

# **THE PARISH OF THE ITCHEN VALLEY**

**Incorporating the Parish Churches of  
St Mary's Avington, St Mary's Easton,  
St John's Itchen Abbas and St Swithun's Martyr Worthy**



**ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

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## 1. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The Parish of the Itchen Valley is part of the Diocese of Winchester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is:

Itchen Valley Parish Office  
St John's Church  
Itchen Abbas  
Winchester  
SO21 1BJ

The telephone number is (01962) 779845 and the office is open from 9 am to 1pm on weekdays. The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Itchen Valley is a Registered Charity No: 1133110.

The Churches of the Parish are St Mary's at Avington, St Mary's at Easton, St John the Baptist's at Itchen Abbas and St Swithun's at Martyr Worthy.

### **Ministry team:**

Rector	vacant
Assistant Priest	The Reverend Alex Pease
Licensed Lay Minister	Mr Gerry Stacey

### **Churchwardens:**

St Mary's Avington	vacant
St Mary's Easton	Theo Mezger, Vanessa Rosewell
St John's Itchen Abbas	Tony Gaster
St Swithun's Martyr Worthy	Andrew Impey, Robin Greenwood

### **Deanery Synod Representatives** (elected in 2017 for 3 years):

Martyr Worthy	Gerry Stacey
Easton	David Anderson
Itchen Abbas	Tony Gaster
Avington	Sarah Shirley

### **Elected members of the PCC:**

Penny Russell (Avington), David Poole (Easton), Verity Coleman (Martyr Worthy)

### **Elected Alternates** (serve as deputies for the relevant PCC member in his or her absence):

Sarah Shirley (Avington), Jill Croft (Easton), Vernon Tottle (Itchen Abbas) Amanda Seymour (Martyr Worthy)

Hon Secretary: Verity Coleman

Hon Treasurer: David Anderson

## 2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) for the Parish of the Itchen Valley is the governing body for the Parish. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules and the Parish Scheme.

The PCC met six times during 2017. The PCC was supported by a Standing Committee and a Finance Committee.

There are four District Church Councils (DCCs), one for each District centred on the Churches of the Parish. All the DCCs met regularly during 2017.

All regular Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC and DCCs.

The Constitution of the Parish of the Itchen Valley and supporting Policy Guidance document can both be found on the parish website.

## 3. AIMS AND PURPOSES

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the **Rector**, to promote in the Ecclesiastical Parish and the area of the Itchen Valley, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It is the duty of the Rector and the PCC to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish.

## 4. OBJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our churches and to become part of our parish community. The Ministry Team and PCC all acknowledge the need to consider public benefit in planning activities and guidance on the advancement of religion.

## 5. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The report from the Ministry team and the churchwardens' report set out some of the highlights of the parish's achievements and performance in 2017.

		Average attendance		
		2017	2016	2015
8.00 am		8	8	10
10.00 am	Parish Communion	36	38	n.a
	All Age Worship	63	62	29
	Valley Worship	72	n/a	n/a
	<i>10.00 am average</i>	42	39	40
11.00 am	Matins	18	30	n.a
6.00pm	Evensong	13	12	17
	Christmas Eve & Day	509	579	531
	Easter Day	370	178	185
		Number of services		
	Baptisms	1	8	7
	Weddings	5	3	8
	Funerals	7	12	8

These figures exclude the much higher numbers attending special services such as the Remembrance service or patronal festival services.

## 6. ELECTORAL ROLL

There are 218 names on the 2017 Electoral Roll for the Parish, of whom 28 live outside the parish. This is an increase of 2 on 2016.

## **7. REPORT ON THE FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS OF THE CHURCHES**

### ***St Mary's, Avington***

The main undertaking in 2017 was the repair of the churchyard wall which was successfully completed by Lydia Gould. A Health and Safety concern over the suitability of the storage chest in the ringing chamber of the tower was identified. It was considered that there was a serious risk of injury. As a result we have put in place a short term remedy and are investigating the possibility of having a purpose built cupboard. We have contacted the DAC for advice. An electrical inspection has revealed some areas that need repairs or improvements and quotations are being sought. A quinquennial inspection was undertaken in October and the report has just arrived for consideration.

