

**St John the Evangelist Church, Milborne Port
and Milborne Wick Mission Church**

APCM Committee Reports for 2024

Priest in Charge: Rev Rona Stuart-Bourne

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INCUMBENT'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2024

The Milborne Benefice (TMB), including Milborne Port, Milborne Wick, Goathill, Charlton Horethorne and Stowell.

1. Introduction

As we reflect on 2024 in The Milborne Benefice, we give thanks for the life and ministry of our churches and the faithfulness of our communities.

While numbers in our congregations have fallen slightly, the rhythm of worship, hospitality, pastoral care, and mission has continued as a steady and reassuring presence in our villages.

It has been a privilege to lead seven weddings, baptise 19 people, and preside at eleven funerals, marking these important moments in the lives of parishioners and their families. These occasions remind us of our calling to be a church that journeys alongside people in times of joy, new beginnings, sorrow, and remembrance.

This is not just about the clergy team, but about our whole community and how we not only meet these needs, but enhance the life of the community that we are fortunate enough to live in.

The Benefice Lent course on the Psalms offered a rich opportunity to engage with the ancient book of Psalms, and rediscover it as a tool for spiritual accompaniment and growth, while the Advent course, exploring the Advent Bible passages with Lectio Divina (Holy Reading) and deepening our engagement with them through poetry, music, and paintings, opened wide for all those attending the mystery and wonder of the season.

Throughout 2024 It has been encouraging to see people come together to explore their faith in new and meaningful ways.

Noteworthy is the core group who say The Morning Prayer Office each weekday at 9am in Milborne Port Church, and it has been a delight to welcome newcomers to that in recent times. Remember that when you hear the bell ring in Milborne Port on a weekday morning that community members are gathering to pray for the wider community.

One of the joys of our Benefice is the opportunity to worship as a whole community, and our fifth Sunday services continue to be a valuable time of gathering, reminding us that we are part of something greater than our individual churches. These services have been a source of encouragement and a visible sign of our unity in Christ.

We are especially grateful for the dedication of our retired clergy, who have provided steadfast support, particularly through the regular Wednesday Communion services in Milborne Port.

A special mention of to Rev Stuart Thomas and the Open the Book team, whose inspiring work in our schools has brought Bible stories to life for the young generation, offering them a

warm and engaging encounter with the Christian faith. The members of the team enjoy the stories as much as the children, and we encourage others to join in.

As we look ahead, may we continue to seek ways to grow together in faith, hope, and love, serving our communities with joy and compassion.

2. Worship & Ministry

We have been fortunate to have enjoyed a full Holy Week of Services, A Deanery Ascension Day Service at Milborne Port, wonderful Carol Services in each Church, and a regular provision for Sundays and Wednesdays throughout the Benefice.

After a great deal of collaboration, we introduced new service booklets for the whole Benefice. Green (Ordinary Time), Purple (Lent) Yellow (Christmas and Epiphany) and a different Purple (Advent). It is very useful to have a standard service throughout the Benefice, and we have varied some of the prayers and responses.

3. Mission & Outreach

Community engagement has been seen through the ever-popular Christmas Tree festival (thank you to all those who decorated trees and provided refreshments – but a HUGE thank you to Susan Wales who put so much time and effort into this).

Shortly afterwards the Christmas Light Switch on was a very popular event for the whole village, thank you so much to the Spirit of Milborne Port for their sterling organisational skills.

Earlier in the year we also enjoyed a very creative (and chocolatey!) Easter craft afternoon with an Easter Egg hunt in Church House, Milborne Port.

There is a monthly communion service in Gainsborough House and Elliscombe House, and Charlton Horethorne School has two visits each week with Collective Worship and singing.

Milborne Port and Charlton Horethorne Schools both enjoy a twice a term Open the Book visit, and special services for Christmas, Easter and Year 6 Leavers.

Food share in Milborne Port was one of the community events which drew me to this Incumbent role, and the volunteers give so much time and attention, and so many people make generous donations.

