

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 2018

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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, tel (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	The Reverend Alex Pease
Licensed Lay Minister	Mr Gerry Stacey

Churchwardens:

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

*Elected but not formally appointed

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

Martyr Worthy	Gerry Stacey
Easton	Theo Mezger
Itchen Abbas	Tony Gaster
Avington	Tim Clapp

Elected members of the PCC:

Penny Russell (Avington), Jill Croft (Easton), Sarah Hunt (Itchen Abbas) Verity Coleman (Martyr Worthy)

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

Helen Wayne (Avington), David Poole (Easton), vacant (Itchen Abbas) Amanda Seymour (Martyr Worthy)

Hon Secretary: Verity Coleman

Hon Treasurer: Richard Coleman

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 eight times during 2018. The PCC was supported by a Standing Committee and a Finance Committee.

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

There are four District Church Councils (DCCs), one for each District centred on the churches of the Parish. All the DCCs met regularly during 2018.

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

3. AIMS AND PURPOSES

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Rector, to promote the whole mission of the Church - pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical - in the Ecclesiastical Parish and the area of the Itchen Valley. 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 2016.

		Average Attendance		
		2018	2017	2016
8.00 am		8	8	8
10.00 am	Parish Communion	44	36	38
	All Age Worship	54	63	62
	Valley Worship	43	72*	n/a
	<i>10.00 am average</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>39</i>
11.00 am	Matins	-	18	30
6.00 pm	Evensong	19	13	12
	Christmas Eve & Day	512	509	579
	Easter Day	169	220	178
		Number of services		
	Baptisms	10	1	8
	Weddings	4	5	3
	Funerals	15	7	12

*only two Valley Worship in 2017

6. ELECTORAL ROLL

There are 161 names on the 2019 Electoral Roll for the Parish, of whom 25 live outside the parish. This is a decrease of 63 on 2018.

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

St Mary's, Avington

The quinquennial inspection took place in 2018, including an inspection of the roof and void which had not taken place since 1997. This required scaffolding for safe access. The inspection has shown that a number of bricks in the parapet and roof area need to be replaced, most of which need to be made specially to shape. Some other roof work is also required. Preparation for this work is ongoing. Electrical wiring work for outside the building was undertaken in 2018, with more likely to be needed for replacement lighting inside the church in 2019. A cupboard more suitable for the storage of Avington's Vinegar Bible will be acquired in 2019. A Commonwealth War Graves Commission sign has also been fixed to gate of the graveyard on the other side of the road from the church telling people of the presence a WW1 war grave.

St Mary's, Easton

The major works of 2017 were completed in 2018. However, upon further inspection last autumn it was found that, whilst a substantial improvement, some ingress of water continues. The matter has been brought to the attention of the architect and the contractor and has yet to be resolved. The plans for the extension of St Mary's progress with the approval in principal of both Easton DCC and the PCC. Negotiations concerning improved disabled access via the adjacent track continue. We still await final approval of the path lighting scheme.

St John's, Itchen Abbas

No major works have been needed to the church itself. The big project for the year was to complete the long awaited path from the lychgate, together with new lighting. This now provides for easy access for wheelchairs or child buggies. Following a generous donation from the Humphrey family, a pilot project to improve the car park field was carried out. In recent years, the field has proved unusable at times, particularly after wet weather. The car park was laid with a plastic mesh a few years ago, but increased usage has limited the improvement achieved in wet weather. A trial area was laid with a further membrane and hard core and re-sown. A dry summer period restricted the grass growth but the trial has been sufficiently successful to encourage planning for a wider area of treatment. The DCC abandoned a project to have a chandelier due to cost. Some of the existing light fittings have been replaced, where possible with energy efficient fittings. The churchwardens and DCC have noted that increased use of the church raises some issues, including potential repairs and replacements and storage for these activities. A Commonwealth War Graves Commission sign has also been fixed to the lychgate telling people of the presence a WW1 war grave

St Swithun's, Martyr Worthy

As in 2017, there were no major repairs in 2018. Martyr Worthy DCC is still considering what work to do as a result of its quinquennial inspection that took place in November 2017. It has reviewed the report arising out of the inspection and drawn up a specification of works and, once it has gone out to tender and the quotes have been received back, a decision will be made as to what works it is proposed to carry out and appropriate authorisations will be applied for.

