

## PRIEST IN CHARGE

Thank you to Susan Wales for pulling together this annual report for the Churches which are part of the Milborne Port Parish. As secretary this is one of the busier times of the year, and so our grateful thanks to Susan for this.

2022 dawned with the parish in Interregnum. This is often a time when a parish can grow and even flourish, but there is usually a collective sigh of relief when a new Parish Priest is licensed. This parish has certainly done well during this time, but the added complications which Covid has wrought have meant that 2022 was a year like no other. In many ways this was NOT the best time to be enduring an interregnum, but also in many ways this Parish has acquitted itself remarkably well.

After 2 rounds of interviews in Spring and then Summer, I was offered the position of Priest in Charge at the end of July. The combination of a required 3 months' notice period, which was delayed in its start because of key people being on holiday, and a new Bishop being licensed and wanting to be part of my licensing meant that it was not until the 29<sup>th</sup> November that we were able to celebrate the beginning of our journey together.

November quickly turned into December and we enjoyed a busy and happy Christmas here in the Parish, and I was delighted to begin to settle in the Benefice and Deanery.

As a Benefice we can look forward towards the future. Although there are certainly changes in the pipeline, not least because of the knock on cost implications which is the legacy of Covid, I think we are well placed to continue to build on strong foundations in the life and worship of our Churches.

Thank you so much to those who have worked so very hard to keep everything thriving during 2022, and a particular thank you to the wonderful Churchwarden Team throughout the Benefice, Charlie Beney, Nicki Edwards, Jacquie Hall and Trudy West. I commend this report for the workings of the Parish in 2022 to you. With every Blessing to you.

**Rev Rona Stuart-Bourne**

## BELLRINGERS

Fifteen ringers paid their annual subscription to the Bath & Wells Association of Church Bellringers in January 2023. However, two of these are sadly now unable to ring, but continue to contribute. We were delighted to welcome two new ringers to our band in March. They had relocated from Northumberland and are presently living in Stalbridge. In the autumn of 2022, we began to teach two new ringers – one who had been taught to handle a bell previously - and it is hoped that they will both continue. Due to various reasons, we can usually only muster a band of eight on a Sunday, however practice nights are generally very well attended.

Following the Covid restrictions, it has been good to get out and about more, to visit other towers, and to ring with and support other ringers from both the Cary and Ilchester Branches.

Along with other ringers both in the UK and across the world, we were privileged to be able to mark the death in September 2022 of HM Queen Elizabeth II by ringing the bells half-muffled. Some "open" ringing to celebrate the accession of King Charles III quickly followed this. Thereafter, half-muffled ringing resumed during the period of National mourning up until the late Queen's funeral.

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 with the putting on and then removing the lights on the village Christmas trees. The whole group met at 'Something Else Fishy' prior to Christmas, and were delighted to be able to meet the Reverend Rona Stuart-Bourne who joined us.

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 2022, our PCC once again gave £300 each month to be donated to a charity. The charities supported were as follows:

- **January:** [Church Homeless Trust](#)
- **February:** [The Alzheimer's Society](#)
- **March:** [The Children's Society](#)
- **April:** [The Sheldon Hub](#) (a safe place for people in ministry to meet, share, and support each other)
- **May:** [Freewheelers Emergency Voluntary Service](#) (volunteer motorbike riders who transport blood, pathology & microbiology specimens, patient notes, X-rays, breast milk, and other medical supplies, to and from NHS hospitals, and who deliver every night to two local Air Ambulance bases)
- **June:** [Scripture Union](#)

- **July:** Operation Mobilisation: (a charity supporting Christian mission worldwide)
- **August:** Yeovil Street Pastors
- **September:** Christian Aid
- **October:** Mission Aviation Fellowship: (using aviation and technology to see isolated people changed by the love of Christ)
- **November:** DEC Coronavirus Appeal
- **December:** Global's Make Some Noise (a charity that supports the lives of disadvantaged people in our communities by working with small charities across the UK and that offers support to vulnerable groups suffering from Covid-19)

During the year, we sent a number of donations, totalling £1666, to the DEC Ukraine Appeal. Our thanks and gratitude must go to all who arrange fund-raising events, or who donated. From the Christmas collections, £215 each was given to Christian Aid and the village Foodshare scheme.