### ***St Mary's, Easton***

Major repairs took place in December 2017 to the chancel parapet wall and dormer access hatch. Vegetation and loose mortar on the chancel parapet wall was removed and repaired with lime mortar, open joints were repointed and the joints between the coping stones were repointed too. A leak in the dormer access hatch had caused decay to the structural timbers, most notably to the cill and vertical post, causing the dormer structure to drop. Rotten timbers were replaced plus new lead on the dormer roof and the gutter bay. On further investigation it was found that the main wooden beam across the chancel was partially rotten and not resting on anything by the access hatch, and the flint wall had been slowly washed away. A new piece of timber was spliced into the beam and the flint wall repaired to support the wall plate timber. Other works carried out were repainting of the gutters and downpipes and lopping off branches of a laurel and yew tree that had become entwined. The plans for a small extension on the north side of the church are moving forward with a visit from the Diocesan Advisory Committee who have endorsed in principle the early design we have proposed. It will contain a lavatory, kitchenette, small meeting room and disabled access.

### ***St John's, Itchen Abbas***

Some small works have been needed in the church; a new water heater in the lavatory and two new light fittings. Outside a new level switch was fitted to the cess pit and the fence adjoining the cottages re-fixed with new posts. There is nothing outstanding from the quinquennial inspection. A project to upgrade the path and lighting has passed planning consent and now awaits DAC approval. A project to try and improve the car park is expected to start in the spring.

### ***St Swithun's, Martyr Worthy***

There were no major repairs in 2017. A quinquennial inspection took place in November. The report has only recently been received and Martyr Worthy DCC is currently considering it.

## **8. REPORT FROM THE RECTOR**

Change. We cannot escape it. Like the River Itchen which flows through the heart of our community, nothing ever remains the same for very long. At the beginning of 2017, we had a full time stipendiary rector, a full time stipendiary curate, and a part time self supporting minister, but as I write in March 2018, reflecting on our parish year of 2017, we now find ourselves with only one remaining! But we serve an unchanging God and I am reminded of the words in Paul's letter to the Philippians Chapter 1 verse 6: "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ". What God has started in the Itchen Valley Parish, He will continue, using resources which He has at His fingertips – using us all as His hands and feet.

So I think we should celebrate 2017 as a year in which fantastic foundations were laid by gifted and committed clergy and lay people alike. Last year we said goodbye to Revd. Rebecca Fardell, who left the parish after completion of her curacy here in April 2017. In February 2018 our Rector Revd. Amanda Denniss left us after just under three years leading the parish. We are sad to see them go. They have both made a huge contribution to the development of the parish and made a considerable difference to many peoples' lives here. We were fortunate to have them both working with us and they will be a difficult act to follow.

As the Parish changes so does the Deanery. During 2017 the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee has been discussing a Deanery Mission Action Plan which envisages a major reduction in the number of clergy throughout our area and may also involve consolidation of benefice and parish boundaries. Key to our future is going to be the concept of 'focal ministry' local lay people being encouraged to be more involved in leading services rather than relying solely upon the clergy to lead them all and being able to cope at our level with the regulatory demands on safeguarding, health and safety, finance, and data protection placed upon a modern church. Whilst we are obviously very keen to retain our independence in Itchen Valley, we will need to be willing to give time to be involved more in these discussions and in a greater level of co-operation with our neighbours than has hitherto been the case. I am confident that I can rely upon your help in achieving this.

We are extremely fortunate to have so many people who have done so much for our Parish during the course of the year. The churchwardens in particular, under the leadership of Andrew Impey, have carried an immense burden. It is a big responsibility at the best of times to look after four ancient buildings and their churchyards, to raise money to maintain them and to put together everything needed for our variety of services, but of course, at the end of 2017, the churchwardens have had the additional burden of the responsibility of the parish as it moves into the vacancy. It's a lot of work. There are a lot of meetings, and it takes leadership, patience and understanding of others to get the job done without conflict. It takes character. We are so grateful to them all for achieving what needed to be done with the minimum fuss and great enthusiasm.

