

Parochial Church Council of St. Stephen's Sparsholt and St. Peter's Lainston
A charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission
Annual Report for 2018

The Parish of St. Stephen's Sparsholt and St. Peter's Lainston comes within the Diocese of Winchester. Correspondence should be addressed to ; The Benefice Office, The Rectory, Church Lane, Littleton, SO22 6QY. Tel 01962 880845.

PCC Members during 2018

Incumbent	Revd Jax Machin
Churchwardens	J Wesley and A Barron
Elected members	S. Wesley (Treasurer), T. Wilson
Deanery Synod Representative	A Barron

1. PCC Membership

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. Our PCC is small and a new member or two would be welcome.

2. Aims and Purposes of the PCC

- Working with our Incumbent, the PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and be involved in its life as a part of our Christian community. We aim to cater for as many types of churchmanship as is practical so that everyone in our community can find a spiritual home at St Stephen's and also that we build strong links with village organisations such as our school, shop and post office, clubs, groups and college – this is a difficult balance to achieve sometimes !
- We maintain the fabric of the church of St. Stephen's to facilitate the mission of the Church and we keep it open every day for private contemplation and prayer. All are welcome every day in this house of God. This is made achievable to a very large degree by the existence and financial support of the Friends of St Stephen's.

The Life of the Church

3. Activities

We organised some great activities during 2018 including :

- The Annual Fete was a fantastic success, generating record levels of revenues – huge thanks are due to Hilary Eggers and her fete committee for their time, enthusiasm and commitment. The fete was attended by several hundred people from in and around the village. This success enabled the Church to give a record level of financial support to several good causes within the Village.
- A harvest supper attended and enjoyed by many members of the village
- To round off our APCM in 2018 we invited all those who volunteer (some 55 people !) to help the PCC to a 'thank you' event in the church following the APCM.
- Our Parish Paper is distributed bi-monthly to all the parishioners keeping them informed of the important matters affecting our church and articles that maintain the Christian message.

4. Worship and Prayer.

- We continue to offer a range of services in St Stephens including Family Communion, Matins, Holy Communion and Welcome Worship on a regular monthly basis. We have also held special services throughout the year including the celebrations for Easter and Christmas, a Mothering Sunday service, a Maundy Thursday service, an All Souls service, a Pet service and a Remembrance Day service. We place particular emphasis on holding services in conjunction with the village school, e.g. for leavers, Harvest festival and for Easter, and two of our Sunday services were led by the School's Worship Group for the first time.
- Average numbers attending across all services remain fairly static, year on year, at about 25. If festival services are excluded though, average Sunday attendance has slipped to just above 17. Attendance numbers at festivals do remain encouraging, notably for Easter Day and over the Christmas period - some 264 adults and 116 children attended services over the 2018 Christmas period, an increase in numbers from 2017.
- We are also very conscious that we are part of the Downs Benefice and we encourage congregants to visit the other 4 churches to enrich their worship and spiritual life.
- We do not currently hold a House Group or bible study group in the village. It is hoped to start one such group in 2019.
- Three young members of our village community studied for confirmation in 2018 and were confirmed by the Bishop of Winchester in Winchester Cathedral on 31 March.
- The growth of lay ministry in the Benefice and in Sparsholt has been a feature of 2018. Two Licenced Lay Ministers and 5 holders of the Bishop's Commission for Mission, including our own Sally Wesley and Alastair Barron, now support our Rector in taking non eucharistic services across the Benefice. Lay led services have been welcomed across the Benefice and are seen as a positive development at St Stephens.
- As a village church, our community and also visitors have come to St Stephens to celebrate the milestones of life through baptism, marriage and funeral services. In 2018 we hosted 6 weddings and 8 baptisms. Unhappily, we also hosted 5 funerals.

5. Messy Church.

Messy Church is a fresh expression of church, started in Portsmouth in 2004, and now taking place in over 2000 places around the world. Families, particularly those with children, come along to take part in activities based around a Biblical theme; join in a celebration with songs, Bible story and prayers; and finish with a meal – it can be pretty noisy and chaotic but it is fun ! Our Messy Church was started in 2012 and circulates between Crawley, Littleton and Sparsholt. It is held every three months in Sparsholt and consistently attracted about 30 attendees, adults and children.

6. Pastoral Care.

Working with others within the Downs Benefice, St Stephens has an active group of Parish Visitors, who are trained to bring pastoral care to any in need in the Parish, whether they are Church members or not. They give their time, energy and compassion reflecting Christ's love for his people. They respond to requests from Link members, Church members, people in the community and the Clergy. They also take Communion in their homes to those unable to attend church.

7. Deanery and Diocesan Synods.

The PCC representation on the deanery synod provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church. The main task facing the deanery synod was to oversee the implementation of the Deanery Mission Action Plan into action at benefice and parish level and, based on the Archidiaconal Action Plan. We will begin to contribute to the revision of the plan in 2019 and 2020. Our Rector and one of our Deanery Synod representatives also sit on the Diocesan Synod which helps us, and the Benefice more broadly, stay in touch with Diocesan activities.

