

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

DUCKLINGTON

ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR 2017



Rector's Report

As I reflect on the life of the church over this last year and our direction looking forward, it has been good to see a deepening of the spiritual nature of our fellowship which was highlighted by those who attended the Pilgrim Courses leading up to Advent and during Lent.

That growth in spiritual sensitivity has also developed from the debates and conversations which have arisen as we have explored our customs and practice in the way we worship and celebrate the sacraments of communion and baptism. While it has been painful to some to be challenged why we worship in the way we do, for others it has highlighted a new awareness of the presence of God and a realisation of their spiritual hunger.

The work which I have been called to do here is only possible through the faith, help, care and dedication of many people who have responded to their own vocation of Christian service. I am truly thankful to you all who seek to make Christ known through your ministry of service, whether it is an upfront role in helping with our worship or it is a quiet ministry of pastoral visiting and support.

This year we celebrate the forty-five years' service as church warden given wholeheartedly by Edmund Strainge. Edmund is not offering to stand this year and I gladly express the gratitude of the church for those years of dedicated service. May Edmund and Stacey look forward to new adventures as the family move to join them at Ducklington Farm.

Thank you, too, to the other officers and trustees of the church who willingly give of their time: particular mention must go to Roger Barnes for his faithful oversight of our building and fabric, Angela Williams for her care and inspiration of our young children with her team of helpers, Meg Roberts for her work in leading the Pastoral Support team and our Lay Ministers Dave Adams and Ian Paul as they help me in the ministry of teaching and preaching God's word. Please continue to pray for Nicci and me as we seek faithfully to work together with all within the fellowship as we each strive to become the people which God wants us to be and to share the good news of Jesus Christ in our community.

Paul Boddam-Whetham

Tower Ringing

In February the ringers held their annual dinner at The Three Horseshoes which was well attended by 25 ringers and their partners. On the first Sunday of each month we usually attempt a Quarter Peal, which is about 45 minutes of continuous ringing, before the evening Communion Service. Out of 9 attempts, 7 were successful, one of which was rung in recognition of the life and work of Marion Pitman, verger at St Bartholomew's for many years. We also welcomed Lynda as a new ringer, and she now rings regularly on Sundays. We use the Learning the Ropes teaching plan which systematically introduces and progresses new recruits into the art of bell ringing.

In June we entered two teams in the Witney & Woodstock Branch striking competition at Tackley. We achieved 1st place in the call-changes section and were narrowly beaten into 2nd place in the method ringing section. A very good performance. In July we held our annual outing, this year ringing at Twyford, Padbury, Steeple Claydon, and Middle Stoney, with an enjoyable lunch at The Crown at Gawcott.

Maintenance-wise little needed to be done. Ian Craig provided a "rope warmer" that keeps the ropes dry even in the dampest of conditions, and we carried out a risk assessment that resulted in some extra warning notices and improved safety procedures.

On Fritillary Sunday we opened the tower to the public, always a busy event, and a big thank you to all who helped. We have an active and enthusiastic team of ringers, but as always anyone wishing to "learn the ropes" will be more than welcome.

Roger Barnes

Fabric Committee

The Fabric Committee met six times during 2017 and much of the discussion centred on proposals for a mobility scooter parking area by the South door, drying out the crypt as a place for storage, improving kitchen area facilities and seating, and improved methods of heating the South aisle. The new internal North door project was satisfactorily completed, and a grant of £1,000 was awarded by the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust towards the work.

Tasks completed by the Fabric Committee during the year included:

- Update to the church property register.
- Mesh on the area inside the graveyard gates.
- Removal of a dead oak tree in the churchyard.
- Pruning yew trees in the graveyard.
- Christmas cards
- Improved ventilation to the crypt – hopefully this will make it less damp.
- Replacement of dimmable spot lights at the east end of the nave.
- Repairs to the external notice boards
- Repainting of the graveyard gates.
- Removal of ivy from the graveyard walls

Tasks currently on-going include:

- Developing proposals to refurbish the kitchen facilities and to create an area for meetings and socialising.
- Providing a mobility scooter parking area.
- Lighting the south path.
- Heating improvements.
- Repairs to internal step at North door. Approval with conditions has been received from the Archdeacon.

We are thankful to volunteers who give their time to carry out minor repairs and inspections, thus saving the church money and helping to keep the fabric in good condition. We are also very grateful to the rota of volunteers who unlock and relock the church daily.

Roger Barnes

The Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union branch presently has 15 members. We were very sad to lose Marian Pitman last year; she had been a founder member since 1990. Two people have joined. M.U. is open to all in the church, regardless of gender or marital status, as long as they support its stated aims of supporting marriage and family life. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings held each month. A brief act of worship is followed by a talk or discussion on a subject related to family life

A few of us attend meetings with members from other branches for services or meetings around the county. M.U. supports local projects such as the Food Bank; knit blankets for elderly people in care homes, for new babies, and for the siblings of children in the Children's Hospital who stay with their parents at Ronald MacDonald House, and we also donate toiletries for parents staying there. We were very thankful for all the toiletries members of the congregation donated when we appealed last year. This year we are making poppies for the Witney commemoration of the Centenary of the end of WW1, and possibly a nativity scene. We should mention our thanks to Mrs Joan Hanks, who has a prolific output of squares for the blankets!

