

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF WINCHCOMBE

WITH GRETTON, SUDELEY MANOR AND STANLEY PONTLARGE



ANNUAL REPORT

for the year 2015

**presented at the
Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

Sunday 17 April 2016

ORGANISATION AND AIMS

Winchcombe Parish consists of four churches: St Peter's in Winchcombe, Christ Church in Gretton, St Michael's in Stanley Pontlarge and St Mary's on the Sudeley estate. It is part of the large Winchcombe Team which is currently suspended. For most of 2015 the parish was in vacancy, and so worship and pastoral care was led by Julia Hook (part-time team vicar), James Pickersgill (assistant curate) and Bishop David Jennings (James' mentor during the vacancy), along with many retired clergy and lay ministers attached to the parish.

The parish is part of Tewkesbury and Winchcombe Deanery, whose Synod meets three times annually "for the purposes of sharing in and supporting the work of the church nationally".

The main purpose of the PCC, as defined in the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956, is "to co-operate with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical". The PCC met six times during the year. Between council meetings, business was transacted by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, which is the standing committee of the PCC.

Our mission is:

- to help people of all ages to encounter God;
- to help them to grow in their relationship with God; and
- to equip them to serve God and thus to serve the community in every area of our lives.

How we plan to achieve this was set out in our parish profile, drawn up during the vacancy, which reflects that we believe that we are called:

- to be at the heart of our community, open and accessible to all;
- to participate in the rhythm of local life, reflecting in our relationships the love of God that we see in Jesus; and
- to encourage others to join us in a personal connection with God through Jesus Christ.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE

The last Annual Parochial Church meeting was held on Monday 19th April 2015, the electoral roll then stood at 280 including 26 not resident in the parish (compared with 277 in 2014)

Combined attendance at our three churches (St Peter's, Christ Church and St Michael's) was:

On a 'normal Sunday'	149
Easter Day	360 (including 250 communicants)
Christmas Eve & Christmas Day	522 (including 437 communicants)

There were 22 Baptisms (12 infants, 9 children & 1 adult), 9 weddings and 30 funerals (in church, at the Crematorium or the Cemetery).

REVIEW OF PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In last year's Report I said that an Interregnum was an opportunity to take stock of our Church Life and to use it positively to consider the future.

So it has proved!

The exercise of preparing the Church Profile concentrated the minds of the Group who prepared it and enabled us to identify areas of Church life which were good and those which could be improved.

Some of those have already been accomplished.

We have successfully established and formalised a Church Pastoral Group and the Team, led by Margaret Batterbury has been doing excellent work.

We have taken a careful look at the Parish finances and in order to balance our books we have reduced our Parish Share contribution from £82,000 to £62,000. The Diocese would like us to pay

more but understand the decision we took – which was after many years of providing mutual support to the rest of the Team, over and above our correct Parish Share allocation.

As a result we have succeeded in balancing the books and the Accounts show a small surplus – for the first time for a number of years.

However, we still need to take a more detailed look at our Finances for the future and we shall need to raise our income – there is much we can do but we need the money to do it!!

The Interregnum has proved to be a very positive in many ways and shows how the Clergy and Laity can work together .We have been blessed to have the services of Julia and James together with the retired Clergy who have all provided sterling Service.

It has meant a lot of hard work and many meetings – but hopefully in a satisfying way!

So we have had a successful year culminating in the Licensing Service for JP. The Parish is now in good heart to go forward with him into the future.

Alan B. Thomas, Lay Chairman.

DIOCESAN SYNOD

As is usual the Diocesan Synod met three times during the year. The Synod met at St Nicholas, Prestbury, the Cathedral for a service followed by the meeting at North Warehouse, Gloucester and at All Saints Academy, Cheltenham.