In each village there are so many people who do such important jobs, upon whom we are completely dependent. Our wonderful vergers Vernon Tottle, Sarah Shirley, Sara Janssen and Simon Ffennell and the sidesmen and women in each village make the services happen. But also we have our readers, intercessors, eucharistic assistants, flower arrangers, cleaners, bell ringers, coffee rota people and gardeners – all who make the church what it is. That does not even include all our committee members, the PCC members, DCC members, our PCC Secretary Verity Coleman, our Health and Safety Officers, co-ordinated by David Parker, our Safeguarding officers, led by Sarah Hunt, and our Data Protection Officer, Gerry Stacey. I will not name them all individually. They know who they are. They are hugely appreciated. Thank you.

However, I do want to say something particular about Vernon Tottle. Vernon's efficiency and hard work in organising the chairs at St John's, which are in perpetual motion because of the many uses to which that building is put every week, and his efficiency in preparing vestry sheets and porch sheets monthly and checking over Church Matters, is at the central core of what we do. It's just so essential and makes life so much easier for whoever is leading the parish. We are so grateful to him. Vernon, you make an enormous contribution. Thank you.

I would also like to thank Lucy Pease our Parish Administrator who I think has been totally wonderful (but then I would say that wouldn't I?). She has established the job of Parish Administrator in our parish and made the move to a professional paid administrator logical and possible. Such a move will revolutionise the way in which we conduct ministry in the Valley by taking a huge burden off the Rector enabling the sort of pastoral and prophetic ministry that we are all hoping for in the future. Lucy has been the pioneer. She has done much more than most of us know in keeping the parish running smoothly and done it with great humour and friendliness. We are so grateful to her and thank her now that she has stepped down to hand over to Beccy Clark.

Thank you also to Gerry Stacey our Licensed Lay Minister has been so helpful in leading services, speaking about the Night Shelter and helping to lead the Way of the Cross, and to Revd Jan Brookshaw who has been so willing to lead services.

Our Sunday services are the main place where we regularly meet as a church community to worship God and encourage one another. In 2017 we have been using a number of different organists found by Lucy Pease every month. We have been unable to find a Director of Music to replace David Truslove and so it looks as if we will continue to use a range of organists in 2018, now kindly organised by Charlotte Appleby. At our All Age services, the worship band led by David Parker has gone from strength to strength with an increasing repertoire of modern worship songs and now includes four to five adults as well as a number of teenagers.

As Christians, we live out our faith both in worship and service in the church and in serving our local community across the generations. In order to reflect the variety of ministries in which our church is engaged, we have asked for separate reports from the teams involved in CAMEO, Little Rainbows, Free to Be, UTX and The Ark and The Bereavement Journey.

We have a growing relationship with the schools in our parish: Itchen Abbas Primary School (IAPS), Prince's Mead School and the nursery school, Riverbank. We take assemblies on a regular basis at IAPS and more occasionally at Prince's Mead. IAPS uses St John's church for some of their class assemblies as it gives them plenty of space for both children and parents. Our UTX is built around successive cohorts from IAPS but also includes those from other local schools.

Our pMAP (Parish Mission Action Plan) has been the framework for much of our mission over the last year. At the Diocesan Synod Conference in September 2013 four Strategic Priorities for Mission (SP1-4) were agreed. These set the agenda for the work of the Diocese and our pMAP encapsulates our response to these priorities in the Itchen Valley. Below I am going to look at each of our four Strategic Priorities to let you know how we are getting along. The priorities are grouped under four headings which reflect the priorities of our diocese.

### **SPI: We grow authentic disciples**

This priority acknowledges that many of us do not feel confident in sharing our faith with others and would welcome being equipped to do this more effectively. As a church, we want to invest in our discipleship so that we can be encouraged, motivated and confident in sensitively sharing our faith. In 2018 we need to build on what we have done in the past few years.

We have been running Youth Alpha for our UTX teenagers during 2017. This has been taken up so enthusiastically that there have been reports of some of our young people running to the event on Sunday morning! We need now to establish a regular course for people to deepen and discover their discipleship and we will be giving thought to this as we move forward.

