

Annual Reports
and Financial Statements
2009 - 2010

BACKGROUND

At Seal Parish Church, with God's help, we seek:

- To enable a wide range of people to engage in worship that is varied, joyful, brings all life to God and permeates all life;
- To be open and welcoming, making it possible for people to join us at any time;
- To show that Christ makes a difference, by caring for ourselves and each other within and outside our Church.

CHURCH STATUS

The PCC of Seal Church is a charity that is authorised by Act of Parliament and is excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

PCC MEMBERSHIP

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation rules.

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

EX OFFICIO

Chair:	The Revd Anne Le Bas	Priest in Charge
Churchwardens:	Matthew Bell Ian Gough	
Reader:	Kevin Bright	

CHURCHWARDENS

ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE PCC

Until 2010

Mary Evans
Marion Gilchrist
Rebecca Jones
Mike Harvey

Until 2011

Malcolm Fox
Maggie Fox
Hilary Coffey
Christine Wightman

Until 2012

Victoria Wyatt
Chris Rampton
Sally Thompson
Trevor Watson

CO-OPTED

Tanya Wright
Sophia Michael

MEMBERS OF THE DEANERY SYNOD

Georgina Taylor
Matthew Bell
Jill Myers

TREASURER

Mr Mike Harvey

SECRETARY (non-voting)

Mrs Jennifer Kent

PRIEST-IN-CHARGE'S REPORT

It has been another busy year at Seal. A number of new members of the congregation have joined us and have become regular worshippers. Average Sunday attendance is now around 85, though it is hard to get a realistic estimate of the strength of the congregation from this measure, as many people do not come every Sunday, having other commitments which take them away from Seal. My impression is that the number of members of the congregation who are actively involved in the church's life has increased over the year, especially in the areas of the choir and young people's work.

There were 18 baptisms last year, not quite up to the previous year's extraordinary total of 22, but a very healthy number nonetheless. Quite a number of the baptism families have become more or less regular attenders as a result of their contact with us at baptism.

There were 8 weddings last year, which is a very healthy number compared to other similar sized parishes locally. A number of those couples married here under the new rules allowing people to choose to marry in a church where they had a "qualifying connection". Some had lived here earlier in their lives, or had family connections here, or qualified because they opted to worship regularly with us (and seemed to have enjoyed the experience and have kept up their contact with the church to some extent.)

We have, sadly, lost a few of our members over the year. Doris Burton, Phyllis Armitage and Mary Evans have moved into residential homes or other care. Derek and Angela Lucas moved away to be nearer their family. We mourn the recent death of Margaret Mountfield, who served for eight years as churchwarden as well as being very involved in many other areas of the church's life.

Young people and families

There has been a noticeable growth this year in the number of children and young people in church and taking part in other church activities. This is partly the result of starting a Sunday School group specifically for older children, for which many thanks are due to Nicky Harvey, who leads this group. She has encouraged them to develop strong bonds between themselves as well as giving them the opportunity to deepen their faith. Nicky and I are now also jointly running a monthly discussion based session on a Sunday afternoon for this group. The young people had a very popular "sleepover" in the vicarage garden for the Patronal festival – not much sleep, but a great deal of fun! Another has been demanded for this year!

During the year we began to run occasional "Messy Church" sessions of crafts, activities and worship for families. This replaced the monthly "Faith and Fun" sessions for the under-fives, which sometimes had too few children really to seem viable. Messy Church is aimed at a wider age range and therefore draws on a wider pool of families. It is planned to continue to run about five sessions per year.

Music at Seal

Daniel Eaton's departure as organist last Easter initially presented us with some challenges. However, we have managed to find a group of organists (or pianists who have been keen to have a go on the organ) to cover, and this has been an unexpected source of blessing, providing us with a range of talents to draw on, and the opportunity to encourage new organists. Dan has continued to run the choir, which has been an immense help, and it has grown this year. Dan has also indicated that he would like to come back to play on a couple of Sundays a month from the autumn, which is welcome news. We shall continue to use our new organists as well, so we should have a strong team, with no one carrying too much of the burden.