**Richard Redman**

## CHOIR

After the seemingly endless restrictions on singing during the pandemic, it has been wonderful to get back to singing on a regular basis (for both choir and congregation) and over the last year we have made the most of our freedom, returning to our usual routines. We continue to rehearse weekly, now up by the organ rather than with the piano, which we all prefer.

We sang Compline throughout Lent for the first time since we were cut off in our prime in March 2020, and took the decision to 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.

Having sung anthems for Harvest and for the service of welcome for our new Priest in Charge, at Christmas we sang for the carol service at Stowell for the first time since 2019 and of course at St John's, where we enjoyed preparing four carols – and having the first choir party for some while too!

As I said last year, none of us will ever take singing for granted again; the unfair stigma it was given during the pandemic has made us appreciate what an important part it plays in all our lives, and, when many choirs are still struggling to return to pre-pandemic numbers, I'm delighted that all the choir members have returned to sing.

**Rachel Willetts**

## **CHRISTIAN AID**

Life after Covid has more or less returned to normal so that during 2022 we were able to send £2,108.18 to Christian Aid, more than twice the 2021 figure. We received a total of £2,095.37 in gifts and through our activities, for which we are most grateful. The loose Christmas services collections (2021) at St John's raised £202.00, the Lent Lunches produced £744.00 and the Harvest Supper £314.00. From Christian Aid Week we received £748.18, small-change boxes raised £69.39, and hot cross buns contributed £12.80. We hope to offer a similar programme of events during 2023 and we look forward to your much needed and very kind support.

**David Johnson (Hon. Treasurer)**

## **CHURCH HOUSE**

Church House is now used by a good number of regular users and by private bookings for parties, wakes and events so we are now operating close to pre-pandemic booking levels. The Foodshare group is using Church House for food storage and distribution and this has continued to grow and flourish over the past year, providing a really useful service to the local community

During the year we have completed the installation of a defibrillator, which is fixed to the exterior of Church House near the main door, and this is now fully functional. A telephone line has been reinstalled into the office and WiFi with Internet service has been reinstated for all Church House users. The Parish Office has also been refurbished and decorated. The Church House garden and grounds continue to be cared for by Brian and Barbara Tindale. We are extremely grateful to them for the hours of work they put into looking after the garden.

The 100 Club continues to provide essential financial support and enables us to maintain the building for the future. We are grateful to all our 100 Club members. There are currently a few vacancies for membership of the 100 Club. Due to the pandemic restrictions we were not able to run our regular Christmas Lunch for a few years but this year we managed to reinstate this as a New Year lunch held on 14th January which raised over £300, and which was split between Foodshare and Church House. The raffle made £110 for church funds.

Due to the increases in energy and general maintenance costs it has been necessary to increase our hire charges from April 2023 but we have kept these increases to an absolute minimum.

**Trevor John, Chairman, Church House Management Committee**

## CHURCH HOUSE FINANCE

With all Covid restrictions having ended and people having received one or more Covid vaccinations, 2022 was "back to normal" for bookings. Comparing to 2019 (as the latest year unaffected by Covid), total income from hire of the hall reduced. Income from one-off bookings (2022: £1,950) was roughly the same (2019: £2,045). However, in 2019, Church House hosted ten regular groups, whereas, in 2022, there were only six regular groups, and thus hire income from regular bookings decreased by just over £1,100 (2022: £2,997).

It is also interesting to note that our cleaning costs and energy costs have more than doubled, and insurance is now £300 more expensive, when compared with 2019.

Compared with last year, total hire income increased from £2,774.61 in 2021 to £4,948.45 in 2022, which shows the effect Covid was still having in 2021.

