

**THE CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL
STEEPLE ASTON**



**ANNUAL REPORT
and
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS of the PCC
2016 -2017**

St Peter and St Paul's

The church of St Peter and St Paul is situated in rural Oxfordshire and is part of the United Benefice of Steeple Aston with North Aston and Tackley. The Benefice includes Middle Aston which for church administrative purposes is linked with Steeple Aston.

Our Rector is Revd Marcus Green, M.A. (Oxon).

Correspondence: The Rector, the Rectory, Fir Lane, Steeple Aston OX25 4SF

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL 2016-2017

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the AGM of the PCC. During the last year the following have served as members:-

Churchwardens:

Graham Clifton

Malcolm Hensher (retired January 2017)

Deanery Synod Representatives:

Malcolm Hensher (retired January 2017)

Martin Dale

Elected Members :

Paul Beadman(ret'd. Sept 2016)	Rebecca Hoare	Edwina Kinch
Lawrence White	David Stewart	Shirley Palmer
Caroline Compston	Mary Williams	Jeanna Atkins

In addition, the following people were elected to serve as **Sidespeople** at the 2016 APCM:

David Armitage	Ruth Dale	Mary Williams
Jeana Atkins	Rebecca Hoare	Gil Woods
Ted Atkins	Edwina Kinch	May Woods
Susi Barber	Royston Kinch	Paul Beadman
Sid Sterling	Roger Bradley	Lawrence White

Introduction

This report is offered by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) as a record of its activities in the Year of our Lord, 2016-17. It serves as a review of church life within the church over the past year.

The life of the congregation is mainly seen through the lens of its worship of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, week by week, throughout the year. Our services of worship are open to every member of the village and indeed to anyone who wishes to join us. We welcome to communion all who have been baptised, including children who have participated in our preparation courses, and seek to offer a variety of styles and forms within our common worship. It is our hope that the love of God works upon our hearts and helps us to love all we encounter in our wider community, sharing God's love in words of witness and acts of kindness and care.

The PCC is elected on a three-year rolling basis by the church electoral roll and operates chiefly through five plenary meetings a year with recourse to various sub-committees whose duty it is to report back to the PCC. The PCC has overall responsibility for the maintenance of the church, the churchyard, graveyard, fabric and content.

The Standing Committee is the only committee required by law, comprising the incumbent, churchwardens, secretary and treasurer. It has the power to transact business of the PCC subject to any directions given by the PCC without recourse to plenary meetings.

Rector's Report

I may be Rector, but this is not my journey - it is *our* journey. We build and we grow in Christ together.

Over the last year, on our journey of faith together, I think we've had some amazing moments, where we've hit real heights; and perhaps there have been times when we could have done better too. In both respects, I think we have been very similar to most churches. But this is our journey, and what follows will try to pick out moments from what has been our story this year.

With the building project becoming ever more a focal point in our thinking, our conversation, and the pages of the Steeple Aston Life, I'm glad that our prayer card for the last year has carried the title "Building a People". Whenever I am asked to start explaining what the project is about I usually begin here:

A church - and I mean the people - is about loving God and loving other people. It's building should reflect this. Usually, our church buildings are pretty good at the first (loving God), and pretty poor at the second (loving other people). What we are trying to do is make our wonderful gift of a building better at both - so that we as a people will be better at both. We want to love God and serve all the people of our community. With that in mind, let's look at the prayer we've been praying together for the last year:

God of Glory,
renew your church with your Holy Spirit,
and build your kingdom in our midst and in our day
as we worship you with heart, soul, mind and strength,
love our neighbours as ourselves,
and tell of your saving power in our lives.
This we ask through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

In terms of "renewing your church", the Monday Bible Study group continues to grow in faith and in understanding; last year's Lent course was amongst the best we've had (I'm writing this just ahead of this year's starting), and there have been some lovely examples of faith and the sense of God about the place at all sorts of times. I have been very touched personally that at a couple of points, members of the church have come to pray for me. It's always a great sign of a church being renewed when the rector gets prayed for!

As for the "build your kingdom" line, I have seen lots of evidence of God's love being practically displayed in a year when the world has been broken in all sorts of ways. The Benefice's response to our Harvest appeal for Mary's Meals was extraordinary. Our Christian Aid collection was very strong. I have watched folk care for each other and was amazed by the number of people who came to worship with us over Christmas.