### **SP2: We re-imagine the church**

We want to continue to value and cherish our existing congregation and to strengthen our relationships with all who live and work in our community. Over the year, a particular focus was improving our connection with families and young people.

Over this last year, we have seen a slight increase in the number of people attending our All Age Worship, up to an average of 63 in comparison with 62 in 2016

We estimate that we have about 14 families coming to each service out of the 49 families that we are in regular contact with. Each family is emailed ahead of each All Age service. The average attendance at these services is 44 adults and 19 children under 16.

#### ***All Age Services 2017***

<b>Average Attendance</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Itchen Abbas</b>	14	36	51
<b>Easton</b>	26	54	81
<b>Martyr Worthy</b>	13	33	45
<b><i>Itchen Valley Parish average</i></b>	<i>19</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>63</i>

#### ***Valley Worship***

In 2017, Revd Amanda Denniss initiated an entirely new service at St Mary's Easton. Held on the third Sunday of the month, this service is named 'Valley Worship'. The aim is to attract a younger adult element to a more informal service with more substantial teaching than is possible at the All Age Worship, at a service which is not eucharistic, and which would have a more modern worship feel to it than the usual Parish Communion. During 2017 two Valley Worship services were held. Congregants were welcomed with croissants, and children and UTXers attended the Ark and UTX Sunday Morning respectively (the latter running Youth Alpha) while the adults enjoyed informal worship, prayer, a Bible reading and preaching but also a session entitled Everyday Lives in which someone was interviewed on how they managed their lives at work as a Christian. These initial services were well attended with an average of 72 people attending including an average of 21 children. Valley Worship has continued successfully in 2018.

At the other end of the age scale we repeated The Bereavement Journey course again in 2017 (see separate note below).

### **SP3: We are agents of social transformation**

The focus of this priority is on sharing the love of Jesus in practical ways both in our local community and beyond. Our original aim was to establish small discipleship groups with a mission focus. These discipleship groups would meet together to read the Bible, pray and support one another. Each group would have an outward focus e.g. night shelter, local schools, elderly. These groups were not initiated in 2017 but we hope to take some steps towards building these groups in 2018.

However, during 2017, at Revd Amanda Denniss's initiative, we conducted the Who Cares Survey in Itchen Valley. This was a very significant exercise involving 283 returns; over half of the houses in the Valley (approximately 500) took part. We discovered a great deal about 'What hurts the most' in our community. Our greatest challenges are in the area of relationships (with neighbours but also with family) (altogether over 40% of our population reported that this hurt the most). Secondly negative emotions (16%), issues of injustice (14%), physical suffering (11%), bereavement (8%), loneliness (5%) and money (4%). It was a huge privilege to be invited into heart of our community in this way and a mark

of the high regard in which the church is held that it was possible. We have focused two talks at regular services on the issues which arise entitled: 'finding hope when relationships are difficult', 'finding hope when I feel blue' which address the two most commonly felt areas of pain: relationships and negative emotions. These talks were well publicised in advance in the Itchen List and then recorded and published on the Parish Website and had a significant number of hits. We will continue to use this material to inform our approach to social transformation in the parish.

This priority also recognises the importance of rooting everything we do both within the church and the local community in prayer. Prayer is where we listen to God speaking to us and share our hearts with him for his kingdom to come in our lives and in the lives of the people we are praying for. Prayer is key to sharing the love of Jesus in practical ways.

We have had two regular prayer places where we met to pray together midweek which reflect different worship and prayer styles. On Mondays, we meet for Midday Prayer which is a more formal way of praying using a simple liturgy. Midday Prayer is at 12 noon and we meet at St John's Itchen Abbas. On Tuesday mornings during term time during 2017 we held an informal prayer meeting at 9am at St John's Itchen Abbas (coffee at 8.30am). We sang worship songs and prayed in an informal way. One of the focuses of our prayers was for our children and youth and the local schools. Both Midday Prayer and Informal Prayer are open to all. Both have a small number of people who regularly attend. Our Tuesday morning prayer has now been succeeded by a Wednesday lunch time informal session.