Church House continues to run a 100 Club, which is a great help in contributing towards increasing energy costs (which will again increase over the coming years as we reach the end of fixed contracts). Net income from the 100 Club was £480. Thank you as always to 100 Club members.

In March 2022, we received our last Covid-related government grants, totalling £3,917. The committee is seeking to spend the grant money received on capital projects, rather than on running costs.

Looking at expenditure, in addition to usual running costs of just over £4,600, around £500 was spent in 2022 on repairs, and around £900 on improvements to the facilities, including the exterior security lighting, electrical work to provide a Wi-Fi connection to hall users, and a contribution to shelving for the very well-used Foodshare project. The hall is also now home to a defibrillator on the outside wall, which cost £2,561 to install.

Total income for the year was £10,094.53 (2021: £20,847.26) and total expenditure was £9,477.52 (2021: £6,207.07) giving a surplus of £617.01. The end-of-year balance was £32,413.35.

**Ben Grundy**

## CHURCHWARDEN

In 2022 our congregation continued to pull together and to be both cohesive and inclusive. As the effects of the Covid pandemic gradually diminished during the year we were determined that we would ensure that the added challenge of being "in vacancy" would not hamper our work and witness. We hope that visitors and new members always receive a warm welcome. Numbers attending our services have stayed at pre-pandemic levels and in some cases have grown which is very much against the national trend.

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. Having the church open for private prayer has been a great comfort to many. Just seeing the "Welcome" sign on the church door is a reminder that God is always there at the heart of whatever we are doing. 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 further progress has been made on the work highlighted in our quinquennial report; our building could not have been in better hands.

The diocese asks that we "live and tell the story" in our community and we continue to do this. We are pleased that "Foodshare" runs out of Church House and is an invaluable provision to many families. Other outreach events like our outdoor Easter Garden event for children on Easter Saturday, Harvest Festival and Church Open Day, Remembrance Service in November and Christmas Tree Festival, Carol Service and Christingle and Crib service on Christmas Eve ensure that the village sees the church at the heart of the community.

The parish profile and advert for our new Priest-in-Charge was carefully prepared and we were delighted that in July the Rev. Rona Stuart-Bourne accepted the post. Her induction in November was a tremendous cause for celebration and we are looking forward to working under her leadership.

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

Bruton & Cary Deanery is one of eighteen deaneries in the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The Area Dean is Revd Kevin Rogers. Our benefice is entitled to elect three representatives to the Synod, which meets three times a year. Our representatives are currently Harold Clarke, Jacquie Hall and Linda Mumford; elections will shortly be held for the next three-year period. Linda also sits on the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group, which initiates and advises on proposals; ensures that members are adequately informed on questions raised and other matters of importance to the Deanery; prepares the agenda; and advises the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Group regarding the pastoral organisation of the Deanery – following careful consultation with deanery Synod, Clergy Chapter and the parishes concerned. There is a pastoral re-organisation process underway, which began in 2022 but is not yet concluded.

### Synod Meetings

The Ascension Day Deanery Service was held this year in St Mary's Bruton, and the first of the Synod meetings was held via Zoom, but the remainder were held in person at North Barrow Village Hall. In March Julia Hill, Diocesan Head of Deanery and Parish Support, explained the project "Enabling Ministries"., and the members were then asked to discuss a variety of questions: "What encourages you?", "Do you have any questions?", "Do you have any suggestions?" and finally "What next?" – the subsequent minutes revealed the variety of responses.

In June, Kevin Rogers and Rob Sage, the Area Lay Dean, spoke about the Deployment of Stipendiary Clergy and Re-imagining Ministries, noting that as a result of our Diocese's financial difficulties following the pandemic, the number of stipendiary clergy in the Diocese would have to be reduced by 28 to 150 and in our Deanery the number would have to be reduced by 1½ to 7.