8. Sparsholt Church of England School.

The PCC has maintained close links with Sparsholt Church of England School by inviting participation of the school in the Mothering Sunday service, the Harvest Festival and the Carol service. The school also conducted their own Harvest Festival and Christingle service in the church. The active encouragement of Revd. Jax with support from Sally Wesley, the Church Foundation Governor, has helped to maintain very high Christian values within the school.

9. Financial Review

- Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £37,700 of which £16,700 were unrestricted voluntary donations. Restricted donations were also received of £19,300 from the Friends of St. Stephen's and £10,800 from Winchester Cathedral Chancel Liability & the Listed Places of Worship Scheme for the building works.
- Planned giving through standing orders continued the downward trend with a decrease of 12%. Collections at normal Church services remained static but the collection on Remembrance Sunday, donated to the RBL Poppy Fund, more than doubled, presumably reflecting the centenary of the Armistice.
- Total income, including tax recovered, was up by £27,500 compared with last year (however, as £29K was received for the building works, this puts the total income without building works down by £1.5K). Income on investments yielded 3.9%. £15,900 was raised through fund-raising; this includes £2K from the FOSS/PCC 100 Club.
- £33,700 was spent from unrestricted funds to provide the Christian ministry from St. Stephen's Church, including the contribution to the Common Mission Fund that increased by 4.7% in the year. Our share of benefice expenses increased by £400 over the previous year; £1,400 of this was paid out of Investment income on Restricted Funds and specific donations.
- Net profit from the Fete was £12,250; the PCC donated 20% this to five Sparsholt organisations in grateful recognition of village support for the church fete. In addition, £1,200 was donated to charities outside the village [Winchester Hospice, Karis Kids, Winchester Nightshelter].
- Overall expenditure (£78.9K less cost of building works of £29K) was 1.87% higher than last year. The net result for the year was a shortfall of payments over receipts of £2,000. The bank and deposit balances carried forward at 31st December 2018 on Unrestricted funds totalled £1,600 of which £600 relates to the Bell Fund (a designated fund).
- As at 31st December 2018, £109,400 was held as cash and investments (an investment valuation decrease of 1.4%). £68,900 of this total was held as Restricted Funds.

10. Reserves Policy

It is PCC policy is to maintain a balance on Unrestricted funds and investments (currently £40,400) which equates to at least 12 months' unrestricted expenditure. This is equivalent to £40,085 so the Reserves policy target in 2018 was met. It is held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow and to meet emergencies. Members of the PCC are regularly advised of the amount held in Reserves.

11. Building and Infrastructure

As our next Quinquennial Infrastructure Inspection becomes due we are very sorry not to be able to call on our Architect, James Lunn-Rockcliffe, who has retired after many years of sage and expert advice. Following the re-tiling of the west facing Chancel and Nave and attention to the West end parapet we are hoping that the necessary time has elapse for the walls to dry so they may be redecorated. Apart from removal of vegetation from the west wall of the tower, there should only be minor items to attend to, in accordance with our policy of "little and often".

12. Music

Our rota of regular organists continues to enhance our services and are much appreciated in times when live accompaniment is becoming rarer. The Choir struggles on with reduced numbers and would dearly love regular augmentation as evidenced by the high standard of music at our Christmas Eve midnight service. Highlight of the year was a visit by the Cathedral Choir for a special Evensong in March featuring our own Angus Williams as treble soloist. A most successful and enjoyable Supper for all followed in the Memorial Hall.

13. The Friends of St Stephens

- FoSS continues to thrive and to contribute to our beautiful church being the centre of our worship an church life in Sparsholt. Whilst the work was completed in 2017, FoSS's main activity in 2018 was to pay for the repair of the roof – approximately £20,000. We are very grateful for their support.
- FoSS continues to work with the PCC on expanding the 100 Club which has raised approximately £2000 for both the FoSS and the PCC – valuable additions to funds.

14. GDPR

St Stephens contributed to Benefice working group set up to ensure that we worked to understand the May 2018 legislation, assessed our risks and current practices and became GDPR compliant. We remain aware of this area of risk but no (potential) breaches have been brought to the PCC's attention.

15. Safeguarding

The PCC has worked to understand this sensitive area of risk and it is an agenda item at every PCC meeting. Alastair Barron, who is St Stephens nominated point of contact for all safeguarding issues or concerns, and Sally Wesley have both attended safeguarding training. No safeguarding issues have been brought to the PCC's attention during 2018.

16. Volunteers

- Finally but very importantly, we would like to thank all the volunteers who work so hard to support the church within the community of Sparsholt. In particular, we want to thank Sally

Wesley for her efficient handling of the accounts and finances and Christopher Anderson and Robin Hodgson who have again provided strong leadership in raising finance for the PCC.

- We also should thank the large band of helpers - flower arrangers, bell ringers, key rota volunteers, sidespeople, organists, fete committee, FoSS, 100 Club, school service organisers, magazine distributors et al ! Some 60 people support the Rector, PCC and ministry team more broadly and add so much to the life of our church as we seek to make it the welcoming, vibrant and supportive Christian community we aspire to be.

Approved by the PCC on 19 March 2019