#### **SP4: Stewardship and generous giving**

This priority recognises our need to increase our level of regular giving to match our running costs and to allow us to expand our outreach and mission. Our aim is to establish a stewardship programme that helps us to be motivated both individually and corporately to contribute to the financial and practical ministry of our church.

I would like to thank everyone who has worked so hard this year to raise funds for our church. David Anderson, our Treasurer deals separately in his report with our progress in increasing our regular giving to match our running costs. This year we have continued to focus on asking regular givers to move to the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) as this will save our Bookkeeper, Madeline Quest-Ritson, a considerable amount of work. Many of our regular givers have not yet made the transition and we would encourage everyone to do this.

In conclusion, we have an amazing parish and community in the Itchen Valley and it is a delight to live and work here. But from the Who Cares survey we conducted during the summer we know that there are significant areas of pain. As Christians we know that it is only through a relationship with Jesus Christ that we humans can really flourish and we need to find a way in which we can bring the benefit of the relationship that we have with Him to bear on the pain and suffering in our community, to those who do not know Him. But we need to do this with kindness, gentleness and respect, recognising the close relationships that we have in our community with our neighbours. It is an exciting challenge for the future!

*Revd. Alex Pease, Assistant Priest, Itchen Valley Parish*

**CAMEO** (Come and meet each other) takes place once a month on the third Tuesday, in St. John's, Itchen Abbas. There is a short communion service, followed by a two-course lunch for the over 65s. It had another happy and successful year in 2017 and now caters for between 36 and 40 people, consisting of 25-30 guests and about 10 helpers. At the Christmas Lunch for nearer 50 we again had the pleasure of being entertained by some of the children from Itchen Abbas School singing carols. CAMEO is fully self-supporting with donations from our guests. Thanks to these donations, and to the generosity of our helpers in donating most of the food, we have been able to add to the equipment that is available to other users of St John's and to contribute a top-up for winter fuel. During the year, I have completed a hygiene course and revised procedures have been introduced for the serving of food. We are extremely grateful to the Ministry Tea whose input at our services and during the lunch is invaluable. We are also enormously grateful to Vernon Tottle for organising the chairs and tables so efficiently for us each month. The CAMEO Committee have again done a fantastic job and deserve so much praise for the support and enthusiasm that they give to this project.

*Lavinia Owen*

#### **Valley Visitors**

The Church recognises the importance of the support for the lonely and needy which was previously so well provided by The Pastoral Visitors. The idea is to see this outreach activity renewed and enlarged, while keeping a watching brief on it, with the ability to offer prayers and other pastoral services as required. I was asked to form a group, now known as Valley Visitors and Friends to take this forward. We now have some twenty volunteers. Much of the last quarter of 2017 was spent establishing ground rules and getting safeguarding and data protection under way, but the members of the group continued to visit and support as friends. We expect to be fully operational by the end of the first quarter of 2018.

*Lavinia Owen*

## **Free To Be**

Free to Be was a group for people who live with the challenges of emotional health issues, such as depression or anxiety, to meet and share their experiences. It has been running for three years, 2017 being its final year, with six regular members and one occasional member. During 2017 the group met every Wednesday during term time from 9.30-11.00 at St John's Church, Itchen Abbas. The group was a church initiative and was fully supported in prayer from within the group and also by the clergy of the parish.

After much consideration, reflection and prayer it was decided at the end of 2017 to bring Free to Be to a close. This was for a number of reasons: first, due to the resignation of the Rector this sensitive area of ministry was without legal oversight; second, we felt the group had run its course reflected in declining attendance; third, a growing understanding that we as leaders were not fully able to meet the important and present needs of some of the attendees at that particular time, who had become increasingly unwell; fourth, there were a couple of members who were experiencing good recovery from their difficulties and were beginning to find new ways to live life with the possibility of employment, which was great news and of course the whole point.

The area of mental health is a very important part of ministry and when the way looks clearer for the parish we will consider new ventures to incorporate the needs of those in the parish who suffer in this way. In the meantime, we have given all the attendees a list of organisations, services and societies for any additional support that they might feel they need. The friendships formed through Free to Be within the parish will continue on an informal basis, but will no longer be under the authority of the church during the vacancy.