In September an additional longer meeting was held on a Saturday morning, to which other members of the Deanery had been invited. The subjects covered included looking at where good things were happening in our communities, and where there was a struggle. Then the timetable for producing a Pastoral Reorganisation Plan for the Deanery was presented. Finally the Synod was asked to discuss how the laity could complement the clergy role as benefices enlarge.

In November the Synod heard more from Rob Sage about the criteria, timescales and feedback for Stipendiary Clergy Posts, which had come out of the 'extra' meeting that had been held in September. We also shared ideas of how the Church could support its communities during the cost of living crisis.

The Deanery did not ask parishes for any subscription payments in 2022, since there had been little expenditure in the previous twelve months.

Linda Mumford

## EVENTS COMMITTEE

Members of the committee are Anne Briggs, Margaret Curtis, John Fanning, Linda Mumford, Sandra Nichols, Jan Sharpless and Anne Salkeld. Thanks are due to them, their families and many other members of the congregation whose energy and enthusiasm contribute to these events.

Our first event of 2022 was in April with Opera Refreshments marking a welcome return of the Opera after the Pandemic and raising £120. The Village Fete was held at the beginning of June and the Events Committee provided the Cream Teas and raised £317. Open Gardens and Cream Teas followed in late June, a lot of hard work on posters and maps produced by Linda extended the number of gardens. There was a lot of enthusiastic feedback about the event and £475 was raised.

The Church Fete took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Trevor John opened the fete with an update on the progress of our Churchyard Rewilding scheme and we raised £2284 after expenses.

The committee also provided refreshments during Gift Day and the Christmas tree Festival; the amount raised was not logged separately.

We have started to plan 2023, the fete will be on Saturday 15 July and Open Gardens on 17<sup>th</sup> June.

**Anne Salkeld**

## FOODSHARE

Milborne Port Foodshare has been in operation for almost two years. It is staffed entirely by volunteers and food is distributed on Thursday afternoons from the hall at Church House. The project benefits greatly from having the use of the Susan Parsons room for safe storage of the food and of the hall for one session per week.

The project receives funding from Sherborne Food Bank each month for the purchase of non-perishable food and additionally receives fresh fruit and vegetables weekly. The shopping of non-perishables and the collection of fruit and vegetables are done by volunteers. The project is about to establish its own bank account for the transfer of funds from the Food Bank once expenditure has been evidenced.

Elaine Ennis-Bunt has been approached about becoming a Sherborne Food Bank Trustee and this is expected to be ratified on March 9<sup>th</sup>. This development will allow Foodshare to be party to developments underway within the Food Bank and also to have access to advice and expertise on food poverty and its alleviation in this area.

The project is currently benefitting from a grant from Milborne Port Parish Council which is used to buy a small number of ready-meals and baby milk each week. It is hoped that a further grant application will be successful later in the year. Recently a financial donation from Church House Trustees was gratefully received.



From the outset the project has received 'use by' and 'best by' food from the Coop which is collected by volunteers on three evenings a week. Additionally, Coop staff collect the Coop stamps donated by the public and when these reach £50 in value, they donate items of food. Donations from the public that have been placed in the Food Bank/Foodshare basket are collected at intervals throughout the week.

Donations from members of the congregation at St John's are collected weekly from the hamper at the back of the church.

The local agent from Somerset Council advises the project on governance and policy matters and also alerts us to grant aid when it is available. In the past year a grant from South Somerset Council has been used to pay the public liability insurance and to buy shelving for the storage of food plus other equipment.

The number of people using the project has grown steadily. The vast majority live in the Milborne Port area with a few in Milborne Wick and adjacent areas. Around 20-25 people attend the distribution sessions on Thursday afternoons in Church House and they are catering for upwards of 40 adults and 25 children ranging in age from a few weeks to 17 years of age. Additionally, the project supplies fresh fruit to Milborne Port Primary School for Key Stage 2 children who do not receive the subsidised fruit offered to Key Stage 1 pupils.

