

**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 2017**

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/Fax 881898.

**PCC Members during 2017**

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

**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 to be 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 that we build strong links with village organisations such as our school, clubs 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. 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 2017 including :

- The Annual Fete was a stonking success, attended by several hundred people from in and around the village and raising a record amount of funds. This success enabled the Church to give financial support to several good causes within the Village.
- A Flower Festival weekend, with tea and cake, enabled flower arrangers of all levels of skill to show off their talents. The arrangements were many and varied but all were wonderful.
- A Harvest Supper attended by the Mayor of Winchester and which included a very well supported scarecrow competition – as we often find to be the case, the children stole the show with their entries.
- To round off our APCM in 2017 we invited all those who volunteer to help the PCC to a 'thank you' event in the church following the APCM.
- With the financial support of the Friends' of St Stephens, to the tune of approximately £20,000 (not in this year's accounts, paid in 2018), the roof over the chancel was replaced.
- 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 offer a pattern of services in St Stephens including Family Communion, Matins 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 which raised £349.75 for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. We place particular emphasis on holding services in conjunction with the village school – e.g. for leavers, Harvest festival and for Easter.

Whilst attendee numbers do vary, overall they remain fairly static year on year at about 22 on average for Sunday services. Attendance at festivals rises significantly though, notably for Easter Day and over the Christmas period - some 235 adults and 90 children attended services over the Christmas period.

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 encourage the work of the Laity and Lay Ministry generally at St Stephens and Sally Wesley and Alastair Barron were trained for, and granted, the Bishop's Commission for Mission in 2017. This is an important extension of our life as a church and of their personal ministries.

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.

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 once a month except in school holidays.
6. **Deanery Synod.** The PCC representation on the deanery synod provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church. In 2017, 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, to revise it for 2018.
7. **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.
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. The school worship team led two successful Sunday services in St. Stephen's as well.
9. **Financial Support to External Organisations.**

After the very successful fete, the PCC decided that £400 should be given to each of several village organisations who add so much to the life of the village - the Ham Green Volunteers, Sparsholt C of E Primary School, Sparsholt Village Playground Association, the Village shop and Post Office and the Village Hall. The PCC organised a village envelope drop for Christian Aid week in May which raised £332.67.
10. **Financial Review**

**Income.** Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £42,200 of which £20,500 was unrestricted voluntary donations. Restricted donations of £1,500 were also received. Planned giving through standing orders decreased by 11% but it was good to see the use of Gift Aid envelopes increased by 3.2%. Collections at Church services decreased by 10%; the collection on Remembrance Sunday was donated to the RBL Poppy Fund. Total income, including tax recovered, went down by 1% compared with last year. Income on investments yielded 4%. £12,800 was raised through fund-raising.

We were very grateful for donations totalling £900 from the Friends of St. Stephen's Church who exist to support the church's programme of repairs and maintenance - very literally, we could not manage without them. We are now working with the Friends in a joint fundraising initiative, the 100 Club. The Club currently has some 50 members who subscribe regularly and, going forward, it should raise about £5000 p.a. as well as giving members the opportunity to win prizes in their regular draws.

**Expenditure.** £32,800 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 6% in the year. Our share of benefice expenses decreased by £1,000 over the previous year; £1,300 of this was paid out of Investment income on Restricted Funds and specific donations. The PCC donated a higher than usual proportion of fete income (20%) to five Sparsholt organisations in grateful recognition of village support for the church fete. There were insufficient funds to make any donations to charities outside the village.

Overall expenditure was 1.35% lower than last year. The net result for the year was an excess of receipts over payments of £200. The bank and deposit balances carried forward at 31st December 2017 on Unrestricted funds totalled £3,800 of which £700 relates to the Bell Fund (a designated fund).

**Reserves policy.** It is PCC policy is to maintain a balance on Unrestricted funds and investments (currently £43,600) which equates to at least 12 months' unrestricted expenditure. This is equivalent to £41,000 so the Reserves policy target in 2017 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.

**Summary Position.** As at 31st December 2017, £112,900 was held as cash and investments (a valuation increase of 5.6%). £69,400 of this total was held as Restricted Funds.

## 11. 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 who add so much to the life of our church and make it the welcoming vibrant Christian community we aspire to be including the flower arrangers, the bell ringers and key rota volunteers.

Approved by the PCC