

Book of Reports 2023

For the PCC of

St John the Evangelist, Milborne Port

With

Milborne Wick Mission Church

PRIEST IN CHARGE

As dawn broke on the morning of January 1st 2023 I had only been in role for a few weeks. So, it was with a sense of excitement and eagerness that I greeted the New Year. I was looking forward to getting to know the Benefice, your ways of working, and most importantly the people.

It has been said that Vicars are in the business of hatching, matching and dispatching – in other words, Baptisms/Christenings, Weddings and Funerals. I know that we are involved in many other areas and have many other responsibilities, but I thought it would be fun to use that as a framework for this report.

As a Benefice there is more that unites us than divides us and I am heartened by so much, in your faithfulness and dedication to your Church. Within this Benefice of 5 churches, I see loyalty to individual churches and a recognition of our character as a whole Benefice. This loyalty to our Benefice is something I would like to work on, particularly as the Deanery will be altering boundaries so that by 2025 this may well be a Benefice of 8. This is why I am producing one PiC letter, so that we can share the blessings and the challenges, and celebrate or comfort each other accordingly.

Hatches

There have been quite a few Christenings during 2023, although all of them have been in Milborne Port. Well, all the human ones that is. A few toys and one fortunate doll have been Christened in the font in Charlton Horethorne as we learnt about Baptism in Years Reception up to Year 4 of the Church of England School. With the human babies, toddlers, children and even toys, there was delight all round, and much fun had by all.

Continuing with the young people of the parish we have welcomed them into both Charlton Horethorne and Milborne Port Churches for various activities and learning opportunities (such as a very creative and busy Prayer Stations) in addition to their usual Easter and Christmas services, which has been a joy.

Other hatching, or new beginnings have been seen throughout the Benefice. We welcomed Helen Solomon to be Benefice Administrator, and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with her in the parish office. We also welcomed Louisa Hughes onto the Milborne Port PCC. Rev Stuart Thomas took up his PTO and we welcomed him onto the rota of services.

A significant new beginning was the Open the Book project, which began in September, and we would love to see all others joining this tremendous way of taking the stories of the Bible into the Schools in an engaging way. An enormous thank you to Rev Stuart and Charlie Beney for taking the lead on this.

There were other beginnings as well with a few new services (The Longest Night, Stations of the Cross, The Service of Light, The Nail (*at Easter*)), and new service sheets appearing, the Sanctus bell being rung during the consecration at St John's, and the Diocesan agreement for an Aumbrey to be put into the Gethsemane chapel in Milborne Port for reserve sacrament.

The end of the year saw a very exciting new beginning when we welcomed the Community of Milborne Port into the Church and the Church grounds for the Christmas light switch on. Wonderful MP creatives made 150 angels which had a Christmas blessing attached, and we handed them out to the children and families as a sign of how blessed we felt to have them in the Church. This will hopefully become a regular event.

Matches

The weddings of 2023 brought much happiness and full churches. We had weddings in Milborne Port, Charlton Horethorne, and even a joyous one in Goathill. There was a Marriage Preparation course which was offered to couples getting married and included those whose banns we were reading. It was a hybrid course, and one couple solely joined us online.

Bringing together Scripture and people's faith meant that we had quite a few *joining together occasions* with various courses held during the year. These were open to the whole Benefice, and we enjoyed representation from most churches. The highlight for me was the 'How to eat bread' course written by Miranda Threlfell-Holmes. It was so encouraging to hear how people enjoyed engaging with the Bible in new and life changing ways.

The Lent Lunches included a short Bible reading and reflection, which was a good way of joining the social aspect of the lunches and faith.

I would like to also comment on Morning Prayer in Milborne Port. June Goodman and Marilyn Haskett have faithfully been saying the 'Daily Office' for many many years now (June over 40, and Marilyn nearly 20). The bell is rung just before 9am each morning, and wherever you are when you hear it, remember that people are praying for you, and for this community. Quite a few others faithfully join in these prayers regularly and there have been occasions during the year when friends from outside our community have joined and said they have never been a part of a Church with such a faithful witness to prayer. This is a real treasure in our midst, so I wanted you to know about it, and please come and join us occasionally.

