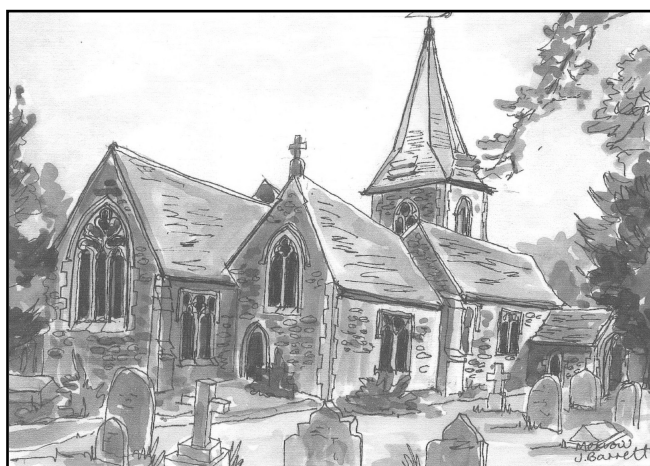


The Parish Church of
St John the Evangelist

MERROW



Parish Profile

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I. INTRODUCTION

St John's is a thriving, friendly parish church on the outskirts of Guildford. The church sits in the middle of the parish, just off the main road into Guildford town centre. The north eastern corner of the parish consists of a large suburban area which houses 9,000 people. The rest of the parish contains large areas of common land: Merrow Downs and Merrow Common, as well as some agricultural land and part of Clandon Park.

The church dates from the 12th century (although much of it was rebuilt in the 1850s), and it is surrounded by a well-kept open churchyard. The interior provides a tranquil and beautiful space, with three areas for worship. The principal focus is the high altar, but there are two side chapels: the traditional Memorial Chapel and the more flexible, open space of the Onslow Chapel. Next to the church is the St John's Centre, an excellent community facility built by the people of St John's.

This parish profile gives a snapshot of the church, the people and our ministry as we try to live out God's calling to be the body of Christ in this place. We developed the following mission statement in 1998 to help clarify our identity and approach:

*“Being at all times rooted in faith;
St John's seeks to love and worship God
and to love, welcome and serve its neighbours”*

As a result of strategic work carried out 2½ years ago, we sharpened our focus, feeling that we were being called as a church to:

“Make room for others”

This means being open and inclusive to a wider range of people within our community – young and old from all backgrounds – and welcoming them into the life and worship of the church. We have worked hard on moving towards this and the friendship and support offered to people in need by the wider congregation is particularly valued.

The congregation has grown over the last few years as we have implemented our wider vision, but there is much more work to do. We feel that this church has great potential, and we are looking for a Rector who will lead us in discerning and releasing that potential for the glory of God.

2. THE PARISH OF MERROW

2.1 Demography

Merrow village was brought into the Borough of Guildford in 1933. The population has grown steadily from 1,690 in 1931 to 9,000 in 2005. A significant number of residents commute to London or other large centres of employment, although Guildford provides a source of employment for many people.

The 2001 census statistics for Merrow Ward (not quite coterminous with the parish) show the population to be predominantly middle class and white. About 30% of the population are aged between 25-44, and 25% are between 45-64. Approx. 16% are 65 or over. Unemployment is low and there is notable affluence: 76% of houses are owner-occupied and 45% of households have two or more cars.

There are several main residential areas in Merrow -

Merrow Park - a housing estate built around 1980, made up of around 1,300 households and situated quite near to the church.

Boxgrove Park, Merrow Woods, Woodlands Park - three estates of privately owned houses at the western end of the parish built between the mid 1950s and mid 1960s - a total of around 380 households.

Bushy Hill - a mixed housing estate built in the 1950s and 1960s containing around 900 households.

In addition, there are about 2,000 households off the Epsom Road and adjacent to Merrow Downs, a number of which are substantial properties.

Housing for older people is provided in several locations within the parish, some of which is warden assisted. Redwood Care Home is situated alongside the village hall.