The weekly lunch club in Church House Milborne Port continues to provide a regular delicious lunch and some good company. We are so fortunate to have so many good cooks prepared to make this offering to our community.

We continue to raise money through so many different means; some for the Church and some for other charities, this is such an integral part of who we are as a community.

4. Lay Ministry & Volunteer Support

The Churchwardens, PCC members, and volunteers do so much to keep our parishes running. I want to say a huge thank you to you all.

This, along with the fabulous team of retired clergy stretches our outreach – so a huge, personal thank you to you all. I recognise that we couldn't do all that we do without you all!

5. Financial & Fabric Matters

A special mention to Paul Springett who has done such a superb job as the Treasurer for much of the Benefice, and Nick Bunt for continuing to keep the Goathill Treasurer role going while we wait for Goathill to be incorporated into the Milborne Port Parish.

Church building maintenance continues in each of our Churches. Sadly, the roof in Goathill and the roof in Milborne Port both need replacing, the heating in Milborne Port needs to be replaced, the lychgate in Charlton Horethorne requires work, and the lead from the roof of the Boiler room in Charlton Horethorne was stolen, meaning that needed replacing also.

Thank you to all those who keep these beautiful old buildings open and working.

6. Looking Ahead – Vision Priorities for the Coming Year

2025 will be a year where we continue to encourage each other to focus on our faith, and engagement with the community as a result of our belief. We are excited to be a part of an enormously warm and faithful group of Christians, and everything we do has this as the foundation.

We extend a huge welcome to three new villages in the biggest change to our Benefice in 2025. This is the result of the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery of Bruton and Cary.

The enlargement of the Milborne Benefice will occur in practical terms in the second quarter of 2025 (and in formal/legal terms approximately a year later).

We very much look forward to welcoming Compton Pouncefoot, Blackford and Maperton Churches, villages and people into our community of faith.

During 2025 there will need to be necessary improvements, repairs and even some reordering with our buildings. This work will be undertaken because of the findings of the Quinquennial reports on Milborne Port Church, Church House and Goathill St Peter's. It is an exciting time to be involved in the workings of the Churches in our Benefice, because in addition to ensuring that our buildings are watertight and warm enough, we are looking at ways to widen their usage for the community. Project St John's has huge potential to take our buildings and therefore communities into a new era, and we welcome interested parties to join in.

In the 3rd week of April 2025, we are launching our first Dementia service 'Memory Lane'. This will be an hour of singing, light touch prayers and liturgy, and hospitality. It will take place in Church House on the 3rd Saturday of every month at 4pm. We hope to encourage all those who are living with memory challenges in their lives or the lives of their loved ones to attend, and we trust that it will provide an opportunity for comfort, refreshment and reflection.

Scope of the role of the Incumbent

The combination of the usual everyday business of this Benefice, the additional work involved in incorporating three new parishes, and the large building projects this year means that my role as Incumbent will be different, and I wanted to be open about this.

The 20th Century role of the Vicar being a shepherd to a flock is no longer possible when the flock has grown so considerably in size and also geographical spread.

I will continue to endeavour to manage my time in the best way possible, but unfortunately there are parts of the role of the traditional vicar which I would love to do, but cannot fit in.

The main one of these is regular pastoral visiting, but I am happy to be available (when possible), so please don't hesitate to ask – apologies but it just won't be a regular thing.

Conclusion

While we recognise the challenges facing rural churches, we also celebrate the depth of faith, commitment, and love that sustain our benefice.

Growth in discipleship, strengthening our outreach, and deepening our worship life remain central to our calling as the Church in this place.

Thank you to everyone who has helped, and been a part of our journey in 2024, we look forward to sharing 2025 with you.

With every blessing **Rev Rona**

BELL RINGERS

Fourteen ringers paid their annual subscription to the Bath & Wells Association of Church Bellringers in January 2025.

Jill, Frank and Gill continue to contribute and be part of the group, although are no longer able to ring.

Alan Davis, a member of the band since 1977, had a stroke in May '24, and is also sadly no longer able to ring. We all greatly miss his knowledge, expertise, and calm leadership.

