

# **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 APCM 04<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

The Parish of St. Stephen's Sparsholt and St. Peter's Lainston lies 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 2024**

##### **Incumbent**

Revd. Kevin Rogers (from 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024)

##### **Churchwardens**

John Wesley, and Tonia Truter (until May 2024)

##### **Elected members**

Sally Wesley (Treasurer), Alastair Barron, Tim Wilson, Mark Himbury and Tonia Truter (from May 2024)

##### **Secretary**

Sally Wesley (acting Secretary)

##### **Deanery Synod Representative**

Alastair 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 new members would be very welcome.

## **2. Aims and Purposes of the PCC**

The aims and purposes of St Stephens remain as before and as below.

- 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 continue to build strong links with our village organisations such as our school, shop and post office, clubs, groups, and college.
- 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**

Fête - The 2024 Fête on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June was a great success and attracted some new stalls as well as the tried and trusted popular attractions from previous years. The Fête Chair, Caroline Horrill, successfully recruited new members on to the Fete Committee. The net profit was over £7k. Our grateful thanks go to the Fête Committee and all the villagers who supported the Fête.

Harvest Supper – this was held on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September and was enjoyed by eighty members of the village and friends – it raised a net profit of £872.

Our new Rector - A very “full and standing” Church of 199 turned out on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March to welcome our new Incumbent, Rev’d Kevin Rogers, who was inaugurated by Bishop Philip. We were very pleased to welcome Bishop David also, who had been instrumental in minimising such a short interregnum.

‘Thank You’ Event - we again invited all those who volunteer to help the PCC (some 80 people !) to a party in the church on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> April to say thank you for all their varied contributions to the life of the Church and to welcome Revd. Kevin and Lorna Rogers. This was not a fundraiser – the food and drink were kindly donated.

Occasional Services – there were 5 Weddings, 4 Baptisms. 7 Funerals/Thanksgiving Services and 3 Interment of Ashes held in the church during 2024; the PCC is very grateful to the Registry Clergy and LLMs who officiated at these Services during the Interregnum.

#### **4. Worship and Prayer**

We continue to hold two Services a month – 8:00am BCP Holy Communion on the third Sunday of each month and Morning Worship at 10:00am on the fourth Sunday of each month. Not only are we constrained by shortages of officiants to lead the Services, but also the pool of Duty Wardens and Sidesmen is continuing to diminish.

#### **5. Pastoral Care**

The Rector, the Benefice Office, and our own network of visitors have stayed current with anyone who may need some support. Home Communion is offered to those who are unable to attend Services. Pastoral Care is a standing item on PCC Agendas; Minutes do not include names to preserve confidentiality

#### **6. Deanery and Diocesan Synods**

Andover Deanery Synod met 4 times this year - on 6 February, 16 May, 24 September and 12 November which was a joint meeting with Whitchurch Deanery held on Zoom. Alastair Barron attended these meetings as the named representative for St Stephen’s.

Deanery Synod serves to bring the benefices and parishes of our Deanery together on a regular basis and to hear about and discuss topical issues affecting us all. In addition to parishes giving updates on their activities, concerns and successes, there is generally a speaker talking about a specific topic of interest and this has been a full and interesting year in this regard. In 2024, our main presentations were from Diocesan representatives, including Colin Harbidge who introduced some of the realities of the finances of Winchester Diocese, Revd David Roberts presented a paper on the Deanery’s link with the church in Burundi, Greg Eland spoke about Lay Ministry in the Diocese and the work of the School of Mission, Revd Georgi Thompson Leask, gave a presentation on Stewardship in its various forms and Sam Scott spoke about Net Zero and what parishes can do as they seek to move towards it.

#### **7. Sparsholt Church of England School**

The PCC has continued to maintain and develop close links with Jane Gwilliam, the Worship Team Leader of Sparsholt C of E School, this year. The school choir performed at the Carol Service to the delight of the congregation including their families. We have aspirations to inaugurate a children’s choir as a church initiative for special Services such as Mothering Sunday and Harvest Festival and continue to search for a volunteer to take charge. Sally Wesley, the Church Foundation Governor, has helped maintain very high Christian values within the school and is much appreciated. The PCC allocated funds from the Buckston Browne Fund to the school at the request of the Pupil Governors to procure resources to enhance the children’s education.

## 8. Financial Review for 2024

### Receipts

- Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £31.5K of which £17K came from voluntary donations.
- Planned Giving through standing orders was at a similar level to last year but needs to increase due to a worrying reducing trend over previous years.
- Collections at Services decreased by 20%, probably due to many not carrying cash and the difficulty in having payment by card/phone without Wi-fi or a reliable phone signal in Church
- Fee income from weddings, baptisms & funerals increased by 35%, due to the arrival of the new Rector in the Spring.
- Net profit on Fundraising Activities increased by 27%, due to a very a successful Church Fête. and a simple but enjoyable and entertaining Harvest Supper.
- Income on investments yielded 3.3%.
- Total income, including tax recovered, was £39.1K, a decrease on 2023 year, mainly due to the generous donation of £17K from FoSS that year for building repairs and redecoration.