2.2 Schools

St John's has excellent relations with local schools. Of the six situated within the parish, the clergy team has significant involvement with three:

Merrow Church of England Infant School (c.140 children)

This is a voluntary-controlled school, which works closely with the community, especially St John's Church. As a Church of England infant school, one of its expressed aims is to maintain a framework based on Christian principles, morals and values. We feel this works best when school and church are closely linked.

The former Rector led assemblies once a fortnight, which the children looked forward to greatly. The Headteacher regularly writes an article for the parish magazine and would welcome ideas as to how the school and church could work together in the future.

The former Rector was also vice chair of the governing body and provided significant input and support to the school; it is envisaged that this would continue. There are three Foundation Governors, all of whom worship at St John's. School staff, parents and pupils also form part of the congregation. The children come up to the church for special services (eg Harvest, Christingle). They also make curriculum-based visits which were led by the Rector, with involvement from parishioners.

Bushy Hill Junior School (c.200 children)

There are increasing links with Bushy Hill, which receives the majority of children from Merrow School. Our full-time curate was on the governing body, as are a number of other parishioners. The curate undertook assemblies and organised visits to the church and the staff are very receptive to input from the church.

Boxgrove Primary School (c.400 children)

Support, assemblies, church visits and occasional teaching sessions are provided by the clergy at Boxgrove School, where there are also good relationships with the staff.

Other schools in the parish include: St. Thomas of Canterbury Primary School and St. Peter's Comprehensive School, both of which are Roman Catholic. St John's has good relations with these schools, but all input is provided by the local Roman Catholic Church. Thornchace, a school for teenage girls with emotional and behavioural difficulties, is also situated in the parish; as are a number of day nurseries and pre-schools, one of which meets in the main hall at St John's Centre. Just outside the parish there is a large, popular secondary school, George Abbot, which many of our local children attend. Private schooling is also very common in this area.

2.3 Health and welfare services

There is a purpose built Medical Centre on Merrow Park, with further medical and dental services available elsewhere in the parish, in addition to a wide range of facilities provided throughout Guildford. Private and National Health Service hospitals are located within easy reach of Merrow. The clergy have good relationships with the chaplains at the Royal Surrey County Hospital (approx. 5 miles distance) and regularly visit parishioner inpatients.

2.4 General amenities

Local shops are located in the centre of the parish, close to the church, with smaller parades situated on two of the housing estates. There is a small business park on the edge of Merrow Park and several small businesses close to the Downs. Social amenities include a village hall, which incorporates the village club, a community centre, a pub, children's play areas and allotments. Local sporting facilities include tennis, golf, cricket, football, bowls and a health club with a pool, squash courts and a gymnasium. Merrow Downs consists of 409 acres of registered common land, part of which is leased to the Guildford Golf Club. The public has the right to walk over all of the common land.

Amenities for young people in Merrow are limited and in certain areas this causes problems. In common with many other churches, St. John's finds it difficult to interest teenagers in church activities. Good progress has been made in planning and designing a meeting place on Bushy Hill for young people, but the project has stalled due to lack of personnel willing to run the facility. Groups such as Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers, Brownies, Guides and Rangers are popular, although they have no formal connection with the church.

2.5 Fellow churches and ecumenical matters

St John's has good relationships with the local churches, in particular Merrow Methodist Church and St Pius RC Church, both of which are in the parish. There is an active 'Together in Christ' Group, drawing together Christians from Merrow and neighbouring parishes in Burpham and East and West Clandon. The group shares evening worship in each other's churches on the 5th Sunday of the month; in August, St John's and the Methodists also share non-Eucharistic evening worship.

Other joint activities include a very successful ecumenical Lent Group scheme involving about 100 people, and involvement in a Tuesday Lunch Club for older people at the Methodist Church. The above mentioned Bushy Hill Youth Project is a venture which includes local government, welfare service agencies and local churches.

The parish is part of the Guildford Deanery, which has monthly Chapter meetings. These are welcomed by the clergy as a supportive forum in which to meet with other local priests.

3. ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

The patron of St John's Merrow is the seventh Earl of Onslow.

3.1 Our people and ministry teams

Clergy and Group Arrangements

An ordained local minister has been serving as a priest since November 1996, and has lived in the parish for 39 years; officially she works 20 hours per week, but her workload has increased during the interregnum. All pastoral care and worship was shared amongst the clergy team. A full time stipendary curate was appointed to the parish in July 2003 but she moved on in September 2006 to take up the post of Chaplain at Exeter College, Oxford. St John's has been a successful and attractive training parish for a number of years.

The benefice is part of a group arrangement with neighbouring East and West Clandon. There is a regular pulpit swap between the parishes and a popular joint annual retreat. A permanent deacon and a lay reader assist the Rector of the Clandons and we provide occasional cover for each other when necessary. Regular meetings of the Merrow and Clandons Group Council are held as part of the group ministry shared by the two parishes. We are aware that there may be proposals regarding the future of the group, which are currently being considered as part of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Plan.

Administrators

There is a well-equipped parish office with two job-sharing administrators. They are managed by the Rector and support the clergy as well as St John's Centre.

Churchwardens

The present churchwardens have been in office since 2004 and 2005 respectively. Our policy is that churchwardens are elected for three years, but an additional year can be served in exceptional circumstances.

Parochial Church Council

The PCC normally consists of nine elected members who serve for a maximum of three years. The secretary, treasurer, clergy, Deanery Synod representatives and churchwardens are ex-officio. The PCC meets every other month and there is a standing committee meeting in the intervening period, with separate Worship and Finance Committees also meeting regularly. Numbers on the Electoral Roll have been stable in recent years, currently standing at 218. Approx. 30 regular worshippers live outside the parish boundary.

Pastoral Team

We have seven Diocesan-trained Pastoral Assistants. We also have access to a professional counsellor and a group of parishioners who undertake visiting and informal pastoral care

3.2 Our fellowship and Christian development activities

Junior Church (Sunday School)

St John's Junior Church meets every Sunday except on the 1st Sunday of the month, when the whole church family worships together, and on the 5th Sunday, which is kept free. Junior Church meets in the St John's Centre, but the children join the congregation part way

through the Eucharist for the administration. A crèche also meets in the Church Centre. There are currently 22 children on the register although the average weekly attendance is 12. There is one leader for Junior Church and two for the crèche assisted by parent volunteers.

House Groups

There are six fellowship and discipleship groups in the parish. We had started to undertake a review of their organisation and functions so that they are better supported and able to grow but will await the arrival of a new incumbent to take the review forward.

Teaching Activities

We consider ourselves to be a teaching parish and run regular lecture series and group sessions on a range of biblical and topical subjects; these are well attended. In addition, there is an active 'Education for Ministry' Programme within the parish, run by a trained facilitator, which is ecumenical in outlook.

Other Groups

There is a monthly parish prayer breakfast, and the clergy organise *ad hoc* day retreats at local convents and monasteries.

3.3 Our worshipping life

Churchmanship

Our churchmanship is Anglican with central to moderate catholic practice and vestments are worn. The sacrament is reserved and taken to the sick. Worship is inclusive and maintains a sensitive respect for the wide range of Christian backgrounds reflected in the congregation. The central act of worship is the Eucharist. We observe the seasons and festivals fully and these services are well attended by the parish. For example, there is a very full programme in Holy Week, which includes the observance of the Triduum, footwashing and the Easter Eve vigil.

There are a number of annual services held for particular occasions, e.g. All Souls Service, patronal festival, Harvest and Christingle. There are three Healing Eucharist services per year, with laying on of hands.