8. REPORT FROM THE RECTOR

Sometimes you just get a sense of something exciting being in the wind. Of course, it is Spring, as I write this report, but this is more than a rustle in the leaves and the buds forcing themselves out in to the still yet chilly air.

Indeed, I am reminded of the passage in Isaiah chapter 43: "Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the waters...Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert...for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise."

It has been a very exciting year. A year of change yes. But also, a year of growth and spiritual development for the people in Itchen Valley – a people 'chosen by God, formed for Himself so that they might declare His praise'.

The year started with Amanda Denniss's leaving service in mid-January and we went into a brief period of Vacancy. Then there were selection meetings and consultations, whilst you, the Itchen Valley community, through your representatives, determined who would be the next Rector of Itchen Valley Parish.

The main difference for the appointment this time round was that we were no longer able to make a full-time stipendiary appointment. The post of Rector of Itchen Valley Parish is now a half time appointment (with housing provided) and will be for subsequent appointments as well. The consequence of this reduction in the time to be worked by the appointed Rector, is a reduction in services in the Parish – an approach which is inevitable and consistent with what is happening all over the country for rural churches. Indeed, one of the principal tasks for the new rector was to help the Parish adapt to this reduced level of provision of services.

The Churchwardens and PCC asked me to stand as a candidate for this post (and I had a very significant amount of personal encouragement to do so from numerous people in all four villages) which I was very happy to do. Lucy and I have found it immensely rewarding to be working in this Parish and have enjoyed engaging with you all very much during my time as curate and assistant priest and so it did feel absolutely the right thing to do now that my training as a priest is over. I was delighted to be appointed.

However, as the post is part time (and in my case unpaid except for a small housing allowance) I have had to be highly disciplined about and monitor closely the amount of time that I spend on work for the parish. As I keep on having to remind myself, maintaining the boundaries and sticking to the agreed number of hours per week is actually part of my job, as the Parish adjusts to a part time model of ministry. The Churchwardens and PCC are very good at supporting me in this and we review how many hours of work over my contracted period I have done at each PCC meeting. Also, a number of people have taken on responsibility for things which might otherwise have been carried by me and this has been incredibly helpful.

But most challengingly, the Parish has had to get used to a new pattern of services to reflect the appointment of a part time non-stipendiary priest where previously there were two full time stipendiaries (the Rector and a curate) and a part time self-supporting minister (i.e. me) and two lay readers. Now we have one priest and one licensed lay minister. The challenge has been to get a fair balance across the whole Parish between traditional services and modern worship. We now have two Book of Common Prayer 8am Communion, two 10am Parish Communion, two Evensongs and two modern worship services (the Family Service and the Valley Worship service) in a normal month and a further Book of Common Prayer communion and a further Parish Communion in a five-week month. This balance reflects the preferences of two strong constituencies within the congregation, generally (but not always) the older and the younger members of our church community. Leading both types of worship is an important commitment which I made when I was appointed, and I cannot envisage a situation in which we would ever want to change that approach in the foreseeable future. However, I do recognise that not always having the service you prefer in the church building in your own village does require significant sacrifice from a number of members of the community, and I am very grateful for the selflessness of those concerned and the willingness of so many to move round to whichever is the church with the main service that Sunday regardless of worship style. In this particular case, I would like to say a particular thank you to Mark Stent whose good humour and cheerfulness in accepting whichever type of service is being offered, whether or not he prefers the style, is an example to all of us. I hope that I am as young at heart at 90, as he is.

A very significant development early in the year was the appointment of our professional Parish Administrator, Beccy Clark, with effect from February. This appointment has been completely game changing for the Parish. So many of you have commented so positively about Beccy's friendliness and helpfulness as she runs the Parish Hub in St John's Itchen Abbas. She is both calm and highly organised and delightful with it. She enables me to do much more of the pastoral and preaching tasks that you want me to do in the community, in the limited hours that I have available, because my time is not taken up with the burdensome administration which is part of modern life for a church community.

She is one reason why, despite the reduction in clergy over this year, I believe that the parish is as active as it was in 2017 and perhaps even more so. But it is not just Beccy; so many of you are taking responsibility for the things that we do as a church and I think enjoying doing so and doing a really good job of it as well. I think particularly of the Valley Visitors who are co-ordinated by Lavinia Owen. Lavinia during this year attended a Bishops Commission for Mission Course on Pastoral Care. We will be witnessing her commissioning shortly. Lavinia's leadership of this group has been outstanding. Every year we are learning more and more of how to do this kind of visiting better and making sure that neither duplication nor omissions occur. The enthusiasm, love and effort of the Valley Visitors for our more elderly residents is a touchstone of the sort of community that we are living in and want to live in.