### Payments

- £33.8K (£32.2K in 2023) was spent from unrestricted funds to provide the Christian ministry from St. Stephen's Church. The contribution to the Common Mission Fund (CMF) of £20.1K is included in that figure; there were sufficient funds to pay the total requested by the Diocese.
- Sparsholt's share of benefice expenses was £5.5K greater than the previous year, mainly due to a rise in salary, and interregnum costs. £1.2K of the benefice expenses was paid out of investment income on Restricted Funds.
- Donations of £434 each were made to 5 village organisations (Sparsholt Primary School, Sparsholt Village Shop, Friends of Sparsholt School and Ham Green Conservation Group), using 20% of the Fete profits. Also, collections from funerals were paid to various charities, as was the Remembrance Sunday collection.
- Overall expenditure (£39.8K) was 6.2% more than 2023 (increased CMF & Benefice expenses).
- The net result for the year was a shortfall of payments over receipts of £4.5K (£2.6K in 2023), funded by a sale of Unrestricted investments The bank balance carried forward as at 31st December 2024 on Unrestricted funds totalled £3,700 of which £730 relates to the Bell Fund and £434 to the Fete Reinvestment Fund (both designated funds).
- The PCC Trustees have confirmed that a review of the charity's internal financial controls in the year reported has been carried out; there has been no change to the policy whereby approval in the form of authorisation by email or signing the relevant invoice is given by a Trustee who is an authorised signatory and who is not John Wesley (as he is married to the Treasurer), to provide dual control on all expenditure.
- The PCC Trustees have also confirmed that they expect the PCC to be able to settle outstanding invoices, bills and commitments as and when they fall due.

### Reserves Policy

- The PCC policy is to maintain a balance on Unrestricted funds and investments (currently £21.9K) which equates to at least 6 months' unrestricted expenditure. Such expenditure in 2024 was £17.7K (1/2 of £35.5K) so the Reserves policy target in 2024 was met. Unrestricted Reserves are 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.
- At 31st December 2024, £106K was held as cash and investments (an investment valuation increase of 7%). £83K of this total was held as Restricted Funds, of which £63.3K are Endowments held in the name of the Vicar and Churchwardens of St. Stephen's Church and cannot be disposed of in any way.

## **9. Building and Infrastructure**

The 2024 Quinquennial Inspection was carried out by our appointed architect, Duncan McKellar; his report is awaited. It is believed that there are no major items requiring immediate attention.

Discussion continues about renewing the existing pathway that leads through the Churchyard and installing a new path towards the Yew Avenue to improve access to the ashes memorials. Also deliberations continue with some false starts to replace the noticeboards in the churchyard. Both items seem to have difficulties in finding contractors to quote for our requirements. The bell ropes, bells and safety harness equipment have been serviced.

Following the retirement of the church cleaner, cleaning has been undertaken by the PCC Secretary on a temporary basis until an affordable new cleaner has been found, bearing in mind the reduced number of monthly Services we now hold.

## **10. Music**

St Stephen's has a ring of six bells which are rung before the 10am Sunday Service and Festival Services with practices weekly on Monday evenings and extra practices once a month. Our bells are much admired and we continue to receive regular requests from visiting teams to ring.

Our two organists, Anthony Burns-Cox and Mark Zarb-Adami, have brilliantly accompanied our sung Services, including special Services, throughout the year. The acquisition of a portable amp/speaker has enhanced our outdoor annual Pet Service and Remembrance Service and can also be used for weddings and funerals which require Bluetooth capability.

## **11. The Friends of St Stephen's**

FoSS continues to thrive and to contribute to our beautiful church being the centre of our worship and church life in Sparsholt. FoSS also continues to work with the PCC and the 100 Club which raises approximately £3000 for both the FoSS and the PCC in an average year – a valuable addition to funds.

## **12. GDPR**

St Stephen's works with the Benefice to ensure we are GDPR compliant. No breaches or potential breaches have been brought to the PCC's attention.

## **13. Safeguarding**

No safeguarding issues have been brought to the PCC's attention. It is a standing item for PCC Agendas. We strive to ensure that all church volunteers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.

## **14. Volunteers**

We thank all the volunteers who have contributed to the life of St Stephen's throughout this year and invite them to refreshments after our APCM. They work so hard in so many ways to support the church within the community of Sparsholt. We thank those involved in the finance management, cleaning, flower arranging, bell ringers, key rota volunteers, sidesmen, organists, fete committee members, FoSS, 100 Club, School Service organisers, magazine distributors – all have contributed.

Thank You !!