyard of the Johnston Room with lots of wonderful comments so far from families and the children. The investment has greatly improved the outdoor area quality with a more friendly and welcoming environment. Preschool numbers have been at good levels for the summer and autumn terms.



Spring (January to April)	Number of children on roll	Special Educational Needs	Government funded 15/30 hours	St Mary's full fee paying families	Number of vacancies	Safeguarding-support and referrals
Two year olds	15	3	15	3	0	2
Three year olds	23	5	23	0	1	4

Summer (April to July)	Number of children on roll	Special Educational Needs	Government funded 15/30 hours	St Mary's full fee paying families	Number of vacancies	Safeguarding-support and referrals
Two year olds	13	1	13	0	0	2
Three year olds	25	6	25	0	0	3

Autumn (September to December)	Number of children on roll	Special Educational Needs	Government funded 15/30 hours	St Mary's full fee paying families	Number of vacancies	Safeguarding-support and referrals
Two year olds	19	3	16	3	1 P/T	1
Three year olds	14	5	14	0	5	2

St Mary's Playscheme

St Mary's Playscheme: St Mary's ran eight out of the nine weeks of holiday playscheme provision in 2023. For six of these weeks we received government funding for Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) provision for children aged six to 12 years. The HAF provision fed and supported a large number of children, giving families extra food with support from the Felix Project food banks.

There were more children with special educational needs (SEN) attending the playschemes than in past schemes. Islington Council visited the Easter and Summer HAF provision and commented favourably on the enrichment programme for the children. The children had an excellent choice of activities and a good range of exercise, with healthy options for food. The scheme looked and felt outstanding. Children we spoke to certainly agreed.

	Number of children	Special Educational Needs	HAF (no. of children with free Gov code)	Free vulnerable space safeguarding
February (five days)	22	5	n/a	3
April (nine days)	36	9	29	1
May (four days)	16	6	n/a	3
Summer holiday (four weeks)	43	10	27	1
October (five days)	12	2	n/a	2



Sharon Ellis
Childcare Services Manager

Engaging with Schools

Over the past year our schools' work has grown tremendously and we have been able to connect with over 1,700 students from different primary schools in Islington. This includes St Mary's, Laycock, Hanover, William Tyndale, Ambler and Thornhill schools. Most school events take place at St Mary's Church but we have hosted collective worship and assemblies at both St Mary's and William Tyndale schools.

We cover various topics as part of the R.E. curriculum which are chosen by the teachers. We, as a church team, plan the sessions with them. Topics and questions covered include: what do Christians believe about God; why do some people believe God exists; inspirational people of faith; church art and architecture; sacred Christian festivals and ornaments. We ran 'experience Easter and Christmas' sessions, led services of remembrance, led Christmas and Harvest services.

We are delighted to be running the 7 by 7 programme with St Mary's Primary School. This programme encourages us to work alongside the school and host sessions, visits, activities and talks that will keep pupils connected to the Christian faith. This programme is now being rolled out more widely by the London Diocesan Board of Schools.

St Mary's Preschool held their Easter, Harvest and Christmas services at St Mary's. As a team we plan these services and invite the preschool parents to attend. This a great way for them to connect with the church.

As a church team we are incredibly grateful for all the school connections we have made and hope to strengthen them over the coming years. These connections have allowed families from the local community to attend many of our services/events such as St Mary's Festival Family Fun Day. The Light Party and Big Family Carols.



Youth & Children's Ministry



We continued to see the number of young people who are part of St Mary's grow in 2023. We regularly now need extra tables at the back of church on Sunday for children and young people and some Sundays have over 30 children and young people. In 2024 we hope to increase our Sunday provision for young people and children even further.

St Mary's Primary School held their first carol and Christmas services at St Mary's. Parents were invited which lead to over 300 parents and children at both services.

Our Family Fun Day, run as part of St Mary's festival, was a great success in engaging young people in our community. Likewise the Light Party, which took place on Halloween, provided a safe and fun space for children and young people from our community.