The first meeting was on 7th February and was chaired by the Bishop of Tewkesbury as we were still in an interregnum between Diocesan Bishops. The Church was celebrating the appointment of Libby Lane, the first lady Bishop, as Bishop of Stockport. The South West Region would be starting the process of seeking a new Bishop in April with ten delegates representing the Diocese. The Safeguarding Board was two years old and had an annual reporting obligation to Synod. The income from Parish Shares for 2014 fell £70K short of the £6M requested which meant there was an estimated general fund deficit for the year of around £410K, including pension contributions – this is just short of the budget for the year.

The second meeting was held on 13th June with Bishop Martyn again in the chair. The delegation of certain powers and obligations from the Bishop of Gloucester to the Bishop of Tewkesbury were read out by the Diocesan Registrar and agreed by acclamation. The Parish Share review was discussed in great detail and the Synod approved the changes to the apportionment of the Parish Share within the Diocese of Gloucester. The Synod welcomed the New Ministries Fund paper and commended it for discussion in deaneries and parishes with feedback to the New Ministries Fund Steering Group. It further requested annual update reports on the work to each summer Synod until further notice.

During the year elections to the Gloucester Diocesan Synod and Diocesan Board of Finance took place and I was re-elected.

The third and final Synod meeting of the year took place on 3rd October at All Saints Academy, Cheltenham when Bishop Rachel Treweek attended her first Synod since her enthronement as the first Lady Diocesan Bishop on 19th September. Bishop Rachel expressed her gratitude for the warm welcome she and her husband had received and she was especially grateful to Bishop Martyn for his leadership. She went on to explain her vision for the future. The Principal of the Academy was invited to address the Synod. The Synod, passionate about the life to be found and shared in Jesus Christ, committed the Diocese to placing church schools at the heart of its mission and directed the Bishop's Staff, Council and Deanery Synods to ensure that schools, and in particular church schools, are an integral part of future strategic planning for mission ministry. The budget for the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance for 2016 was approved and Mr Colin Rank was elected, *nem con*, as the chair of the Board.

Tom Hancock, Diocesan Synod Representative

DEANERY SYNOD

As usual the Deanery Synod held 3 meetings during 2015 – in January, June and October.

The January meeting received a Parish Share 2016 presentation which was led by Canon Ben Preece Smith and the Revd David Smith. It was decided that there would be an extraordinary Deanery Standing Committee meeting to be held on 18 March 2015 to discuss the deanery response to the proposals noted in the above presentation – and this meeting to be open to all Deanery Synod members, PCC Treasurers and PCC Representatives to attend.

The June meeting considered a Reform & Renewal consultation which was led by Dr Julie Fay (Deanery Synod lay chair) and the Revd Canon Paul Williams (Area Dean). Members present were invited to comment on what they felt were:

- the **Strengths** of the Church of England;
- the **Weaknesses** of the Church of England;
- the **Opportunities** within the life and Christian witness of the Church of England;
- the **Threats** to the Church of England.

The October meeting reflected on the question “Who are you?” which was introduced by guest speaker the Revd David Runcorn [Diocese of Gloucester Warden of Readers & Associate Director of Ordinands].

Your Deanery Synod representatives are Nigel Bearne, Tom Hancock, Margaret Jarvis and Alan Thomas.

Nigel Bearne, Deanery Synod Representative

FABRIC

St. Peter's, Winchcombe

The most significant investment in the fabric of St. Peter's this year is invisible, but certainly audible. The Organ received a major internal refurbishment to eliminate missing notes on certain stops (which required expert disguising by organists). This investment ensures the organ will continue to play an important part of our music in worship and concerts. The funds were raised by major efforts from Fiona and the choir, significant investment from the Friends of St. Peter's, grant funding gathered by Bob Pragnell and many contributions from the congregation. Many thanks to all for making it happen.

Also audible is the generous gift of an improved audio system, which we are still getting to grips with, but which has already (with technical help from the congregation) enabled audio streaming of services to those at home.

