

**The Parish of St. Petroc's Church, South Brent, Devon**

**A Parish in the Dart and Avon Mission Community**

*Address for correspondence:  
The Vicarage, Hillside, South Brent TQ10 9AN*

**Annual Report and Financial Statements**

**For St. Petroc's Parochial Church Council**

**For the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

**Team Rector**

Reverend Prebendary Professor Gina Radford

**Bankers**

NatWest, Paignton (B) Branch, 15 Victoria Street, Paignton TQ4 5DE

**Independent Examiner**

Mr Robert Barclay  
Yonder Cross  
South Brent  
TQ10 9DR

**Our website**

[www.stpetrocsandstmarys.org.uk](http://www.stpetrocsandstmarys.org.uk)

**The Parochial Church Council is an Excepted Charity**

**The Parochial Church Council of St. Petroc's Church South Brent**

**Annual Report**

# For the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023

## **Aim and Purposes (Public Benefit Statement?)**

St. Petroc's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church; pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also responsible for the well-being of the church finances and the upkeep and maintenance of the church and church room buildings. Both buildings are located in Wellington Square, South Brent TQ10 9AQ.

## **Current Situation**

The parish is part of the Dart and Avon Mission Community in which the Rev Prebendary Professor Gina Radford is Team Rector. Until November 2023 she was the Team vicar, covering the Rector vacancy since June 2021. In November 2023 she was appointed as Team Rector, leaving the 0.5wte Team Vicar post vacant. Gina is part time and is officially on duty on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday each week, but does amend her timetable to fit in with weddings and funerals particularly. She lives in the Vicarage in South Brent.

Gina is supported by a Ministry Team of a Curate, 2 LLM's and retired clergy. The Team meets monthly. In addition, lay people are encouraged to develop and grow their skills and talents in leading aspects of worship.

The Mission Community was saddened by the death of our LLM, Pam Saunders, during the year. Pam had been a great support to St. Petroc's tasking monthly services in our two Nursing Homes and being a core member of our Pastoral visiting team. She is very much missed.

## **Objectives and Activities**

The PCC remains committed to the community of South Brent, enabling as many people as possible to worship in the parish church, taking the message of the Gospel to the wider village, and supporting and serving the wider community, as well as growing disciples and the whole body of Christ in this place. St Petroc's is a church for the whole parish, whether they are regular worshippers or not.

The PCC has an overview of worship and is very supportive of the ministry team by supporting existing services and offering constructive feedback and practical help.

The worshipping community at St Petroc's works hard to enable all people of whatever background to discover, establish and grow their faith through worship, prayer and exploring our faith together. We seek to learn and grow in our knowledge and trust in Jesus.

The provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish and outreach work remain a priority. Our Pastoral Visiting Group supports members among the church community and beyond. This includes monthly services in our two Nursing Homes. These used to be led by our LLM Pam, but are now led by the Rector, supported by members.

We seek to be the generous people of God, and to look beyond our own community to offer support. We donate to a number of charitable and other causes, and see this wider giving as an essential part of our life together. The PCC has agreed a policy of giving away 10% of its unrestricted income to charitable causes.

In addition, the Churchwardens are members of South Brent Feoffees, which the Rector chairs. This group supports both individuals and groups within the village, with a particular concern for those in greatest need.

## **Achievements and Performance**

## *Worship and Prayer*

The PCC is keen to offer a range of services that our community find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling.

St. Petroc's is a growing church, and numbers have increased in this past year. We have had a number of new people join us, including at our Family Service which now welcomes 70+ adults and 13+ children each month.

We hold weekly 9.30am services at St. Petroc's. Our main services follow the pattern of a Family Service on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month, a Village Eucharist on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays and Service of the Word on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday. In months where there is a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday, we join with the rest of the Mission Community for a joint service. We also have an 8.00am service of Holy Communion from the Book of Common Prayer on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday.

Services are filmed and placed on the website, which enables those not able to attend in person to worship.

We have committed to continue to offer a virtual access to our worship for the foreseeable future thanks to the faithful support of a member of the congregation who undertakes the filming each week.