Pattern of Services

Sunday	8.00am	Eucharist (BCP: 1 st , 3 rd , 5 th Sundays, CW Order 1: 2 nd , 4 th Sundays)
	10.00am	Parish Eucharist (CW Order 1: 2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th , 5 th Sundays) Church Family Worship 1 st Sun (Usually non Eucharistic, but Eucharistic 3-4 times per yr)
	11.30am	Holy Baptism (1 st Sunday and occasionally other Sundays)
	6.30pm	BCP Evensong (2 nd , 4 th Sundays) Informal Eucharist (1 st Sun) Contemplative Service (3 rd Sun) Joint Ecumenical Service (5 th Sun)

Weekday Services

Common Worship Morning Prayer is said at 8.10am daily with an additional service of BCP Matins at 10.10am on Wednesday. There is one midweek Eucharist on Wednesday at

10.30am. Occasional midweek feasts are observed e.g. an early morning Eucharist on Ascension Day. Monthly pram services for mothers and toddlers have been held in the Church or the Centre in the past. It is hoped that the new Rector would consider reinstating these services. A monthly communion service is held at Redwood Care Home. Between 10 and 12 home communions are undertaken by the clergy each month.

In 2006 the average number of communicants on a Sunday was 120 while the average total attendance was 150; these figures can double at Christmas and Easter. In 2006, the average number of communicants at the Wednesday Eucharist was 18.

Sacraments and Occasional Offices

Baptism

Baptism is a significant point of contact with St John's for families on the fringes of the church. Families make initial contact through the Parish Office and are then visited and prepared by a pastoral assistant or a member of the clergy. There were 25 baptisms in 2006 and the parish has operated an open baptism policy, welcoming anyone who lives in the parish or who has a worshipping connection with the church. We also offer Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child when appropriate. There is an annual Thanksgiving for Baptism service, and baptism anniversaries are marked.

Communion before Confirmation

There are regular classes organised by the clergy for children over the age of seven to prepare them to receive their first communion. These usually happen every other year or when a cohort is ready. There is an opportunity for these children to join the young serving team.

Classes are offered by the clergy and we had six adults confirmed in 2005, one in 2006. The confirmation service is sometimes held at St John's but can be elsewhere.

Weddings

There are approximately 15 weddings per year, mainly in the summer months. The former Rector operated a policy, with the approval of the PCC, of marrying people who have been divorced. At present, all couples are seen together at a meeting in January and then three times by the priest who is to conduct the marriage. Wedding preparation needs reviewing, and there is a possibility of joining with the Clandons in this work.

Funerals

There are approximately 40 funerals per year, the majority of which are held at the Crematorium. In 2006 funerals took place in the church however, thanksgiving services were also held in the church following a funeral service at the Crematorium. The church has an open churchyard where there are approximately five burials per year. There is also a Garden of Remembrance for interment of ashes. Pastoral assistants undertake bereavement visiting, and there is a monthly 'bereavement tea'.

Musical Staff and Choir

There is a Director of Music who is responsible to the Rector for the care, control and oversight of all the music in the Church; she is also the organist. The Director has responsibility for training and conducting the adult robed Choir, currently 18 in number. The Choir sings anthems during the administration of Holy Communion at the 10am service, and is present also at most special services. The Director of Music prepares and plans hymns, songs and music for services, incorporating a wide range of styles from traditional to modern.

Serving Team

There is a Serving Team comprised of 14 adults and children. An adult server assists the clergy with "laying up" the 8 o'clock Holy Communion, reading the lesson and administering the sacrament. At the 10 o'clock Eucharist a team of crucifer and two acolytes is normally provided. Larger teams are assembled when required, e.g. Midnight Mass, Easter Eve, when incense has sometimes been used. Adult servers and other chalice assistants participate in the administration of the sacrament.

Other Lay Involvement

Lay people organise rotas for sidesmen, the reading of lessons and leading intercessions. From time to time lay preachers are invited to take part in services. In the past, local schools and other youth groups have contributed to services.

Parishioners undertake various tasks within the church in support of the worship, including washing the linen, cleaning the silver and arranging the flowers. A faithful member of the congregation cleans the church on a weekly basis.