Another reason that we have been able to be so active with a reduced clergy provision is the enthusiasm of our group of younger worshippers. They may not see themselves as being particularly young - but to me anyone under 50 is immensely youthful! I would like to say a particular thank you to Tim Clapp, James and Verity Greig, James and Julia Wright in this connection. Tim as leader of the Ark (his defining

words are 'it's all about having fun') has made a huge difference to the parish. He has contributed to the Band and helped to initiate our Light Party (at Halloween) and the Pancake Party (on Shrove Tuesday). Both of these parties have brought families into the church who would never usually attend on a Sunday. James and Verity Greig have been thoroughly involved in these two events as well. Julia and James Wright have given a huge amount of time effort and prayer to what we are doing in the Parish. Julia effectively now leads our weekly toddler group Little Rainbows and Julia and James have both run for us the Parenting Children Course and hope to run the Marriage Course before too long. James and Julia also lead our Wednesday Night Worship which is an informal charismatic worship and testimony evening held once a month at St John's Itchen Abbas which is gradually growing as it attracts people who enjoy this type of worship. David Parker continues to be the dynamo behind our parish band – such a huge amount of work goes into getting ready twice a month to lead our modern worship and we are so grateful for what he does. Thank you also to Chris Ellis for the support he has given us on the sound and IT side of things. As we improve the quality of technology so the Band will get better and better at drawing us into worship of God in our contemporary services.

It is not just in the area of our contemporary services that we have made new developments. Tim Tyler and Olivia Shields have initiated this year a new occasional group of singers: the Itchen Valley Parish Choir. This had its debut at our Remembrance Evensong to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Since then, we have held an Ecumenical Service of the Stations of the Cross with St Peter's Catholic Church in which the Choir sang excerpts from Stainer's Crucifixion. We hope that the Choir will be able to aid our worship at Pentecost and Advent this year.

We have been so busy during the year. Our regular pattern of services on Sundays is supplemented by a number of events during the week. In particular, our Little Rainbows toddler group which about a dozen children and their parents attend on Mondays. Thank you to Julia Wright, Sally Parker and Nora Haywood for making all the arrangements. Once a month our wonderful CAMEO lunch enables our older residents to meet and take communion under the leadership of Lavinia Owen with the support of her wonderful team. Also, once a month Kelly and Mike Gibson lead our UTX group for our teenagers – always good fun and a lot of discussion on some important issues about God, the universe and everything. Our new Wednesday Night Worship session once a month led by Julia and James Wright has provided a great opportunity to draw close to God and to receive intercessory prayer for a number of people in our community who enjoy that style of worship. Also, we hold an increasing number of home groups at the moment which meet at differing times. Thank you to John Bouldin, Beccy Clark and Theo and Judith Mezger for leading groups. We also have a new post Alpha group which Lucy and I lead.

Thank you also to all those who by their cooking and washing up have supported the courses during the week that we have run – the Alpha Course and the Parenting Children Course in particular. It's not just about our regular services and meetings. There are some special events which we have held this year which I would like to draw to your attention:

In March, we held numerous Easter services, including Easter school assemblies for both Princes Mead and Itchen Abbas Primary School in which the young children learned about 'Easter, Entropy and the Third Banana'. We held our annual Way of the Cross in church lane Martyr Worthy and then our Easter Sunday Services at Easton and Martyr Worthy.

In April, there was the simply wonderful licensing service in which I was appointed as your Priest in Charge (aka Rector) where the sense of support and encouragement for Lucy and myself amongst the congregation and community of Itchen Valley was palpable, even to visitors.

In mid-May, the Stewards Trust came to Itchen Valley for a youth event at which our UTX youth group were engaged and inspired.

During the year we have put together some major fund-raising events. In April, the Martyr Worthy Plant sale, in June, the Easton Duck Race, Martyr Worthy Gardens Open and the Avington Big Car Boot Sale, in August the Easton Village Fete, in September Flanders and Swan revisited at St Mary's Easton, in October the Marriage of Figaro at St John's Itchen Abbas, and in November the Martyr Worthy Lectures.