We have coffee and fellowship after the service in the adjacent church room. This is very well attended, and coffee and fellowship time can sometimes be as long as the service!

Weekday Morning Prayer takes place twice-weekly and is regularly attended by up to 10 people, both in person and by Zoom.

A weekly Thought for the Week study group meets virtually to discuss matters arising from the Sunday sermon.

We have a number of active bible study and prayer groups, which meet on a regular basis and a celebration of World Day of Prayer takes place annually. In addition, Lent courses are held.

We have a large and flourishing band of bell ringers, who have regularly won awards. St. Petroc's church bells were rung whenever circumstances permitted, including the nation ring to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2022.

There is a small but growing branch of the Mothers Union.

Our Civic Service of Remembrance was held without restrictions this year and was very well attended. Our Christmas services were very well attended and a truly joyful time – especially our Carol Service and our Christingle with a full church on both occasions.

In addition to our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate, mark and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. We see Life Events services as a very important part of our mission. At baptism we thank God for the gift of life, in marriage public vows are exchanged with God's blessing and through the funeral service family and friends express their grief and give thanks for the life that is now complete in this world and commend the person to God's keeping. We have celebrated 3 baptisms this year, one Thanksgiving, with 4 weddings and 22 funerals, including crematorium services, being held during the year.

St. Petroc's is blessed and very grateful to have the active ministry from retired clergy and other members of the Mission Community Ministry Team.

In addition to our two highly talented organists, we have an excellent choir who together support us at our 9.30am services. We also have a band which plays at Family Worship and on other special occasions, and an enthusiastic group of young actors who bring bible and other stories to life for the congregation.

All are most welcome at our services. At present, there are 119 parishioners on the Electoral Roll, an increase of 14 from last year.

## *Christmas*

Our usual Carol service was held on the Sunday before Christmas and our Christingle Service was held on Christmas Eve. 568 people attended our Christmas services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

## **Deanery Synod**

After several years of faithful service, the PCC Secretary (now a Church warden) stepped down from being secretary to the Deanery Synod. We have one Deanery Synod Rep.

## **The Church**

We want our Church to be open to our community for private prayer. It is open from about 9.30am until the early evening every day.

The interior of the Church is cared for by a dedicated group of cleaning volunteers and the appearance of the Church is wonderfully enhanced by the work of our very active team of flower arrangers.

The main difficulty we have experienced with the church building this year has been further water ingress in the tower. Necessary repairs to some of the gutters and downpipes, concurrent with a structured maintenance regime, has gone a long way towards rectifying this problem. However, we remain concerned with the extent of water ingress following the work on the Church tower. This is being monitored and will form a key element of the Quinquennial Inspection by our new architect, Jeremy Chadburn, in March.

We have also had significant problems with the heating system which remain under investigation.

Given the escalating cost of heating using gas, we have initiated a heating project and have successfully secured a £5,000 'Give to Go Green' matched funding grant from the Church of England. Infrared is our preferred technology to implement this project which will require DAC approval. It is hoped to complete the project either late 2024 or early in 2025.

## **Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care in the parish by the Rector and members of the congregation is a very high priority. Home Communion take place regularly in the Willows and Windward residential homes, as well as a monthly service for the two care homes. Home communions for housebound members of the congregation take place regularly, together with other pastoral visiting. In addition, there is the regular visiting for funerals, baptisms, weddings and other pastoral matters. The Pastoral Visiting Group coordinates work in this area.

## **Work with Children and Young People**

We continue to have a number of committed and energetic teams which work with children and young people in the parish.

### *People with under Fives 2023 (PUFFS)*

Walk up into the Church Room at 9.15 on a Monday termtime morning and you will be greeted by three mats on the floor, strewn with a colourful selection of toys, inviting enough to tempt even the shyest of little ones to dive in, explore and share with friends while the mums/carers can chat over a cuppa together. There are healthy snacks and drinks for the children, with sliced apples the favourite!

The day starts for the predominantly Mothers' Union team helpers, (eight on the rota) before the scene above, with a prayer "for all children, young and old". We've been running Puffs since 2021 and since then we have welcomed altogether some 34 children, including babies, currently 17 regulars and their carers.