More people coming to worship? This has to be the beating heart of our life together, always. And in 2016 our congregations were very faithful. While we all hope and pray for yet more, it has been lovely to find new villagers regularly worshipping here, and new friends often joining with us. Open hearts, open doors, open Bibles, an open Table - and above all all of us open to Jesus loving us and changing us day by day.

So it is our congregational life that inspires our desire to make better use of our church building.

Our building is a gift which we treasure. We treasure it most when we use it to shape and serve the community in which we live, for that's the reason we have this gift: to love God and one another here in Steeple Aston. The project we are looking to fulfil is one where we grow in faith, love and worship as we enable our building to serve these needs every day of every week.

The PCC voted to carry the project forward, and the Pledge Weekend in July - with its partner weekend at Harvest - saw us begin to gather the funds we would need to turn ideas into reality. This is a complex year: outline drawings and plans worked out in the Feasibility Study have to be turned into technical plans; the process of permissions from various bodies has to be negotiated; further reports are drawn up; and full costs for the project are worked out and fund raising for that has to begin. So the Pledge Weekend was about committing funds NOT to build anything - but to get us to a place where something could happen.

I was amazed that by early 2017 we already had funds and promised in place for the whole £20,000 we had budgeted for this stage. Many thanks to everyone in the congregation and the wider village for giving so generously; thanks also to the Dr Radcliffe Foundation; and thanks to MGQ in December and Amici in February for their wonderful concerts (there are a couple of video clips from those concerts on our church website). All of these things, along with a healthy dollop of Gift Aid, have helped get us to our target. Thank you!

And thank you to everyone who has asked questions along the way. There is no such thing as a bad question. Sometimes there's a question that's already been asked - and I can always apologise and answer it again if I haven't done well in communicating things. But good questions make better projects, and I am always happy to hear questions asked so that we can do the very best as we move forwards.

In the year of Brexit and Trump, we remember that we are Church. The Body of Christ. We don't - can't, even - agree on everything; but as Church we belong together. We are Family. The Jesus Family. Everyone matters, and everyone has a place. Sometimes things happen that we don't like; and yet we are still all loved and valued. This is the heart of who we are.

Finally:

Many thanks to everyone who makes St Peter & St Paul family it is. Thank you to every church member, to everyone who comes and worships here. In a year where we have had extraordinary financial outlay (and I fear another lies ahead) thank you for the continued regular giving which has been amazing. Thank you to all who assist in leading our worship - to Robin, Geoff and Richard especially, but also to all who lead intercessions or read. And to that list let's add - organists, bellringers, sidespeople, servers, children's leaders, Open The Book, those who serve coffee after worship, those who prepare the church and those who keep it clean and tidy for us. Thanks to PCC members, especially Mary our amazingly efficient secretary who has held that office for many years, and to whose good humour and grace I am always indebted.

It's always a pleasure to be in the school, and a privilege to be a governor. I am grateful to the head, Frances Brown, for all she does to help Dr Radcliffe's be a Christian environment for our children in Steeple.

Many thanks too to our churchwardens. Graham brings consistently solid sense to issues and reminds me where we are financially. He is the definition of reliable.

And that brings me to Malcolm Hensher.

Malcolm's ill health is known to most, and has brought his time as church warden to a premature end. May I say: every rector deserves a Malcolm. Someone who knows where everything is and how everything works. Someone who makes the everything work perfectly. Someone who knows when the next thing needs to be organised, and organises it. Just occasionally, the rector will wrest something out of such a person's hands (for me, it was sorting out the hymns for services!) but this is done with respect and with appreciation for the sheer breadth of knowledge of church life that someone like Malcolm brings.

On the building project, it's well known that Malcolm has had very strong disagreements with me. At every point I have said - he deserves being listened to, because no-one works harder for the church than Malcolm.

So as Malcolm steps down and another takes up his mantle at the APCM, I want to record my enormous and heartfelt thanks to him for being one of my first wardens here in Steeple. Malcolm: you have made my introduction to life in this place a joy, and I will always be grateful. Please get back to full health soon, and know that you are in all our prayers.

And so we move onwards.

We have a new prayer card for the year ahead: Your Kingdom Come. It's the Lord's Prayer in modern English. Sometimes it is good to see familiar things from a different angle, and as we go forwards as a church, let's see how God will guide us. We should aim to read more Scripture (familiar things, different angles), to worship

together as often as we can (I know that people struggle to make every week, but as let's meet as often as possible, as familiar things from different angles may surprise us!), and we should all try to pray every day (and maybe the new card will spark that off too). I don't think we'll see any building work this year (speaking of seeing the familiar a little differently), but I'm prepared to be taken by surprise! (Hopefully that sentence will read very differently in next year's report...)