Thank you so much to all of you who were involved in these fantastic events which made a big difference to our balance sheet.

In September, we ran the Alpha Course for 9 evenings and one day. We started with a supper at which the course was introduced by me and also by Fr. Mark Hogan of St Peter's Catholic Church in Winchester marking the first of two ecumenical events run in the Valley during the last few months. All 12 guests managed to get to the end and some had some very significant encounters with God during the course.

In November, we held our annual Remembrance Service this time at St Swithun's Martyr Worthy and as I have mentioned above our Choral Remembrance Evensong. A feature of this year's services was the Lord's Prayer being read in English, French and German to mark the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War. Also, in November we held our annual All Souls Service to commemorate those close to us who have died. Our Ark Sunday school led by Tim Clapp put on a Light Party full of games and fun in Itchen Abbas which was packed out as parents chose an alternative to Halloween.

At Christmas we had our usual round of Carols in the Barn (thank you to the Stents in Avington this year and to Sonia Cragg who led the worship dressed as a cheese eating problem solving detective mouse) the Crib Service and Family Communion with the usual school nativities for Riverbank and Itchen Abbas Primary School. At the Crib Service we introduced a new drama written for us by Lou Lou Stirrup and narrated for us by Dan Day Robinson. St Mary's Easton was packed out as usual. A very busy time of year. But a joyful one!

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, under the leadership of Andrew Impey, have carried an immense burden. I am so grateful to Andrew, in particular, as he comes to the end of his tenure as a churchwarden. He has been an enormous support to me personally and has led the Parish during the incumbency of Amanda and during the vacancy with great wisdom and discernment.

Thank you to all the churchwardens. It is a big responsibility 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. There are so many 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 the them all for achieving what needed to be done with the minimum fuss and great enthusiasm.

My particular thanks to David Anderson who retired as Treasurer this year. David achieved great things in putting the Parish's finances back into shape over the last few years and we are so grateful for what he has done. Rolls Coleman is a worthy successor with huge experience in both the business world and charity sector. His wise counsel and that of our excellent Finance Committee are greatly reassuring. In each village there are so many people who do such important jobs, upon whom we are completely dependent. I would like to endorse the thanks given by the Churchwardens in their report and by the Treasurer in the financial review to everyone who does so much for our church community and our buildings. I think sometimes the less glamorous jobs in a church can feel less spiritual. However, putting the chairs out, hoovering the carpet, opening and closing doors, dusting, cleaning brasses, cooking and washing up and keeping the roof on is as much a spiritual job, as much a calling, because it enables people to worship God in our community and to have their lives transformed. What you do is important even if may not feel particularly exciting some of the time. Thank you so much!

Thank you also to Gerry Stacey our Licensed Lay Minister who has been so helpful advising me on many occasions and in leading services, leading courses and helping to lead the Way of the Cross. Thank you to the Clerical Register for the many clergy who have stepped in to fill for my absences and Sundays off – in particular Revd. Christopher Blissard-Barnes, Revd. Ron Corne and Revd. Jill Bentall. Thank you also to Liz Wilkinson who is the coordinator of the Clerical Register who so efficiently puts retired clergy in place for us just when we need them.

Our Sunday services are the main place where we regularly meet as a church community to worship God and encourage one another. In 2018 we have been using a number of different organists found by

Charlotte Appleby every month. 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 we look forward to new technology at St Mary's Easton to make our worship there of even higher quality.

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 they use 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. We have recently started the Open the Book series of assemblies at IAPS; these assemblies led by Sonia Cragg enable the children to learn the basic Bible Stories which are essential for their education.

Our pMAP (Parish Mission Action Plan) was the framework for much of our mission over the last year. However, it has now been necessary to have a review of it and we will be developing it over the course of the next few months. In February we held a day for the PCC and the various leaders of ministries to focus on the future and on what makes a church grow. At our APCM this year, I will focus in my speech on some of the lessons that we have learned from the Church of England's study on growing churches as to what we need to do to be a growing church. The future offers a number of exciting opportunities and I hope that it will be an exciting vision for the future of the Parish. I hope that you will want to be involved.

Revd. Alex Pease, Rector, Itchen Valley Parish

9. CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

We are happy to report that 2018 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 and become part of our community.

