

**The Parochial Church Council
ST MARY'S CHURCH
CRAWLEY
in the
DIOCESE OF WINCHESTER**



**ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
for the
YEAR ENDED 31st December 2016**

**to be presented to the
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

**on
Friday 21st April 2017
6 pm**

St Mary's Church, Crawley

**Correspondence Address:
The Secretary
Peach Hill
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Winchester
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The Parochial Church Council

Background

The PCC of St Mary's Church, Crawley is responsible for co-operating with the Incumbent of the Benefice of Crawley, Chilbolton, Littleton, Sparsholt with Lainston, and Wherwell by promoting within the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church – pastoral, evangelical, social and ecumenical. It also has responsibility for the maintenance of the church building of St Mary's Crawley, including the adjoining Church Room and facilities. Meetings of the PCC are held quarterly in the Church Room.

Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio, elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules, or co-opted. During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Rector Revd Jax Machin

Assistant Priest Revd Dave Mapes

Church Warden Mr Alick Kay

Elected Members Mrs Diane Payne (Secretary)
Mr Robin Bayford (Treasurer)
Mrs Amanda Bayford
Mrs Felicity Gillibrand
Mr Phil Payne
Mrs Hazel Watson

Standing Committee

Revd Jax Machin, Alick Kay, Robin Bayford, Di Payne, Phil Payne.

This Committee is required by law and has power to transact business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC.

Worship Committee

Di Payne (Chair), Hazel Watson

Fabric Committee

Robin Bayford (Chair), Phil Payne

This Report was approved at a meeting of the PCC on 23rd March 2017

Acknowledgements

As always the PCC is indebted to all who have contributed to the worship and mission of St Mary's Church.

We are particularly grateful to our Rector, Revd Jax Machin, our Assistant Priest, Revd Dave Mapes, as well as those serving and retired priests, Licensed Lay Ministers, and Lay Worship Leaders who have assisted the Benefice in covering our current service patterns.

In particular:

Revd Bruce Kington, Rev Norman de la Mouette, Revd Brian Pickett, and Revd Liz Pickett.

Licensed Lay Ministers: Dr Alan Disher and Mrs Charlotte Nash.

Lay Worship Leaders: Andrew Kent and Di Payne.

We are also very grateful to Caroline McAulay, Carrie Blyth and Caz Woronczak (resigned Sept 2016) in the Benefice Office for their valuable administrative help and support, especially in organizing the service rotas; Di Payne – Sacristan, Amanda Bayford, and Alick Kay- Assistant Sacristans; members of the Choir, the Sidesmen and Sideswomen, Lesson Readers and those who lead intercessions; Tamsin Orlebar - Flower Arranging Coordinator and her team of helpers; Amanda Bayford - Cleaning Coordinator who looks after the church room, coffee rota, is Tower Secretary and who put this report together; all who dust, polish and vacuum our church which always looks clean and beautiful; those who maintain the churchyard coordinated by Tony Macklin; the team of Bell Ringers; the 4th Sunday Service Planning Group, in particular Di Payne; Hazel Watson, Sunday School Organiser and her team; Phil and Di Payne, John and Hazel Watson – House Group leaders; and Felicity Gillibrand who co-ordinates the catering arrangements for special events.

PCC Report

The Downs Benefice

In this, the seventh year of the enlarged Benefice, we have seen a continuation of the excellent cooperation which has been apparent from the beginning as we continue to strengthen the links between the parishes and so being better able to serve as God's ministers in our particular part of rural Hampshire.

Since joining the Andover Deanery, we have played a full and, in many cases, a leading role in the workings of the Deanery. All of our parishes have been able to pay our full 'Parish Share' to the Deanery. Members of the Benefice continue to play important roles in the Deanery and Diocese, in particular Andrew Kent, from Chilbolton as Lay Chairman of the Deanery. He, Colin Sheath from Chilbolton, Alick Kay, and our Rector served as a member of the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee.

Contacts:-

Benefice Council Alick Kay

Benefice Council Di Payne

Worship Committee Di Payne

In their absence, Robin Bayford will attend meetings of the Council.

Sunday Services

Our normal pattern of Sunday Services continued through 2016.

1 st Sunday	Family Communion	10.00 a.m.
2 nd Sunday	Morning Worship	10.00 a.m.
3 rd Sunday	BCP Communion	8.00 a.m.
4 th Sunday	4 th Sunday Worship with Sunday School	10.00 a.m.
5 th Sunday	Benefice Communion	10.00 a.m.