A more visual impact was the sanding and polishing of the West end parquet floor. This has lifted the informal area at the back of the Church with a lighter colour and smooth finish. Can you identify the different woods in the north and south sections? This open area gives us a very flexible space for group and social activities, whilst maintaining our seating capacity for major services with additional chairs. Plans for the full re-ordering need to progress this year to refine the vision, select the permanent furniture and embark on the fund-raising. The PCC would welcome volunteers to steer this exciting project.

The pews removed last year have been put to good use: 4 are being used at Postlip Hall and others are being re-fashioned to provide a welcome desk in St. Peter's. This is particularly for the use of the Church Stewards who give a greatly valued and knowledgeable welcome to visitors in all seasons.

Somewhat less glamorous are the continuing efforts to trace the occasional leaks in the South Aisle. When the wind is strong and from the south water finds a way in under the metal roof and leaves us chasing leaks with mops and buckets.

Numerous small repair and maintenance tasks are undertaken by the Fabric Group who tackle most

things from lock repair and joinery to tiling and plumbing. For many years Adrian Sharpe has led this industrious band and we offer him our great thanks as he passes the baton to Geoff Adlington.

The inaugural St. Peter's maintenance day in November proved a great event for fellowship, whilst making significant progress on improving the condition of the Church inside and out. Stewart & Rosemary Aylward did an excellent job in organising the day which is likely to become part of the social calendar.

Christ Church, Gretton

The Quinquennial inspection in Gretton was carried out in 2015 by Richard Basnet, a specialist building surveyor. Despite the anxiety that the shifting clay soil might mean further repairs were needed, the structure of Christ Church was declared sound. The Christ Church congregation have been able to keep on top of most of the other repairs required to minimise the impact of weather on the fabric of the church. Repairs/replacement of the cast iron rainwater gutters and down pipes to the front left hand elevation were a major task successfully completed by the team.

An outstanding item is to review the stability of headstones in the Churchyard; some of which are currently leaning over. Also outside there was a need to have some tree surgery to one of the impressive pine trees and a rowan.

The Christ Church congregation have also been instrumental in the setting up of a trust to maintain the redundant Chapel of Ease in the centre of Gretton.

St. Michael's, Stanley Pontlarge

The very active Friends of St. Michael's responded swiftly to the 2014 Quinquennial and ensured that the repairs, including to the ancient roof, were completed and funded by the Friends. A new timer for the under-pew heating will ensure that St. Michael's remains the warmest of our places of worship, but without inadvertently heating an empty building.

Considerable time has been invested in keeping the churchyard in good order and plans for new planting will be put to the Diocese in the coming months.

St. Mary's, Sudeley

A Quinquennial inspection was also made at Sudeley during November; which proved valuable in identifying some easily rectifiable problems which would have caused damage if left unchecked. There are likely to be some significant repairs to stonework needed and the Churchwardens will work in partnership with the Castle team to tackle them. The funding of repairs (between castle & PCC) needs to be reviewed to improve on the current informal arrangements.

Finally many thanks from both Churchwardens to Graham Taylor, Rosemary Hancock and Tom Hancock as Deputy Wardens for Gretton, Stanley Pontlarge & Sudeley respectively. They have taken responsibility to act as the focal point for both fabric and service matters, for which we are most grateful

Tim Hall, Churchwarden

CHRIST CHURCH, GRETTON

Services at Christ Church are held every Sunday at 10:00 am, alternating between Holy Communion and Morning Worship. The average attendance at regular Sunday services is between fifteen and twenty; fellowship time follows with refreshments served. A different priest, or on occasion a lay reader, takes the services each week, and we have a trio of dedicated organists who operate on a rota basis. Members of the congregation also read the lessons on a rota basis, and lay people take intercessions. Our hope is to make our church a more prayerful place, looking outward to our community in a variety of ways.

Our Harvest Festival Service was made special by having children from Gretton School attend; Julia Hook officiated and the children sang for us. It is hoped that they will be able to attend at many more special services in the future, as they have done in the past.