Our practice nights are mostly well attended, and we can usually ring on a Sunday morning, although often we do not have enough ringers to sound all eight bells. We are heavily reliant on four ringers who also support the Stalbridge team, and we are considering how new ringers to St John's can be attracted. It would be a huge shame if the bells became silent.

Members of the team continue to support other towers and regularly attend training practices. The group enjoyed a Christmas lunch at The Kings Arms, East Stour in Yeovil.

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, Tower Captain

CHARITIES AND MISSION

During 2024 the PCC donated £350.00 to us each month to be allocated to a charity. The charities supported were:

January – Ripple Effect (help for small farms in the Uganda to become self-sufficient)

February – Julia's House Children's Hospice.

March – Rendez Vous Sherborne

April - Parkinson's UK

May – Church Homeless Trust

June – Alzheimer's Society

July – Mary's Meals

August – Dorset Youth for Christ

September – Compassion Uk (supports children who have the responsibility of parenting.)

October – My Time (provides young carers 15 – 25 with support and friendship)

November – Operation Mobilisation (supports Christian Missions worldwide)

December – Yeovil Street Pastors.

We gave during the year two donations of £300.00 each to our FoodShare programme and £500.00 to the Jerusalem and Middle East Church association to help with the Gaza crisis.

We do thank everyone for their generosity towards coffee in Church House which made these donations possible. From this year's Christmas collection, we have sent £265.00 each to Christian Aid and the homeless charity Arc in Taunton.

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 COMMITTEE

Although we are an independent, interdenominational committee, most of our support is from the congregation of St John's so it is appropriate to include a report here.

Our committee members are Sui Chung Chan, Margaret Curtis, Felicity John, David Johnson, Anne Salkeld and Clare Silk.

We were pleased to be able to send £2,711.00 to Christian Aid in 2024, an increase of £536.30 on the previous year.

The major sources are the loose cash from St John's 2023 Christmas services (£585.00) kindly donated by the PCC, our Lent Lunches (£759.90), Hot Cross Buns (£65.10) and Harvest Supper (508.00) and the collection during Christian Aid week (£751.00).

Additionally, from Christian Aid Week, Christian Aid was able to claim £182.50 in gift aid from the slips that many of you were able to complete.

Thank you so much for supporting us! **David Johnson** (Hon. Treasurer)

CHURCH HOUSE FINANCE

The overall position for 2024 was total income of £9,719.71 (2023: £8,059.11) and total expenditure of £13,140.57 (2023: £7,528.74), resulting in a deficit of £3,420.86.

First of all, can I extend my continued gratitude to all members of the Church House 100 Club, whose subscriptions helped supplement our lettings income by a net sum of £550 in 2024. There are some vacancies should people wish to join.

The hall is well supported by a number of regular users, and lettings income from regular use was broadly similar to 2023. However, our one-off lettings income dropped by about £700. This resulted in an overall decrease in lettings income of around £500. Unfortunately, the costs of running the hall – insurance, cleaning, utilities, etc – increased by around £1,100. This was partly due to £300 of electricity from 2023 being charged for and having changed gas suppliers with £400 of credit still being held with old supplier, but things like insurance and utility costs are just generally increasing.

Church House also had to spend around £5,700 in one-off repair/improvement costs during 2024. This included some building work as well as replacing the 10-year-old dishwasher, which it was uneconomical to repair. There were external contributions of £2,000 towards the dishwasher, without which the 2024 deficit would have been greater.

The end-of-year balance was £29,522.86.

Ben Grundy

THE CHURCH HOUSE, MILBORNE PORT CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, MARCH 2025

Church House continues to be used by a good number of regular users and by private bookings for 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 again and this is proving to be a really successful event.

During the past year we have had to replace the kitchen dishwasher, and we are grateful to the Parish Council for a donation towards this.

It has also been necessary to repair a section of the roof due to slippage of tiles. In undertaking the repair, we have also taken the opportunity to improve the roof insulation. Unfortunately, it has revealed that the rest of the roof needs similar treatment so we will be soon fundraising - please watch for opportunities to support us in maintaining Church House as a very useful Parish resource.

