

St Peter's Church PCC Alstonefield



Annual Report
And
Accounts
2016

Saint Peter's Church, Alstonefield
Trustees Annual Report 2016/17

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 until September 2016)
<u>Interim Minister:</u>	Revd Prebendary L.R. Price	(Licensed 8 th September 2016)
<u>Lay Reader:</u>	Position vacant	

<u>Wardens:</u>	Mrs Marion Beloe	(Re-elected April 2016)
-----------------	------------------	-------------------------

<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 2016)
-------------------	------------------	-------------------------

<u>Elected lay members</u>	Mrs V. Littlehales	(elected April 2016)
	Mr Neil Beloe	(elected April 2016)
	Mr Martin Wilding	(Treasurer, appointed April 2016)
	Ms. Carrie Osborne	(elected April 2016)
	Mrs Angela Campbell	(elected April 2016)
<u>Secretary</u>	Miss Rosemary Crafts	(re-appointed April 2016)

<u>Electoral Roll Officer</u>	Mr Neil Beloe	(elected April 2016)
-------------------------------	---------------	----------------------

Overview

Since our previous Incumbent left the benefice (January 2016), and for the greater part of 2016 (until September) we have been in an interregnum period.

The benefice was formally suspended by the Bishop of Stafford 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. At the time of this report, the benefice is still suspended and no decisions have been made regarding any changes.

The vacancy offered us an opportunity to 'grow our mission', thus during the interregnum period, it made sense that we (church wardens) worked collaboratively to support each other, whilst also maintaining a sense of mission, purpose, care and continuity for our respective parish communities.

There has been an increase in Lay Led services, which have been generally well received in Alstonefield parish. We have also been very fortunate in securing the services of a small group of retired Clergy to offer Holy Communion services and also officiate at Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms as and when required.

Locally, we have been very fortunate again this year to have willing support from many 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.

The Church Warden also expresses sincere appreciation for the invaluable help and support given by the Treasurer, members of the PCC and the PCC Secretary throughout the year.

However, it must be recorded that the number of core volunteers is shrinking and becoming ever smaller (and older) year on year. The reason for this is the changing demographic of Alstonefield village in recent years, which is reflected in the increased second home ownership alongside the existing holiday lets. Thus it is that the same few people are carrying an increasingly heavier load.

In September 2016, the Revd. Prebendary Lawrence R. Price was appointed to the benefice as Interim Minister for a period of twelve months.

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 we are fortunate to have a small kitchen facility enabling us to offer self service refreshments for the many visitors to the area.

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.

Scripture mission booklets are available (suggested donation) for anyone who may be interested in learning more about faith, and the Prayer Board continues to be used to raise awareness and encourage people to pause and reflect.

The *Peak Pilgrimage* (developed by Eyam church community) continues to be very popular and indeed we have seen an increase in visitors as a result. Walkers and Pilgrims have the opportunity to enjoy the refreshments that are available in a peaceful, reflective setting.

It was decided to re-commence the monthly coffee mornings from January 2017. This would offer an opportunity for people to enjoy fellowship and social interaction, which is a particularly important part of our community mission-to reach out to those who may feel isolated.

The Mission Action Plan (MAP) remained a work in progress, specifically with reference to the development of a dedicated Pastoral Visiting Team and different approaches to service provision ie. what type of service and when. It is hoped that we will be in a better position to achieve our MAP objectives in these particular areas in the near future.

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

Church services and attendances

There were 19 services in church during 2016, pre-dominantly lay led. In addition, there were 31 benefice wide Holy Communion services held, of which 5 were hosted at St. Peter's.

It was a consensus decision by all of the benefice church wardens that, in order to make a more effective and efficient use of retired clergy time (and keep costs to a minimum), all Holy Communion services would be 'Benefice' services, thus this is reflected in the reduced number of (Parish) services this year. Average Sunday attendance across the year was 19 adults and 2 children.

In 2016, two lay led services were held jointly with St Margaret's church, Wetton; in March a Mother's day service and on June 12th a Thanksgiving Service to mark HM the Queen's 90th birthday. Both services were well attended. Following the Thanksgiving service, tea and cakes were served adding to the overall sense of community fellowship.

The Wakes service in June (led by Revd. Robert Ellis) was very well received by the local, and wider, community.

Church Wardens across the benefice attended a licensing service on 8th September 2016 at St Lawrence Church, Warslow, where Revd. Prebendary Lawrence Price was installed as Interim Minister for the benefice of Alstonefield.

In October, Revd. Prebendary Price officiated at the Harvest service at Alstonefield.

On Remembrance Sunday, a lay led service was held in church followed by a short dedication outside at the War Memorial.

The lay led Carols by Candlelight service was, as always, well attended by the local (and wider community) and visitors to the area. For many people in the community, this service offers them the opportunity to make their own personal observance and reflect upon the Christmas message. It also offers a wonderful opportunity for fellowship.

This year, local children were given Christmas decoration kits (bought from a local supermarket raising funds for Barnardos) and were able to create their own decorations to place on the Christmas tree in church. They understood that their actions made a positive contribution to children and young people who were less fortunate than themselves. Carrying on this theme, the service collection was donated to Barnardos.