At Christmas we had our usual Crib Service and Christingle in the afternoon of Christmas Eve, which as usual was a full house of children and parents, with James Pickersgill officiating and taking the role of Darth Vader for part of the service, highlighting the difference between darkness and light. Our Carol Service in the evening was well attended as always, with our volunteer Christmas choir leading the singing.

Susan Fleck

ST. MICHAEL'S, STANLEY PONTLARGE

Services continue to be held on the first and third Sundays of each month. If a fifth Sunday occurs there is usually a Service, but not always.

Harvest Festival, which usually coincides with Michaelmas tide, is celebrated in style followed by refreshments. The Christmas Carol Service is also followed by refreshments.

In 2015 the Archdeacon took the annual Choral Evensong when the choir of St. Peter's Church came to lead the Service.

The average attendance on "normal" Sundays is sixteen – eighteen, but on "High Days" and Holy Days the church is packed. Services work on a rota basis and we have a different priest each Sunday, also a different organist. Members of the congregation take turns reading the lessons.

Rosemary Hancock, Deputy Warden

ST. MARY'S, SUDELEY MANOR

A large number of visitors come to the Church during the Castle's open season. The model of Queen Katherine Parr has now been removed from the vestry.

Six fourth Sunday Services took place from April to September in the afternoon. Two were led by St. Peter's Church choir, one led by the Octavo Singers and one led by the Sudeley Singers. The Methodist Evening Worship was led by the Isbourne Singers and a Choral Evensong was led by St. Andrew's, Toddington Church choir.

The Services were well attended by local members and visitors and the collections have been consistent. Often visitors stay for the entire Service and sometimes they have to leave in order to catch their coach home. Visitors appreciate being able to attend the Services at St. Mary's Church.

Tom Hancock, Deputy Warden

YOUTH & CHILDREN'S WORK

Firstly, a massive thank you to all those who have prayed for and facilitated the vast array of groups and services run for children and young people – none of which would happen without your serving in this way.

The Diocese recently ran two conferences specifically aimed at children and young people, underlying the overall commitment to including all people within our church life.

Bread or Whine – are children welcomed as a source of joy or?

Thursday 25th February 2016

There was much discussion and various questions poised for each parish to explore together in their own context:

- Why do we want children in church? Is it for the right reasons? Why do we come to church? Is it for 'me' and God, or is it for the whole church family and God?

We need to be intentional about allowing children to be who God made them to be, and recognise their ability to see things in a different way to us. Create a safe forum where members of the church can honestly have two conversations:

It's a problem to worship with children because....

It is a blessing to worship with children because...

In our worship service planning, create an environment where the children are fully engaged.

Making a difference to all children – Friday 26th February 2016

This event was focused around a video *Who We Are Together* which was commissioned by Bishop Rachel especially for the event and which involved people from Winchcombe Abbey School & St Peter's. The video is now loaded on the Diocese of Gloucester website and can be found at the following link:

www.gloucester.anglican.org/schools/

It shows how three primary schools and parish churches in vastly contrasting settings live out their vision to worship, serve and celebrate together, both serving the same communities. The Church of England sees its church schools "as being at the centre of its mission to the nation". Every church school, therefore, will have the support of the clergy and foundation governors in their local parish who will work in partnership with the Headteacher and staff to develop and promote the school's Christian foundation.

The relationship that exists in Winchcombe has always been very strong and should be the bedrock of ministry with families and young people in the years ahead and value and recognise the unique opportunity we have here.

Toddler Service:

The fortnightly service continues to thrive with numbers recently of 15 children and 13 adults. It is a special time of worship and greatly valued by all those who attend with strong relationships and friendships developing.

Exploring Faith:

This has grown out of the Toddler Service as a natural development of the relationships being made. In the intervening weeks between Toddler Services, a group of mums have met to consider and discuss matters of the Christian faith.