Towards 10.15 there may be a story read aloud, from a selection of books and puzzles on a separate table. The last activity involves a box of shakers, bells and rattles, which are eagerly distributed to accompany noisy singing and energetic dancing. Finally, there's a prayer to send everyone out safely to the rest of their day.

Birthdays are marked with the presentation of a card, a book, and the singing of “Happy Birthday to You”, with the appropriate number of candles on Cuthbert the Caterpillar.

As children leave Puffs to start primary school, they receive a copy of the Barnabas Children’s Page-a-Day Bible as a farewell present.

### *Sunday Morning Services*

Young people are always welcomed at our Sunday morning services, with a Family Service on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month. We seek to involve the children by taking part in the service, and have a group of about 20 children and young people who variously attend. Facilities are provided for young children at the west end of the church and “Activity Bags” are provided for the under-5’s and 5 – 10-year-olds which are current and follow biblical themes.

Family service is a growing service, and is now our best attended. It is a lively, fun and wonderful occasion as we encounter God in song, readings, drama, activities, prayer – much of it done by the children / young people themselves. The Rector’s arts and crafts abilities are sorely tested and usually found wanting!

### *SPARX*

SPARX is a development of Messy Church. It is held on the third Saturday of the month in the church room; runs from 5.00pm until 7.00pm and includes activities linked to a Christian, discussion and, importantly, food!

Although a number of our SPARX members have moved up to secondary school, we continue to engage with those at primary school and those in the earlier years of secondary school.

### *Primary School*

We have a state Primary School in the village, with which the Church has established links. The Rector takes regular assemblies. In addition, the school is welcomed to church for all the major festivals. The church has a very positive relationship with the school.

### *The Bridge Project in South Brent (previously 'Youth Bus')*

Ivybridge Youth for Christ (IYFC) currently undertakes this important work as part of their regular Christian outreach to young people. In Brent the events are held in term-time on Wednesday evenings with the aim of providing a safe place for the youngsters to chat with each other or with those adults present (a staff member and at least one volunteer) if they so wish, away from the pressures of school and sometimes family life as well. Typically, between 15 - 25 young people attend each time, many of them quite regularly, resulting in some really meaningful conversations especially if they are in small groups or just one-to-one. The number of young people attending has grown.

We were delighted to have been awarded a Diocesan grant to develop this work in 2024 (The Bridge Project) to become more of a Youth Group to enable the Christian message to be introduced to attendees.

## **Safeguarding**

There have been no safeguarding incidents brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Officer during 2023.

The Diocesan safeguarding office keeps our Safeguarding Officer updated with changes in requirements, and the Mission Community safeguarding personnel met during 2023 and are in email contact as and when they wish.

## **Mission and Evangelism**

We hold a monthly Family Service, which has proved very effective for enabling people who may not be used to church an opportunity to experience a more informal and accessible service. The children help take the service, doing dramas, reading, doing the prayers and playing in the band.

We held our annual Good Friday village walk. A cross is carried to the top of Brent Hill, where the Rector leads a short service. It was a wonderful occasion with well over 100 people and various well-behaved dogs making the pilgrimage. We are very grateful to the landowner who kindly allows us to access the hill.

We have developed a very accessible and attractive website thanks to the expertise of David Brett, a member of the church. It has superseded our use of 'A Church near you' which we found was not the best fit for our needs. It is aimed not only at our regular members, but also at anyone who may be looking in interest. We have pages with prayer resources, worship resources, young people's resources, as well as information about our activities and services. The Rector writes a weekly "Dear Friends" letter with a homily on the Sunday's readings, together with prayers, notices and a diary for the week ahead. This is emailed to everyone in our email group, and is available on the website and the Church notice board for the general public to read.

Facebook posts for weekly services and associated events are posted every week and reach between 200 and 700 people.

A Christmas card was sent to every house in the parish with the times of the Christmas services. Our Parish Magazine (The South Brent Messenger) has been relaunched quarterly and is distributed to almost every household in the parish and Rattery, without charge.

