

St Peter's Church Alstonefield



Annual Report And Accounts 2018

Saint Peter's Church, Alstonefield Trustees Annual Report 2018

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England, and by which the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure governs.

The Parish of St Peter's, Alstonefield is one of the five Parishes ¹within the Benefice of Alstonefield.

PCC Membership and Meetings

The members of the PCC are either ex officio, or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. This year the following have served:

Incumbent: Position Vacant (Interregnum)

Wardens: Position Vacant

Deanery Synod Representatives: Mrs V. Littlehales (elected 2018)

Lay Chair: Mrs Marion Beloe (Re-elected April 2018)

Elected lay members:

Mr Martin Wilding (Treasurer, appointed April 2018)

Mrs Angela Campbell (Secretary elected April 2018)

Mrs V. Littlehales (elected April 2018)

Mr Neil Beloe (elected April 2018)

Ms. Carrie Osborne (co-opted April 2018)

Electoral Roll Officer Mrs Angela Campbell (elected April 2018)

(Benefice Co-ordinator Mrs Marion Beloe)

Overview

This year has been a busy one with a major programme of events inspired by the oldest gravestone in the churchyard (for Ann Green 1518) and orchestrated by members of the PCC, and there has also been a significant change to our benefice.

The benefice was formally suspended by the Bishop in May 2016 for a period of five years, pending discussions about the future of ministry across the whole Deanery, and possible reconfigurations to the Alstonefield Benefice and thus the Alstonefield Deanery.

Pastoral measures were put in place to discuss proposals to reconfigure the existing Alstonefield benefice (5 parishes) to comprise the three parishes of Alstonefield, Ilam & Wetton, with a proposal to appoint a 0.2 incumbent in the future with lay worship support. This was deemed necessary to reduce the Parish Share to a more realistic and affordable level for the three parishes concerned, all of whom had indicated their willingness to Lay lead some services.

Following a series of parish meetings, where representatives from each parish helped to identify our individual and collective *strengths and weaknesses* and contribute to discussions about future ministry, a Benefice Profile was created. This set out the kind of ministry we were hoping for in our

¹ From 1st June 2018 the old Alstonefield benefice (originally comprising the 5 parishes of Alstonefield, Butterton, Ilam, Wetton and Warslow with Elkstones) formally became the Benefice of Alstonefield, Ilam & Wetton.

rural communities, and also identified the skills and qualities we were looking for in a future incumbent. An advert for a 0.2 'House for Duty' Vicar was created, drawing on content from the profile, and this was placed in the Church Times in November 2018 with an interview date set for 25th January 2019.

Our Church Warden stood down from the post this year as her time was increasingly taken up with co-ordinating Benefice business, which has included organising visiting clergy for Holy Communion services and occasional offices, creating a monthly service rota, ensuring wedding Banns were factored in and read at appropriate times, liaising with Funeral Directors and stonemasons, organising wardens meetings, providing supplies e.g for Baptism, Communion, organising parish meetings, writing the benefice profile and preparing and leading services.

As there was no-one else available to take on the role and function of Church Warden, the PCC made the decision to incorporate the role and act on the basis of a management committee, thus the responsibility has been shared through effective teamwork and the church has continued to function well.

It is to the PCC members credit, and their commitment to the Church, that each person has stepped up to do whatever is necessary to ensure that St. Peter's holds true to its mission statement - '*A guiding light for the community, to inspire, refresh and sustain...*' - and grateful thanks and appreciation are expressed in this report to the Treasurer, members of the PCC and also the regular congregation. It has been a real team effort and a lot has been achieved.

This year, as in previous years, we have been very fortunate to have willing support from other members of the community who have helped with routine maintenance tasks, churchyard maintenance, cleaning, flower arranging, clock-winding and opening and locking the church, and we are pleased that this means the Church is open every day. Our wholehearted thanks and appreciation are given for this valuable voluntary support. However, it is clear that the number of core volunteers continues to shrink year on year generally due to increasing age and / or 'volunteer fatigue' - the average age of our regular volunteers is 70 years. The village demographic continues to change and it is proving very difficult to attract new, younger volunteers, thus the same few people are carrying an increasingly heavier load.

Public Benefit Statement

St Peter's church remains an important focus within the community for milestone occasions, for annual church festival celebrations, and for public worship and private reflection.