During the year, the funeral of David Barnard took place. He is very much missed by his family and friends.

We celebrated 4 weddings and 1 baptism during the year.

Ministry Team

As stated earlier, we are very grateful to the team of Priests and Licensed Lay Ministers who have so willingly and ably led our services, in particular Jax, who has served as our Rector. She has worked tirelessly and demonstrated a real ability to work with all ages and backgrounds. We are particularly grateful for her great pastoral skills, and her skill and enthusiasm in leading a wide range of services, making them to so enjoyable for all.

However, we have recognised the need to expand the resources available to assist the Ministry team. So, in 2016, as part of the implementation of our bMAP, we began the process of identifying those in the Benefice who might support the team through, for example, leading services and providing pastoral care. We are very pleased that, this year (2017) a number of candidates have agreed to participate in the training courses run by Jax and the Diocese.

Church Attendance

Normal Sunday Attendance					
Year	Morning Worship	Family Communion	BCP Communion	4 th Sunday Worship	Average
2016	14	23	10	23	18
2015	17	19	13	26	19
2014	16	18	14	27	19

Overall attendances in 2016 are similar to those in the previous year, and it is, again, encouraging that, through Di and Hazel's tireless efforts, our 4th Sunday Worship service (with Sunday School) remains the best attended service.

However, our Easter Sunday, Harvest, Carol and Christmas Day services, for example, saw numbers of 51, 45, 79 and 112 respectively; demonstrating, once more, that many families in the village only attend Church on Festivals. Our continuing mission must be to get members of these congregations to join us at our "regular" services.

In 2016, as part of our bMAP, we established a team to look at possible new forms of worship, and identify how we can better "engage" with our local community. Our very well attended Harvest Hog Roast continues to be a good example of how we can achieve the latter.

Crawley PCC

During 2016 the PCC has met four times, in addition to the APCM.

Although, at the APCM, I was re-appointed Church Warden, the list of responsibilities, prepared and allocated to members of the PCC whilst we had no Church Warden, has continued to be used as a basis for sharing these responsibilities. This has continued to work very successfully thanks to the efforts and cooperation of all the members, for which I am very grateful. Much of the work of PCC members has been detailed above, but I would also like to highlight the work of our Treasurer, Robin Bayford, who has taken on the responsibilities of Benefice Treasurer. Thanks to the incredible generosity of many, as well as Robin's hard work, we have been able to continue to pay our contribution to the Common Mission Fund (Parish Share).

This year, we will continue, with the other Parishes in the Benefice, in the implementation of the Deanery Mission Action Plan (dMAP), and the Benefice Mission Action Plan (bMAP). These are important steps in helping us to achieve the Benefice Vision:

“To be a welcoming, thriving, and growing Christian family, embedded in the wider community of which we are a part, and actively engaged in the work of the Deanery and Diocese.”

Our challenge is to grow Christ's Church in this village.

Alick Kay

Electoral Roll

At our APCM in 2016 there were 85 members on that roll. Of that number, there were 66 resident and 19 non-resident members. This year's roll was closed for preparation on 1st April 2017 and will re-open for new admissions after this meeting. Currently there are 85 members on the Roll, 64 being resident and 21 non-resident. During the year there have been no new admissions.

Robin Bayford

Sunday School

We began in January, making calendars, and thinking about Jesus in the Temple aged 12. February we talked about Palm Sunday. On Mothering Sunday it was a kind of Café Church with lots of activities for the congregation to do. On Good Friday we made an Easter Garden and all the children made an individual garden to give their mothers who were in the church room having coffee!

On Easter Sunday we made flags and thanked God for the Resurrection, then went into the Church and put the flags on the garden. In April we looked at the Ascension and Pentecost. In May it was the Northwood Park Service.

In June we talked about the Queen and her Christian faith, and on the last Sunday the story of Zacchaeus. In July we looked at the Lost Sheep, and in August the call of the first disciples. In September it was Harvest and we had the story of the 'Feeding of the 5,000'. In October it was the story of Peter healing the man outside the Temple. 'Silver and Gold I have none, but in the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk'.

In November we made the Christmas Frieze, and went through the Christmas story in detail, and sang 'Away in a Manger'.