What I do know is that a church is not about a building, it is about building a people who love God and each other. This is the heart of our journey together. This is what we aim to build as we grow in Christ together.

Rev'd Marcus Green

PCC Secretary's Report

The PCC met five times during the year with generally very good attendance.

The main topics discussed and/or acted on at the PCC Meetings were:

Church building project: there were regular updates and detailed discussions on this topic. As is mentioned elsewhere in the report there are certain members of the PCC (and other parishioners) who have major concerns and doubts about the project but overall the PCC is strongly in favour of the re-ordering programme and has clearly voted to proceed with the project proposal.

Events, festivals and dates in the church calendar including Easter and Christmas services plus specific event planning and fundraising:

* Annual Church fete – this was discussed and ably handled by a Fete Committee

* Ride and Stride – this year Team Steeple walked around churches in Oxford in pouring rain and raised a significant sum on the Justgiving website. The proceeds went to the church re-ordering project.

* Snowdrop Sunday in February - was very enjoyable and well supported with plentiful snowdrops and Christopher Compston's Book Stall

* Lent Course in Tackley

* Mothering Sunday

* Annual Parish Meeting organisation; election and re-election of PCC members plus the Annual Report

* Christian Aid Week

* Annual charity quiz – this year the money raised went to the Ponheary Ly Foundation in Cambodia, a charity that helps to educate and care for some of the poorest children in Cambodia. It is supported by Barbara Shooter, a Steeple Aston resident

* Harvest Supper and Festival and Remembrance Sunday - were all well-attended, with excellent giving at Harvest for Mary's Meals charity

* Concerts in church - including a very enjoyable second jazz concert with the Marcus Green Quartet to raise funds for the building project; also a second concert

given by Sophie Cleobury and Amici on the theme of a journey through Lent. Amici also sang at the Sunday service the following morning.

* United Benefice Services

General items: Positions that had fallen vacant during the year due to resignations; the introduction of a new hymnbook to all three parishes; revision of the Benefice Directory; organisation for delivering Christmas cards including details of Christmas services around the village; revision and standardisation of the church keyholders list; an exhibition of Opus Anglicanum at the Victoria & Albert Museum which included, as a major display item, the Steeple Aston Cope; a follow up talk in the village in association with SAVA by one of the exhibition curators; improved future copyright usage of images of the Steeple Aston Cope; continued discussion on the merits of different types of 'giving envelopes'; charitable giving.

Safeguarding policy: this was reviewed and the Diocesan safeguarding policy adopted and sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

Health and Safety has been added to the agenda on a regular basis. New churchyard regulations were discussed.

Church finances: dealt with elsewhere in more detail in this Annual Report

Churchyard matters: also dealt with in more detail elsewhere in this Annual report

Churchwarden's Report

This last year has represented another year of fruitful continuity within SS Peter & Paul. Service attendances are rising, especially at the Family Service where children's presence is increasingly conspicuous. Several musical events have taken place in the church, raising welcome funds for our treasurer.

Predictably the initiative towards the church re-ordering has gathered some momentum with the involvement of various extraneous bodies. It would appear that the majority of the parishioners are in favour of this momentous undertaking though pockets of resistance and scepticism are clearly discernible. But much water needs to pass under many bridges yet. (See Church Fabric below)

As ever the smooth running of our church would not be possible without the dedicated voluntary input of so many: the flower arrangers, the cleaning team, the sidespeople, the coffee-makers, the churchyard working party organisers, the bellringers, the lesson readers, the intercession leaders and all those who offer their time and talents in so many ways. My personal thanks again to Graham Clifton as fellow churchwarden for all his practical help in countless matters arising week by week. Here I would thank Marcus for striving to be patient with such a motley crew of a PCC and congregation, each showing different vested interests and foibles but united, I like to believe, in Christian principles of the first two Commandments.

Sadly, due to a long period of ill health, I have felt it expedient to resign from being churchwarden but will assist any successor in whatever way I can.

With the new PCC to be established on April 3rd both Graham and I look forward to a prosperous and productive year for SS Peter & Paul's church.

Malcolm Hensher

Church Fabric Report

The fabric of our church remains in fair condition. The Lady Chapel roof awaits some repairs to the tiles. Unfortunately the sought-after grant did not materialise so this will remain an on-going issue.

