

St Bartholomew's Church Yarnton



Annual Parish Report 2023

Aims and purposes

St Bartholomew's, Yarnton Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Oliver Petter, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Introduction

Thank you to all who have continued to support St Bartholomew's. We are so grateful to all those whose hard work and commitment enabled us to sustain the church's ministry in new as well as familiar ways, and to maintain our central offering of worship and prayer, and pastoral care in our community. We are blessed by all our congregation and friends. Particular thanks must go to our excellent and dedicated PCC led by our churchwardens Paul Tweddle. Treasurer Gary Brewerton, Secretary Alison Riggs, and Safeguarding Officer Charlotte Rayner.

Objectives and activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St Bartholomew's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish.

Diocesan and Benefice vision

St Bartholomew's is the only physical Christian presence in our parishes and we welcome all denominations to join our worship. Our tradition is simple, traditional worship, although we are open to change. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. We try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work. We face the challenge of being physically located on the edge of the village which we serve, so there is little visibility of the

church for village residents, and we are striving to reach out to all parts of our village through our missionary work.

The PCC has expressed a commitment to the Diocesan Vision, as a helpful overview of our mission. Four points continue to have great resonance.

- To make a bigger difference in the world and serve the poor.
- To share our faith with adults, children and young people and grow the church in every place; rural, urban and suburban.
- To serve every school in our community.
- To put the discipleship of all at the heart of our common life and set God's people free.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Bartholomew's church. This is a major task with our historic building.

PCC

PCC members in 2023 were: : Rev. Oliver Petter (Incumbent), Paul Tweddle (Churchwarden), Gary Brewerton (Treasurer), Alison Riggs (Secretary), Charlotte Rayner (Parish Safeguarding officer), John Appleton, Douglas Fairhurst, Michael Fogg(from 3rd December), Ann Moss, Neil Small, Penny Small (Deanery Synod representative), Julie Walters, Rosie Hilliard and Jill Rowbotham. Thank you to all our PCC.

The PCC met on 26th January, 27th April, 6th July, 5th October for full meetings with an Extraordinary Meeting on 3rd December with the APCM on 5th March.

Review of 2023 (*Achievements and performance*)

Early months

The principal pattern of worship continued to be the 8am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) and Parish Communion with Junior Church at 11am on Sundays. Alongside this we continued to hold a Wednesday morning 9.30am Holy Communion Service.

Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer were said from Monday -Friday (No Evening Prayer on Friday.)

Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Services in Lent were well attended and had a good sense of momentum. In Holy Week, and through April we have had encouraging congregations, with some growth from last year:

Palm Sunday 37

Maundy Thursday 16

Good Friday 22

Easter Vigil 6am19

Easter Day 11am Communion Service 47

A new event was added to the Holy Week Calender with a successful Little Sheep Easter session, exploring the Easter story.

Special Events

Coronation of HM King Charles III - Eve of the Coronation May 5th

We had a large village service in St Bartholomew's, attended by members of the youth uniformed organisations, and representatives of village groups. The service was accompanied by Yarnton Band. The church was packed with standing room only, and we then walked in parade to the Village Hall for a party. The VH was also very well attended, and Yarnton Band played again. Our volunteers hosting the party did a wonderful job, with mountains of sandwiches and cake disappearing quickly! This was a special and unique village gathering of all ages, and the role of St Bartholomew's as a focal point in the village was in evidence.

Ascension Day

We held a lovely Benefice evening Service, attended by 24 people, followed by a party at the Rectory.

Benefice reflective nature walk Sunday 25th June

We held a walk from St Bartholomew's, over spring hill and to St Michael's, Begbroke. This was facilitated by Rachel Woods and Alison Riggs, and the walk featured insights on the nature around us, as well as prayers, readings and reflections. It was a rich time of fellowship and a wonderful occasion, on a hot afternoon. In Begbroke there was lovely hospitality and a tea laid on for the 22 walkers. We were very grateful to those from the St Michael's community who hosted the tea. A commitment to further similar events was made.

Benefice Summer Gathering - Friday 21st July

Thank you to all who joined in and brought food to our bring and share summer party.

St Bartholomew's Day - Thursday 24th August

We enjoyed a fish and chip supper after our Patronal service.

Remembrance Sunday 12th November

A Village Act of Remembrance took place at the Rutten Lane War Memorial. Whilst 2023 saw the wettest Remembrance Sunday for many years, the event continued to be admirably observed within the village. Those in attendance represented a cross section, with many children from the uniformed organisations, and wreaths laid by those organisations, as well as the War Memorial Committee WI, Yarnton Blues, Parish Council, Church and Gardening Club. Yarnton Band played as the full band once again which was a great blessing for the Act of Remembrance. There were over 200 people present, with many young people.

Advent and Christmas.

Numbers for Christmas services were high. We had a packed church for our Village Carol Service, followed by hospitality at Yarnton Manor, courtesy of the Lanier Foundation. This was very generously provided and we were all grateful. I hope that this was a valuable time of fellowship and we are grateful for the willingness of the Manor to reach out to us and the village.

