

Vicars Letter 2019

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the things that have been happening in St John's over the last year.

In February 2019 over 700 people from across the Diocese of Bath and Wells - clergy, readers and churchwardens - came together to discuss '**everyday faith**'. This was in response to the findings of the 'Setting God's People Free' report from the Archbishops' council. The report recognised that 98% of the people in the Church of England are lay people and 90% of their time is spent outside church. Also, we have more impact when we are in the world than the time we spend together on a Sunday. We have been encouraged to live out our faith in the world through the conversations we have and things we do, sustained by prayer and the Bible. This year the emphasis will be on '**everyday conversations**.'

As always at this time of the year when I read these reports I am humbled by just how much is going on in our church and how many people are involved in the many things we do. So, a big thank you to everyone.

I am even more heartened when I hear about all the clubs and societies and activities going on outside church to which so many of you belong. All those different places where we meet others. You all continue to be a blessing to this place and our wider community.

Keep up the good work of being 'salt and light'. My prayer for 2020 is that we continue to share the light of Christ to our community and the world.

Rev Sarah.

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Bell Ringers

Ringers at St John's who are paid up members of the Cary Branch of the Bath and Wells Association of Change Ringers presently stands at fifteen, all of whom live in the village. We have been fortunate to have recruited two new ringers as a result of members of Spirit of Milborne Port visiting a practice night last summer, and it is hoped that they will both eventually be able to contribute as full members of the band. An existing ringer has recently moved to the village – she can handle a bell and ring simple methods so we are feeling reasonably optimistic. However, it should be borne in mind that the majority of the band is over 60.

Attendance at Sunday service ringing has remained steady and it has been possible to ring on all eight bells for the majority of services, including all those over the Christmas period. Attendance at Wednesday practices has been steady and some members of the band are working towards ringing more complex six-bell methods. Some members regularly attend other towers – either for meetings, special practices or for training days.

A pre-Christmas meal was enjoyed by all at The Ship Inn, East Stour, and a small contingent of the band continues to support the Tippling Philosopher after Wednesday practices.

In October, our loyal team served morning coffee and cakes in church for the Pumpkin Festival, and members were delighted that the ringers' tree in the Christmas Tree Festival was voted the 'people's favourite'.

I would like to thank each and every member of the band for the continued support that they give to the church, and also the valued support given by the Church and villagers to the band in return.

Susan Wales, Tower Captain.

Choir

As ever, the last twelve months have been busy ones for the choir and, as well as the regular services at St John's, we have continued to sing for a number of services elsewhere in the Benefice, notably providing a choir for the monthly evensong at Stowell, along with singing for their Advent Carol Service.

The choir continues to have a good number of singers, though new members are always welcome, and we were delighted to have extra singers to swell the ranks at Christmas. We continue to tackle a wide variety of music, both traditional and modern. During Lent we sing Compline every Friday, an annual activity that provides much needed quiet time for people at the end of their busy week.

I continue to be grateful to all the members of the choir for their dedication and time, not only each Sunday, but also for weekly rehearsals and the extra services both at St John's and at other churches in the Benefice.

Rachel Willetts.

Charity & Mission

During 2019 our Church, through the PCC sent £300 to each of the following.

January: Food for the Hungry

February: Foundation for the Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East

March: Tearfund

April: Mosaic Family Support

May: Julia's Home Children's Hospice

June: Médecins Sans Frontières

July: Sherborne Food Bank

August: Christians Against Poverty

September: Rendezvous Sherborne

October: Samara's Aid Appeal

November: St. Margaret's Hospice

December: The Children's Society

From the collections at the Christmas services, £326 each was sent to Christian Aid and the Salvation Army. Last Spring £55 was sent to Mary's Meals from the Mothering Sunday breakfast. Money from the coffee table left each Sunday morning service came to £453 and this was used to send £500 to the DEC Cyclone IDA Appeal. We do thank everyone for their continued generosity each Sunday.

Richard Redman.