Talking of bells, we are so fortunate to have bells in four of the Benefice Churches, two requiring teams to ring them. The bells have called people to worship, celebrated weddings and other special occasions, and tolled for funerals. Bell ringers are special people – there you go – what a statement! But I mean it, and our two teams are no exception (and I'm not just saying that because I was invited to a Christmas Bell Ringers party – honestly!). If you have an interest in bell ringing, please can I encourage you to become part of these ringing teams, we need exciting young folk to treasure this skill, which is enjoyed by so many.

'What about hospitality', I hear you cry?! Well, there have been *many* different occasions which have combined food, drink and gatherings. Breakfasts, brunches, lunches, and teas. I am so grateful to the teams who cook, bake, serve and welcome people from the wider community. Being a hospitable Church is a superb witness to the one who always notices '*Whenever you gave a drink, cup of tea or coffee, or some bread, lunch, biscuits, cake to the least of these you did so in my name...*' to slightly misquote Jesus.

Dispatches

There have been funerals in Goathill, Milborne Port, Charlton Horethorne and the Crematorium this year. There have also been a few occasions of interment of ashes in both the consecrated Churchyards and in other locations. Every one of these has been different, and as unique as the individual we mourn. The funeral directors in this area are some of the best I have worked with, and as a Benefice we have endeavoured to lead the most personal and fitting tributes to your loved ones when they die.

There are three occasions in the year when we specifically remember the departed in services in Church: All Souls Day, Remembrance Sunday and The Service of the Longest Night. For the last one of these we will be sending out personal invitations in 2024 because there were quite a few who weren't aware of the service in 2023. All services were moving and comforting, offering a moment to reflect on the person who has died with thanksgiving and love. A 'tree' with lights on the branches has been purchased by the Benefice and this can be used for memories to be written and attached during these services.

Towards the end of the year, I had a health hiccup which has been very annoying and distracting. I am putting this in the 'Dispatches' section because I would rather leave it behind in 2023. Thank you for your care for me while I was unwell, and since my return. My standard answer now is that I have a New Year's Resolution not to discuss my health, I hope you don't think I'm being rude, but I want to take the distraction away from us engaging in this superb work, prayer, worship and ministry of this faithful community.

Conclusion

There are so many people to thank, and I will forget someone if I try to mention everyone, so please look in this Annual Report and you will see the tireless work done by loyal and dedicated Christians to keep the flame of God's love alive in this place.

I could not have done anything however without the four Churchwardens – Nicki, Jacquie, Trudy and Charlie, and those who care for the smaller Churches – Jane, Liz and Amanda, David and Janet. Thank you to the wonderful June and Ronnie Goodman, and all of us would like to thank the retired clergy, non-stipendiary clergy and lay reader for all their hard work as well – Diane, Brian, Frank, Stuart, Becky and Pat.

Thank you, PCCs, thank you to those wonderful folk who fulfil the Treasurer roles, thank you committees, magazine editors and contributors, thank you choir, organists, bell ringers, churchyard gardeners and mowers (Grasshoppers), thank you to all the volunteers and the various groups who make this such a wonderful place to be.

And finally, when I prayed for a place that I could really put roots down, God sent me here, so thank you from me and my family for making us so welcome. Remember that we are not just a faithful, diminishing few keeping the churches open, but we are the powerhouse of God's love, keeping the pilot light burning, praying for others to gather around and feel the comfort and warmth, and looking forward to the days when this hearth will burst open into full blown bonfire and we celebrate God's Kingdom here in our Benefice.

As St Paul said to the fledgling church in Colossae:

Colossians 1:3-14

³In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel. ⁶that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. ...

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. ¹¹May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Rev Rona Stuart-Bourne

BELL RINGERS

Fourteen ringers paid their annual subscription to the Bath & Wells Association of Church Bellringers in January 2024. Frank and Gill are sadly now unable to ring, but continue to contribute and be part of the group. We were delighted to welcome a new ringer to our band in November. She has relocated from Surry and is presently living near Stalbridge. Our practice nights are well attended and we can usually ring all eight bells on a Sunday morning. On a personal note, I no longer have the support of my husband David, who died unexpectedly in June, but I will continue to serve as Captain to the best of my ability.

