

St Peter's Church
PCC
Alstonefield



Annual Report
And
Accounts
2017

Saint Peter's Church, Alstonefield
Trustees Annual Report 2017

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 within 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:

<u>Incumbent:</u>	Position Vacant	(Interregnum)
<u>Interim Minister:</u>	Revd Prebendary L.R. Price	(until 7 th September 2017)
<u>Lay Reader:</u>	Position vacant	
<u>Wardens:</u>	Mrs Marion Beloe	(Re-elected April 2017)
<u>Deanery Synod</u>		
<u>Representatives:</u>	Mrs P. Gilman	(re-elected 2014)
	Miss Mary Jephcott	(re-elected 2014)
	Mrs V. Littlehales	(elected 2014)
<u>Lay Chair:</u>	Mrs Marion Beloe	(Re-elected April 2017)
<u>Elected lay members</u>		
	Mrs V. Littlehales	(elected April 2017)
	Mr Neil Beloe	(elected April 2017)
	Mr Martin Wilding	(Treasurer, appointed April 2017)
	Ms. Carrie Osborne	(co-opted April 2017)
	Mrs Angela Campbell	(elected April 2017)
<u>Secretary</u>	<i>Miss Rosemary Crafts</i>	<i>(re-appointed April 2017*)</i>
	Mrs Angela Campbell	(From September 2017)
<u>Electoral Roll Officer</u>	Mrs Angela Campbell	(elected April 2017)

* Died 15th August 2017

Overview

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. At the time of this report, the benefice is still suspended and no decisions have been made regarding any changes, although draft proposals are currently being discussed.

Following our previous Incumbent's departure in January 2016, and eight months into the initial interregnum, a decision was taken by the suffragan Bishop and the Archdeacon to assign an Interim Minister to the Alstonefield benefice for a proposed period of twelve months Sept 2016 -Sept 2017. Whilst it may be accepted that the decision was made with the best of intentions, the appointment created additional work and difficulties during the period of the Interim Ministry.

The initial vacancy (from Jan 2016) had offered us an opportunity to 'grow our mission', thus during the initial interregnum period, church wardens across the benefice worked collaboratively to support each other, whilst also maintaining a sense of mission, purpose, care and continuity for our respective parish communities and this has continued throughout 2017.

Lay Led services continued throughout 2017 and have been well received in the Alstonefield parish.

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 daily. 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 currently is 70 years. It is proving very difficult to attract new, younger volunteers predominantly because of the demographic of the village, thus the same few people are carrying an increasingly heavier load.

The Church Warden expresses deep gratitude, via this report, for the invaluable help and support given by the Treasurer, members of the PCC and also the regular congregation throughout what has been an extremely challenging year. In particular, the sudden and tragic death of a highly respected and very dear colleague, Rosemary Crafts, who was Alstonefield PCC secretary, Churchwarden at Wetton and also benefice Secretary/Treasurer. This unexpected bereavement has had a significant impact across the benefice.

On 7th September 2017, the Interim Minister's contract formally ended, thus the benefice entered a second interregnum for an indefinite period. Alstonefield's Churchwarden assumed the role of '*benefice co-ordinator*' to ensure continuity of service provision and mission across the benefice – a role that had been previously shared with Rosemary Crafts.

Mission: A guiding light for the community, to inspire, refresh and sustain...

Our church is an important focus within the community for milestone occasions, for annual church festival celebrations, and for public worship and private reflection.

Public Benefit Statement

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 five parishes within the Benefice of Alstonefield), 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.

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. Walkers, Pilgrims and visitors have the opportunity to enjoy refreshments in a peaceful, reflective setting.

For anyone who may be interested in learning more about faith, Scripture Mission booklets are available (small donation), and 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.

There were several coffee mornings held in the first half of 2017, which offered an opportunity for our more elderly residents within the community to enjoy a time of fellowship and social interaction. This is a particularly important part of our community mission- reaching out to those who may feel isolated and lonely. Unfortunately, during the latter half of the year, the coffee mornings were discontinued due to several of the regular attenders becoming more infirm and the organiser having health problems that required a lengthy period in hospital. As a result of this sequence of events, several members of the PCC have undertaken pastoral care via regular home visits and/ or telephone contact.