In 2018 we were delighted to welcome Alex Pease - who had been our Assistant Priest since 2016 and before that our Assistant Curate since 2012 - as our new Rector on 15 April and feel very fortunate that Alex chose to apply for the post and was successful. Alex's appointment followed Amanda Dennis deciding to leave us, taking her last service on 14 January and leaving on 9 February; the Parish then entered into a Vacancy of just over two months. We would like to pay tribute to our new Rector, supported by Gerry Stacey, our Licensed Lay Minister, and Jan Brookshaw, for all that they have done since Alex's appointment and feel truly blessed to have them. We would also like to thank Alex and Gerry for all that they did to assist the Churchwardens during the Vacancy when responsibility for running the Parish fell on the Churchwardens. In addition, we would like to thank the Suffragan Bishop of Basingstoke David Williams and Archdeacon Richard Brand for all that they did to facilitate a short Vacancy compared to periods of over a year that the Parish had to endure on the last two occasions. We thanked Amanda both after her last service and in last year's report and wished her well.

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, providing activity bags for children in each of our four churches and those who make and serve coffee, and all their co-ordinators
- become members of our new choir

- 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, and again all their co-ordinators
- organise Wednesday Night Worship and Home Groups
- organise, participate in and help with The Way of the Cross, Carols in the Barn and the Crib Service
- organise and help with CAMEO, Little Rainbows, the Ark and UTX
- organise and help with the Alpha and the Parenting Courses
- act as Valley Visitors
- organise and help with fund raising and other events
- organize and help with the Harvest Lunch, the Pancake Party and the Light Party
- guide us on important administrative items such as health & safety, safeguarding, data protection and food hygiene

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

With a short Vacancy and Alex and Gerry's involvement in it, we were able to keep up the momentum and build on the successes of the last five years and pursue new initiatives. However due to changes proposed at Deanery level, there have been three important changes:

- the post of Rector is now a half-time post and we no longer have a curate as well. This has meant that we have had to adjust to being a half-time post parish including recognising that Alex only works Sundays and three weekdays a week and has one Sunday off a month, with the other Sunday being covered by Gerry and outside clergy from the Register of Retired Clergy maintained by the Diocese, and moving to having two rather than three services each Sunday which we did from 1 May.
- for these reasons, as well as the increasing administrative and regulatory burden of running a small rural parish, we have needed to free up our ministry team for pastoral work and appointed Beccy Clark as a paid administrator starting on 20 Feb 2018 working five mornings a week. Beccy has taken over many tasks and is now the first point of contact in the parish, including for baptisms, marriages and funerals. However, with a paid bookkeeper as well, which we have had for some years now, it also comes with a cost implication.
- we are now required to work closely with the clergy and laity in the Deanery to ensure that we have a creative strategy and a plan for the future that is good for both us and the Deanery as the Diocese faces the challenge of maintaining and growing the church with a declining number of clergy and limited cash resources.

We were pleased therefore to have been able to sustain a minimum of three church services each Sunday during 2018, reduced to two on 1 May. The services are spread across our four churches in a regular pattern of worship which our congregation appreciated. As set out in the parish profiles agreed at the time of both Alex and the last three Rector's appointments 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 broad spectrum and so both maintain a wide appeal and attract younger people that is so important if we are to be a vibrant and growing rural parish. We appreciate that the more modern form of services does not appeal to some of our older congregation members. However it has begun to attract younger families who are also beginning to play an active role in church life. We propose to keep the format and content of these more modern form of services under regular review.

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 his predecessor and their ministry teams with implementing our Parish Mission Action Plan as part of Bishop Tim's Strategic Priorities for Mission. As mentioned three 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 two years. We are now starting the process of producing a revised Parish Mission Action Plan at the request of Bishop Tim.

We would once again like to thank Beccy Clark, our Parish Administrator, and Madeline Quest-Ritson, our Parish Bookkeeper, for all their hard work and help. We thanked Beccy Clark's predecessor, Lucy Pease, who acted as an unpaid volunteer for two and half years in last year's report. 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 acts as PCC Secretary, David Parker who acts as our Health & Safety Officer, Sarah Hunt who acts as our Safeguarding Officer and Charlotte Appleby who co-ordinates the finding of organists. We are truly appreciative and grateful. Thank you. In addition, we would 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, our Patronal Services and parties and Carols in the Barn. 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, Royal British Legion, Winchester Hospice, Christian Aid, Tearfund and the Children's Society, both 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 was relaunched as Valley Visitors on Palm Sunday 2018
- we continued to foster our links with local schools and playgroups

2018 was a very active and successful year for fund raising. Events included a Car Boot Sale, a Duck Race, a Fete and an Evening of Gilbert and Sullivan (for Easton Development Fund) in Easton, Marriage of Figaro in Itchen Abbas, a Plant Sale, an Open Garden Day and the first of a 2018/19 Lecture Series in Martyr Worthy, plus 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. In summary the churchwardens thank all those who contribute in many different ways to the work and smooth running of the parish.