In September the ringers ran their customary "pop up coffee shop" on the morning of Gift Day. Members of the band once again helped the Spirit of Milborne Port group with the putting on and then removing the lights on the village Christmas trees. The whole group enjoyed a Christmas lunch at The Penmill Hotel in Yeovil, with twenty-four present.

As always, I would like to thank the contribution that each and every member of the band gives to the church, and also to thank the church and villagers for their support in return.

Susan Wales

CHARITIES AND MISSION

During 2023, our PCC once again gave £300 each month to be donated to a charity. The charities supported were as follows:

- **January:** Rendez-Vous Sherborne (provides advice, information and help with the emotional well-being of local young people aged between 13 and 25)
- **February:** Parkinsons UK
- **March:** Church Homeless Trust
- **April:** The Alzheimer's Society
- **May:** The Children's Society
- **June:** The Sheldon Hub (a safe place for people in ministry to meet, share, and support each other)
- **July:** Compassion UK (a Christian charity that cares for children worldwide who are suffering the effects of parenting)
- **August:** MyTime (provides young carers, aged 5 – 25, with support and friendship)
- **September:** Operation Mobilisation: (a charity supporting Christian mission worldwide)
- **October:** Yeovil Street Pastors
- **November:** Christian Aid
- **December:** Mission Aviation Fellowship: (using aviation and technology to see isolated people changed by the love of Christ)

During the year, we sent £1304.00 to the DEC Turkey/Syria Earthquake Appeal. From the Christmas collections we sent a further £585.00 to Christian Aid. We do thank everyone who generously gave to these appeals.

Richard Redman

CHOIR

As ever, the last twelve months have been busy ones for the choir, with the regular services at St John's as well as occasional services across the Benefice.

The choir continues to have a good number of singers, though new members are always welcome and we would particularly like more basses. We continue to rehearse weekly, now up by the organ rather than with the piano, a change which we made during the pandemic, but which we all prefer.

During the year we tackled a wide variety of music, both traditional and modern. We sang Compline throughout Lent, and, in another lesson from lockdown, now sing in the crossing, under the tower, which gives us more space and has proved a much nicer spot to sing in.

The choir also sang Bob Chilcott's lovely settings of hymns from his St John Passion during Sunday services in Lent, and during the year we have enjoyed working our way through a number of anthems in the 'Flexible Anthem Book', which accounts for the inevitable occasions when some parts might be missing.

At Christmas we sang for the carol service at Stowell and of course at St John's, where we enjoyed preparing four carols.

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

CHRISTIAN AID

In these times when many are suffering financial hardship, we are so grateful for the very kind and generous donations for Christian Aid that you gave during 2023. We are organising a similar programme of events in 2024 so please continue to support us. We were able to send a total of £2,174.30, a slight increase on 2022. The loose Christmas services collections (2022, but received in 2023) at St John's produced £215.00, the Lent Lunches raised £781.05 and the Harvest Supper £392.00. From Christian Aid Week we received £739.30, small-change boxes contributed £7.07 and hot cross buns raised £39.25. The sharp eyed amongst you may spot an apparent arithmetical mistake but this is due to differing amounts carried forward in our own bank account to the following year!

David Johnson

CHURCH HOUSE

Church House continues to be used by a good number of regular users and by private bookings for wedding receptions, parties, wakes and other events. The Foodshare group also continues to use the hall regularly for food storage and distribution. Use was also made of the building and gardens at the village Christmas lights switch in December for the first time, and this proved to be a really successful event.

We have recently installed the WI Millennium Embroidery on the wall of the hall. This had previously been hanging in the Town Hall but has now found a new home in Church House. During the year we replaced a couple of ageing apple trees in the garden which had been damaged in recent storms with new trees, one apple and the other a pear, and these are establishing well.