Messy Church:

In the 2½ years we have been facilitating Messy Church from October 2013, there have been 8 messy churches. Over 95 unique parents and 121 children have attended (not to mention the team in the kitchen and those on registration) ... that is quite a lot of Pizza! 63 different families have attended over the course of 2½ years! A large portion of these are not regular church attendees of any of the town's churches.

On average each messy church has about 30-50 children attending with their parents, grandparents or carers. There is a great team of people who make it possible – at least 4 on Registration, 6-8 on craft, 3 in the Kitchen, 4 on welcoming / doing the talk / musical worship; all from the different churches, a great initiative of Churches Together with all playing their part.

Children and adults seem to love the relaxed atmosphere, crafts, talk, learning about Jesus, worship and family tea, which has the feeling of a party. A place where children are welcome – "let the children come unto me".

The next two main Messy Churches are planned for June & October 2016 but we have also been invited to be a part of the Festival of Music & Arts on May Bank Holiday taking Messy to the streets. We are also exploring 'Sweaty Church' to run alongside Messy Church, as a way of engaging slightly older children.

Sunday mornings:

We continue to run a full programme of groups for all ages, which are appreciated by all those who attend. Recently, many new congregation members have joined the team to facilitate which has enabled us to move towards people being rotated once a month.

Youth:

Sunday morning Youth Church has been challenged by limited contact time during the service and we need to explore ways of giving all ages tailored stimulation and ideas whilst involving them in the broader service. Chill-out on a Thursday evening after choir is a relaxed time for older Choir members to share experiences and seek advice and support with their concerns.

All-age Services:

These have continued through the interregnum on the 1st Sunday of each month, are well attended and again, give us a unique opportunity to gather and worship in a contemporary way with all-ages together.

Future:

If we are to succeed to build our Church for youth and children we need a more structured approach to develop their faith, fellowship and personal development.

Discussions are in a preliminary stage with the other churches in the town to discuss ways of working together more fully in the future for the benefit of the young people.

In many circles, a dedicated Family Worker to work with children, young people & families across the age spectrum has been suggested as something that would greatly benefit people in the parish. We all have our part to play in the body of Christ and this role would enable further and deeper ministry amongst families.

In summary, as always there is much to give thanks to God for and plenty to pray for, for the future of all of our young people that we have the privilege to serve.

James Pickersgill, Curate

THE PCC ACCOUNTS

First of all, thanks must go to Stewart Aylward, who as a retired Chartered Accountant, was able to use his expertise in producing the attached detailed accounts, thus saving the church a much needed few thousand pounds!

I believe the accounts are reasonably understandable, but as Treasurer I should like to draw your attention to a few points.

With regard to unrestricted funds, giving via the planned giving scheme, collections at services and other offerings was over £4,300 (4.7%) lower than last year. The solar panels, which are on the roof of St Peter's, continue to generate an income. Our total income from all sources, was just over £4,000 (2.8%) higher than last year, which meant that at the end of 2015, we had a small surplus of just over £3,600. This is the first surplus for some years!

This has largely come about because we were able to reduce the amount we paid in Parish Share by around £20,000. In addition, we have not had a Youth Minister for most of the year, with a consequent saving in salary. Also Teachers House, which he occupied, has been let, thus producing a rental income. Without these there would have been a significant deficit.

During the year the repairs to the organ at St Peter's were carried out with funding being shown within the Restricted Funds Section of the accounts. All of the work was financed by gifts from numerous individuals and various charities and The Friends of St Peter's. Thanks must go to all who contributed most generously to the work.

There was a roof repair required to Teachers House and this cost around £3,300. Apart from that expense and the organ repairs there has not been other major capital expense.

The outstanding loans on Teachers House as at 31 December 2015 were £25,150 and all are open-ended with no fixed repayment date.

In 2015 the overall cost of running the Parish was around £386 per day.