As trustees of the Charity, the members of the PCC are aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in the Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit and have had regard to it.

We believe that, by promoting the work of the Church of England within our Ecclesiastical Parish of St Peter's (and as one of the three parishes of the new benefice of Alstonefield, Ilam & Wetton), we help to promote the whole mission of the Church (pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical) more effectively within our Ecclesiastical Parish; and that, in doing so, we provide a benefit to the public by:

- providing facilities for public worship, pastoral care and spiritual, moral and intellectual development, both for its members and for anyone who wishes to benefit from what the Church offers;
- promoting Christian values, and service by members of the Church in and to their communities, to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

The local and wider mission

St Peter's Church is open every day, and a small kitchen facility enables us to offer self service refreshments for the many visitors to the area. Walkers, Pilgrims, visitors and locals have the opportunity to enjoy refreshments in a peaceful, reflective setting.

This is particularly popular with the Peak Pilgrimage (developed by Eyam church community) as St. Peter's is one of the churches listed on the route.

The Prayer Board continues to be used to raise awareness and encourage people to pause and reflect. Prayer cards are also available for people to complete and leave in a specified area should they wish to do so; these prayers are offered up at service times.

We have been unable to continue with Monthly Coffee Mornings, because many of the regular attenders have become more infirm and less mobile, and some have sadly died. The coffee mornings offered a time of social interaction for a number of the very elderly members of the community and, in the absence of this, members of the PCC have undertaken pastoral care via regular home visits and/ or telephone contact. This is a particularly important part of our community mission- reaching out to those who may feel isolated and lonely.

The Mission Action Plan (MAP) remains a work in progress, specifically with reference to the development of a dedicated Pastoral Visiting Team, and we are challenged to reinvigorate this in 2019 with the eventual appointment of a new incumbent.

Service provision has been maintained via very supportive visiting clergy and lay leadership.

Church services and attendances

Alstonefield has a predominantly older population with around a third of the regular church congregation being 70 years and older. The remaining two thirds of the regular congregation comprise a majority of people in their middle age, plus one young family.

There were 21 services in church during 2018, 7 Holy Communion Services and 14 lay led services. Average Sunday attendance across the year was 20 adults and 2 children. These figures reflect a slightly increased attendance due to two special services during the year - the Ann Green Festival service and a WW1 centenary exhibition and service – Lay led services have increased in number this year, and have ensured that a Christian presence has continued to be nurtured within our community. There were four funerals in Alstonefield during 2018.

In April, Bishop Michael attended an All Age Worship service to officially open the Ann Green festival, which was a wonderful introduction to a series of *Tudor themed* fund raising events throughout the year.

The Wakes service took place in June on the Village Green, at which Canon John Hampton (*Vicar of Alstonefield from 1976-1982*) gave a sermon. It was attended by locals and also visitors to the area.

In October a lay led community 'Harvest Thanksgiving' service was held in church, which was well attended and enjoyed by everyone.

This year was the centenary of the end of WW1, and this was marked by an outstanding exhibition created by the local history group and displayed in church.

On Remembrance Sunday, an Act of Remembrance took place outside at the War Memorial followed by two minutes silence. The solemnity of the occasion was enhanced by a young Bugler playing *The Last Post* and the *Reveille*. Following the Act of Remembrance, a service of commemoration took place in the church.

Community carol singing took place around the village in December, and the lay led *Carols by Candlelight* service on Christmas Eve attracted around 140 people drawn from the local (and wider community), and also visitors to the area.

This special service of Nine lessons & carols has become an annual event for many people in the community, and offers an opportunity to make their own personal observance and reflect upon the Christmas message. It also offers a wonderful opportunity for community fellowship.

This year the Christmas offertory was very generously supported and donated to *UNICEF's Syrian Child appeal*.