Throughout the greater part of the year, benefice wardens have worked together co-operatively and collaboratively to ensure that a variety of service provision was maintained across the benefice. Given that each parish within the benefice is different, it is extremely important to be sensitive and responsive to individual (and collective) need, and thus avoid adopting a 'one size fits all' approach.

For the first eight months of 2016, we have been extremely fortunate in having the support of a small group of visiting clergy, all of whom have been well received by our respective communities.

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 2016 there were three funerals, one wedding and a baptism in the parish.

Community Engagement and Fund Raising

Alstonefield has a predominantly older (retired) 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.

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 different reasons.

The PCC has again struggled this year to organise many fund raising activities mainly because there are not enough people to help organise and run such events, and the (only) Church Warden remains stretched to the absolute limit of her capacity.

As reported last year, concerts in church would offer a relatively straightforward fund raising activity with the minimum of effort. However, there are no toilet facilities in St Peter's and this continues to be a significant problem, not just in terms of fund raising activities, but also at services,

especially weddings and funerals where people have travelled some distance. The PCC has 'ring fenced' money for installing a toilet, and hopes to make progress in achieving this objective soon.

The self service refreshments offered some income generation this year, especially during the summer months, also helped by visiting pilgrims on the *Peak Pilgrimage*'. Annual Friends of St Peter's donations also contributed some income, as does the regular giving by a few parishioners.

St Peter's day was celebrated during the 'Wakes weekend' in June. This year the newly re-formed *Alstonefield Local History Group (ALHG)* created a fascinating exhibition covering aspects of village life in Alstonefield in past times. It was well attended with a number of people travelling some distance to view the exhibition and to recount their own memories.

As the weather had been unpredictable and inclement, the usual outdoor service of thanksgiving and praise took place in Church, and was led by Revd. Robert Ellis.

In October, the Harvest supper was held in the village hall and, following a successful 'Bring & Share' harvest supper the previous year, it was decided to repeat the same format again this year. This is likely to continue in the future as 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.

Community Carol singing took place around the village in December and donations were split between *Water Aid* and the church toilet project. As mentioned earlier, the Carols by Candlelight service in December also offered an opportunity for the community to come together in fellowship.

Electoral Roll

The revised Electoral Roll at the APCM was fifty (50), however two people requested to be added to the Roll after the APCM therefore the total stands at fifty two (52).

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.

Various maintenance tasks were also undertaken by willing volunteers across the year and a working party tackled leaning headstones and cleared gutters.

The Church Inventory has also been revised and updated.

This year, we have been very fortunate to receive three new, specially commissioned, cloths. The Altar (Holy Communion) Cloth is an exquisite piece of workmanship, and was commissioned by a parishioner in memory of her late husband, who had served St. Peter's church faithfully for many years. The cloth was formally dedicated by the Ven. John Hall (*Archdeacon Emeritus*) at a Holy Communion service on 17th July 2016.

Later on in the year, an Altar day cloth and matching credence table cloth were presented to the church by the same parishioner and subsequently dedicated by the Revd. Prebendary Lawrence Price.

Currently, and because The Vicarage remains unoccupied, the Church Warden also makes regular checks on the empty property and, at the time of this report, this is ongoing.

Churchyard

The churchyard is maintained to a very high standard, thanks to a willing team of local people, who mow, trim and manage the mole problem. In 2016 the church received a Nature Friendly Award and also a Silver Award, reflecting the ongoing commitment of our dedicated grounds maintenance team for which we are very grateful.

Bells

In January 2016, Alstonefield and Wetton bell towers began to hold joint bell ringing practices, alternating between the two towers on a Wednesday evening. During a joint practice in March at Alstonefield tower, the Wetton Tower Captain noticed that there were some difficulties with bell handling and that the bells appeared to be 'oddstruck'. It was also noted that there was wear and tear on some of the ropes. Further investigation in the bell chamber highlighted major maintenance (and safety) issues with all six bells requiring urgent attention. It was discovered that there was a nut missing on the treble bell (a clapper retention nut, therefore safety critical), and all the clapper bushes were excessively worn, potentially damaging the bells. Other worn or missing fixings were also noted.

A member of Alstonefield PCC (registered as a ringer at Wetton Tower) informed the PCC of the unsafe state of the bells. As the PCC is ultimately liable for the safety of the bells (as per Canon Law), a decision was taken to suspend all bell ringing activities with immediate effect, thus there was no ringing before services, no practice sessions and no visiting ringers allowed until all the major repairs were completed.

The missing retention nut was replaced, but all of the clappers needed to be removed and sent to Loughborough Bell Foundry for refurbishment. Worn ropes were also refurbished.

Major repairs were completed in May 2016 at a total cost of £1,224.00.

Wetton's Tower Captain compiled a report for the PCC on the 'oddstruckness' of the bells, and also outlined a bell maintenance schedule to include regular checks. This was received gratefully by the PCC.