Re-ordering raises the fundamental questions of pews, wooden floors and heating. The wooden floor is badly infested with woodworm or worse, and has been for some years. If the pews are lifted and replaced whether in part or in toto then the time to tackle the rot would be apposite. No final decision has yet been made about the removal or reduction or indeed shortening of existing pews, an area of some controversy. Similarly the question of underfloor heating and its efficacy has yet to be scientifically resolved. Common consensus would approve the need for a toilet and some form of server for refreshments. Again plans here are somewhat embryonic.

Outline plans are available in the church for public perusal.

Malcolm Hensher

Treasurer's Report

Steeple Aston Church Accounts 20th Jan. 2016 To 19th Jan. 2017

HSBC Community Account

Receipts	2016		2015
Standing Orders	15,195.00		15,015.00
Collections	1,337.22		1,354.62
Special Collections	959.40		1,439.67
Pew Envelopes	3,614.33		3,277.85
Free Will Offering	503.00		1,531.85
Central Board of Finance Deposit Fund	761.50		
Central Board of Finance Interest	122.64		144.83
Charities Trust Donation	1,200.00		1,199.83
Donations	2,527.24		2,107.00
Fees, (Weddings, Funerals etc.)	2,923.00		3,945.00
Oxon Ride & Stride	291.00		137.50
Building Fund	12,386.45		
Lent Books			57.60
Fund raising	4,354.28		4,289.91
Donation feasibility survey	7.00		3,466.45
Income Tax reclaim	6,232.12		5,682.26
Wall safe	55.79		174.97
Votive Candles	20.00		
Grant, Parish Council for grass mowing	600.00		600.00
Misc.	87.36		
Money towards new Hymn books	1,265.04	Bank error 2015	45.00
Money withdrawn from High Income Account.			5,000.00
Reclaimed Rector's exp. From Tackley & N Aston	1,362.71		1,344.41
Total income	55,805.08	£55,805.08	£50,813.75
 Payments			
Parish Share	23,714.34		23,213.00
Insurance	3,162.22		3,340.75
Charitable Giving	1,687.64		2,358.18
Cost of Services	85.52		228.47
ODBF Fees	961.00		790.00
Children's Church	204.54		101.73
Child & family worker acc.	231.80		
Rector's Expenses for Benefice	2,090.48		1,922.52
British Telecom	735.66		658.42
Church Yard	1,980.00		1,800.00
Hall hire	140.00		135.00
Miscellaneous	279.69		428.58
Electricity	504.00		473.00
Heating Oil	285.08		330.71
Boiler maintenance	120.00		
Five Year Inspection	160.00		140.00
Fire security check	159.60		130.68
Envelope scheme	27.12		108.89
Organist	430.00		460.00
Organ tuning	106.00		105.00
Fete expenses	346.00		265.00
S A Life adverts	111.00		77.00
New Hymn books	2,098.00		
Lent books			71.91
Thames water	21.62		23.21
Architects Fees & Surveys etc.	5,165.03		8,245.02
Building Architect Fees	4,493.86		
Building Fund expenses	335.00		
Transfer to Money manager account	2,000.00		
Roof alarm maintenance	428.40		428.40
Transfer to CBF Deposit Acc.	8,133.09		
Fabric repairs & Furnishings			36.00
Total Expenses	60,196.69	£60,196.69	45,871.47
Excess of Expenditure over Income		-£4,391.61	

Balance Sheet

HSBC Community Account

Balance brought forward 20th Jan 2016	£8,992.52	
Excess of expenses over income	-£4,391.61	<u>£4,600.91</u>

Children's & Families Worker Fund

	2016	2015
Brought forward 20th Jan 2014	£423.95	£423.95
Receipts		
Payments Book packs	231.80	
Closing balance 20th Jan 2017	<u>£192.15</u>	<u>£423.95</u>

£4,600.91

Money Manager Account

	2016	2015
Income		
Opening balance	£6,961.89	11,554.79
Standing Orders	400.00	£400.00
Transferred from Com. Acc.	2,000.00	
Bank Interest	5.24	7.10
Total income	£9,367.13	11,961.89
Expenses		
Transferred to HSBC Community Account	0.00	5,000.00
Balance at year end	£9,367.13	6,961.89

£13,968.04

Total Funds at the start of 2016

Funds at year end		2015
Community Account	4,600.91	£4,050.24
Money Manger Account	9,367.13	£11,554.79

Year End Total

13,968.04

£15,605.03

Excess of expenses over income for year **-£1,636.99**

Less money committed for Children's worker

Carried forward from	2015	192.15	2014	£423.95
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Funds available at year end **£13,775.89**

£15,181.08

Graham Clifton Hon. Treasurer.