Due to the increases in energy and general maintenance costs it was necessary to increase our hire charges slightly from April 2023, but despite continued increasing energy costs we have been able to maintain the current rates without further increases.

Lucy Clarke, our cleaner, retired in August and we thank her for her wonderful support over the last year or so, and are pleased that Michele Cullen has now taken up the position.

Trevor John

CHURCH HOUSE FINANCE

Costs of running the hall significantly increased in 2023. Our insurance premium paid in June was £1,281 (2022: £1,204). We renewed the gas contract, which had been previously fixed for three years, at a unit rate double the previous fix, and a new electricity contract was agreed at the end of the year with a 25% increase in both the standing charge and the unit rate from the previous rates.

I would like to thank all members of the 100 Club, whose subscriptions have helped to supplement our lettings income to cover these increasing costs.

In April, the Committee decided that, bearing in mind the rising costs of energy and insurance, the charges for hiring the hall should be increased. The previous rates had been in place since 2017, so an increase was probably overdue. This helped to boost our lettings income compared with 2022, although we need to continue to monitor income vs. expenses to try to ensure that Church House continues to cover its everyday running costs through hiring out the hall.

Going back to January, a 'New Year's Lunch' was hosted in Church House, raising £314 net towards Church House funds, of which £200 was donated to the Foodshare project. An additional £110 raffle proceeds were donated to the PCC. Thank you to everyone who helped to organise and run that event.

Overall, Church House's financial position is strong, as we continue to hold significant funds from Covid grants. With interest rates increasing, in January, the Committee decided to place £25,000 in a fixed-term deposit account. On initial maturity of the term (in July), £334 of interest was paid. The principal and accrued interest has been re-deposited since.

Total income for the year was £8,059.11 (2022: £10,094.53) and total expenditure was £7,528.74 (2022: £9,477.52) giving a surplus of £530.37. The end-of-year balance was £32,943.72.

Ben Grundy

EVENTS COMMITTEE

The Committee Members are Anne Salkeld [Chair], Sandra Nichols [Minutes Secretary], Anne Briggs, Margaret Curtis, John Fanning, Jan Sharpless. Linda Mumford has resigned but is still giving IT and publicity support.

In April we provided tea, coffee and cake at Milborne Port Opera. On 7TH May a celebration tea for the Coronation was held in Church House with sandwiches, cakes and fizz. The Spirit of Milborne Port fete was on 3rd June and our team provided cream teas and cakes. Milborne Port Open Gardens was on 17th June, with 12 gardens open, and prosecco cream teas in Church House. Next year Silverthorne Eggs have offered to sponsor the cream.

The Church Fete was held on 15th July. Due to high winds, stalls were moved into the Church and Church House but we still managed to raise over £2000. Susan Wales and team presented Quiz Night with Fish and chips on the 11th November.

None of our events could happen without the support of many other members of the congregation, and the wider community to whom we offer our thanks.

Dates for 2024 include the Church Fete on 20th July, Open Gardens 15th June and Quiz Night 18th May.

Anne Salkeld

MAGAZINE

I am pleased to report that the Milborne Port Magazine has had another steady year, thanks to all the efforts of our excellent team. Susan Wales has now stepped down from the committee, and we thank her for her contribution.

Major thanks must go to Robin Bawtree who manages our finances and deals with the frequently complicated needs of the paying advertisers. Both advertising rates and the price of the magazine have remained stable this year. We have been able once more to make donations from the magazine account to the PCC, The Spirit of Milborne Port, the Milborne Port Food Share, Milborne Port Primary School, and to provide the cash prize for the Summer Draw associated with the Church Fete.

We have a large team of distributors who get the magazine out around the village each month, and we're very grateful to Richard and Liz Redman, who organise all the rounds and supply the village outlets where magazines can be bought.

The magazine is an informative read, with news of forthcoming events of both church and village activities, and a number of articles each month on topics of interest. Photos submitted by readers make our covers attractive, and fresh submissions are always welcome. The Milborne Port Calendar has again proved popular this year and we sold almost 200 copies, with proceeds to church funds.