We had a practice for the nativity play the Friday before Christmas, 4 girls sang really beautifully. On Christmas Day 24 children joined in and we had a lively play, hopefully enjoyed by everyone!

We ended by singing 'We wish you a Merry Christmas'.

Hazel Watson

Café Church

An experimental service was held on Mothering Sunday, called 'café church' due to there being a menu of activities for all ages to join in with and a large supply of coffee and doughnuts to eat throughout! The service began with a short prayer and song, after which those present were free to wander round the church and church room to try a range of activities all with a spiritual theme.

There were craft activities and a children's song workshop where children learnt a lively song which they performed at the end of the service. Both children and adults enjoyed making traditional tussy mussies with spring flowers and herbs, and there was a poetry corner, with a range of books of Christian and contemplative poems to read and colouring for adults giving time and space for quiet and stillness. Particularly popular with the men who came was the newspaper corner, and those who spent their time here were encouraged to cut out and pin articles on issues of concern to a prayer board, so they could be used as a basis for intercessions later on. The chancel was set aside as a space for personal prayer or for those who wished to be receive prayer.

Feedback on the service was overwhelmingly positive and it will certainly be repeated although probably with one or two fewer activities on the menu.

Di Payne

The Home Group, Westfield House

We started the year with reading Psalm 46 and talked about Simeon and Anna welcoming the Lord Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. We looked at some 'key' verses in March and in April talked about the Resurrection from John's Gospel.

In May we looked at Psalm 23, and 'rejoicing' from Philippians. In June we looked at the book about the Queen and reflected on her Christian faith. It was her 90th birthday that week. In July we read Psalm 34, and Ephesians 3 and sang five hymns!

We started again in September with Psalm 27 and 2 Tim 1 v12, I know whom I have believed. In October we looked at the Lost Sheep, and Coin and The Prodigal Son. In November, we looked at Galatians 5 v22, and sang 'Into my heart'.

In December we had Carol singing and invited many more to come – about 25 altogether!

Each 'meeting' we have a good tea and chat. Everyone is very friendly and enjoys coming!

Hazel Watson

Saturday Breakfast Meetings

This group has continued to meet on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month, its aim being to give an opportunity for growth in understanding and faith and mutual encouragement and support. The sessions start with breakfast at 8.00 a.m and move on to an informal study and discussion on a topic or theme.

We have used reflections from the book 'Light for our Path' as a starting point for our discussions through the year. It is a book of daily Bible reflections from around the world, covering a wide range of themes from both the Old and New Testaments but all with a focus on how the word of God bears on our own lives. Through our discussions we have been encouraged, strengthened and at times challenged, but all the time feeling and appreciating the strength of gathering together in God's name to study His word.

There is a steady membership of the group but there is always room and a warm welcome for new faces.

Phil and Di Payne

Sunday and Festival Choirs

The Sunday choir has continued to lead the singing of hymns at services, and are now well used to being accompanied by our digital organist, the hymnal, affectionately known as 'Howard'. Numbers in the choir have fallen a little unfortunately due to ill health in some of our longstanding members but we have one new regular member to compensate for those who are no longer able to take part and no shortage of enthusiasm.

It's also been a real encouragement to have a wealth of new faces joining the group to form the Festival Choir to sing at weddings and festival services. The age range of this bigger group spans approximately 75 years! This augmented choir sang at Easter and Christmas services and a small group also sang a contemporary version of the Sanctus at the Benefice Trinity Sunday service at Northwood Park Farm. Singing is not the only talent in the group. Two of the younger members, Immy Breen and Freya Bennett, beautifully choreographed a dance piece for the Candlelit Carol Service which they performed along with other members of the Bennett family.

Music remains a vital part of our worship and I hope and trust that there will be an enthusiastic choir to support and lead our singing for many years to come.

Di Payne

The Bells

Another interesting year for Crawley Bellringers. In 2016 we rang for four weddings as well as before some special church services. Again, we are so grateful for the expert tuition we receive from Edmund Wratten enabling three more children to join the team in October and they are all progressing well. In June we rang for The Queen's 90th Birthday prior to the village celebrations. During the year we had visits from three bands of ringers, hosted two District Practices and in October a District Training Event on Raising and Lowering in Peel. In May a combined Sparsholt and Crawley team entered the District Striking Competition coming second.

Visiting ringers and new ringers are always welcome.