Community Engagement and Fund Raising

This year saw a unique fund raising project, *The Ann Green Festival*, which was organised to commemorate Ann Green who is buried in the churchyard and whose grave records the date 11th April 1518 – allegedly the oldest legible gravestone in the Country. It was a huge undertaking and co-ordinated by a member of the PCC and her family, to whom grateful thanks are extended. The activities throughout the year included:

- Community Art Event
- Tudor Blackwork Honey Bees Threads Workshop
- Talk on Churchyard Lichens, a story of Sanctuary, Resurrection and Hope
- Tudor Fair
- Piva Concert
- Talk on Monarchy, Marriages, Monks and Martyrs: the messy birth of the Anglican Church
- Talk on Rural Life in Ann Green's time: living in an upland landscape around 1518
- Exhibition in Church

Information boards about interesting aspects of the church were created and during the May and August Bank Holiday weekends, guided tours of the church were offered to visitors along with Cream Teas and other refreshments. Local school children from Ilam, Warslow and Fenny Bentley schools also visited, creating stories and pictures to record their visit.

Our appreciation and thanks are extended to everyone who volunteered their time and skills to help with the various activities this year, which have contributed to church funds.

The task of fundraising, however, remains a perplexing one as the number of volunteers continues to decrease, and attracting younger volunteers is proving difficult.

In October, the Harvest 'Bring & Share' supper was held in the village hall and Harvest produce was auctioned as usual. This, combined with a raffle, also contributed income for the church.

Alstonefield Local History Group (ALHG) created a wonderful, thought provoking display in the church to commemorate the Centenary of the end of WW1. The focus was upon the local men who went to war and also offered a fascinating insight into the social history of the area during 1914-1918 via photographs, information boards and oral history from older members of the community. It resonated with many local families who had direct links with the soldiers and also attracted a lot of interest from a large number of visitors. Descendants of researched families also attended which was poignant.

The self service refreshments continued to provide a valuable well safe income stream as visitors, walkers and Pilgrims (walking the Peak Pilgrimage) made a contribution. Friends of St Peter's annual donations and the regular monthly and annual giving by some parishioners also contributed some income.

Community Carol singing took place around the village in December in aid of *Water Aid*.

The Carols by Candlelight service in December offered the opportunity for the community, and visitors, to come together in fellowship.

A significant number of people attend church only for specific services and festivals across the year, and some either worship elsewhere or do not attend church at all; nonetheless there remains a very strong sense that the Church offers a sentinel presence.

Electoral Roll

Ten people were removed from the Roll and five people requested to be added to the Roll, therefore the revised Electoral Roll stands at fifty one.

Fabric, Maintenance & Conservation

Routine maintenance checks are carried out regularly by PCC members and the maintenance log kept up to date. The Church Inventory has also been revised and updated.

In September 2018 the Quinquennial Inspection was carried out by our Church Architect. He acknowledged in his report that "*The church is generally in good condition; it has been looked after well by the PCC*". However, as expected with a Grade 1 listed building of this size, the report also highlighted a significant number of issues that should be addressed before the next inspection for which funding will have to be identified and made available and faculties applied for. These will be prioritised accordingly within a five year plan.

Part of our overall responsibility during the interregnum is ‘caretaking’ Alstonefield Vicarage, and regular checks have been made on the empty property by a designated member of the PCC. It is hoped that the Vicarage will once again be occupied in the not too distant future.

Churchyard

The churchyard is maintained to a very high standard, thanks to a willing team of local people, who mow, trim and effectively manage the recurring mole problem.

This year the church received a Diocese Gold Award, reflecting the ongoing commitment of our dedicated grounds maintenance team for which we are very grateful.

We have also benefited again this year from a specific donation for its maintenance.

Bells

This year Alstonefield and Wetton bell ringers have been actively involved in teaching new ringers at Butterton Tower – the latter having new facilities, including computer technology, to aid the process. As a result of this initiative, and because bell ringers are in short supply, a new group called ‘The Manifold Ringers’ has been created and practice nights now rotate between the three towers (Alstonefield, Wetton, Butterton). This has made ringing before services, special services and weddings easier to organise locally.

Maintenance checks are the responsibility of the Steeple keeper(s) and any problems reported to the PCC for attention. Visiting ringers rang the Alstonefield bells in April, July and December.

Toilet project

We are very grateful for the continued help and expertise of our designated Project Manager (an experienced water sanitation Engineer). As a result of his endeavours, we have finally been granted a Faculty to proceed with creating a toilet in the disused South porch. It is hoped that the toilet will be completed by Autumn 2019.