The major impact of Dan's departure was on Evensong. For a while most Evensongs were said, with recorded hymn accompaniments. At the moment, however, we are usually able to provide organists for two of the three monthly Evensongs, and this seems to be a workable arrangement. We have also been able to sing several Choral Evensongs during the year.

Ministry

Kevin Bright and Rosemary Clary continue to provide much needed and valued input as Readers. Kevin, in addition to preaching once a month, ran a Lent group in 2009 and 2010. His 2009 Lent group have continued to meet from time to time for Bible study, which is an encouraging development. Rosemary is very busy behind the scenes, doing the majority of home communions and providing a variety of other pastoral and practical support. Nicky Harvey has continued her training to be an authorised Pastoral Assistant. Her licensing should take place in October. I anticipate that her ministry will, at first, be a continuation of what she is already doing among our young people and more generally in giving pastoral support. She is a very busy lady already!

Seal School

Relationships between the church and the school have continued to strengthen during the year. I am regularly involved in leading collective worship, as well as being used as a resource by the staff either to talk to the children about Christianity or to provide support and information for them as they deliver the RE curriculum. They come to church at least four times a year for school services, to which any member of the congregation is welcome. Our team of foundation governors has met regularly to discuss ways in which we can support the school. I now produce

a termly prayer letter, which is available in church as well as in school, so that we can support the school in prayer, and this has been welcomed.

It was very good to have a large number of the children with teachers and parents, join in the village carol singing in December and enjoy the refreshments in the hall afterwards.

I have also had regular contact with Sevenoaks Prep school during the year, and hosted visits from other schools to the church.

Parochial Church Council

The PCC has met six times during the year, and has discussed a wide range of issues. These have included ongoing fabric issues (for more details see Churchwardens' report), the maintenance and running of the Church hall, which has seen increased use during the year, attempts to recruit a new organist, guidelines on our response to the threat of swine flu, and events and services in the church.

Many PCC members came to a planning afternoon in the autumn, in which we came up with various suggestions for development in the church. This helped to confirm my impression that a major concern for the PCC was to maintain and develop our links with the community through such initiatives as the "Know your neighbours" group. Through this group we were involved in another very successful village fete, and the village carol singing event. There are a number of sub-committees which take on individual pieces of work, meeting as necessary during the year. These include a hall, events and fundraising committee.

I am very grateful for the support of the PCC. Meetings are constructive, lively and good natured.

I would also like to record my thanks to my excellent churchwardens, Matt and Ian, who have been not only personally supportive, but also very efficient at getting the various practical (and sometimes quite boring!) jobs done on which the church depends.

Looking forward

My main concerns are similar to those I expressed last year. A growing church is, inevitably, a busy church, and it is not easy to keep up with the work involved in planning for services and events, baptisms, weddings, and funerals, being involved in the local schools, and doing the wide variety of pastoral work which all these things involve and give rise to. There are always far more opportunities and needs than I can meet personally. For the church to continue to grow and thrive it needs the contributions of time and talents from as many people as possible. I am very grateful to all those who take responsibility for organising, leading and getting involved, whether that is in the field of worship, informal pastoral work, children's work, or other work in the community. There is always a need, however, for more volunteers. The events committee, for example, is desperate for new blood – many of its members have been labouring faithfully on for many years. If you can help plan and put on social events, please volunteer – you will be welcomed with open arms!

Just as we need people's contributions of time and talents, we also need financial support. The Treasurer has indicated in his report the challenges that face us, along with many other churches. It is important that we take these seriously. If we value our church and what it does in the community, we need to make sure it is funded securely. Seal church, it seems to me, provides very good "value for money". It is a meeting place, a spiritual re-fueling stop, a place to reflect, a source of consolation, a place to pass on to the next generation the stories and values we hold dear, and many other things to those who use it, but it is entirely dependant on the voluntary giving of those who use it and that makes it very vulnerable to their financial circumstances, and their willingness to give.

I often read in the press of the imminent decline and fall of the Church of England. Seal is neither declining nor falling, however, and I rejoice in that. There is real enthusiasm and commitment from a wide range of people who have found a spiritual home here and this is hugely encouraging. I would like to ask you to pray for the resources – human and financial – so that the growth we have seen can be sustained and developed in the years to come.