Amanda Bayford

Posada

Our knitted nativity figures once again made their way round the village in the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas, stopping off in the homes of village families overnight before moving on yet again. The flock of knitted sheep gradually diminished in number as families kept one back before moving them on their way but all were reunited at the Posada service on Christmas Eve, held again in the barn at Kingswell Point.

The barn is a wonderful place to gather to listen to the nativity story together. Carpeted floor and electric heating aside, the atmosphere of the barn gives a real feel of the stable in which Jesus was born and helps make the story come alive. People and sheep gathered at the church to make their way to the barn in a candlelit procession and, once the Christmas story was retold and the figures assembled in the stable, mulled wine and mince pies helped bring this much-loved annual event to a close.

There was a collection in aid of the charity Toy Box who help children living on the streets in South America and £100 was raised. Thanks to all who donated so generously and to Sue and Pete Bolger for allowing us to use their wonderful barn once again.

Di Payne

Messy Church

Messy Church has been running within the Downs Benefice for over 4 years. Sessions take the form of 1 hour of crafts and other activities around a central Christian theme; a celebration with a Bible story, songs and prayers; and a delicious meal to round the afternoon off. Recent Messy Church themes have included Paul's letters, Pentecost, and the Messianic prophesies (except in our case they were Messy-anic!). We have turned Sparsholt School field into the Sea of Galilee (for our first ever outdoors Messy Church), toppled a cardboard temple on top of Revd Dave (for Messy Samson) and celebrated the Queen's birthday with a ping pong ball gun salute, but most importantly we have had fun together whilst learning about God and his love for us.

Messy Church in the Downs Benefice takes place on the second Saturday of each month (except April and August) from 4-6pm, circulating between the villages of Sparsholt, Littleton and Crawley. We have a tremendous team of volunteers from across the three parishes who willingly spend the afternoon cooking, helping children with crafts, laying tables or simply chatting with parents whilst their children are absorbed in their creations. Without these willing helpers, we could not have achieved the wonderful success we have had to date. In 2016 a total of 21 families attended at least one Messy Church, some of whom have had very little previous contact with the church.

For more information see our posters or visit our Facebook page: Messy Church in the Downs Benefice.

Carol Coleman
Messy Church leader

The Fabric Report

During the year the Parish Council, who are responsible for the maintenance of our closed church yard, removed the diseased lime trees and these have been replaced early this year with young limes. With the removal of the limes the light over the church yard gate had to be replaced. A motion sensitive light has been installed on the gate posts, which is proving a little bit temperamental, but is doing the job required.

Similarly the lead theft from the church room roof reported last year has been made good with the help of our insurers.

In the spring a bulge in the church yard wall was noticed and inspected by our surveyor. This has been repaired with half the cost being paid for by the Parish Council.

The insurance inspector came in September. She increased the valuation of the building to £3,137,000 which will result a small increase in premium. Similarly the gas boiler was serviced during the year. Our electricians inspected and given a clean bill of health and our fire extinguishers inspected and renewed where necessary.

Robin Bayford

Financial Review

Total receipts were £36,977 (2015 £36,754) and are detailed in the financial statements. Standing order receipts together with the tax recovered on them now amount to 80% of total receipts.

Total expenditure was £33,450 (2015 £36,489). This expenditure included £17,572 (2015 £16,108) for the diocesan parish share which largely provides the stipends and housing for the clergy.

Charitable giving of £3,636 (2015 £3,133) is detailed in note 2 to the financial statements.

The significant cost decrease this year relates to our share of the Downs Benefice refurbishment costs which was a one off charge born in 2015. Repair cost also came in low in 2016.

There was a net inflow of resources for the year of £3,527 (2015 £265).

Outlook

Our quinquennial inspection of the church's fabric comes up in 2017. The Church is expensive to run, is a valuable asset to the village, and support is much needed. Please consider increasing your regular giving and including legacies in your wills.

Reserves policy

It is the PCC's policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds (if possible) to meet approximately six months unrestricted payments to cover unforeseen emergencies. The balance of £21,635 meets this target.

However, the balance of £13,619 on the Fabric Fund, retained to meet repairs to the ancient grade II* listed building, remains a low figure compared to expected future structural costs.