St. Petroc's Lending Library of Christian-based books continues to be used by a small number of readers. Books especially relevant to the time of year in the Church's calendar are placed on the top shelf with a selected few showing the front cover in full to help attract attention. The agreed extension to the library has been achieved through two stand-alone bookcases placed behind the choir stalls in the Catherine Chapel.

## **Ecumenical Relationships**

We have been very successful in establishing close relationships with the other churches in the parish in recent years. Combined services are held at the annual Covenant Service at the Methodist Church in early January and on Remembrance Sunday at the Parish Church. There is a combined Service of Light at the Roman Catholic Church on the first Thursday in December. Anglicans take an active part in this service. Personal relationships with members of the other churches are very strong. The World Day of Prayer takes place each year, the venue rotating around the three churches.

## **Churchyards**

St. Petroc's has three churchyards in its care: the historic graveyard around the church building; the 1910 Cemetery in Station Approach, which takes its name from the year it was opened; and the adjoining Millennium Cemetery, opened in the year 2000. St. Petroc's churchyard contains three Grade II listed mediaeval tomb chests, and the stone wall facing the car park and roadway is also listed, as is the small lych gate and the base of the mediaeval stone cross outside the main lych gate.

The lower third of St. Petroc's Churchyard is earmarked as a wildflower meadow, and as an improved wildlife habitat for birds, butterflies, insects and bees. The grass here is allowed to grow long in the Spring and Summer and mown in the Autumn.

St. Petroc's Churchyard and the 1910 Cemetery are both closed to new burials and interments, unless these take place in family plots. The Millennium Cemetery is open for burials, or interment of ashes, for any resident of South Brent, regardless of their faith. We see the cemetery as very much an amenity for the whole parish and we are grateful to the Parish Council, who make a contribution of 50 per cent towards the cost of grass cutting in the 1910 and Millennium Cemeteries.

Repairs to the entrance wall of the 1910 cemetery were completed during the year and repairs to the main Lych Gate were commenced.

The problem of leaking pipework from the Village Hall to the Millennium Cemetery outlined last year has been dealt with. The water supply has been terminated and alternative arrangements are now in place. Visitors to the Millennium Cemetery have been advised that there will no longer be a water supply in the cemetery.

We keep watch on unauthorised items placed on graves and continue to remove these, hopefully in a sensitive way. All three churchyards remain areas for quiet contemplation and also as havens for wildlife.

The churchyard and 1910 cemeteries are officially signed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to indicate the presence of such graves.

## **Financial Review**

Following the small deficit incurred in 2022, a "steady as you go" budget was prepared for 2023, in order to be realistic as to our ambitions. Planned income was kept at achievable levels, given that the results of the Stewardship Campaign being undertaken during the year, were unknown.

Expenditure was to be strictly monitored and controlled and only essential items incurred cost.

The resulting budget for 2023, accepted and endorsed by the PCC, showed an anticipated deficit for the year of £1,000

In common with other churches, the increase in energy costs was the biggest problem faced in 2023. St. Petroc's was very grateful to receive a Diocesan Energy Grant of £3,340 as the country continued to battle against high energy costs. In December 2022 our contracted gas unit cost had risen by a factor of 2.6, which meant that to continue with our existing heating regime would cost an additional £7,800 per annum, which was clearly unaffordable.

"Heat the people, not the building" was the approach adopted, and a series of temperature and timings trials were carried out, with daily records kept, together with attendant daily costs. The resultant effect on the building and fabric were closely monitored. The congregation were kept informed as to progress and the reasons why we were undertaking such activity. As a result of only heating the Church immediately prior to services, and only for a short time, our energy costs were kept at the same level as the previous year.

St. Petroc's has been selected as one of the very few Church of England churches throughout the UK to be offered a matched funding "Give to go Green" grant to enable us to install a much more sustainable form of heating which will also considerably reduce our annual heating costs. We are currently looking at options to achieve this and it is envisaged that the chosen installation will be completed during 2024, or early in 2025.