My thanks also go to Felicity John, who has been inducted into the magazine editing process and has tried out her skills on one of our magazines this year. With an eye to the future, if there is anyone who would also be interested in getting involved with editing, please get in touch!

Linda Mumford

MILBORNE WICK MISSION CHURCH

The monthly service is working well with the community of Wick

Fundraising has taken the shape of a tombola table which was held at the 'Party in the Park' event in July in Wick, followed by our annual Cream Tea event in August; again another wonderful 'Darling Buds of May' event with a plant stall, tombola, raffle and delicious cakes and scones, entertained by a wonderful group of musicians throughout the afternoon and framed up by our visiting horse and cart! Our Harvest supper fundraiser was held in the church at the beginning of October - 40 people attended the event seated in the church which was a great success coupled with a delicious Harvest Supper provided by the Wick residents. The Christmas Carol service took place again in the church and featured a Wick choir for the first time.

Amanda Mackintosh

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding continues to sit at the heart of all that we do at St. John's. Ensuring the safety and welfare of our community is key. We are careful to be vigilant and always have at the top of our minds that 'it could happen here'. The Diocesan Safeguarding team provide valuable monthly updates and a comprehensive training programme. They are also available to provide advice and guidance on individual situations as necessary. There were no significant safeguarding issues in the Parish this year.

Nicola Edwards

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Under the leadership of our Priest-in-charge, Rev Rona Stuart-Bourne, the worshipping life of the church continues to flourish. Rona has brought fresh vision, impetus and focus to the mission of St John's.

Weekdays always begin with Morning Prayer which is said in the Gethsemane Chapel and our midweek Communion Service on a Wednesday is an important part of the weekly pattern of worship. Communion is celebrated on 3 Sundays each month at 10:30, the congregation for this service has grown steadily, now regularly comprising around 65 people. The Matins service, on the 3rd Sunday of each month, is less popular but continues to maintain a committed core of around 40 worshippers.

Services in Lent included two Ash Wednesday communions and a weekly service of Compline on a Friday sung by the choir, tying in with their regular Friday rehearsal. Our Mothering Sunday service was less well attended than previously. A wide range of opportunities for worship were provided during Holy Week and these were hugely appreciated. These included, the stations of

the Cross, a performance of 'the Nail', a commemoration of the Last Supper, a Good Friday service and Easter Eve service of light. On Easter Day over 100 people attended the 10:30 Communion.

In May, Coronation Prayers were hosted at Stowell and a beautiful Rogation Service was held in the church and grounds of Goathill. Our Pentecost service was a suitably joyful affair! In the summer Rona ran a very successful bible study group for people across the Benefice. Our Harvest Service and Open Day, on the theme of "Art in our community" in the early Autumn were very successful and really captured the spirit of our church.

When Rona became unwell in the late autumn, we were incredibly fortunate to have the support of our retired clergy, Brian McConnell, Diane Barrett, Frank Wright and Stuart Thomas, as well as Becky Ayers-Harris, Chaplain of Godolphin School in Salisbury who lives in the village. They led our services brilliantly and this was a tremendous support to Rona and the congregation.

A short Act of Remembrance was held at the War Memorial on 11th November. As always, our Remembrance Service on 12th November was well attended and appreciated by the village community.

Christmas started early when we hosted the "Light Up Night" festival for the village. This was a new departure since all the village activities took place in the church building, the grounds of the church or Church House. This provided a safe and welcoming venue for the community. The atmosphere was busy and joyful - a wonderful witness.

Over Christmas we were able to provide our special "Longest Night" service for those who have been recently bereaved as well as the usual Christmas events. The combined Crib and Christingle Service maintained its popularity this year being attended by over 47 children and 77 adults. The church also busy on Christmas morning with 79 adults and 8 children.

Benefice services at Charlton Horethorne and Stowell have been much appreciated and provide a chance for people from across the parishes to worship together.

It has been a real joy to see increased working with our village primary school through weekly assemblies, "Open the Book" as well as their services in the church for key festivals such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

We are so grateful that through real teamwork we have been able to maintain a lively Christian presence in our village.

Nicola Edwards