We have worked hard to develop a pathway for children and young people; from initial engagement to helping them being supported in exploring faith. This allowed us to encourage people to come along to our Big Family Carols and Children's Christmas Eve service. This helped with an exceptional turnout at both services. We welcomed over 550 people across the two services, most of whom were new to the church or connected with us through local schools.

St Mary's Preschool held their Christmas service in the church. The turnout was great and we saw children aged two to four perform various Christmas songs. There was even a surprise visit from Santa.

Oasis youth club continues to grow and flourish. New members have joined over the last year and we have supported young people as they have made the transition from our children's ministry to our youth ministry.

Visits to major attractions took place for young people and children and families throughout the year.

Chloe Rotter
Youth Minister

Worship and Music

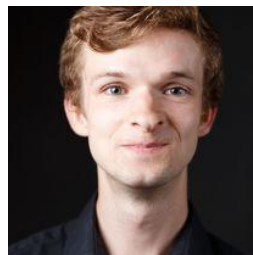
Our mission aim of being known for high quality music and worship has given us a good focus as we seek to grow this part of our life together.

We welcomed Tom Jesty as our Music Director in March of 2023 and he has settled well into the role. The choir and band have gained new members and we have introduced new songs as we seek to keep our music fresh and varied.

There was a wonderful evening of music and creative arts as part of this year's St Mary's Festival, and we look for the God-given creativity in our congregation and community to be released. The expanded choir did a wonderful job in preparing for and singing at our Carols by Candlelight services. These are our busiest services of the year and the choir did a fantastic job, offering a high quality programme of music and sung worship. We look forward to the monthly Friday concert series being launched in 2024.

The St Mary's junior choir was launched and have been such a blessing to our worshipping life. As well as singing at some of our Christmas services they will also sing at our Easter services. Well done to all the children and young people who have put so much effort into the Junior Choir.

Our Sunday liturgy booklets were reviewed and refreshed and the new booklets will be used throughout 2024. It is particularly pleasing to have large print and braille copies available so that we can make our worship more accessible.



Rev. Obi Chike joined our Sunday service leading and preaching teams and Sarah Fagg was officially licensed as a Licensed Lay Minister at St Mary's.



Thank you to all those involved in our Sunday worship, and for all the time and energy you give in enabling our worship to God.

St Mary's Operations

Over 2023 the Operations Team worked hard to develop a strong sense of cohesion between all teams at St Marys, as there was no unified operations team prior to this. With our growing confidence we have also put efforts into expanding our connections in the community with new relationships being formed with Islington Council, local support services, outdoor education charities and small, independent businesses. Primary examples of this include: working with New Horizons Youth Centre to provide them with facilities for sports sessions for disadvantaged homeless youth; The Forest Classroom sessions in the Church Gardens for St Mary's Primary school; cooking classes run by Islington Council in our Crypt Kitchen; and a renewed contact with Islington Police hosting monthly ward panel meetings.

Alongside this, we have worked to improve our existing relationships with Mary's, Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants and the Claremont Project among others. Emphasis has also been placed on increasing the connectivity between operations teams in multiple churches across Islington with a broad aim of increasing stability through information sharing and networking. A good example of this is the work started with Reverend Trevor, at St Mark's, to help demonstrate interest in a new facilities management software package tailored for churches in Islington. This will help ease the administrative burden on understaffed parishes and help improve the resilience of all parishes in Islington.

The Islington Legal Advice centre continues to operate weekly from St Mary's Crypt, providing a vital service to many in need and each week several anonymous groups for addiction meet at St Mary's.

Our Community Sports programme is working to provide physical and emotional wellbeing for groups from MenCap, Islington Centre for Migrants and Refugees and Claremont. This has allowed us to develop a work experience programme with MenCap, and each week three MenCap volunteers come to gain valuable work experience at St Mary's.

St Mary's Operations

We have been working with the Ecochurch group to help demonstrate our caring for creation through projects to improve sustainability with a successful grant application to the Cloudesley charity to install secondary glazing in our Crypt. While these works will occur in 2024, they were approved and the grant was successful in 2023.