3.4 Our fabric and resources

Buildings

The Church and Churchyard

The last quinquennial inspection took place in August 2003. Generally, the fabric is in good condition with no serious outstanding defects. The heating system has benefited from some

improvements in recent years, but a review of the system will be needed in the foreseeable future. The shingles on the spire were replaced in 2003. In the same year pews in the Onslow Chapel were removed, its floor was rebuilt and the chapel restored as a place for private prayer and less formal worship. Improvements were made to the existing sound system in 2005, which have proved to be of particular benefit to those with hearing difficulties.

In March 2006 repair work was undertaken on the roof above the Onslow chapel and the Chancel. This involved stripping the area and retiling using mainly clay tiles. At the same time other works were carried out, for example wood preservative was applied to some timbers and insulation was improved. During the summer of 2006 we made a number of internal changes, which were designed to improve access and flexibility, and to provide a more welcoming entrance to the church. The first row of pews in the nave was removed to create increased space for presiding and worship activities. The choir vestry was updated to include toilet facilities and a safe haven for parents with young children, if required.

The Churchyard is open for burials, although the remaining plots are limited. A Memorial Stone was erected in the Garden of Remembrance in 2004, with bronze plaques naming those whose ashes are interred in the unmarked plots. The Churchyard is mown on a regular basis by a Contract Gardener, and parishioners help to trim & trim during the summer months.

St John's Centre

The Centre, opened in 2002, is well maintained, checked regularly for defects and has a reserve fund for future decoration and maintenance. A quinquennial was carried out in August 2006. The short term recommendations are now in hand.

The Rectory

The spacious Rectory is situated within a short distance of the church. It was built in the 1930s, and has five bedrooms and an upstairs bathroom. There are two reception rooms with connecting doors, a large study, downstairs cloakroom, a large kitchen with pantry, and utility room. The hall and stairway were decorated in September 2000 and other work including rewiring and kitchen refurbishment was carried out the previous year. Contractors have carried out other necessary work whilst the property has been unoccupied. Internal redecoration will be undertaken during the interregnum, in consultation with the successful candidate. The garden has been well maintained. It has been the custom to hold the annual Parish fete in the Rectory garden, as well as some other parish social occasions.

The Curate's House

The parish owns and maintains a modern three-bedroom house on the Merrow Park estate, which is in good order.

Finance

Overview

The 2005 accounts show a surplus of income over expenditure due to the revenue raised by the Centre. However, under the terms of the Community Fund Grant, money from the Centre cannot benefit the church. The PCC set a budget for 2006 achieving a break even position at the end of the year.

While raising general church funds is a challenge St. John's has a very successful record of fund raising for specific projects. Most notably between 1998 and 2003 the parish raised £370,000 to fund the redevelopment of the St John's Centre for which we also received a Community Fund Grant. A campaign to raise funds for re-shingling the steeple was successful, as was an appeal for roofing works in 2006.

The PCC is committed to stewardship within the parish and ran a successful Stewardship Campaign in 2005, enabling us to break even. Further, the PCC is committed to an annual review of giving to help us address the continued financial challenges that we face. Our stewardship has benefited from a positive uptake of Gift Aid, both for general funds and for outward giving. The parish has a Stewardship Officer who deals with planned giving and Gift Aid and keeps records to comply with Inland Revenue requirements.

Giving is sourced in various ways. Most planned giving is done through standing orders and a weekly envelope scheme. Collections are regularly taken at services and the use of gift aid envelopes is encouraged. We also receive "one-off" donations and the parish responds well to special emergency appeals.

Outward Giving

The parish aims to raise approximately 5% of its general income to be used for outward giving both through fund raising events organised within the Church and through the endeavours of individual parishioners. Outward giving benefits a range of charities both in the UK and overseas. In particular support is provided to USPG, CMS, Christian Aid and the Children's Society.

St John's has been running a very successful Traidcraft stall in the Centre on the first Sunday of the month for several years. Opportunities to buy Fair Trade products have been extended to church fetes and other events. In September 2006 a monthly weekday stall was introduced to run alongside stalls manned by local charities. We look forward to this initiative developing further in 2007. The Diocese of Guildford and Guildford Borough have both been awarded Fair Trade status.