The project is constantly evolving and volunteers are all actively involved in making decisions about the running of the project including the fair allocation of items within the fixed budget. Feedback from people using the project is very positive. Project users spontaneously tell volunteers of their struggles to buy food and their appreciation what is supplied and the friendly approach of volunteers.

**Elaine Ennis-Bunt**

## MILBORNE PORT MAGAZINE

Strong teamwork keeps the magazine appearing each month and popping through the letterboxes of more than 500 homes in Milborne Port and Milborne Wick. Our team of distributors is organised by Richard and Liz Redman, who do a wonderful job in collating each "paper round", taking in the annual subscriptions and also keeping the retail outlets supplied with copies. Robin Bawtree efficiently manages our advertising and keeps a watchful eye on our accounts, while Linda Mumford collects and edits the contributions of the community and does the page setting.

The Magazine has continued to thrive and to provide a service to the community in the last twelve months. The number of advertisers has reduced slightly with the closure of some village businesses, and this has enabled us to have an extra editorial page for a few months, which has been very useful, as contributions continue to flow in from individuals and organisations in the village and beyond. The content, we hope, is varied and useful.

We would like to thank our amazing retired clergy, the Churchwardens and Susan Wales as PCC secretary, all of whom have provided introductory letters for the magazine during the vacancy, and we of course welcome Rev Rona who now shares her thoughts with the village each month in her parish letter.

We always try to give back when we have sufficient balance in our account, and in the past year we have been able to give donations to the PCC, the DEC Ukraine appeal, the Food Share, the Spirit of Milborne Port group, and to provide the cash prize for the Grand Draw, as well as funding the draw tickets. The Milborne Port Calendars, created from the cover photographs for each month, have again been popular (total raised tbc).

We would love to increase our circulation further, particularly in the newer parts of the village. If you have new neighbours, please do check with them if they would like to have a magazine delivered each month. It is still great value at 45p per copy.

**Linda Mumford**

## SAFEGUARDING

The PCC continues to take its Safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and has complied with the duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding. Safeguarding is a standing item on each PCC agenda. In 2022 there were no safeguarding incidents, but we remain vigilant and aware that safeguarding issues can arise in any parish. Nicki Edwards is the Parish Safeguarding Officer and she also acts as the Benefice Safeguarding officer – she has completed the Church of England leadership in safeguarding course.

**Nicki Edwards**

## WORSHIP COMMITTEE

For the first eleven months of the year, we were in vacancy. During that time we were incredibly fortunate to have had the support of our retired clergy, Brian McConnell, Diane Barrett, Frank Wright and Stuart Thomas, as well Becky Ayers-Harris, Chaplain of Godolphin School in Salisbury who lives in the village. They led our services brilliantly and as a result the numbers in our congregation have been maintained.

The Benefice Communion in January, on the theme of Candlemas was very well attended. During Lent there was a successful Lent course and our usual Lent lunch programme. Over 100 people attended on Mothering Sunday. The usual Holy week activities took place with slightly reduced numbers due to ongoing Covid concerns. However, Easter Sunday saw attendances rise back to a more normal level.

In May and July there were two further Benefice Communions, hosted at Charlton Horethorne and then Goathill. Both were held outside and well attended.

In early September we marked the death of Queen Elizabeth with two services and by hosting a book of condolence for the village. Our Harvest Service and Open Day, on the theme of "Childhood Memories" in the early autumn were very successful and really captured the spirit of our church. As always, our Remembrance Service was well attended and appreciated by the village community.

Christmas started early when we hosted the Christmas Tree festival for the village which began on "Light Up Night" on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November. The trees formed a beautiful back-drop for the joyous occasion of the induction of Rev Rona Stuart-Bourne as Priest-in-Charge of the Benefice on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The new Bishop of Bath and Wells, Rt Rev Michael Beasley led the service.

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 including the ever-popular Carol Service. The combined Crib and Christingle Service maintained its popularity this year being attended by over 35 children and 57 adults. The church was filled on Christmas morning with 92 adults and 18 children.

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

**Nicki Edwards**