Church House Finance

Total income for the year was £8,731. Income from lettings makes up the majority of this total with £6,191 from that source. Approximately two-thirds of that (£4,145) is from our regular lettings, which is fantastic. Church House now hosts a toddler group on Friday mornings, and other regular lettings have increased their hours leading to an increase of £1,245 of income from regular lettings over the previous year (2018: £2,900).

The 100 Club raised £710 in 2019 (subs received less prizes paid) and events (the Safari Supper and Christmas lunch) contributed a net figure of £1,107. We are very grateful to everyone who is a member of the 100 Club, and the organisers and attendees of our events.

Our costs of trading (utilities, insurance, etc) totalling £3,283 were covered by our regular lettings income, which puts Church House in a sound financial position. Around £2,700 was paid out in 2019 for non-routine maintenance items including a deposit for a new boiler of £1,300 (the balance to be paid in 2020).

The overall balance at the end of the year was £7,248, up from £5,601 at the start of the year.

Ben Grundy

Church House

Church House continues to be well used by our regular hirers. The hall is used weekly by the Brownies, Pilates, Tai Chi, Table Tennis, Toddler Group, and the Tuesday Lunch Club, and the Heritage Group holds monthly meetings. Since January this year we have also been pleased to welcome the weekly Sweaty Mama Classes. The Church uses the hall for activities, meetings and fund-raising events. We also have a good number of private parties and other events.

Our financial position continues to be sound; our regular lettings cover the day to day running costs and the 100 Club, and other donations, provide essential financial support enabling us to maintain the

building for the future. There are currently a few vacancies for membership of the 100 Club, details of which can be found on our website (www.mpchouse.org.uk). We have had two very successful fundraising events over the past year. In June we had a Safari Supper and in December we held the Church House Christmas Lunch.

Church House is a reasonable state of repair and we continue to monitor the condition of the roof which will need further re-tiling work over the next few years. We are also in the process of replacing the boiler with a more efficient one and this investment should reduce maintenance and running costs over the coming years. The ongoing improvements to the garden and grounds means the grounds are now a real asset and are enjoyed by many of our users.

The Church House Management Committee has met four times over the past year, and the committee continues to maintain regular email contact to ensure that everything is running smoothly. Nick Grundy retired as chairman of the committee in November 2019 prior to his move from the village and we are extremely grateful to Nick and Liz for all their years of service to Church House, and we wish them all the very best for the future.

I wish to thank all members of the committee for their work and support to keep Church House running as a valuable Church and community facility.

Trevor John

Chairman, Church House Management Committee.

Christian Aid Committee

The committee consists of Anne Salkeld (chairman), David Johnson (treasurer), Felicity John (secretary), Margaret Curtis and Clare Silk and we are operating as an independent multidenominational group now that our parent body, Churches Together, has been disbanded. We are reporting our activities here as we have a close connection with St John's.

In 2019 we were able to forward a total of £2,680.22 to Christian Aid, made up chiefly by:

½ Christmas loose collections 2018	370.00
Lent lunches	393.00
Lent course booklets surplus	50.00
Good Friday hot cross buns	35.35
House-to-house collection (in May)	1,115.22
Breakfast and sale of harvest produce	82.05
Harvest supper and raffle	432.06
Carol singing	58.02

The Christmas collections' sum is always for the previous year as we do not receive the gift until early January. Very many thanks to those of you who helped us with our various activities during the year and to all who very kindly supported these events as it is your money that we send.

David Johnson (Hon. Treasurer)

Church Warden Report

As a church family we have so much to be grateful for. In 2019 our congregation continued to grow and work together to be both cohesive and inclusive. We hope that visitors always receive a warm welcome.

From a practical perspective we are hugely grateful to Ronnie and June, our Vergers, who do so much to keep the church clean, tidy and welcoming. We all also owe a real debt of gratitude to Jacquie who has the responsibility for the fabric of the church; the amount of time she and Robert give to our church is exceptional. This year tremendous progress has been made on the work highlighted in our quinquennial report; our building could not be in better hands.

The diocese asks that we "live and tell the story" in our community and we continue to do this. Working with children and young people is so important in a world where there are huge pressures on time in family life – for most families Church is no longer a central focus on a Sunday. Sarah's work in our schools is therefore so important, her weekly assemblies and the special school events in church are vital in helping our families to see the church as being at the heart of the village.