Neil Briggs who has been the Church House Manager for over 20 years has retired from this role and we thank him and Anne for all they have done over the years, and we are grateful to Jacquie and Robert Hall who are jointly taking over this role.

Also, our gardeners Barbara and Brian Tindale have also had to relinquish these duties as they have moved away from Milborne Port, and we are grateful to them for transforming and maintaining the Church House Garden. We are currently looking to find someone to take over this role. **Trevor John, Chair, Church House Management Committee**

DEANERY SYNOD

The Bruton and Cary Deanery Synod meets three times a year and acts as an intermediary between the parochial church councils of each parish in the deanery and the synod of the diocese as a whole. Meetings are normally held at North Barrow Village Hall. As you might imagine this has been a year where the topic of the reorganisation of the Deanery, including the expansion of our Benefice, has sparked lively debate!

The April meeting was held on Tuesday 16th April where there was an update by the Lay Dean Dr Rob Sage on the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery. After refreshments Revd Jill Perrett, the Diocesan Developing Ministries Adviser, gave a short presentation on the Lay Ministry Pathway. At this meeting the Deanery's Annual Report and Accounts were approved.

The July Deanery Synod was held on Thursday 18th July at The Davis Hall, West Camel. There was a reflection by the Revds. Jonathan Evans and Elisabeth Isted on the new Benefice Share which replaces the Parish Share system. There was also a presentation on Environmental Concerns and the Church given by Dan Wills, the Diocesan Net Zero Enabler. At this meeting David Baldwin was elected as Deanery Treasurer.

The final Deanery Synod of the year was held on Thursday 17th October where the new Area Dean Caroline Walker was welcomed. The Lay Dean Dr Rob Sage gave an update on the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery. Cesca Priestley, the Go Team adviser for Wells Archdeaconry, led a workshop on growing faith with children, young people and families.

Harold Clarke

REPORT OF EVENTS COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES 2024

1. Quiz Night with Fish and Chips May 22nd - 83 tickets sold net amount raised £601
2. Open Gardens: 10 gardens opened plus cream teas sponsored by Silverthorne egg Farm; net raised £425
3. Church Fete and Grand Draw 20 th July net raised £2136 plus £150 donation from Magazine
4. Quiz Night with Fish and Chips Nov 16 th 96 tickets sold net amount raised £911

Committee members are Anne Briggs, Margaret Curtis, Sandra Nicholls, Anne Salkeld, Jan Sharpless, Gillian Topp. IT support from Linda Mumford.

We also have loads of help from family members and friends, other members of the congregation and the wider village community.

Quiz Night planned for May 24th

Church Fete July 19th

Anne Salkeld

MILBORNE PORT FOODSHARE: ANNUAL REPORT TO PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Foodshare continues its work to address food poverty in the village.

It is a community project staffed by volunteers and operates out of Church House where it has a storeroom and use of the hall on Thursday afternoons for distribution.

Sherborne Food Bank ceased its funding of the project in the summer of 2024 and since then we have been relied on funding from the Parish Council although the current funding agreement ends in March 2025.

Other than this the project has donations from individuals in the village in cash or kind and collects 'use by' and 'best by' food from the Coop on three evenings a week.

The people who use the project are all on means-tested benefits, have children on free school meals or are currently working with a debt counsellor. Exceptionally they may be people who have had a sudden catastrophic fall in income because of unemployment, relationship breakdown or some other reason.

Elaine Ennis-Bunt, Chair

MAGAZINE

The Milborne Port Magazine is run by St John's members as a service to the Milborne Port Community.

While containing regular notifications of our church services, church events, and always a letter offering reflection from Rev Rona or other church leaders, it also includes as much information as possible from the wider community, with reports from the Parish Council, the Primary School and many other groups.

We also have articles of general interest, for example the popular Birding and Sky at Night features. The Magazine also carries small ads for local businesses, which are much appreciated.