Loan

During the year I made a £5,000 donation to the PCC on the condition it was lent on to the Benefice while I was also honorary treasurer to the Downs Benefice, this money greatly helps me undertake this task. This donation increased our gift aid recovery in the year by £1,250, but credit for the £5,000 loan to the Benefice has not been taken in the accounts as the loan may be forgiven and it would be imprudent to carry it as an asset.

Robin Bayford
Hon Treasurer

Rector's Report

SCRIPTURE FOR 2017

John 4: 14 – Jesus offers the Water of Life

Jesus said: *'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'* The woman said to him, *'Sir, give me this water always.'*

During 2016, we were directed by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of St Mark to *'Go throughout the whole world and preach the Gospel to all people.'* That we have been doing as a benefice, and I am at once humbled and overjoyed to have witnessed evidence of your faithful work bearing fruit in all manner of ways and in every parish.

My thanks go to the Churchwardens of each parish, to the Sides-men and women, and to all the teams of people who assist them in keeping our churches clean, brim-full of magnificent floral arrangements, visitors welcomed, altars laid, cloths washed, lessons read, bells rung, organs played, anthems sung, graves dug, churchyards maintained, records kept, prayers offered ... Christ worshipped and glorified! My thanks also ring out to Alick Kay as our indefatigable Chair of Benefice Council who has steered us through another year of dMAP's and bMAP's and who still looks sane at the prospect of aMAP's coming to us from the Archdeacons. Our benefice thanks his Deputy, Andrew Kent, and all the members of our five PCC's who represent the parishes on Benefice Council, and who administer our parishes and inspire fundraising events with such grace and wisdom. Caroline Horrill is chairing a review of Children's ministry across the Benefice which reveals we are doing some amazing work and Charlotte Nash is spearheading M28 (think Matthew's Gospel Chapter 28!), a group dedicated to reviewing worship patterns and liturgy. Ruth Myers and Neil Bowen joined forces to bring an effective Health and Safety policy to fruition, which can now be adapted for use by each parish. Patrick Hendra has stood down after many patient years of work effecting first CRB and now DBS certification; our thanks go to him as they do to Caroline McAulay who has kindly offered to take on the task. In the Benefice Office this year, we said farewell to Caz, having come to the sad conclusion that three part-time administrators just didn't work. Caroline and Carrie continue as *'Mission Control'* often working way beyond their paid hours. I am so very grateful to them for all they do.

Blessings also heap upon Lesley Kent, Lawrence Wild and Jane Brown at Chilbolton who have served St Mary the Less throughout another year without a churchwarden. Churchwardens are vital to the health and wellbeing of our church communities and so I do pray for a resolution to this situation.

Our Treasurers deserve special merit for their expertise in navigating us through yet another financial year fraught with escalating Common Mission Fund charges before even a light switch or heater is budgeted for. Through God's grace, we have made it through this far, but as a benefice we need to be thinking deeply about our sacrificial giving if we want these beautiful churches and the sacramental and pastoral services they offer to continue for future generations. Our thanks go also to Robin Bayford as benefice Treasurer and to Clive Thompsett as Deanery Money Man, who describes finding monies like *'walking in the Himalayas: having scaled 2016 we now find another peak to climb.'*

As we come to APCM, I must ask you to please encourage your Parishes to appoint the Lay Deanery Synod members they are entitled to. It's a bit patchy around the Deanery, and there may be a perception that it's unimportant, but could you remind them please that if they aren't there they won't have a voice in Diocese affairs that affect their parishes.

I do not know what I would have done without the support I have received from our 'retired' colleagues this year, who have honoured us with their spiritual ministries, and in the sensitive leading of many funerals, baptisms and weddings – with some challenging sermons to boot. My thanks go to *all* the ministry team to whom I am equally indebted. Charlotte goes from strength to strength in the warmth of her distinctive ministry and Alan has begun to lead Communion by Extension for the contemplative service of Peace and Wholeness at Littleton, leading us in some powerful reflections with his wise theology. Dear Bruce keeps our Ministry team in check with his wise theological oversight and Norman's fan-base gathers a-pace as his midweek Eucharist congregation flourishes! Thanks to Dave for his monthly visit to Arqiva where he joins the Christian Fellowship gathering there; for his support of Flowerdown and Westholme Nursing homes and to Sylvia Arnold and Deirdre Wratten for playing at them, and Alastair Barron, Lucy Kington, Ken Wren, Susan Ansell; all those who visit parishioners, and who take worship and Holy Communion into people's homes across the benefice. We have had a frustrating year trying to arrange diocesan training for additional Parish Visitors and Lay Worship leaders but we have light at the end of the tunnel as we go into 2017. Hazel Watson continues to encourage a flourishing Sunday school at the 4th Sunday service at Crawley. Di Payne, has worked her charms on the digital 'Howard Goodall' music machine and has led some inspirational worship at St Mary's this year, as well as leading the Music Group at Northwood Park.