Sunday 17th December Village Carol Service 150 people

Wednesday 20th December Little Sheep Christingle 20

Thursday 21st December Children's Christingle Service 2pm 40

Sunday 24th December Crib with Yarnton Band 3pm 150 *The Crib service saw another packed church, with large numbers of children and a full cast of characters for the nativity story.*

11pm 'Midnight Mass' 75

Monday 25th December Christmas Day all age Communion 40

Occasional Offices in 2023- Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals

Weddings 4 Weddings took place in St Bartholomew's.

Baptisms We held 10 Baptisms in 2023.

Funerals There were 13 Funerals of parishioners over 2022, 11 of which were in church. Alongside this were two services with Burial of ashes.

Parish Life

Electoral Roll

In 2023 we revised our electoral roll. The number on it increased to 56 , from 53 in 2022.

Deanery Synod

Penny Small was re-elected as Deanery Synod representative at the APCM in 2023. The Synod provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church.

Safeguarding

The PCC adopted the new Safeguarding Policy in January. Members of the PCC completed online safeguarding training as required by the Diocese. We have continued to be ever thankful to Charlotte Rayner for her work as Safeguarding Officer.

Ministry

The Rector continued to be supported by Rev'd Richard Armitage, Rev'd Jim Turner and Canon Barbara Doubtfire in leading worship. We are grateful for their care and dedication to God and God's people. We were also blessed by the provision of ministry from Rev'd Sue Spankie, who joined led services with increasing frequency during an interim period of ministry, and who settled into our context sensitively.

We are grateful to our regular intercessors and readers for their contribution to our worshipping life, and to our welcomers. Thank you to Charlotte Rayner for co-ordinating the rota of volunteers for many years. Charlotte handed this over to Rachel Gardner, and we are grateful to Rachel.

Music

We were once again grateful to Malcolm Hawkins for playing for us throughout the year. Malcolm has been wonderfully faithful and consistent in playing for us on Sundays and for numerous occasional offices.

In the autumn we explored some additional musical involvement, drawing on the gifts of ordinand Sam Haiser. He led Taize chants on his guitar, and accompanied certain hymns with Malcolm.

Pastoral Care

Reverend Oliver Petter visited all church members who requested it, to celebrate communion with them either at their homes or in hospital. The Rector visited The Sanctuary for a monthly service of Holy Communion for residents. We were thankful to the Activity co-ordinators at the Sanctuary who facilitated these visits. There were also ad hoc pastoral visits to the Sanctuary, and to Erdington house.

Thanks are due to Jim Turner, Richard Armitage, Barbar Doubtfire and Sue Spankie for their dedicated pastoral ministry and telephone ministry. We are grateful to the ways in which members of our community care for one another and support in pastoral and practical ways.

Mission and Evangelism

Caring for God's creation

Our Eco Action sought to consolidate our work following our Bronze award received this in spring 2022, and have sought to work towards the silver award. The Eco Church awards set a programme of work to foster a more sustainable church life, working on: worship and teaching, management of church buildings, management of churchyard, community and global engagement, lifestyle. This is in every sense a vital part of our mission.

Our annual Climate Sunday Service was paused but will return in 2024.

Junior Church

Our Junior Church ran at our 11am Parish Communion on a weekly basis. A growing community of local families have become involved in the Junior Church with five core families leading the way. We are very grateful to Rachel Gardner for leading this central aspect of our ministry to children and young people. The Junior Church has worked hard to grow in faith and spirituality as a cherished part of our Christian community. Each week they sing songs, hear and reflect on one of the days readings, and respond with creative activities and a time of prayer.

Little Sheep

Little Sheep had its first full calendar year following Charlotte Rayner handing over the pastoral staff in the summer of 2022. Rachel Gardner oversaw a team of parent helpers and the community of children, parents and carers continued to flourish. The autumn saw an influx of newcomers and at times we had over 30 at sessions. This represents an important pastoral space for parents and carers within our village, as a free drop in session , with careful pastoral care underpinning it. Special thanks are due to Caroline Hansell and Jane Black as key weekly volunteers.

Study Group

Our study group continued to be an important part of our learning, prayer and fellowship, and a central part of our mission and formation as disciples of Christ. We had run 5 series in 2022. Our hope is to provide resources for all our worshipping community to grow in faith and our evening groups have been fruitful in 2023.

A *Lent series* took place over 6 Wednesday evenings within Lent. We reflected on the life of Jesus, from the call of the disciples, through to the events of Holy Week and Easter. We had 13 participants in total and 6-9 people most weeks. Following a Lent series, we ran a series of 6 sessions in May and June studying the *Acts of the Apostles*. These were good occasions of fellowship and exploration, and helpful in reflecting on our own mission in our time and place.