*Lucy Pease and Susie Brine*

## **UTX**

As part of our ministry to our young people we hold UTX meetings approximately twice a month during term time; UTX meets for social activities one evening a month. In July we held the annual summer activity which this year involved tenpin bowling followed by ice-cream, and in January we held our annual movie night in St. Johns. Other sessions include craft activities and games, in addition to a new 'Big Questions' slot where we discuss faith-related topics put forward by our young people. The morning session continues to give our young people further opportunities to explore their faith, and in the autumn we started the new Youth Alpha series which uses discussion to share thoughts and ideas on questions relating to life and faith.

*Kelly Maltby*

## **The Ark**

The Ark has continued to meet during term time, teaching our children about the bible so that they learn about Jesus' life and teachings. This year we have welcomed Claire Hunt and Katherine Impey to our group of leaders which has been a huge help, especially as we have seen a gradual increase in numbers attending. We are also grateful to Sara and Frits Janssen who let us use Dymoke House when we are at Easton. As part of their learning our children have made many craft items and we have also enjoyed them sharing what they have learnt when they return to church at the end of the services. Remembrance Sunday is always particularly well attended, and Suzannah Duke and Sarah Turner have become experts in producing wonderful creations to mark this occasion. We are also enjoying music and singing songs, and we were really blessed by a song that Emily Brine recently taught us. Enormous thanks must go to all the helpers and leaders who make this work possible.

*Tim Clapp*

## **Bereavement Journey**

Elaine Labram and Sally Clarke ran the Bereavement Journey again in 2017. The course is a series of filmed sessions, and was presented in St John's Church. It was attended by five people in total and ran over five weeks. Everyone who attended seemed to find it thought provoking and helpful with an excellent on-screen presenter and full course notes.

*Elaine Labram*

## **9. CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT**

We are happy to report that 2017 has again been a successful and busy year in the life of our parish.

We would first like to warmly welcome all those who are new to the Parish, including the many young families and those from outside the Parish who have chosen to worship with us.

We would like to pay tribute to our ministry team in 2017 led by our now departed Rector, Amanda Denniss, who was assisted by Alex Pease, Assistant Priest, and up to April 2017 Rebecca Fardell, Assistant Curate, and supported by Gerry Stacey, our Licensed Lay Minister, and Jan Brookshaw. We are grateful for all that they did and were truly blessed to have

them. We thanked Rebecca in last year's report and many of us went to her induction as Vicar of Sunnyside, Berkampstead and Bourne End. In October Amanda announced that she would be resigning as our Rector in the New Year. She took her last service on 14<sup>th</sup> January this year, when we thanked her for all that she has done for us in nearly three years with us and wished her well for the future. She and Oliver left the Rectory on 9<sup>th</sup> February, following which the Parish has entered into a Vacancy until a new Rector is appointed. In the meantime, the Churchwardens are responsible for running the parish and we have delegated much of the day-to-day responsibility to Alex Pease. It is also planned to rent out the Rectory.

In addition, and most importantly, we would like to thank the many people who volunteered to:

- serve on the Parish Church Council and its committees and our District Church Councils and their secretaries
- act as vergers, sacristans and bankers of cash
- organise the finding of organists in the absence of a full time organist
- help at services whether as sidesmen, lesson readers, intercessors, chalice or eucharistic assistants, bell ringers, members of the band, helping with young children, and those who make and serve coffee, and all their co-ordinators
- help with church cleaning, flower arranging and opening and locking up the churches, and again all their co-ordinators
- keep our churches and churchyards in good condition
- keep the Electoral Roll
- act as pastoral visitors
- help with CAMEO, Little Rainbows, The Ark, UTX, the Bereavement Journey and Free to Be
- organise fund raising and other events
- guide us on important administrative items such as health & safety, safeguarding and data protection

It has always been and remains one big team effort and we are truly appreciative of all that you have done. We thank you.