Andrew Kent has begun to flex his wings taking some inventive lay-led services throughout the benefice – including one service involving a pair of socks, which I still haven't got to the bottom of!

The Peace and Wholeness Team have gone from strength to strength during this past year and our lives are underpinned by the profoundly important work of our Prayer and Meditation Teams who found their ministry on Jesus' words: '*Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.*' (Matthew 21:22)

In each parish this past year we have developed incarnational '*God-with-us*' fresh expressions of church – taking 'church as we know it' out to where people are; demonstrating the values of worship and opportunities for people to praise God in settings in which they feel comfortable and which they can call their own. In this past year we have taken to church rooms in Littleton, Sparsholt and Crawley with some amazing Messy Church services, offering theologically themed craft tables for young and old alike to have creative fun with whilst learning more about the bible stories set for the session complete with a delicious supper for all who attend. The theme of offering meals, coffee with cake, or cheese and wine is a big hit with our congregations who value the fellowship of meeting with other Christians and those seeking faith in the symbolic hospitality of our Lord, who first broke bread for us.

In Chilbolton, Gaynor Childs and her team have successfully brought *Simply Sundays* to the children there, offering a twist on the Messy Church theme. In Littleton in May, Café Church was born, offering a 4pm opportunity once a month for folks to gather in the delightful surroundings of the new Church Room for an informal afternoon with scrummy cake, newspapers and a themed reflection around a bible reading. Pet Services on the village green in Sparsholt and in church at Wherwell entered into their second year – with a much more diverse range of pets coming along, though my puppy, Herbie, is still a work in progress! On Trinity Sunday, this year we were blessed by Revd Tim Maguire as he offered up his last formal Eucharist among us before retiring. How to thank him for his immeasurable and selfless spiritual leadership, in and out of interregna across his wise and holy ministry among us? Well, I gather the joy of the 100 plus who gathered to worship with him that day amidst the enjoyment of a

superb BBQ brought him great delight. Dear Tim, we are indebted to you in more ways than we can express; thank you!

During the summer, each parish took my breath away by offering yet more spectacular Summer Fetes, culminating in the Littleton and Harestock Show, oftentimes in weather which had me in tears of agony for you all after the many months of painstaking preparation. Yet you were not daunted! Your energetic enthusiasm on the day helped me to see, yet again, the face of Christ shining from you all. I am deeply humbled, not least of which because you seemed to have turned adversity into triumph with flourishing financial results. Bless you all!

Ministry into Wherwell Primary School has not gone as well as I'd have hoped during 2016 but head-teacher, Mr King, is as generous as ever and is enthusiastic about the coming year. I have recently led a stirring Carol service with the children in St Peter's church which was declared a resounding success by all, so we pray for more opportunities to develop our work with the children across 2017. St Peter's has gone from strength to strength with its services for Wherwell families. A new carpet has been laid in the vestry to enable parents to offer a crèche for the youngest children, which is a wonderful development. The Advent Carol service was another very special gathering of Wherwell families in church following a magical lantern procession through the lane from the village hall. My thanks to all the villagers who made a phenomenal effort to dress their cottages with exquisite Christmas lights!

At Sparsholt Primary School, Margaret Blakemore has given another year of fine work as Church Foundation Governor and is much valued by Mrs McCarthy and her staff. We held a very special Easter Eucharist and Christingle service in St Stephen's church for all the school and it has been wonderful to welcome the school choir to sing at some of our notable services throughout the year – their contribution to St Stephen's Carol Service this year was first class. By return, The Benefice has been profusely thanked for the Christian Advent Calendars which were given to both schools by the Benefice – this is a stunning way of helping children to relate to the Christmas message each day leading up to the birth of Christ and it has been wonderful to read the many letters from children telling us how much the calendars have meant to them.