We have dedicated ourselves to bettering our facilities, with works taking place on the preschool courtyard and Johnson room to demonstrate to our new Preschool staff and parents our commitment to them. This allows us to welcome in more groups from our community. There is also less obvious work we have been undertaking to improve efficiency and capacity through improved digital networks, new storage arrangements, higher levels of cleaning and upgraded system software. We are also dedicated to thinking differently about how we structure our team to get the best outcomes. As an example of this we have increased the cover of the reception in the evenings and weekends to provide more security on site and increase our contact with our client base.

We also saw some positive trends across 2023 in bookings with a 21% increase in income on 2022 levels based on historical data. We are very positive going into 2024 that these trends will continue and we look forward to more projects in the future.

Shane Thompson
Operations and Enterprise Manager

and

St Mary's Churchwardens

EcoChurch

The principal aims of the EcoChurch scheme are to protect and encourage biodiversity, and to minimise energy use and waste in the buildings and land controlled by churches. In 2022 St Mary's earned a silver award from A Rocha. In 2023, the St Mary's EcoChurch steering group took stock on what would be needed to achieve gold status: it would need greater congregation involvement and for us to reach out more widely to the local community.

The EcoChurch group reached out to the congregation and ran a lively book group in the Spring which discussed Greta Thunberg's seminal Climate Book and, starting in September, a series of monthly film nights. The annual St Mary's Festival coincided with Creationtide and featured an evening of poetry and music relating to creation, a panel debate on the Christian response to climate change with speakers from A Rocha and Tearfund, mid-week Franciscan prayers, and a Sunday morning Barnabas spot with the EcoChurch coordinator from St James Piccadilly, one of the few London churches to have received a gold award. 39 members of the congregation responded to a survey asking what changes people had made to their lifestyle in response to the climate crisis and what would support them in taking this further. All respondents had made some changes and many were contemplating changes that would be more difficult for them. Suggestions and comments for taking this further included regular news and tips. Most respondents said they would like to be part of the EcoChurch group.

As for reaching out more widely to the local community, Sally Hull has continued to run a gardening group, open to all, which has met regularly throughout the year to maintain the rose garden. We have begun to make links with the Islington Environmental Alliance and with a few other local churches also working on the EcoChurch agenda. Richard Nicholson is a member of the recently revived Stepney Area Climate Action Group. We also hosted our first 'Bulb Sunday' in the autumn when we planted over 1000 spring bulbs in the church Gardens.

To reach gold status involves scoring highly in all of the five categories assessed by A Rocha: worship and teaching; buildings; land; community and local engagement; and lifestyle. Buildings and lifestyle are the two areas in which we have the most still to do.



Deanery Synod

Synod members are the clergy from Islington parishes, plus elected lay members of each church. Meetings allow churches to raise concerns in a wider forum and, if necessary, pass them to the diocesan synod. Information about central initiatives can also be passed down. Synod is responsible for appointing governors to CofE schools in Islington, and trustees to a couple of charities.

The first meeting of the year, late April, was mainly about mission to young people and mission work on housing estates, partly because Islington is an area that has a low level of funding, per head of population, for such work. At the June meeting, synod heard about the work of Choices Islington, a compassionate and non-judgmental Christian response to unwanted pregnancy and abortion. Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended; one woman in three has an abortion in her lifetime; and 33% of babies are born as the result of an unintended pregnancy. Choices offers Islington women support throughout their pregnancies, and runs The Boutique providing baby clothes and an equipment bank for new parents. It also provides support to pregnant women in three Surrey prisons.

Most of the autumn meeting was a session about safeguarding, led by one of the ten Diocese of London safeguarding advisers.