St John's Centre

The Centre is a thriving venture and generates sufficient income to be self-supporting.

Clergy Expenses

Expenses are reimbursed in accordance with the guidelines detailed in "The Parochial Expenses of the Clergy", issued by the Central Stipends Authority in January 2006.

4. ST JOHN'S CENTRE

4.1 Background

The Centre was commissioned in 2002, four years after the church decided that the most practical way of serving its neighbours was to build a modern, inviting and roomy community facility that would open up new avenues for pastoral care to the community. The aim was threefold; room for the many community organisations that were always looking for good facilities; a low cost base for local charities to use; and a modern facility for the church's own activities. The slogan was "For Christ and Community".

Of the £590,000 cost, £370,000 was raised by the congregation, largely through freewill giving, but also by various activities including coffee mornings, jumble sales, a fashion show and a flower festival. The effort and the fun involved in running and supporting such events was just as important as the financial benefit. Additionally £200,000 came from a Community Fund grant, with the remainder from donations made by other charities and local businesses.

4.2 Facilities

The Centre is built on two levels with an entrance lobby and welcome lounge area, the parish office, two halls, kitchen and toilet facilities on the ground floor. The main hall and kitchen can cater for events with up to 150 seated attendees. The first floor consists of two separate rooms plus a large seminar room which can be divided into two smaller rooms. A lift provides disabled access to the first floor facilities.

4.3 Staff

The busy parish office is manned full time by two job-sharing Administrators and several volunteers from the parish. The services of a part-time cleaner and caretaker are employed for the purposes of cleaning, maintenance and security.

4.4 Overview of use

The Centre is used extensively during the day, as well as for evening events. Hirers include a wide variety of local clubs, charities, businesses and self-help groups. Some groups meet on a regular basis but others may just hire the facilities for one specific event for example a wedding reception. A daily pre-school runs in the main hall and a mother and toddler group also uses these facilities on a weekly basis in the term time. There is a Wednesday coffee club for older parishioners, but coffee is also served daily by a team of volunteer "coffee potters". This scheme enables the church to reach out to the community of Merrow whether they are shoppers, visitors to the parish office or bereaved relatives tending a grave in the churchyard. The Centre also serves as a base for the local Community Safety Warden.

5. STATEMENT OF NEEDS

5.1 Our strengths

We believe that our greatest strength is the people who worship at St John's. Our assistant curate is very hard working, maintaining high standards of preaching, liturgy and pastoral care. The congregation is committed, involved and largely supportive. Laity play a crucial role in assisting in worship, serving on the PCC, sharing their talents and generally rising to challenges as they present themselves.

A further strength lies in our worship. St John's is a broad church and aims to cater for a range of Christian traditions. We enjoy traditional worship with a Eucharistic focus, but we also welcome the opportunity to experience other formal and informal liturgies. We benefit from being able to worship in a building that is generally in good condition and has an atmosphere that is conducive to prayer. The fact that there are several distinct areas where worship may take place makes creative use of the space possible, enhancing what can be done in different types of service.

Most people find change difficult. However, we feel that as a congregation we cope fairly well, seeing change as necessary if we are to move towards our aim of "making room for others". We have successfully made a number of changes over the last few years: from moving the time of the parish Eucharist to 10am, making it easier for families and some older parishioners to attend; to the removal of a few front pews to provide better access and worship space at the front of the nave.

Junior Church is growing in numbers, enabling our young people to participate more fully in the life of the church. A children's Easter Activity Day was held for the first time in 2006. This venture was a great success, involving parents and grandparents as helpers, and drawing in the rest of the congregation by displaying the children's work in church on Easter Day.

St John's Centre is an excellent asset, enabling us to enjoy fellowship with each other. It serves as an excellent venue for meetings and for providing pastoral care, as well as enabling us to reach out in to the wider community of Merrow and beyond.