We have welcomed people through the doors of our churches to invitational services such as celebrations of Marriage and Baptism, Christian Aid services; post-Fete and Littleton and Harestock Show services; All Souls and All Saints services; Patronal Festivals where we honour the lives of the saints to whom our churches are dedicated; during Advent, Sparsholt took the risk of offering spiritual adventures behind real Advent Doors throughout the village to the delight of all who attended.

As the year moved on, we had a number of spectacular Harvest gatherings – from a well-attended Hog Roast at Crawley to an entertaining Picture Quiz at Sparsholt of some very difficult photographs to discern ... but-oh-so-easy-when-you-know-the-answer! Chilbolton and Wherwell joined forces for some services throughout the year including a memorable open-air celebration for Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday, a delicious Christian Aid Cream Tea and All Souls services. Our thanks to Vivienne Aspen for her assiduous collation of names and her ministry in sending out hundreds of letters to all the bereaved in our benefice. We were lucky to welcome speakers from Gideon's Bible Society, Street Reach and Christian Aid to our churches during the year and our *i-Witness* series of Lent talks brought forward an high-calibre group of people who spoke movingly about how their faith informs their work and how, in turn, their work informs their faith. 'Material Boy,' Revd Bryan Taphouse spoke of his work in the fabric industries of India and the Far East; Cllr Caroline Horrill opened our eyes to the experience of the homeless in Winchester. Colonel David Parker came to us with all things military 'On Her Majesty's Service' and Dr Dale Webb brought us a moving account of his work in the slums

of Malawi. We closed the series with a Deanery Half-Night of Prayer at St Peter and Holy Cross, Wherwell.

Our Occasional Services were also highly valued by all who attended them. These are the services where we have the grace-filled opportunity to show people who do not usually darken the doors of a church: How joyful the wedding, how full of promise the baptism, how uplifting and comforting the funeral! Slowly but surely, we are beginning to see new worshippers returning to our churches because they feel they identify with the welcoming worshipping community they have met. They have come home!

But there is lots yet to do. We must look forward together, prayerfully and determinedly to continue in the commission given to us by Jesus Christ to proclaim His message of Good News to a thirsty world. I take encouragement from The Revd Dr David Goodhew of Cranmer Hall Theological College, Durham who has written prolifically about Church Growth and how to attain it.

First off, the statistics are promising – despite the negative jibes from the secular media, churches have been steadily growing since the Thatcher era. Methodism has shrunk, the Baptist Union is holding its own but Pentecostal and Charismatic evangelical churches are growing exponentially, especially in inner-cities. Wait, you cry, how can that help us in rural Hampshire? Well, there is also evidence of a rise in attendance at Cathedral style, traditional services too, particularly midweek. Happily, we are seeing that in the steady increase at our fortnightly 9.30am weekday Eucharist at St Catherine's, and in the steady attendance at St Peter's, St Mary's and St Stephen's 8am services. Matins at St Stephen's remains a popular service as do the traditional 10am Eucharist's across the benefice.

Data from an unusual source, CAMRA (the campaign for real ale), has confirmed that whereas pubs and village shops have been closing, the same is not being said for village churches. David Goodhew points to something much larger at work in terms of culture and community identity, where people still value the presence of their parish church and the sacramental and pastoral work of its worshipping community even though they do not worship weekly; identifying with the values of Christianity and welcoming invitational opportunities to be part of the worship they long to be fed by.

These are the very insights I have long believed to be fundamental principles of growing church in a sustained way and which we have been gently implementing together; the most important of which being Spiritual Renewal: the need for each of us to journey deeper into relationship with Jesus in order for us to fully know the joy of journeying out to others with the Gospel truths we profess. This is slow, often painstaking work, and I was delighted that David Goodhew acknowledges this.

Our churches flourish through good theology and via concrete expressions of intentionality: put simply: *'Churches which intend to grow, tend to grow!'* In this coming year may we honour God by listening to the Holy Spirit; living Gospel-shaped lives and rooting our hearts in prayer. May we drink from the living water Christ offers us, sharing it with all who seek Him, and may the year ahead bring abundant blessings upon you all.

Yours in Christ,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin

Independent Examiner's Report to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Mary's Crawley

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2016, which are set out on pages 15 to 17.

Respective responsibilities of the PCC and Independent Examiner

The PCC consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission.

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the PCC concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with s.130 of the 2011 Act; or
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Christopher Phillips
Whitethorn Cottage
Crawley
Winchester
SO21 2PN

6th April 2017