Unfortunately over several months, there were difficulties with co-operation between the Alstonefield Tower Captain and reasonable requests made by the PCC. These difficulties could not be satisfactorily resolved, therefore at a PCC meeting held on 28th September 2016, Revd. Prebendary Lawrence Price (Interim Minister), with the PCC, passed a formal resolution to rescind the incumbent Tower Captain's position and devolved authority for the following reasons:

- *lack of positive co-operation with the PCC regarding Bells safety & maintenance as per Canon Law*
- *non-compliance with PCC requests to attend meetings in person to report on status of bells*

Of the six ringers registered at Alstonefield Tower, five resigned in protest at the PCC's decision. This has had an impact on joint practice sessions at Alstonefield, although other bell ringers are willing to ring before services and at weddings etc.

In October, the remaining Alstonefield Tower member, plus one other bell ringer from Wetton Tower, attended a course on Steeple-keeping run by the Derby Diocese. The PCC gratefully acknowledges their commitment to maintaining and preserving Alstonefield church bells for future generations.

Toilet project

The proposed toilet project remains a work in progress, and we have ‘returned to the drawing board’ and our original specification of a ‘toilet pod’. We are very fortunate to have been offered help with this project from a local parishioner who is an experienced water sanitation Engineer, thus we are encouraged that positive progress can now be made.

Future projects include (in priority order):

- Replacing Nave, south and north aisle lights with LED lights
- Clock casing (to protect the mechanism)
- Re-painting inside Church walls
- Cleaning of the War Memorial
- Secure storage for the lawn tractor

Finances

The Parish Share remains our biggest challenge and it is difficult to comprehend how we can meet current expectations without a Benefice reconfiguration being made to reduce clergy deployment to a more sustainable level.

Church attendance and service collections are affected by the fact that Alstonefield comprises a significant number of second homes and holiday lets. The actual number of people residing full time in the village is less than 50% of the total population, thus our regular congregation is small in number.

There are also very few people to organise and run specific fund raising events and therefore our main activities are concentrated on Wakes weekend and at the Harvest Supper. Occasional concerts are held in church but, as previously mentioned, these are infrequent due to the lack of toilet facilities.

Increased collections from larger congregations attending community services, for example, Remembrance Day and Christmas Services, particularly the annual Carol Service, are gratefully received. We also receive income from the annual gift aid claim. Website sales of the Headstone Project and walking booklets also generated some income this year.

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

In 2016 we also received income from 3 funerals and 1 wedding.

We have been able to meet our general running costs, and our priorities in 2016 have been insurance, heating oil, utility bills and maintenance. This year we have managed to contribute 23% of the Parish Share through ad hoc payments, and as cash flow has allowed.

The PCC takes the Parish Share contribution very seriously, but affording to pay the current level (over £8000) is a constant challenge – especially taking into account that we are already in arrears from previous years.

Whilst it is acknowledged that contributing to the Parish Share is important, we must be careful to avoid a blinkered focus on ‘making ends meet’ overriding our primary focus of mission in the

community. However, as a gesture of commitment and goodwill, the PCC is committed to paying a small monthly contribution towards the Parish Share in future.

In September, Alstonefield's church warden was asked (along with a Wetton church warden) to attend a meeting with the Archdeacon of Stoke and the Diocesan Parish Share Assessors. At that meeting, we emphasised that we could no longer afford a full time vicar, thus there was a pressing need to 'downsize'. The suggestion to share a House for Duty post with Wetton and Ilam was recognised as a practical approach to reducing our respective Parish Share(s) to a more realistic and attainable level. We also discussed the mounting arrears and our reasons for not contributing the full amount of Parish Share, specifically with reference to the previous Incumbent's performance, subsequent extended sickness and more recently, an interregnum period of eight months.

Our rationale also highlighted the fact that two wardens had been carrying the responsibility for the whole of the Benefice, as well as their individual parishes. The number of volunteer hours translated into in excess of £15,000; that commitment was understood and acknowledged at the meeting as a major contribution in kind.

The PCC has a reserve (deposit) account, which 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, which was given by a local family as a legacy and 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 2016 financial balances stood at:

- Nat West Current Account: **£2625.44**

Church Board of Finance deposit accounts (ring fenced):

- Wall fund (legacy) = **£3186.00**
- Fabric fund = **£7625.88**
- Water fund (Toilet project) = **£2401.75**

In conclusion

Much has been achieved, especially during the first eight months of the year, in nurturing the community and offering a sense of continuity through the provision of pre-dominantly lay led services, all of which have been well received. 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 high standard of service provision, and this is gratefully acknowledged here.

At the time of writing this report, the Alstonefield Benefice remains formally suspended and this continues to have an impact on forward planning, specifically with reference to the parish Mission Action Plan, pastoral care and payment of the (current) Parish Share.

Several benefice discussions have highlighted the potential for reconfiguration, and a way forward has been identified and offered as a solution, but no decision has yet been made by the Diocese. Although we have been assigned an Interim Minister for twelve months, it is frustrating that more progress has not been made towards a long term solution, and therefore we (the community) remain in limbo.

It is hoped that a positive and practical solution will be put in place in the near future, which will enable us to respond with a creative ministry and to move forward with renewed enthusiasm.

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.

Marion Beloe
Church Warden
March 2017