Anne Le Bas

Deanery Synod

The Deanery Synod met twice during the year. As well as discussing Diocesan and Deanery business, we have heard presentations about the new Debt Advice centre in Sevenoaks and on the procedures for encouraging and selecting candidates for ordination.

Electoral Roll report

There are 151 members on the electoral roll 74 of whom are not resident in the parish. 10 people were added to the list during the year and 2 were taken off (either through death or moving out of the area.)

J Myers (Electoral Roll Officer)

Churchwardens report for year to April 2010

As well as day to day maintenance Churchwarden's tasks have centred on the Quinquennial report of 2007. Three major tasks have been completed two are ongoing and several new tasks commenced.

Completed

- i) The boiler chimney has been rebuilt and all work completed.
- ii) The table top tomb has been lowered, made safe and all works completed.
- iii) The path lighting has been replaced by new bollard style lighting.
- iv) The boiler pressure release valve developed a leak post chimney replacement, it was discovered this valve was redundant following the replacement of the boiler and the valve has subsequently been removed.
- v) A report was received detailing damp in the vestry. The PCC decided costs were too high and damp not severe enough to warrant expense. NFA

Ongoing

- i) The beetle infestation investigative work is now complete and, subject to PCC approval the architect will draw up a specification of work to be undertaken to remedy the damage. This is likely to fall into two areas, one where damaged areas are repaired and two, where infestation is present but damage is slight chemical treatment applied to prevent further deterioration.
- ii) Benefaction boards, this remains with the DAC who are in two minds on how to proceed, direction is expected soon.
- iii) Damaged plaster in porch, again with the DAC awaiting permission to proceed under "minor item" mantle. Also trying to link this repair to include area above choir pews.
- iv) Stained glass windows, comprehensive report provided by Cathedral Studios however, costs to follow thereafter PCC decision required on how to proceed.
- v) Phone mast, nothing further to report.

Commencing

- i) The QI recommends guttering to be provided on the South Aisle roof to the west of the porch. A quotation has been received and a faculty is being raised. This should assist in reducing the damp on the wall by the font.

Emergent

- i) The relatives of a deceased parishioner have requested a memorial bench be placed in the churchyard, this has been agreed and a faculty is being raised.
- ii) The downpipe at the east end of the organ loft roof fractured and required replacement. As the DAC are advising increasing the size of guttering this small area was also replaced.

General

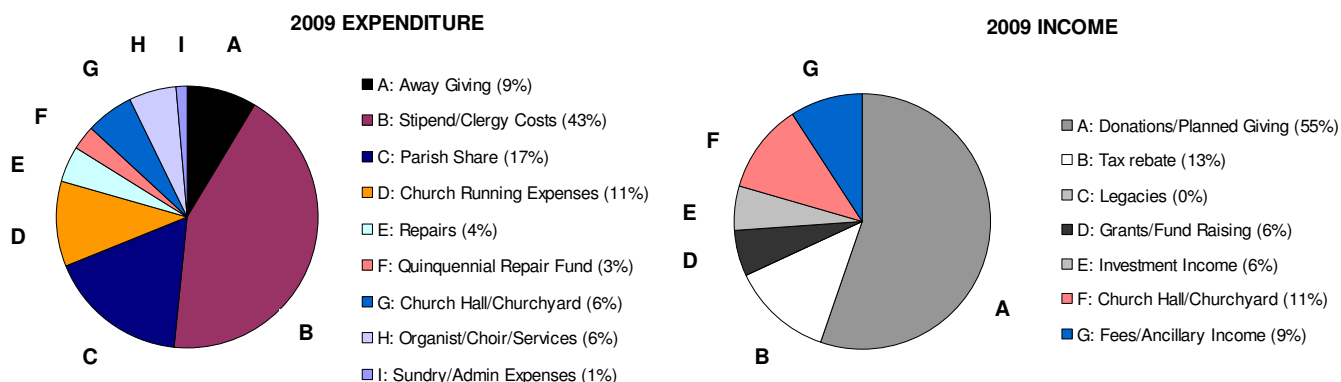
- i) There is an area of wooden flooring in the south west corner of the bell chamber in the tower that is suffering decay and is not as sound as the rest of the flooring. This area has been marked off by warning signs. The architect has re-examined the area at our request and whilst it is not as sound as we would like, it poses no threat as long as anyone traversing the area is cautious. The recommendation is that the area is avoided. There is a wooden ladder in that area that is unsafe, this has been marked by signs and will be removed in due course. It was hoped that both items were dealt with at the time of the phone mast installation but if the latter is not forthcoming we will need to take action.
- ii) The roofs were visually inspected in the autumn, the gully between the organ loft and the north side of the chancel roof (area of chimney repair) had a lot of moss and debris, the chimney workers cleaned this up. The gully between the south aisle and the south side of the chancel roof was clear. The turret was clear but the tower roof drains had to be cleared of bird droppings and other detritus.
- iii) The Diocese is undertaking the registration of land under the land registration act 2002. This work is ongoing.
- iv) Matt Bell attended a new CW' meeting in June and Ian Gough attended a Faith in Maintenance day in October.