Meg Roberts, Branch Leader

The Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team continue offer support to church members with transport to church and medical appointments, visits to sick, elderly, lonely and bereaved people if requested, send cards to those who are unwell, in hospital or undergoing long-term treatment, to the newly bereaved in the village and congregation, and on the first anniversary of a bereavement. We can only do this if we are informed of needs, and remind members to let the Rector or a member of the team know of any of which they become aware.

Meg Roberts

Ducklington Primary School

The school and the church have developed a really strong working relationship over the past year. Our three foundation governors have built very sound links with the school and carry out their roles very effectively. They are; Nicci Boddam-Whetham, Laura Edwards and Henry Cook.

A foundation governor is someone who, in the opinion of the person entitled to appoint them, has the skills to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school, **and** who is appointed for the purpose of securing:

- in all cases, that the school's character (including religious character where it has one) is preserved and developed.
- that the school is conducted in accordance with the foundation's governing documents.

Nicci regularly leads key stage 2 assemblies and, along with other governors, supports the headteacher to maintain the distinctive Christian ethos of the school. She works closely with the diocesan representative to make sure that the school is well-prepared for its future SIAMS – School's Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools.

The Reverend Paul Boddam-Whetham has led all church services for the school at key times in the Christian calendar, including Harvest, Christmas and the leaver's service. He has also spent time in classrooms looking at and "Forgiveness" and the Lord's Prayer, helping children to understand its meaning. In the summer term coming up, Paul will be working with the children and the staff to discuss the Holy Trinity.

The school has been very supportive of 'Messy Ducks' and has allowed us to advertise through their newsletters and to use their facilities to run the sessions. It was very encouraging to see children who do not come to church attending these sessions and learning some more about what Christians believe.

Following the headteacher's successful funding bid to the Department for Education, Ducklington Playgroup is now housed in a wonderful new building on the school's site and the children are really enjoying the new space and equipment. Staff in the foundation years at school are working closely with

staff in the playgroup so that children get the very best learning opportunities and transition into school is smooth.

2018 started for the school with the long-awaited Ofsted Inspection at the end of January. They have been ready and waiting for this for quite some time and were delighted when it finally arrived! Ofsted is now a one-day inspection and is an intense but fair process to judge whether a school is effective. Staff and governors were delighted with the report which contained so many positive elements and comments and judged us to be a good school. The report confirmed that children love coming to school, that lessons are challenging and fun and that the children love the creative opportunities they are given at school. It also pointed out that pupils feel safe at school and that parents would recommend the school to others. We were all delighted that the inspector stated that 'the school has continued to improve since its last inspection.' All the staff at Ducklington School strive to continually improve and do their utmost for the children in their care. Thanks should go to all the parents, staff, governors and children for their ongoing support and positive comments. If you would like to read the full report please follow the link on the school's website.

The school is also hosting 'The Easter Experience' again this year for parents and any members of the local community. Last year the Church kindly hosted this event with volunteers creating images of the Easter Story and talking to the children about these. Children extended their appreciation to the church by writing letters of thanks.

This year it is the school's turn and each class will create an outdoor image of a part of the story, learn about it in depth ready to talk to the other children and their parents about it. It is a very powerful way of helping the children unravel and understand this complex story.

We look forward to another year of working together and supporting our local school and children.

Sarah Varnom (Chair of governors).

The Friends of St Bartholomew's Church

In 2017 the Friends contributed £1,740 in subscriptions to enhance our wonderful church and to make sure that it continues to serve our community for generations to come. That substantial contribution to our fabric fund is before the addition of gift aid.

The subscription to Friends is £12 per year, or £20 per couple, but many Friends pay more as and when they are able. I know St Bartholomew's is very grateful to this kind and loyal group of people who are united by their love of our church. Many joined when Maurice Spalding and others created the Friends some eighteen years ago. Some are regular church attendees but many made their connection to our church through weddings, christenings or through their families, or are local families who want to support their church.

Friends receive a newsletter twice a year and have a get together in the summer. I would like to thank all contributors to the newsletter, but particularly Roger Barnes for his enlightening pieces on church and local history, and Maurice for his continuing contributions to the enduring and inexplicably popular humour from the pews. Thank you to the willing volunteers who deliver the newsletter to Friends in the village, and to Rosemary for the food for our summer get together.

We would like to promote Friends more widely and I would be very grateful for your help in reaching new members.