However, the future remains precarious and, as Rolls Coleman says in the Treasurer's Report, we need to seek to persuade those who are members of our regular worshipping community and those on our electoral roll that the church can only really survive in the

Itchen Valley in the long term if they all contribute regularly through the Parish Giving Scheme. It should also be remembered that our Mission Transitional Grant of £10,000 pa is only for three years to cover the transition to a half-post model.

This year sees Andrew Impey standing down as a Churchwarden after eight years, the last three as Deputy Chairman of the PCC. We would like to thank Andrew for agreeing to stand for an extra two years beyond the normal six years and for all that he has done since 2001, including his involvement on the Finance Committee. Andrew was heavily involved in the previous 2014-15 Vacancy and led us as Acting Chairman of the PCC during our recent Vacancy earlier this year including the preparations for it that began four months earlier in October 2017. We are most grateful and the Parish has much to thank him for. Sadly 2018 also saw Sarah Shirley leaving the Parish to be nearer her family. We would like to thank Sarah, who carried the responsibility of Avington almost single handed although latterly not as a Churchwarden, for all that she did over many years and wish her well in her new home.

We also currently expect to be short of two Churchwarden (out of eight) after the forthcoming APCM. If we are to continue to operate in the manner in which you and we would like, as set out in our Parish Profile, keep our four churches open, and have the support of the Diocese, we need going forward to be able to find volunteers from all our four villages for the positions of Churchwardens, members of the PCC and their alternates, members of the DCCs, as well as all the other roles set out above and demonstrate to the Diocese that we are a thriving and growing Parish that manages itself in professional way, discharges its legal and regulatory obligations and can cope by ourselves. We would like to ask you to consider whether you are willing to serve in these vital roles and invite you to come and talk to us about what is involved.

10. DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

This parish has four elected lay members to the Deanery Synod, plus our Rector. Synod met on 21 February and the meeting focussed on the deanery mission action plan (dMAP). One issue that arose was Focal Ministry and how the future pattern of ministry would be provided for in the deanery. The possibility of boundary changes was mentioned, but this was just for discussion.

The second meeting was held on 2 June. Reports about Lango, our deanery link, continued to show difficulty with communications. Gerry Stacey was appointed as finance committee chairman. There followed discussions in groups with the clergy and lay members separated, to discuss future ministry and cooperation. The results show what we could learn from each other by sharing more. The area dean, Graham Bowkett announced that he was leaving and that David Chattell would take over. The third meeting was held on 17 October. The meeting focussed mostly on the rule of life and this was conducted by Sally Dakin.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the work of synod or to read papers presented in detail should contact one of the parish representatives. (Theo Mezger, Tim Clapp, Gerry Stacey & Tony Gaster).
Tony Gaster

11. REPORTS

Health and Safety

This year the new policies and approach of recent years were operated effectively by all churches. We held a training refresher and had induction training for Alex and Beccy. New PCC/CW's will be trained after the AGM. We have no formal incidents or accidents to report. The H&S team have been involved with monitoring and corrective actions for several roof, graveyard and other fabric issues and remain diligent on issues such as electrical appliance testing which has been carried out in all churches.

I am particularly pleased by two things which demonstrate not only management responsibility and closed loop actions, but perhaps more important the culture we have established in a realistic and co-operative approach to this important topic. First is cross auditing. This is where CW's/PCC members from one church audited a different one. This is great as it is a fresh pair of eyes, and also shares ideas and culture. The other is a significant improvement in special risk assessments and proactivity around big and special events such as the Candlelight Service and Carols in the Barn. Many thanks to all for that.