APCM REPORT FOR 2009/10: FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PCC (TREASURER'S REPORT)

The Financial Statements for the year ending 31st December 2009 are provided separately. These have been examined and approved by the Independent Examiner, Anthony Llewellyn, and a copy of his Report is also attached thereto together with a statement of the Church's accounting and reserves policy and the usual graphs for those who prefer pictures to pages of numbers.

Last year a loss of £2,000 was predicted for 2009 but in the event we broke even, although the reasons for this contain some very sobering messages. Planned giving, tax recovery and donations together were nearly £8,000 below budget, but this was more than offset by higher collections, fees and, in particular, Church Hall income. As a result total income was **£67,507**, some £1,650 above the original budget. Expenses overall were slightly lower than predicted, at **£67,514**, giving a net loss for the year of just £8.

For a snapshot breakdown of both income and expenditure in 2009, please see the pie charts below.



Capital expenditure was incurred on various essential works – including rebuilding the chimney above the organ loft, replacing the boiler flue, repairing the table top tomb, renewing the path lighting and further investigatory work for the beetle infestation in the Church – totalling just over **£14,000**. These costs were partly offset by a major grant from the Cory Environmental Trust (for the chimney works), donations and a contribution from the Friends of Seal Church – together totalling **£10,260** – with the remainder met from Repair Fund reserves. Overall during 2009, total assets held (cash and invested funds) decreased by just under £1,000 from last year and currently stand at **£81,000**.

The **Friends of Seal Church** is now administered by the Church but the monies raised are specifically reserved for major items of repair or maintenance and not for general expenses. During 2010, in net terms, receipts from standing orders, tax rebates on gift aid and other donations totalled £3,457 and funding was provided towards the costs of the chimney rebuilding, the new boiler flue and the path lighting totalling £4,895. The balance of funds at the year end amounted to £2,239.

Still awaiting us this year and next are major repair works to the roof structure due to the beetle infestation. Following further detailed investigations, particularly in the Chancel, it appears that the problem is fortunately not as widespread as was at first feared and, once a detailed specification of work has been drawn up, estimates will be obtained following which we can consider grant funding.

Otherwise for 2010, we are predicting a loss of **£1,000** in terms of underlying income and expenditure (i.e. excluding legacies). Ministry and Parish Share costs will inevitably be higher, but we are hoping to increase income from existing and new members of the congregation (including some new gift aid commitments). However, at the moment we are heavily reliant on the income generated from the new Church Hall lettings.

On the brighter side, we have been informed that we should receive a substantial legacy of **£20,000** later this year from a parishioner who, while not a regular churchgoer, wanted to support the church's work. As welcome as this is, however, we cannot afford to look upon this windfall as a subsidy against future running costs as it will disappear all too quickly. We still need to pay our way year on year by at least matching income against expenditure so it is incumbent on all of us to review our giving on a regular basis and, for those that can afford to do so, to increase our giving and the tax recovered via gift aid.

As always please remember that, aside from the tax rebate on Gift Aided donations, Seal Church receives no financial support whatsoever from the Government so that we have to pay for all annual costs and capital expenditure out of our own resources.