As Jacquie and I worked on the diocesan returns this year it has been heartening to note that the numbers in our congregation and frequency of attendance remains strong. Families are still bringing their children for baptism which is an encouraging sign.

Our Open Day / Gift Day was once again a great success; the theme of "All Things Pumpkin" enabled us to work with the school on this event. The Christmas Tree Festival had great support from groups across Milborne Port and was a superb adjunct to the festive activities of "The Spirit of Milborne Port". Our Events Committee does so much to raise our profile in the community and generate much needed funds – many thanks to them. Huge thanks too to our choir, bell ringers, flower arrangers, brass cleaners, coffee makers – all who make our services so inviting.

There have been many special times of worship and learning we are very fortunate to have the creative leadership of Sarah who is always looking for new ways to make worship more accessible, for example in developing our "Light in the Darkness Service". She does an incredible job of juggling the demands of a busy Benefice with 5 church buildings! Thank you so much Sarah for your tireless commitment.

We are keeping the essence of the Christian message alive and well in Milborne Port; we continue to have a real heart for service to our community, we are happy to tell our story and it is my prayer that we will continue to develop our presence and witness, our stories in the year to come.

Nicki Edwards.

Deanery Synod

Membership & Officers

At 31st December 2019 the Deanery Synod comprised 62 members. 51 were members of the House of Laity, mostly lay representatives elected by the 42 parishes in the Deanery. 11 were members of the House of Clergy, mostly beneficed or licensed parochial clergy.

Synod Meetings

The Synod met three times during 2019 in Wincanton Methodist Church. At the February Deanery Synod, the guest speaker was James Fox Robinson, the Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Enabler, who spoke on "What is Spirituality" followed by questions.

The Ascension Day Deanery Eucharist was held at Queen Camel, and the guest preacher was the Revd Mike Haslam, the Diocesan Chaplaincy Development Adviser.

At the July meeting the synod was divided into groups to discuss the Question "What have you done in your Parish that is a cause for celebration and what has this led to?" At the November meeting there were two presentations by Jay Greene was elected as the Assistant Lay Dean and Jeremy Pratt was elected as Deanery Secretary.

Mary Clothier.

Events Committee

Members of the committee are Anne Briggs, Margaret Curtis, John Fanning, Linda Mumford, Jan Sharpless, Anne Salkeld and Sandra Nichols who joined us in the summer.

Thanks are due to the many other people who step in to help us in many events, especially the Church Fete.

Events during the past year:

Coffee after the Opera - £146

Village Fete Teas - £255

Sherborne Singers - £228 (after half proceeds given to Sherborne Singers)

Church Fete - £3085

Quiz Night - £713

Refreshments at the Christmas Tree Festival - (around) £60

Anne Salkeld, Chair

Chair of the Events Committee.

Magazine Report

The Milborne Port Magazine has continued to flourish this year, with the number of regular contributors increasing and the demand for advertising space steady. In January we changed the cover format, inviting submissions of readers' photographs of scenes in and around the village, printed in colour on glossy paper. This has proved very popular and we receive many lovely photographs. We used the twelve cover photos of 2019 to create a Milborne Port Calendar for 2020; this sold well at £5.00 and created a small surplus for church funds. Thanks go to Robin Bawtree, who manages the advertising and the finances of the magazine; and to Richard and Liz Redman and their much-valued team of distributors who do the leg work every month. We would like to increase the circulation of the magazine (currently it goes to around 600 homes) so please recommend it to your neighbours and friends if you get the chance – it's a very useful guide to village life and the small ads are invaluable when you want something done!

*Linda Mumford
Editor, and chair of the Magazine group.*

Messy Church

Messy Church is an ecumenical project run as a joint venture with STEPs community church with the aim of attracting families to worship in a relaxed setting rather than in our more formal services. In 2018 the numbers of families attending dropped to less than the number of helpers. In 2019 we decided to concentrate on major festivals rather than monthly meetings. At Easter we ran a holiday club in Milborne Port Primary School with craft activities on an Easter theme and a BBQ on the school playing field. Twelve children came. At harvest we held an afternoon in Charlton Horethorne Village Hall. Nine children came and made windmills for the harvest service that followed. All came to the harvest supper afterwards.