Steeple Aston Church CCLA Account Income & Expenditure 01/1/2017 - 31/12/2017 (Building Fund)														2,689.63
Income	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total to date	
													0.00	
Pledge money	10,830.00	5,635.00											16,465.00	
Cash donations	70.00												70.00	
Radcliffe Trust													0.00	
Ride & Stride	291.00												291.00	
Transfer from CBF													0.00	
Book sale	282.45												282.45	
Jazz Concert	744.00												744.00	
Amici Concert		832.00											832.00	
Grants		2,000.00											2,000.00	
Income Tax Reclaim		3,991.25											3,991.25	
Interest													0.00	
Total	12,217.45	12,458.25	0.00	24,675.70	24,675.70									
														27,365.33
Expenditure	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total to date	
													4,493.86	
Leap Design	4,493.86												4,493.86	
Transfer to CBF													0.00	
Adverts	42.00												42.00	
Jazz concert fees	310.00												310.00	
Heating Survey	1,305.12												1,305.12	
VAT Services	288.00												288.00	
	6,438.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,438.98	6,438.98
														20,926.35
Net Balance	5,778.47	12,458.25	0.00	£18,236.72										

Treasurer's Report (notes)

Notes on the 2016 accounts

The 2016 accounts show an excess of expenditure over income of £1,636.99 for the year.

The main increase in expenses was due to the outstanding fees for the feasibility study and booklets explaining the scheme (£5,165) and the purchase of new hymn books (£833).

The Parish Share increased from £23,213 in 2015 to £23,714. The 2016 figure should have been £24,145 but we received a rebate from the deanery. The deanery having received a discount from the diocese for paying most of the share on time.

Although there was a slight increase in the Standing Orders from £15,015 in 2015 to £15,195 in 2016 our total giving through the collection plate, pew envelopes and the weekly envelopes has reduced from £21,177 in 2015 to £20,649 in 2016. The Christmas collections were particularly good in 2016.

Fundraising for the year was slightly up from £4,289 in 2015 to £4,354 in 2016.

We received £600 from the parish council towards the upkeep of the churchyard.

Gift Aid tax reclaims was also up from £5,682 to £6,232.

We received a legacy of £1,000 from the late Vera Jones of Middle Aston.

There was a big push during the year to raise £20,000 to fund the necessary investigations into the proposed reordering work. A pledge weekend was held which brought in £11,080. The Ride and Stride money (£291) this year went towards this and £744 was raised at a Jazz concert.

At the recommendation of the PCC this money is being kept separate from general church funds. We held an account with the Central Board of Finance for the COE with £2,500 in. I am now using this account for all money relating to the reordering work.

There will be gift aid to claim on the pledge money and we have been promised £2,000 from the Radcliffe Trust.

Now we have raised the money required for the planning stage of the re-ordering work it would be good to try and build up funds in the general church account during 2017 in case of any unexpected repairs that might be required.

I would like to thank Gil Woods for examining the accounts for us this year.

Graham Clifton
Treasurer

Tower Captain Report

We have again not always been able to ring all 8 bells for Sunday Service and have only been able to practice on Tuesdays because of the help of our regular visitors. I am especially grateful for the support from the visitors as it helps our learners to progress.

Jack and Pam Knowles have become regular members of our team and now ring regularly for services. Jack has progressed into change ringing as well as conducting call changes.

We also welcome back Zoe Shayler following her illnesses. Two new recruits have started during the year Hannah McCloon and her father John; they are both almost ready to join us on Sundays. It is good to see teenage members getting involved in church activities; it reminds me that was how I got involved with the church.

Since October Malcolm has been unable to ring with us due to ill health. He did manage to ring in the New Year, but is still not able to get up the tower. We also lost Dave Puckey when he moved away.

We entered the Banbury Branch striking contest at Cropredy and came 2nd.

We again had a busy social calendar:

The tower outing was to Wappenham, Greens Norton, Lillingstone Lovell and Stowe, followed by a meal on the way home arranged by Lawrence. We held a tower dinner at the Red Lion, and a summer BBQ hosted by the Taylor family in Middle Aston.