As I write this at the beginning of March, John Paul has only been in post for around 7 weeks and we shall await in due course his leading on many aspects of church life. Many will have already noted his mention of giving and finance in his first sermon.

Overall our financial position is that we are a church which currently is capital rich, but income poor. Winchcombe is a generally prosperous area and yet, when it comes to giving of our money to the church here, and its ministry, I am afraid to say a small minority of the congregation are subsidising greatly the majority. For example, a simple exercise carried out in 2015 indicated that over 50% of the congregants were giving less than £7 per week, which for a married couple is only £3.50 each.

I am sure many of us can remember the old school reports going to our parents with the comment on some subjects “Could do better”. As children of our Heavenly Father, with regard to our financial giving, might He not say this, to many of us today: “Could do better”? There is a booklet about “biblical giving” produced by The Church of England’s National Stewardship and Resources Team. I thoroughly recommend looking at it, and I know that if acted upon, it would revolutionise the financial position of our church. It can be seen online at:

www.parishresources.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Give10.pdf.

Roger Eckley, Treasurer

CHURCH STEWARDS

St Peter’s Church stewards had a meeting in December when we had, as our main speaker, Police Inspector Goga from Tewkesbury, who covers this area of Gloucestershire. He gave an interesting talk on security. He said that Winchcombe, generally is a good community.

We still hope that more people will volunteer to become stewards to welcome visitors and to talk about the historic features of the church. It is very interesting to talk to our visitors, bearing in mind that we had 7,289 visitors in 2015 from 46 different countries. The actual breakdown was non-UK visitors : 1,186 and from the UK : 6,103.

I wish to thank the stewards for all their help in greeting visitors, talking to them and for looking after the Church when on duty. Please carry on the good work!

Tom Hancock

LOOKING FORWARD

It is very good to be here in Winchcombe as your priest-in-charge. I do have a strong sense of having been called to be here. Liz, Suzanna and I have very much appreciated the warm welcome you have given us. I’m especially grateful to you for having waited several months longer for my arrival than you might have been anticipating. As you know, this enabled me to continue working with Bishop Rachel as she began her ministry in the diocese, and so I think she is also grateful to you for having been prepared to wait!

During the vacancy last year, many people worked hard to ensure the continuation and flourishing of ministry here. In some parishes everything stops during a vacancy, but that was certainly not the case in Winchcombe. There are some very gifted and committed individuals in this parish.

One of my deepest convictions is that we are called to work together. Although I am your parish priest, the task of mission and ministry belongs to all of us who are baptised Christians. All of us have God-given gifts to contribute to this task as members together of the body of Christ. One of the things I want to focus on during my time among you is to help you as individuals discern what your particular gifts and callings might be.

I want us to be people of prayer, who are excited about the life of the Spirit and who want to go deeper in their walk with God. It is good to share in daily prayer with a few people each day, and it would also be very good to see this number increase.

I want us to find ways of growing in our faith and discipleship, studying the Bible and the teaching of the church, not afraid of wrestling with difficult questions but confident that God will bless our desire to learn more about Jesus.

I want us to continue to be outward-focused and to serve our community better. I particularly want us to build on our close and mutually beneficial links with our church primary school. But I also want us to find ways of connecting with those who have only occasional contact with the church, perhaps through baptisms, weddings and funerals. We also need to take the risk of reaching out to those parts of the community that currently have no contact with us at all.

I want us to be generous in giving our time and talents to service of the church and the community. God has given us a great deal, and we are not currently as generous as we might be in giving our gifts back to God. Later this year, we will devote some time to considering this area of our common life.

I want us to enjoy worshipping together and to develop a rich and varied pattern of services throughout the liturgical year, in which all ages and traditions are able to participate.

There is much to give thanks for here in the parish of Winchcombe, and much to build on. Let's enjoy discovering what good things God has in store for us over the next months and years.

John Paul Hoskins, Priest-in-Charge