In 2019 STEPs community church amalgamated with Sherborne Community church and Sunday services are now held in Sherborne. In 2020 we will review how we wish to continue with our outreach to children and families in the village.

Milborne Wick Mission Church

Our attendances at our Festival services have not been as healthy as last year particularly on Christmas Day. However, we have welcomed visitors from the nearing parishes as well as South Africa!!

In August we held our Annual Cream tea which was a very successful event that included not only the delicious cream teas but a plant stall of which all plants had been grown and nurtured in Wick! We had a children's entertainer and a wonderful Folk Band that entertained our guests with some favourite tunes. The Harvest Festival was well supported with members of the congregation providing produce from the farms and gardens. The community 'Stream clean up' took place at the end of September where all the families of Wick get together to tidy up the banks of the stream in preparation for the winter months followed by a hot stew lunch. Our Christmas Carol service was beautifully put together by members of the congregation and was followed by Mince pies and mulled wine in the church

Amanda Mackintosh

Worship and Evangelism

As a congregation it is important that we support the vision for the Diocese, which is *"In response to God's immense love for us, we seek to be God's people, living and telling the story of Jesus"*.

The Worship and Evangelism Committee meets every two months to review past services and to plan for the coming months. Our discussions are lively and challenging as we work together to try to ensure that we provide a wide variety of worship opportunities that meet the needs of our congregation and the village.

Our Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas Services continued to be very well supported. Special services such as Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and "Light in the Darkness" are increasing in popularity and provide distinctive opportunities for worship.

At the beginning of the year as part of our outreach to children we continued to work in partnership with Steps in joint activities such as the Holiday Club held on the Wednesday of Holy Week. The merger of Steps with Sherborne Community Church means in the short-term their congregation is now largely based in Sherborne, we look forward to a fruitful relationship with their leadership in the future. Working in partnership with Milborne Port Primary school we have held very successful events in St John's Church as well as the annual Rogation Service at Goathill; sadly this year the Carol Service at Goathill had to be cancelled due to the inclement weather. We had good attendance at newly formatted Mothering Sunday Service which was very encouraging. The Crib Service on Christmas Eve was full of excited children and their fraught parents!

Our joint worship events were the Stations of the Cross at the beginning of Holy Week, our Good Friday service and, of course, the Carol Service. The Christian Aid Lent Lunches and Lent Course also provided an additional opportunity for true ecumenical activity. Our Lent Course sessions were held in the evening around supper and each was well attended.

Our Benefice Farm Service was held in the grounds of Stowell Church on a fabulously sunny day in August where we truly witnessed the glory of God's creation.

The annual Gift Day was once again very successful. It was later in the year to allow for our theme of a "Pumpkin Festival" we ended the day with hymns with mulled wine and pumpkin cake which was very popular! Once again this year we held a Christmas Tree Festival – the church looked very festive with trees decorated by clubs, businesses and societies from across the village. We hope that these kinds of activity remind everyone that we are right at the heart of the community.

Nicki Edwards

The Zambia Link Group

It has been an eventful year for the Zambia Link group. At the end of March 2019, we received information from the Diocese of Bath and Wells concerning a review of its companion link with the Zambian Anglican Church. They informed us that an essential restructure of the Link was required in order to ensure that it continues to have a fruitful future.

During the year the diocese hosted several events, some of which members of the group attended, to reflect on how we have benefitted from the Link over the years and its potential going forward.

At the time of writing all monies which we have received from donors have been transferred to Bath and Wells and the majority forwarded to our Link parishes in Zambia. We are proposing to hold a meeting in March to discuss our thoughts and plans for the future. We hope to share these with you at the Annual Parish Meeting in April.

We thank all the donors who have given so generously to support our Link parishes of St. Peter's Lusaka and Matero.

Lesley Oldham