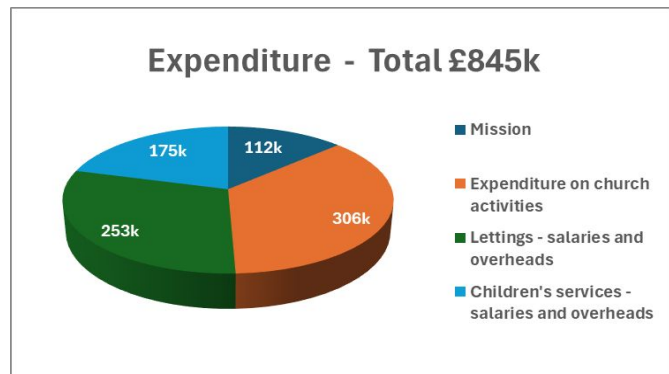
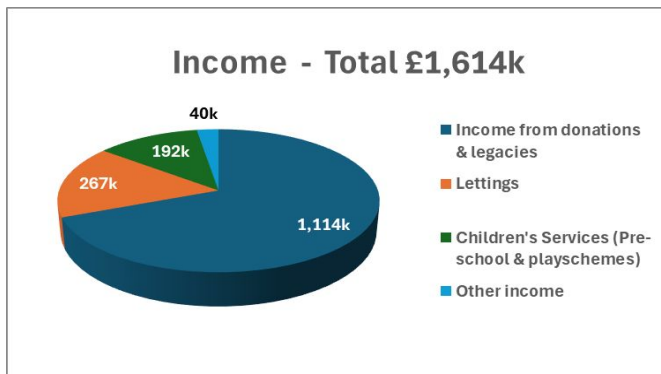
Finances

This year the PCC took control of many of the services which were run by Mary's. With the addition of the lettings and pre-school activities that we are now responsible for we have almost doubled in size in terms of our income and expenditure.

The generous giving of our congregation forms the backbone of our finances and that giving (excluding legacies and grants) has grown over the last year by 14.5%. In addition we have received a significant legacy from the estate of Kathleen Reed which the PCC intends to put toward growing the church and the kingdom of God in this place.

Given the nature of the change in responsibilities budgeting this year was far from easy. We budgeted an unrestricted deficit of £65k for the year on our general reserves operations (excluding designated funds), acknowledging that the period following the transition would be a time of challenge, learning and development. In fact the deficit was £20k lower than budgeted - increased costs being offset by higher than expected revenue, particularly in Children's services and donations.

We maintain our three month reserve policy.



The full financial report is available on request from the church office or by emailing imogen.erskine@stmaryislington.org

Governance and Structure

Our Parochial Church Council Members 2023

The Revd James Hughesdon, chair
The Revd Freya Bradley, Curate
The Revd Josh Richards, Curate
Churchwarden Mr Edward Adegbola
Churchwarden Miss Rebecca Shilling
Churchwarden Mrs Veronica Coulson
Deanery Synod Lay Representative Dr Sophie Castell
Deanery Synod Lay Representative Dr Richard Nicholson
Deanery Synod Lay Representative Mr Babatunde Awonusi
PCC Member (elected) Mr Nick Sykes, Vice Chair
PCC Member (elected) Dr Sally Hull, Electoral Roll Officer
PCC Member (co-opted) Ms Julia Abrey, Secretary
PCC Member (elected) Mr David Vanden Bon, Treasurer
PCC Member (elected) Dr Patty Kostkova
PCC Member (elected) Mr Sam Hansford
PCC Member (elected) Mrs Jennifer Obaseki
PCC Member (co-opted) Mr Neville Walter

A very large number of volunteers support the work of the church and it's not possible to list all of their roles in this report. Among them, significant leadership responsibility is undertaken by the Licensed Lay Ministers, three Churchwardens, Sacristan, Treasurer, service leaders and preachers, preschool and Open House volunteers.

Governance and Structure

Clergy Team 2023

The Revd James Hughesdon, Vicar

The Revd Freya Bradley, Curate

The Revd Josh Richards, Curate





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**Registered charity name: Parochial Church Council of the
Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mary, Islington**

Registered charity number: 1131900