The planned Stewardship Campaign took place during the spring and summer months, with a letter going to everyone on the Electoral Roll, together with known supporters of the Church. The generous response, together with the additional gift aid recovery from HMRC, resulted in an increase year on year, of some £6,000.

This enabled St. Petroc's to increase their charitable giving, with an additional £3,000 being sent in support of local, national and international charities. Special collections were taken during the year in response to national appeals in support of the Turkey/Syria earthquake and the conflict in Gaza. This resulted in some £1,800 being forwarded to the Disasters Emergency Committee. We have also, via the Youth Support Fund, sent a further £1,000 in support of the Youth Bus.

As a result of the activities outlined, St. Petroc's has, once again, been able to pay our Common Fund requirement in full, and have ended the year with a surplus of some £5,500.

St. Petroc's Church organ was purchased second hand some 30 years ago, and we have been fortunate to receive a bequest of £10,000 towards the eventual cost of the necessary refurbishment, in accordance with the wishes of the deceased. Quotations have been received for the refurbishment, and the necessary work is to be carried out during 2024.

In October St. Petroc's were awarded a grant of £5,000 by the Diocese to enable expansion of our youth activities over the next three years, working with Ivybridge Youth for Christ. It is envisaged that this will commence in 2024.,

Budgets and forecasts for income and expenditure for 2024 have been prepared and reviewed by the PCC, together with available reserves and, despite the challenges which lie ahead, the PCC is reassured as to the financial stability of St. Petrocs.

### **Reserves Policy**

It is PCC policy to ensure that sufficient funds are available prior to the commencement of any particular project. We have been fortunate in the past to have benefited from the generous support of parishioners and villagers.

### **Volunteers**

The members of the PCC would like to sincerely thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make our church the lively and vibrant community it is.

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

The Parochial Church Council manages the activities of St. Petroc's. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules.

At St. Petroc's the membership of the PCC currently consists of our Team Rector, two churchwardens, Deanery Synod representative and others elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the Church. All members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll. The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the Church, including deciding on how the funds are to be spent.

The full PCC met 6 times during the year with an average level of attendance of 95%.

Given its wide responsibilities the PCC has a number of sub-committees, each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life. In addition to the Standing Committee, comprising the Team Rector, Churchwardens and Treasurer, there are committees for Fabric, Churchyard, Church Room and Media (Zoom, Messenger & Facebook), together with a Pastoral Committee and a Social Committee. All are responsible to the PCC and report back to it with the results of their deliberations as necessary.



St. Petroc's has a Health & Safety Officer and a Safeguarding Officer, who each report to a Churchwarden. Both the Health & Safety Policy and the Safeguarding Policy are reviewed annually. The Health & Safety Officer conducts annual risk and fire risk assessments and the recommendations are reviewed and implemented by the Fabric Committee.

### **Administrative Information**

St. Petroc's Church is situated in Wellington Square, South Brent, Devon TQ10 9AQ. It is a member of the Dart and Avon Mission Community within the Deanery of Totnes in the Diocese of Exeter within the Church of England.

The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956 and the Church Representation Rules 2022) and a charity exempt from registration with the Charity Commission.

PCC members who have served from 1 January 2023 until the date this report was approved are:

*Chair:*

Reverend Prebendary Professor Gina Radford

*Churchwardens:*

Mr. Rob Brighthouse

Mr. Greg Wall – until 23rd April 2023

Mrs Susan Jozsa - w.e.f. 23rd April 2023 (remains as Hon. Secretary)

*Elected members:*

Mr. Geoff Addy - Hon. Treasurer

Mrs. Christina Cross

Mrs. Shirley Eatwell – Wedding & Funeral Administrator

Mr. Andrew Ferguson – until 23rd April 2023

Mrs. Emma McCulloch

Mrs. Sarah Smith

Mrs Diana Tyler – w.e.f. 23rd April 2023

Mr. Greg Wall – w.e.f. 23rd April 2023

Mrs Elaine Willis

Approved by the PCC on 24th March 2024 and signed on their behalf by

Reverend Prebendary Professor Gina Radford (Chair)



Mr. Rob Brighthouse (Vice Chair)