Steve Bold

Church Flowers

This year we have a new flower lady, Bobby, who we welcome. We lost a dear friend, Marian, who had been doing the flowers for over 20 years. There are not many weddings so the funds have run low, but church funds have helped us out. Also that is why the flower tin is put out for festivals to help.

We hope you all enjoy seeing the flowers that are so lovingly done every week.

Bette Puffett

Handbell Ringers

Over the past two years we have welcomed several new members to the team. We are now able to ring 16 bells on a regular basis.

After some concern, we rang 12 bell pieces for Fritillary Sunday 2017 and during the year rang out at Otters Court in October, Carterton Christmas Fair in November, Richmond Village, and West Witney WI in December. One of the most memorable occasions was ringing from the West End Gallery at the Brize Singers Christmas concert in St Bartholomew's just before Christmas.

We are grateful to St Bartholomew's for allowing us to practice in Church on Friday evenings and in addition on Thursday evenings before performances. Thanks go to all members of the team for their commitment and hard work.

Sally Craig.

Church Cleaning

We have a rota of 4 volunteers who clean the church floors, porches and toilet each week, plus 3 others who dust and polish an area when they have time.

After many years Bette and Tony Puffett had to come off the rota for personal reasons also Josie Pizzey, we miss them and thank them very much for all they did.

As we have lost 3 valuable members of the cleaning team is there anyone who has a few minutes to spare each week, or when they can, to help with dusting an area in church we would be very grateful. Thank you.

Jane Nichols.

Church Music

It has been a lovely year for music in church. The singing group have been meeting regularly under the guidance of Amanda and Harriet, and have been doing a great job of supporting the singing in church, particularly during communion. New songs have been introduced and well received.

Harriet, Pauline and Amanda have been sharing organist duties each week. There have also been quite a few weddings and funerals to play for.

Christmas was a lovely time for music and the Carol service was especially well done this year, thanks to Amanda's hard work. George Cooke's solo of Once in Royal David's City was beautifully sung.

We are very grateful for the recent addition of the heater next to the keyboard, as that part of church does get very cold in the winter months and it is pretty difficult to play when you can't feel the tips of your fingers!

If anyone is interested in taking part in the musical life of the church, either as a singer or an instrumentalist, then please contact Harriet Warner.

Harriet Warner

Sunday School

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the helpers and leaders who support the Sunday School so loyally. At present we have 12 children on our register. The age range is from three to ten years old, and the number of children who attend varies from week to week. The Sunday School session includes Bible stories, music, poetry and creative activities.

Our new venture "Messy Ducks" has taken off, and is an endeavour to widen our outreach to the children and parents of our community here in Ducklington and beyond.

Angela Williams

Church website and Facebook page and You Tube Channel

It's been another busy year with the website being updated regularly each week.

Some of the information provided comprises:

- all service times
- details of regular activities and locations
- special "events"
- meetings
- church rotas
- a sermon archive which now has 171 to choose from!
- The shop with the ability to pay on-line for the products we sell
- Monthly prayer diaries
- Information on the ministry team and PCC

At seasonal times such as Lent or Christmas, the front page of the site is adapted to have a central point of reference for services, talks, house-groups etc.

Visitors to the site can also sign up to receive the electronic newsletter which aims to provide the information from the weekly notices with embellishment. The aim is send this e-newsletter out weekly. There are currently 57 subscribers who receive this. Many are parishioners but some are those now living in other countries or away at university or who have moved on – but all able to keep up with the news at St Bartholomew's.

Do take a look at the website (<https://www.ducklingtonchurch.org.uk>) and if you have any items that you would like included, do please let me know. Please e-mail any articles to website@ducklingtonchurch.org.uk

Facebook "likes" increased by just under 5% this year to 147. These aren't massive numbers of course but it's a simple, useful and effective way to reach out to the wider community who aren't necessarily regular church goers but who want to know, or are interested in, what is happening at St. Bartholomew's - particularly during Easter, Christmas and Fritillary. During the year, the emphasis is on notifying the "audience" of special events such as baptisms and weddings, ad hoc service times such as the Crib service.

Sometimes questions are sent via a message facility and this is a quick way to respond and point people in the right direction.

We still have our You Tube channel which was set up as the best repository for any videos. At present there are only 3 short clips from the Brize Christmas concert. Just go to You Tube and search for St Bartholomew's Ducklington.

Jane Dines

Fritillary Sunday

Fritillary Sunday was held on April 23rd 2017, a week later than usual as Easter Sunday fell on April 16th. As it was an early Spring, the flowers were nearing the end of their flowering period, but still plenty for the visitors to see. The weather was warm with temperatures to 16 degrees, so visitors were able to stay longer in the field. We has two short talks in the field about the field's history and plants which proved very popular.

Our thanks go to all who helped with Village Hall lunches, tower tours, handbell ringing, Morris dancing, church welcomers, the plant stall, children's activities, souvenir stall, and on the field. It was a very successful day. Thank you.

Edmund Strainge