We rang a quarter peal in April to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday and Edwina Kinch's 80th. In January we marked the birth of Olivia Clarke, first grandchild to Nick & Lydia Powell. A full peal was rung in June to mark The Queen's 90th birthday celebrations and Graham & Dorothy Clifton's ruby wedding anniversary.

The ringers arranged the church harvest supper; most of the work fell on Malcolm and Joan as our ringers get older and more frail! I wonder if, as a group we can continue to take on this responsibility.

Tower Keeper's report

No work has been necessary on the bells this year. We still have a new set of ropes waiting to be fitted. It would be worth training up younger members to maintain the bells in the future. If we had to pay to get the bells inspected & serviced it would cost £250 per year.

There was a problem with the clock when it kept stopping; this was due to the drive mechanism to the hands needing lubricating behind the clock face.

Graham Clifton

Churchyard Report

In recent years, we have often found additional jobs to tackle on our Saturday morning working parties in the churchyard. This past year, however, has seen us revert to our standard maintenance programme which means trimming hedges and bushes, weedkilling the paths, keeping gutters and gullies clear, and of course discouraging the ivy from climbing walls, trees, and gravestones. There is always a first though and this time it was the discovery of some very lively worker wasps on the roof in the first week of December, unusual surely!

Acting on a request from SAVA, we brought out of the shed and tidied up the bier for their exhibition in the Village Hall. Despite its years of inactivity, it was in remarkably good condition, a tribute no doubt to those craftsmen who built it.

The birdbath has lain half derelict after a lead theft; following a bequest, it has been renovated and now holds water for the first time for many years.

Our projects this year will be to smarten up a somewhat neglected corner by and including the north-west gate and to return to the cremated remains area to level and tidy some of the stone tablets. Our first working party of the year, though, will surely be to rectify the effect of Storm Doris, thankfully nothing structural!

Lawrence White.

Church Flowers

Thank you and congratulations to the team of people who are responsible for placing flowers in church on every Sunday, except during Advent and Lent. We have boosted our numbers following the Flower Demonstration and Workshop we enjoyed in church last summer.

A comment overheard as the audience arrived in church for a concert “what lovely flowers” and the reply was “Steeple Aston always have beautiful flower arrangements”. Your hard work is appreciated, may you all continue enjoying the challenge.

Edwina Kinch

Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll stands at 57 members, one more in total than twelve months ago.

Jeanna Atkins.

Children’s Church

Children’s church has run on the 4th Sunday of the month this year, in every month except August and October (when activities were held in church in conjunction with the Harvest Festival.) Most months we have used the Samuel Radcliffe building at the school, which has provided a good space for various activities, indoor and out. We return to church in time for the preparation for communion and children enjoy talking about what they have been doing towards the end of the service.

Attendance has varied from 2 to 12 children, with an age range between 2-14 years. We have explored bible readings through games, crafts and songs, including Palm Sunday, ‘ploughing a straight furrow’, the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus preaching in the temple in Nazareth, the storm on the Sea of Galilee, John the Baptist, the Transfiguration and the healing of the blind man. Resources from the children’s ministry of the Diocese of Bath and Wells have been helpful in planning activities. We had a happy children’s church get together after the Family Service in December, with Christmas crafts, music and refreshments, which was well attended with a few new faces too.

On the 2nd Sunday of each month, there is Family Service, which is a service of all-age worship, with no Holy Communion. It tends to be a bit shorter, around 45 minutes long, and we all enjoy the lovely music and singing as well as an often interactive form of sermon!

We have activity bags available for children attending when there is no Children’s Church, with age-specific books and paper and crayons. We welcome all families and children and want everyone to feel at home in our church. Please do ask for help or guidance if joining us for the first time.

This year, as there are no new applicants for the Communion Course (through which children are prepared to be admitted to communion ahead of confirmation) we are

planning 2 refresher sessions with the 12 children who have undertaken this course over the last 2 years. These will take place in the run-up to Easter, and are aimed at deepening the children's understanding of the order of service – why things are when in the Holy Communion service, and who does what at church, including the role of different people, such as the churchwarden – as well as exploring Lent. We very much look forward to welcoming you to our church!

Rebecca Hoare and Rachel Marsden

Sidespeople

There are 15 sidespeople who have contributed to the smooth running of our church services throughout the year. A big “thank you” to everyone on the rota, it is hoped you will continue for another year. We have welcomed several newcomers to our church in the past year and, if any of you would like to offer your services as a sidesperson, please contact Jeana Atkins (347237). You must have your name entered on the Electoral Roll to take on these duties.