5.2 Challenges

The parish comprises several distinct residential areas, however some areas are better represented within the congregation than others. This can give the impression that the church is not really reaching out to some parts of the parish, particularly Bushy Hill. We would like to work towards a congregation that has a greater diversity, where people from all parts of our community feel at home. However, we also recognise that many people who live in the parish travel to more evangelical churches in Guildford and that, because of the two RC schools in the area, there is a large Roman Catholic population.

A further challenge is that teenagers are largely under-represented at St John's. A youth club has been run in the past but numbers dwindled so the club was disbanded. This is therefore an area that needs careful and creative thought.

Although our congregation is committed, the reality is that many parishioners work long hours and experience the normal pressures associated with combining work and family

commitments. As a result it can be sometimes be difficult to find volunteers to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles.

We need to find a way of bringing people who are on the fringes of the church and only attend occasionally into deeper fellowship, giving them opportunities for greater involvement.

5.3 Our hopes for the future

Although we have undertaken strategic work as a parish in the last few years, there is a need to review and update this thinking, developing a coherent vision and an associated action plan for the medium term. For this reason, the hopes listed in this section may appear a little disjointed. Obviously we hope that the new Rector will lead us in discerning what the broader picture is and how some of these items might be appropriately included within that picture.

We hope to become a church that serves all the people of this parish. To this end, we need to offer a more proactive welcome and find ways of encouraging a broader range of people to feel a part of St John's. One possible way of achieving this could be through fostering a closer connection between the church and St John's Centre. Many people from the local community make use of the Centre on a regular basis and we need to consider ways in which they might feel drawn into the fellowship of the church.

The PCC has started the process of evaluating the life of the church against the analyses and challenges in the "Mission Shaped Church" Report. Many of the trends in modern day society identified in the report can be seen at work in Merrow. There are opportunities to be seized, which need to be developed and prioritised. These could include:

- *Music:* Re-establishing the junior choir and encouraging wider involvement in the adult choir
- *Children:* Strengthening Junior Church and providing more opportunities for older children
- *Welcome:* Improving the way we welcome visitors and those who attend occasionally
- *Community:* Fostering additional links with local people through community-based projects
- *Facilities:* Further improvements to the church interior and all day opening of the church
- *Vocations:* Creating opportunities for people to develop their gifts and explore vocations within the church

6. PERSON SPECIFICATION

We would welcome applications from priests of either gender for this post, although we have not had a woman Rector before. The principal qualities and gifts we would be looking for are:

Good people skills

We would welcome a Rector who enjoys being in and among the people. We hope for someone who has a broad experience of life and work and who can communicate easily with a range of people in a variety of ways. Good listening and pastoral skills are essential to this task.

Leadership skills, both spiritual and practical

All parishes want their Rector to be a visionary leader. We need someone who can lead us in the next stage of God's work here in Merrow at the right pace. A commitment to prayer and discernment, strategic skills and leadership qualities will all be important in this task.

A good liturgist and creative leader of worship

The traditional style of worship at St John's is an important part of our ministry as a parish church. We need a priest who is a competent liturgist, committed to good worship grounded in the sacraments. However, we respond well to other styles – contemplative and creative – when these are offered.

A collaborative worker

We don't expect the Rector to do it all! We would welcome someone who can develop people and teams and, working with the curate, foster the gifts and vocations of others.

An enthusiasm for work with children

The links we have with our schools are significant and it is therefore highly desirable that the Rector enjoys working with children and has creative ideas about how to involve young people in the life of the church.

An able preacher and teacher

We enjoy preaching that is rooted in Scripture and Tradition but challenges us to live as disciples in today's world. We enjoy learning and would appreciate a Rector who was keen to develop programmes which add breadth and depth to our understanding of the Christian faith.

Finally, two more general points:

A presence in the parish

We feel that we need a *parish*, and not simply a *congregational* priest: someone who will, through their involvement in the wider community enable us to become a more inclusive church rather than simply serving those who already attend.

Strength of character, blessed with humour

We need someone who will have the courage to challenge us when that is the right thing to do, enabling us to remain faithful to the work to which God has called us. However, we would also appreciate someone with a sense of humour who can encourage us to laugh together and enjoy our common life.