The Mission Action Plan (MAP) remains a work in progress, specifically with reference to the development of a *dedicated* Pastoral Visiting Team. Service provision has been maintained via very

supportive visiting clergy and lay leadership. It is hoped that with the eventual appointment of a new incumbent, our MAP objectives can be achieved in the future.

Working together collaboratively as a 'benefice team' has continued throughout the year and has been helpful as we faced challenges together.

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 22 services in church during 2017, 10 Holy Communion Services and 12 lay led services. Average Sunday attendance across the year was 15 adults and 1 child.

The Wakes service took place in June on the Village Green, and 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.

Remembrance Sunday was commemorated in November with a lay led service taking place in church followed by a short dedication and two minutes silence outside at the War Memorial.

Community carol singing took place around the village in December, and the lay led Carols by Candlelight service on Christmas Eve attracted around 130 people drawn from the local (and wider community), and also visitors to the area. For many people in the community, this service offers them 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 donated to The Salvation Army in Leek for their outreach programmes.

Lay led worship has continued to be developed across the benefice, and a positive benefit of this continues to be the strong support network that wardens have created. It has also ensured that a Christian presence has continued to be nurtured within our respective communities.

In 2017 there was one funeral and two weddings in Alstonefield.

Community Engagement and Fund Raising

The PCC struggles to organise many fund raising activities mainly because there are not enough people to organise and help run such events. The Church Warden remains stretched to the absolute limit, and this situation has been further exacerbated as a result of the unexpected bereavement in August 2017.

Wakes, Harvest and Christmas remain the focus for our main fund raising events. During the wakes weekend in June, we were pleased to offer a concert of light classical music in church given by *Fordante*. The concert was advertised widely and thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended.

Alstonefield Local History Group (ALHG) also offered a small exhibition over the Wakes weekend.

In October, the Harvest '*Bring & Share*' supper was held in the village hall and was well attended. This has become an established way of offering a harvest supper because it reduces the load on an ever decreasing pool of volunteers.

Harvest produce was auctioned as usual and this, combined with a raffle, raised funds for the church.

The self service refreshments generated some income this year, especially during the summer months, and also increased by visiting pilgrims on the *Peak Pilgrimage*. Friends of St Peter's annual donations also contributed some income, as does the regular monthly and annual giving by ten parishioners.

Community Carol singing took place around the village in December in aid of the Marie Curie charity, which provides nursing care for people with terminal illness. As mentioned earlier, the Carols by Candlelight service in December also offered an 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 is an important part of village life for differing reasons, and this is highlighted when comparing the numbers on the church Electoral Roll (56) with the average Sunday attendance (15).

Electoral Roll

The revised Electoral Roll at the APCM was fifty three (53), however three people requested to be added to the Roll after the APCM therefore the total stands at fifty six (56).

Fabric and conservation

It should be acknowledged in this report that St Peter's Church is a Grade I listed building, and therefore repairs and maintenance generally incur significant costs.

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

Various maintenance tasks were also undertaken by willing volunteers across the year. This year, in addition to the regular maintenance, all of the 17th century box pews have been cleaned (along with the Communion rail) and a special wood balm applied. The PCC expresses grateful appreciation for the diligent care and hard work by a small team of volunteers, over many months, in completing this huge task.

The lights in the Nave and also the North & South aisles, plus the Kitchen area, have all been replaced this year with low energy LED lights, which has made a huge difference in terms of vastly improved light quality and energy costs.

In a joint project, the PCC engaged the services of a local clockmaker to clean and service the Church clock (in situ) and, in order to protect the clock mechanism, a local carpenter was then commissioned to build a casement, with access points for clock-winding and essential maintenance.

This year we have also managed to have the War Memorial, which is situated in the churchyard, cleaned professionally by a local Stonemason.

Part of our overall responsibility during the interregnum is '*caretaking*' Alstonefield Vicarage, **which has now been empty for over two years**. Regular checks are made on the empty property and, at the time of this report, this is ongoing.

Our churchyard groundsman had been tending the Vicarage garden, however he has now declined to continue this *voluntary* role for specific and attributable reasons, which are noted but not recorded in this report.