Jeana Atkins

Church Cleaning

Fifteen industrious people regularly clean and polish the church, which is much appreciated. So thanks go out to:- Rebecca Hoare, Chris Clarke, Diana Gardner, Roger Bradley, Edwina and Royston Kinch, Jeana and Ted Atkins, Caroline Compston, Ruth and Martin Dale, Katerina Vernicos, Ian Jackson and Malcolm and Joan Hensher.

There is still room on the rota for more helpers, so please speak to Jeana if you are willing to give an hour or two of your time once every 8 weeks or so.

Jeana Atkins

Chalice Bearers and those Preparing the Holy Communion

Four chalice bearers are available to assist the Priest at Holy Communion and there are three on a rota to prepare for services. Many thanks to everyone for their help.

Jeana Atkins

Lesson Readers

My thanks, as always, to the loyal band of lesson readers Sunday by Sunday. We have a core of about 15 but would welcome any others who feel brave enough to read! It can be daunting at first but confidence soon takes over.

Malcolm Hensher

Intercession Leaders

Leading prayers in church is not easy and needs much time and thought in preparation. Individual styles of course vary and I am most grateful to the eight or so volunteers who assist the Rector in this way.

Malcolm Hensher

Organ and Music Report

This year, once more the organ has soldiered on and remains in remarkably good tune. It appears that the tuner thinks one of the Low G's has a problem but I haven't noticed it. No doubt in due course it will get worse and we will have to do something about it but I think it is some way off still.

As always I yearn for a decent swell pedal - but don't we all.....

Musically, the main event has been the Carol Service directed by Marcus and accompanied by Paul Herrington (the Steeple Aston Choral Society accompanist) who is an excellent organist. Sadly, like all good organists he is fully booked on Sundays. The Carol Service was excellent musically and now has a regular month of rehearsals to itself after the SACS Concert. This fits well and the highlight for me this year was the new carol by Marcus.

The new hymn book is very good and contains both traditional and more modern popular hymns as well the music for the singer. The fact that it unites the Benefice musically is a good thing, not only simplifying planning but also making the moment recently when I deputised at Tackley, easier. Family Service on second Sundays works well with it as it is suitable for that. I wish that there were more instrumental musicians at the family service. Please remember that in your prayers.

Recently a group from SACS sang at a wedding which was both fun and excellent musically. That cannot be done regularly but it is good to feel that this is possible from time to time.

Since major organ works at weddings - notably the Widor Toccata - are out of the question for me there remains the continuous question of prayer for a proper organist. There are a serious number of weddings this year in the Benefice necessitating good organ playing. Recent minor injury to my left hand has forced me to use the pedals in a simple way. It sort of works and, as ever, I wonder if God is telling me just to get on with things!

Martin Dale

Annual Report of the Proceedings of Woodstock Deanery Synod

In 2016 three meetings were held: on Thursday, 11 February at St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock; on Tuesday, 21 June at St Peter and Paul, Hanborough and on Wednesday, 16 November at St Leonard's, Eynsham

At the February meeting the Area Dean announced that Revd Tim Shepherd, who represented the Retired Clergy on Synod, had very recently died, that Canon Adrian Daffern was absent due to a delicate pastoral situation, and that Rosalind Gerring's husband had also died just before Christmas. He offered prayers for them as they came to terms with these events. Revd Marcus Green then led Synod in an Act of Worship. Revd Stephen Jones, Rector of Wootton, Glympton and Kiddington gave an interesting presentation on life in the three villages saying he had always been a 'nosey' person which had many added benefits whilst living in a rural environment. He explained how children were being encouraged to become involved in the church in many different ways, some of which did not always meet with approval from some parishioners. He was involved in the village shop and had recently played The Dame in the village pantomime. He enjoyed being alongside people in times of sadness and joy in their lives. An update on the parish share was given as was a report on the Working Group who were working towards the Deanery Plan. A Review of the Year covered the Accounts, Parish Share and Church Inspection Scheme. The Area Dean and Lay Chair had attended services where Revd Stephen Jones and Revd Roy Turner were licensed as Rectors of the Wootton and Stonesfield benefices respectively.