Given all the resources at our disposal, we were pleased to be able to sustain a minimum of three church services each Sunday during 2017 spread across our four churches in a regular pattern of worship which our congregation appreciated. As set out in the parish profile agreed at the time of Amanda's appointment and in recognition that the Church of England is a broad church, with a balance of traditional and more family-orientated services, we aimed to offer worship across a wide spectrum and so both maintain a wide appeal and attract younger people, which is so important if we are to be a vibrant and growing rural parish.

We are blessed with beautiful and well-maintained churches and are pleased that we are able to keep them open daily and to use them for regular and festive worship and other events. It is gratifying to see from the visitors' books how many people visit and appreciate our churches. This is in large part due to the four District Church Councils, who have delegated responsibility for the upkeep and general maintenance of the churches and churchyards, together with the large number of people who provide additional support.

We assisted the Rector and her ministry team with implementing our Parish Mission Action Plan as part of Bishop Tim's Strategic Priorities for Mission. As mentioned two years ago, this has led to various initiatives including a renewed focus on attracting more families and younger parishioners to our churches. These initiatives have been more fully detailed in the Rector's reports for this and last year. We would also like to thank everyone who got involved in organizing or participating in the Who Cares initiative which is reported on in the Rector's report.

We would once again like to thank both Lucy Pease, our Parish Administrator, and Madeline Quest-Ritson, our Parish Bookkeeper, for all their hard work and help. Subsequent to the year end Lucy has had to resign as our part time Parish Administrator in order to take care of her infirm mother. We are incredibly grateful to Lucy for all that she has done setting up the Parish Office, with help from John Bouldin, in July 2015 shortly after Amanda's arrival and for running the office, or Parish Hub as it is known, during the last two and half years as an unpaid volunteer. We all owe her an enormous debt of thanks for all her efforts and for devoting so much time to the Parish. In Lucy's place, we are delighted to welcome Beccy Clark who started on 20<sup>th</sup> February as a paid Parish Administrator and who has got off to a good start.

We have been, and will continue to be, entirely dependent upon our wonderful volunteers in doing the various jobs that they do including Verity Coleman who offered to become PCC Secretary, David Parker who is our Health & Safety Coordinator, Sarah Hunt who offered to become our Safeguarding Officer, Gerry Stacey who has agreed to become our

Data Protection Officer and Charlotte Appleby who offered to co-ordinate finding organists after our Director of Music left. In addition, we would also like to thank Alex Pease once again for his work in ensuring that the parish website is kept up to date. The website continues to become an increasingly important way of communicating our message to the wider public, showcasing our events and activities as well as hosting the Itchen Valley diary. We encourage you to use it.

The work of the Parish is reflected in the wide range of activities which take place. Notable events included the annual Way of the Cross Service and our Patronal Services and parties. The many regular Parish activities are mentioned in the Rector's report.

With a focus on mission and outreach, and mindful of the importance of public benefit in the work of a charity, many of the activities of the parish continued to be directed towards the wider community and beyond:

- we supported a number of charities, including Winchester Night Shelter, Resurgo, Children's Society and the Winchester Basics Bank, through monetary donations from special collections, through donations in kind and by active involvement
- our pastoral visitors programme to support those in need, whether members of our congregation or not, has been restructured and will be relaunched as Valley Visitors on Palm Sunday 2018
- we continued to foster our links with local schools and playgroups
- we continued our support for Lango

2017 was a reasonable year for fundraising, but raised less than half that in 2016, as is reported in detail in the Financial Statement. These events in 2017 comprised: an Auction Evening in Easton, the second and third lectures in the 2016/17 Martyr Worthy lecture series, Southwood Players in Itchen Abbas, Classical Mayhem Easton for Easton Church's project and several smaller events. They not only make a significant contribution to our financial position but also provide a social dimension to our life as a parish and demonstrate that the congregation is active in the local community. Some are put on jointly with other organisations and may raise money for several charities as well as church funds. We are once again grateful for the energy and enthusiasm of fund-raising teams which makes this possible.

However, as David Anderson says in his Treasurer's Report, we also need to substantially increase the level of our regular giving from all those who worship regularly if we are to continue to have a priest in the future and keep our four churches open.