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. In 2017 the church received a Diocese Silver Award, reflecting the ongoing commitment of our dedicated grounds maintenance team for which we are very grateful.

Bells

There is a national shortage of bell ringers and this is reflected in the Alstonefield benefice. Due to a shortage of local ringers, and also health issues, there have been no regular practices at Alstonefield this year. It has been possible to provide change ringing before some services, including weddings, otherwise one bell is chimed by the Interim Tower Captain before a Sunday service.

Maintenance checks are the responsibility of the Steeple keeper(s) and any problems reported to the PCC for attention.

During the year, one group of visiting ringers (Devon) came to ring the bells, and we hope to encourage more visiting ringers in the future.

Toilet project

The proposed toilet project remains a work in progress. Following communication with Lichfield Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), a visit was made to a similar toilet installation (to the one we propose) at a church in Newcastle under Lyme, which was a very useful exercise. With the continued help and expertise of our designated *Project Manager* (an experienced water sanitation Engineer), we are encouraged that positive progress will be made in the near future.

Future projects include (in priority order):

- Re-painting Church interior
- Secure storage for the lawn tractor
- Replacing the external boiler

Income and expenditure

The PCC takes the Parish Share contribution very seriously, however it remains our biggest challenge. We have been unable to pay the full amount for some time now and, as a result, we are

already in arrears for the previous two (2) years. It is unlikely that we will be in a position to clear these arrears in the future.

We have been able to meet our general running costs for 2017, and our priorities have been insurance, heating oil, utility bills and maintenance. The PCC also committed to contributing a regular monthly sum of £200 towards the Parish Share throughout 2017, which has been fulfilled.

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. Our fund raising events are predominantly concentrated on the Wakes weekend and the Harvest Supper simply because we do not have the (human) resources to fund raise continually throughout the year in order to 'make ends meet'.

Occasional concerts are held in church but these are infrequent due to the lack of toilet facilities, which is increasingly a problem. It is hoped, however, that once the proposed Toilet project is completed, this will allow increased scope to make more effective and creative use of the church building for more community events, fundraising activities and varied concerts.

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 generate income from the annual *gift aid* claim, and this will be received in early 2018.

Website sales of the Headstone Project and walking booklets also generated some income in 2017. 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 enabled us to upgrade the lighting in church.

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 the Church Warden throughout what has been an extremely difficult and challenging year.

In 2017 we also received additional income from one (1) funeral and two (2) weddings.

We look forward to the proposed re-configuration of the Alstonefield benefice in the future, which will offer us a more financially affordable solution as we become a smaller three parish benefice, combining clergy led and lay led services.

Finances

A reserve (deposit) account, is ring fenced as a fabric 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 toilet in church.

At year end 31st December 2017 financial balances stood at:

- Nat West Current Account: £2561.81

Church Board of Finance deposit accounts (ring fenced):

- Wall fund (legacy) = £3186.00
- Fabric fund = £6304.45
- Water fund (Toilet project) = £2408.51

In conclusion...

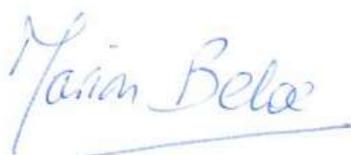
A combination of difficult circumstances and unexpected events has contributed to making this year particularly challenging and demanding. At times during the Interim Ministry, the Churchwarden and PCC found themselves in situations that required careful management and, in some instances, 'damage limitation' was necessary.

Despite the difficulties, the PCC and the Churchwarden have continued to move forward, working hard to maintain a sense of continuity, purpose and mission within our community. In particular, the development of lay led services has helped to create a sense of stability during the two interregnum periods.

The willing support of key members of the PCC, members of the church congregation and also our church organist, 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.

At the time of writing this report, the Alstonefield Benefice remains formally suspended although the draft proposals are now in place awaiting ratification. We are hopeful that beneficial changes will soon be implemented which will allow us to develop a creative, outward looking, responsive and affordable ministry for our rural communities.

Signed on behalf of Alstonefield PCC

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marion Beloe". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Marion Beloe MA
Church Warden
March 2018