Future projects include:

- Internal & External Remedial work (as per the QI report recommendations)
- Internal Decoration (donation received)
- Replacing the external boiler
- Secure storage for the lawn tractor

Income and expenditure

The Parish Share has been a challenge for several years now and parish share arrears were growing year on year, since 2014. Our difficulties in paying off the arrears and funding a full time Incumbent prompted the Benefice changes (that came into effect on 1st June 2018). The subsequent reduction in Parish Share, and positive discussions with the Diocesan Finance Department regarding our arrears, has eased the financial pressure considerably.

We have continued to meet our general running costs for 2018, and our main spends have been insurance, heating and lighting bills and essential maintenance.

Alstonefield has a significant number of properties that are either second homes and / or holiday lets, thus our regular 'full time' congregation is small in number, which correlates to smaller collections. There are a small number of people who give regular monthly donations and some annual donations. These are supplemented by other regular givers who attend services.

This year the Ann Green Festival, which ran from April to September, was a successful fund raising project enjoyed by many people, locals and visitors alike. The primary objective was to increase footfall and pique interest in the church and the local history, thus encouraging donations. It was a huge undertaking, co-ordinated by a PCC member, and requiring a lot of volunteer time and energy, for which the PCC expresses grateful appreciation to all concerned in making the Festival a success.

Increased collections from larger congregations attending community services, for example, Remembrance Day, Harvest and Christmas Services, particularly the annual Carol Service, are gratefully received. We also maximise and generate important income from the annual gift aid claim.

We have been fortunate this year to receive a donation from an annual village event called the Leaden Boot Challenge (LBC), for which we are very grateful. The funding we received from the LBC was intended for internal decorating of the church. However, due to external issues with the South roof resulting in water ingress, it was decided to delay any internal decorating until the external issues are addressed, thus this money has been 'ring fenced' for future use.

The generosity of our regular congregation, and also the wider community, is gratefully acknowledged in this report.

It is also very important to acknowledge in this report the countless number of volunteer hours given, and therefore the major contribution in kind made by the PCC and members of the congregation.

In 2018 we received additional income from four funerals.

As part of a smaller three parish benefice going forward, offering a combination of Clergy and lay led services, we are more confident that we will be able to meet a more realistic and affordable annual Parish Share².

Finances

We maintain restricted funds with CBF Reserve (deposit) accounts, one is a ring fenced fabric and maintenance fund for major expenditures. Donations made are quite often expressly given for the fabric fund (capital expenditure) and not for revenue costs.

There is also a wall fund, given by a local family as a memorial legacy, to be used for perimeter wall repairs only. The water fund contains funds raised (ongoing) to facilitate the installation of a

² At the time of this report a new 0.2 House for Duty Vicar has been appointed from May 2019

toilet in church. A further account is held for The Ann Green Festival activity which continues into 2019.

At year end 31st December 2018 financial balances stood at:

- Nat West C/A: £6582.41 including £1615 of donations pending transfer to Toilet Fund 1/19
- Church Yard Maintenance (separated funds) £382.00
- Church Board of Finance deposit accounts (ring fenced):
 1. Wall fund (legacy) = £3186
 2. Fabric fund = £8161.71 inc £910 of donations pending transfer to Toilet Fund 1/19
 3. Water fund (Toilet project) = £2350.71
 4. Ann Green Festival = £12247.60

In conclusion...

It has been a very busy year and a lot has been achieved in terms of fundraising and also raising awareness of our Church and its history. Events held across the year have appealed to many people, and our grateful thanks and appreciation are extended to everyone who organised, helped and participated at these events.

Churchwarden responsibilities have been split and distributed across the PCC, thus the PCC have continued to move forward as a management committee, working hard to maintain a sense of continuity, purpose and mission within our community. Lay led services have continued to create a sense of stability during the interregnum, and we have been extremely fortunate to also benefit from a small pool of retired clergy for Communion services and occasional offices as required.

The willing support of key members of the PCC, members of the church congregation and visiting clergy, has been invaluable in maintaining a sense of continuity, of mission and also a high standard of service provision, and this is gratefully acknowledged here.

We are hopeful that with the appointment of a new Vicar, we can look forward to a new chapter in our newly configured benefice that will nurture a creative, outward looking and responsive ministry for our rural communities.

Signed on behalf of Alstonefield PCC



Marion Beloe
PCC Chair
April 2019