Benefice together

In the autumn we ran a 6 session Alpha Course in Begbroke Village Hall, with the material adapted for our purposes. Following a dynamic and enjoyable series we followed this with the Bible Society's "Bible Course", which ran over 7 sessions. These evenings included a meal together, as well as study and conversation. There was an encouraging sense of community building up through these sessions and the group often had 18-20 people present. The community that emerged included a fairly even split of Begbroke and Yarnton and this was a blessing. We are particularly grateful to Alison Riggs from St Bartholomew's for anchoring the hospitality and rota, and to all who offered food and helped.

The church in the community

Community Drop in

A team from St Bartholomew's gathered and planned the 'Community Drop in' which began at the start of December 2022 on Mondays in the village hall. Alongside our group we invited Mary Clarke who brought expert help and many gifts in co-ordination. This began to offer a 'warm space' in the cold winter months and with the cost of living high. Gatherings in January drew between 30-40

people, and there were always plenty of volunteers and plenty of cake offered. Remarkably this pattern and format continued all year, excepting holidays, with some weeks drawing even larger numbers. Regular valued the social interaction and warm atmosphere, some found it to be quite a lifeline in a village where one can feel isolated. The efforts of the regular volunteers was commendable and special thanks are due to Ann Moss who took on a co-ordinating role alongside Mary.

The PCC to set up a sub-group to co-ordinate this administrative work and have in December 2023 the administration and financial operation was handed over to a new, independent group, which included two of our PCC. The aim of the Drop in was to foster good company and friendship in the village and no monies were required, and donations requested. The drop in raised monies through the year, making a surplus. The intention was to direct the funds to good causes, overseen by the Committee, consulting the community.

The Drop in has been an example of Christian care and service, and of the community working harmoniously, modelling the love of Christ in action. The note of joy was a sign of this as well.

William Fletcher School

We have been thankful for our relationship with the school, and for the support of their headteacher, Mrs Deborah Nind. Mrs Nind retired at the end of the school year, and we expressed our gratitude for her support of our school and our village, and for the good relationship she developed with the church. Mrs Claire Martin began as headteacher for the new school year. The school visited for their traditional services for Founders day, Harvest Festival and Christmas, where we welcomed Mrs Martin for the first time. Rev'd Oliver Petter is a school governor.

Village News

We continue to be grateful for our page in Yarnton Village News, and the possibilities of publicising church activities through it. This was helpful as we were able to keep villagers in touch with the church during lockdown and to continue to offer Christian reflections.

Church Life

Open church Keeping the church open is a valuable and cherished part of our ministry. We were grateful for all those who kept the church open.

Foodbank The Foodbank collection point continued to be heavily used, and we held a special collection for North Oxfordshire Community Foodbank at Harvest. Thank you to Bill Arnold for driving the collection to Kidlington each week.

Church cleaning Thanks are due to all those who cleaned St Bartholomew's church during 2023, and especially to Jill Rowbotham for co-ordinating the monthly Saturday morning cleaning session, and the monthly regular helpers.

Bell ringers We continue to be grateful to our band of bellringers for their superb ringing.

Tea & coffee Thanks to our rota of volunteers who served refreshments after Sunday services. This was much appreciated by regulars and visitors alike.

Flowers We were grateful to Pauline Watt Smith, Sarah Eaton, Joanna Bailey, Jane Black and Julie Walters for their floristry in the church. The stunning displays, seeking to draw in seasonal greenery and foliage, were widely appreciated. In the autumn Simon and Sarah Eaton developed a relationship with Kidlington Sainsbury's that involved unused flowers being offered to us so as not to be wasted. Many adorned the church, and others were given to the Sanctuary.

Fundraising We also owe great thanks to Pauline Franklin who once again completed the annual Ride and Stride raising money for St Bartholomew's and for the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. This time we had two fundraisers with George Sherratt riding for St Bartholomew's as well. Both did a fantastic ride on an unusually hot September morning.

Ordinands in Training The parish remains committed to supporting the learning and formation of future clergy. We were blessed to welcome members of the community living at Yarnton Manor in the autumn, and some of the academic and ordinand community have joined in our worshipping community and parish life. We were pleased to welcome Timothy Newton from St Stephen's House on a formal midweek placement and he made a strong contribution to the Tuesday evening group.

The Lanier Theological Foundation at Yarnton Manor

We have been enjoying getting to know our neighbours at Yarnton Manor and been grateful for their hospitality and support throughout the year, notably with the fantastic Christmas Carol Service reception, and with regular parking made possible for occasional offices. It has also been a great blessing to have the Parish Room renovated by the Lanier Theological Foundation. Two WCs have been installed. The larger room was being renovated as a kitchen and space for gathering and meetings, with the intention of being made available for church use. This is incredibly helpful for us. We look forward to building on our friendship in Christ and partnership in the gospel.

~

Thank you to all who have given their dedication and care to share the love of Christ in our parish in 2023.

A prayer for our parish

Almighty God, we give you thanks for our parish, and for all your people. We give thanks for all that is done in your name, and for your love shared among us. Give us wisdom to discern your will, courage to follow you, and joy in serving you and our neighbours. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.