The Magazine's hard-working committee consists of Robin Bawtree (Finance and advertising), Richard and Liz Redman (Distribution), Linda Mumford (editor), Felicity John, Jacquie Hall and Rev Rona.

Much of our work throughout the year is behind the scenes, but people would soon notice if it wasn't done! We are also very grateful to the team of distributors who get the magazine out to households every month, come rain, come shine.

Village businesses also sell for us, and we thank Wayne, the Co-op, and the Post Office for their support. We sell in the region of 600 magazines per month – a significant contribution to village information in the social media age.

We would like to sustain and even increase our sales level, so please help us to promote the magazine by showing a copy to any new neighbours you may acquire and telling them how useful the magazine is!

Contact Liz and Richard on 251145 to let them know any new delivery possibilities.

The cost of the magazine remains at 45p per copy.

We are able to make donations from profits raised, and this year have donated to the PCC, SOMP and the Food Share, and gave the cash prize for the Grand Draw as usual.

We thank all our contributors for their thoughtful and interesting articles throughout the year. Anyone can contribute to the magazine by emailing magazine@milborneportchurches.org.uk or ringing Linda on 01963 33495.

We also enjoy all the photos which are sent in and use the twelve cover photographs to create a village calendar each year. These are sold at a very reasonable £5.00.

Please continue to take and send in photographs to the email address above.

Linda Mumford

MILBORNE WICK

Due to a number of factors, we have now reduced the services in Wick down to a monthly service that take place on the 3rd Sunday of each month.

It has been good to welcome a number of residents from Milborne Port to this monthly service.

The fund-raising events this year have included the ever-popular Cream tea which is always held on the Sunday of the August Bank holiday - an event that typifies all that Wick is about. We then followed this with a wonderful Harvest supper in the church, enjoyed by around 40 people.

Our in-house pianist, as we like to call him, and his wife both of whom organise the musical side of our services created the most beautiful service for the Carol service which included a choir and a trombonist and a large congregation of all ages. It was the most wonderful way to start the Christmas festivities.

Amanda MacKintosh

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Under Rona's leadership the worshipping community at St. John's continues to thrive as it seeks to meet the spiritual needs of the village.

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 50 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.

A Lent course focussing on the Psalms was much appreciated.

Our Mothering Sunday service was well attended.

A wide range of opportunities for worship were provided during Holy Week. They included, the stations of the Cross, a performance of 'The Nail', a Good Friday service and an Easter Eve service of light. On Easter Day over 100 people attended the 10:30 Communion. On Easter Saturday there was also an Easter egg hunt run in Church House in partnership with the Spirit of Milborne Port.

During the year we began a new service of Community Thanksgiving on the 3rd Saturday of each month. During the coming year this will be developed to become a special dementia friendly service.

In May, a beautiful Rogation Service was held in the church and grounds of Goathill and was joined by children from the choir of Milborne Port school.

We hosted the Deanery Ascension Day service and our Pentecost service was a suitably joyful affair!

During the months of September, October and November Rona was on sabbatical leave. Once again, we were very fortunate to be able to call upon the support of our retired clergy

to cover our Autumn services, we are so very lucky to have such a dedicated team to draw upon.

Our Harvest Service and Open Day, on the theme of "All Good Gifts Around Us" in the early Autumn were very successful and really captured the spirit of our community. In October we held a special service of thanksgiving for Pat Elliot's lay reader ministry.

In November a special All Souls service was held and was much appreciated as an opportunity to remember loved ones who have died. As always, our Remembrance Service on 10th November was well attended and appreciated by the village community.

Christmas started early when we hosted the "Light Up Night" festival for the village. 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. This was followed by our Christmas Tree festival which brought together clubs and societies from across the village over the week long display.

Over Christmas we were able to provide our special "Longest Night" service for those who have been recently bereaved or who find the usual Christmas services overwhelming. Once again, our Carol Service, Crib Service and Christmas morning service maintained their popularity, each being attended by over 100 people.

Benefice services on the 5th Sunday of the month 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 "Open the Book", a special Christingle Service, 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.

Nicki Edwards