The churchwardens thank all those who contribute in many different ways to the work and smooth running of the parish.

Looking to the future, we look forward to appointing a new Rector in due course and keeping up the momentum and building on the successes of the last two years and pursuing new initiatives. Due to changes proposed at Deanery level, the future will also involve three changes:

- the post of Rector will in future be a half-time post and we shall not be getting a curate in the future. This will mean that we shall have to adjust to being a half-time post parish, including moving to having two rather than three services each Sunday.
- for these reasons, as well as the increasing administrative and regulatory burden of running a small rural parish, we need to free up our ministry team for pastoral work and appoint a paid administrator working five mornings a week who will take over many tasks and be the first point of contact in the parish, including being the point of contact for baptisms, marriages and funerals. This we have already addressed with the appointment of Beccy Clark. However, it also comes with a cost implication.
- we shall need to work with the clergy and laity in the Deanery to ensure that we have a creative strategy and plan for the future that is good for both us and the Deanery.

We also currently expect to be short of two churchwardens (out of eight) after the forthcoming APCM. If we are to continue to operate in the manner in which our Parish Scheme and Guidance Policy provide, we need to find volunteers for these positions and also to replace longer serving churchwardens in the future. Please could you consider whether you are willing to serve in this vital role? In addition, we still need to find a new organist.

## **10. DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

This parish has four elected lay members to synod, plus our clergy. The Rector also held a deanery appointment for one day per week on mission activity. Much of the focus of synod has been on mission action plans.

On 29<sup>th</sup> January we met for the usual Lango (the deanery overseas link) service in Alresford. Three people had visited Lango and were able to report on this and how our future links might develop.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> February a joint meeting with Alton was held at Old Alresford Place (OAP). The new cathedral Dean gave a presentation and financial reports were tabled. A revision to the make-up of the deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee was presented and accepted. There was a short presentation about Lango and how parishes should be encouraged to support this.

The second meeting was held on 4<sup>th</sup> May also at OAP. There was a presentation of the forthcoming “Thy Kingdom Come”. The main presentation concerned the archdeaconry mission action plan, given by two archdeacons and Phil Dykes.

The third meeting took place on 25<sup>th</sup> October in Four Marks together with Alton Synod. A presentation was given by +David which mostly concerned Alton. The two synods then divided and our presentation was about our deanery plan. We were asked to discuss this at PCC and feed back to Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee representatives. Financial reports and one about Lango were also given.

Many papers, which can be shared, have been given to members concerning mission action plans.

*Tony Gaster*

## **11. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The priority for 2016 was to further consolidate our processes and operate within our policies in a meaningful manner, within the constraints we have as a parish with the fabric consisting of four historic church buildings. In 2017 we have concentrated on training and dissemination of good practice as well as ensuring thought went into larger events.

I was particularly pleased by the constructive approach to the midnight candlelight mass which, through the efforts of the Easton team, resulted in an approach that retained its purpose and focus but alleviated many of the concerns of previous years.

The audit programme is working well and thanks to the diligence and efforts of the DCC H&S representatives and their PCC counterparts our track record of closure on corrective actions continues to be excellent. The audit programme is on track. I am very happy that the principal of cross auditing the Churches to bring fresh perspective is working well. My personal thanks go to them for their contribution, which is not visible to most, but essential.

Your DCC H&S reps are David Swinstead, Jacqui Squire, Vernon Tottle and Simon Ffennell. Fire drills have been carried out in all churches with no major issues and local improvements implemented. In general, I would again encourage others to help with clear communications to those members of our congregation who do not hear too well.

I would again emphasise to all that the H&S team do their best to create a safe environment for worship and the other uses for our churches. We try and do this without imposition or detracting from the welcoming culture we have in the valley. However, safety is the responsibility of all and we welcome any observations or suggestions and our collective will to look after each other especially those that sometimes need a little extra help or awareness.

*David Parker*

## **12. SAFEGUARDING**

About twenty new names have either received DBS certificates or are in the process between form filling and certificates arriving. Most of these are joining Valley Volunteers, others are churchwardens. The Diocesan guidelines for Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults are being followed.

*Sarah Hunt*