At the June meeting the recent death of Revd Peter Ball, a member of the Hanborough Clergy Team was announced. As he was very interested in Taize worship, the opening Act of Worship followed this format. The Area Dean began by reading Psalm 121 which had been read to Peter shortly before his death. A presentation was given by Revd Canon Andrew Anderson-Gear, newly appointed Director of Mission. He too paid tribute to Peter Ball who had encouraged him to enter Christian Ministry whilst they were both at Canterbury. He gave an interesting presentation on differing ways of mission, a copy of which was circulated to Synod members with the minutes of that meeting. Synod members had been circulated with papers relating to the Deanery Plan which were approved for consideration by the Diocesan Pastoral Committee.

At the November meeting, Revd Toby Wright, Witney Area Dean, gave a very informative presentation on ways in which the Church integrated with the community. Activities include Street Pastors, Night Cafes, Schools, Warwick Hall in Burford, Nursing Homes, annual carnivals. He used as his theme 'The Church is not an Institution but Mission'. He felt it was important to engage men when they were young as the likelihood was that they became more engaged as families grew. Revd Andrew Atherstone then gave a report on the way in which meetings of General Synod had changed, so that more small group discussions took place. He outlined a number of priorities which the Archbishop of Canterbury was concentrating on, two of which were the training of Ordinands and the question of sexuality. Mrs Elaine Sugden then gave an interesting perspective of the Holiday Club run in the summer at Eynsham for one week. This was an ecumenical venture on the theme of Cave Quest. Parishioners were very generous with contributions both monetary and in kind, and the PCC was only asked for £82 towards the overall cost. Plans were already in hand to repeat the exercise in 2017 and children from elsewhere were welcome or Mrs Sugden was willing to offer help if another parish wished to set up their own club. The parish share for 2017 had been agreed at a meeting of Deanery

Treasurers, using the same methodology as in previous years. The Area Dean reported that the Diocesan Pastoral Committee had agreed that the Deanery should retain its seven stipendiary priests, and was congratulated on its Deanery Plan,

Reports of General and Diocesan Synod meetings were given at the appropriate times. At each meeting refreshments were provided by the host Church, with very grateful thanks to the team of hosts/hostesses.

Rosalind Gerring, Deanery Secretary, January 2017

Election of Officers at Annual Meeting

a note of explanation...

With an electoral roll of 57 members, we have nine elected members on our PCC. These are elected on a rolling basis - a third of the PCC is re-elected each year.

This Easter, Edwina Kinch and Rebecca Hoare have come to the end of their term of office, Paul having already stepped down. On behalf of all of us at St Peter & St Paul's, may I as Rector offer many thanks for all your service on the PCC. Rebecca is not standing again, having been proposed as church warden.

At the end of a term of office, any PCC member may stand for re-election or step down as they wish. Any other member of the church electoral roll (who satisfies all the necessary guidelines) may also stand for election, and if we have more candidates than places we will hold an election during the Annual Meeting. All candidates must have been nominated properly using the printed nomination forms available from the PCC secretary.

Usually, we find ourselves with three candidates, and we elect them all together.

If we have more than three candidates and need to conduct an election, the process is as follows: Those present who are on the church electoral roll have up to three votes each. They may not vote more than once for any one candidate. They do not have to vote three times if they do not wish to. We vote by show of hands, unless a paper ballot is called for. Then everyone must sign the back of their papers. The electoral roll officer ensures that only those on the electoral roll are voting. If there is a tied result at the end of all this, the Rector has no casting vote - the final decision is taken by lot.

I hope this makes everything clear!

Marcus Green, Rector, St Peter and St Paul, Steeple Aston

Annual Parochial Church Meeting 3 April 2017

Agenda for Meeting of Parishioners

Opening Worship

Reflection, led by Rector

Election of Churchwardens

Agenda for Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Apologies for absence

Minutes of Annual Meeting held on 10 April 2016

1. To consider:

a) An annual report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and the activities of the parish generally (Churchwardens' and Secretary's reports)

b) The Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ending 31 December 2016, independently examined

c) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church of the Parish

d) A report on the electoral roll since the last Annual Parochial Church meeting

e) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod

2. Election of three representatives to the Parochial Church Council

3. Election of two Deanery Synod representative

4. Appointment of Sidespeople

5. Appointment of Independent Examiner of the Accounts

6. Any other business

7. Closing Prayer and Thanksgiving

Dates of next PCC Meetings 2017-2018: Thursday 15 June; Thursday 14 September; Thursday 16 November; Thursday 11 January 2018; Thursday 8 March 2018