On the subject of thanks I would like to register my appreciation to all those involved: CW's, PCC members and Beccy, with a special mention to David, Jacqui, Vernon and Simon for their diligence, help, time and the fantastic style in which they keep everyone safe and comfortable in our churches.
David Parker

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 fulfils many of the criteria for 'Fresh Expressions', namely that it is Christian, communal and engages with many of the community who do not otherwise go to Church. From the outset it has always been self-financing, thanks to donations from guests and to the generosity of the helpers, and, indeed, can really only work on this basis. We have had another happy and successful year – the only sadness being that many of our dear friends are no longer with us. We are down in numbers with many of our regular guests too incapacitated to join us.

CAMEO will achieve its hundredth lunch in August, when we hope to celebrate with a French-themed party. There will also be a change of management at the end of the year, when I step down from being the co-ordinator, after eight and a half years. As always the Committee have done sterling work in the preparation and serving of delicious meals, and also in their support for CAMEO, for which they deserve enormous thanks. Our thanks also to Alex for taking our services so beautifully, and to Vernon for making our lives so easy by organising all the tables and chairs.
Lavinia Owen

Valley Visitors

The Valley Visitors were commissioned by the Rector in Martyr Worthy Church on 27 May last year. We are a team of eighteen, spread across a range of ages. Everyone has been DBS checked, and I have completed Safeguarding Courses C1, 2 and 3 and the Bishop's Commission for Mission. Our intention is to visit and give pastoral care, comfort and prayers to those in the Parish who need it. We are currently visiting about twenty-six people, including several former Valley residents who now live outside the Valley. Confidentiality and data protection are of prime importance. Referrals come from the Rector and by word of mouth, and we hope to complete further training throughout the year.
Lavinia Owen

UTX (Under the Cross)

As part of our ministry to our young people we hold UTX meetings approximately twice a month during term time, a Sunday social evening and a Sunday morning faith based session.

In May we held a Stewards Trust day for our UTXers; the Stewards Trust Youth Workers led an uplifting and insightful day for our young people on true confidence. In July we held a BBQ and games evening for our end of term summer activity. Other evening activities have included our annual movie night, games, Christmas craft, a group challenge and a quiz. The Big Questions for God slot we began last year continues, where we discuss faith-related topics put forward by our young people. Our average number of attendees between April 2018 and March 2019 is 6 young people, with the highest attendances at our special events - 11 young people attended our end of year BBQ and 12 attended movie night.

The morning session continues to give our young people further opportunities to explore their faith.
Kelly Gibson, UTX Leader

The Ark

The Ark continues to meet every week during term time. Supported by a fantastic group of leaders it has been a huge pleasure to see a core group of children come every week. Using the energise website we have been covering stories from the Old Testament as well as the parables this term. The highlight of the year was the light party where over 30 children met at St Johns one dark October evening as an alternative to Halloween. We also held a successful Pancake Party in March. The children continue to produce fantastic pieces of craft which they love to do and even made wonderful Mother's Day planters.

Our thanks to all the leaders for their enthusiasm and also to Frits and Sara who allow us to use their home at Easton.

Tim Clapp

Little Rainbows

Claire Hunt, who started Little Rainbows a good 7 years ago, has recently handed the baton over to me. Both my family, and all the others who attend Little Rainbows, are hugely grateful to her for initiating such a great ministry.

Little Rainbows continues to meet every Monday 10-11am at St.John's. We have anywhere between 5 and 10 mums/dads/grannies/nannies, each of whom bring between 1-3 children. The families come from both within the valley and surrounding villages.

The mornings begin with playtime for the children and a craft, while the adults can chat. Then there is snack time for the children, followed by singing and dancing, and finishing with a Bible story and a prayer. The mornings are run by Alex Pease, Nora Haywood, Sally Parker and myself. Nora is a wonderful new addition to the team, helping set up each morning, preparing delicious snacks for the children and adults, and overseeing the clearing up too. We are so grateful for her help.

There used to be a weekly rota of older members from the community who would take it in turns to serve the coffee and cake to the adults. With the arrival of Nora however, this rota is now more sporadic, as there is less need. However we always love it when these lovely ladies (and men sometimes!) do join us. We always value the conversations we have and gleaning from their wisdom and experience.

The mornings serve as a valuable source of friendship and support for all those who attend, particularly as the baby & toddler years can be a lonely and tiring time for mums. Some of the families come along to Sunday services, but not all – perhaps because church services can be tricky with toddlers who are too young to attend the Ark.

I hope that LR can continue to be a blessing to mums/dads/carers and toddlers living in the valley and nearby. And I really hope that it will help to build faith and spark interest in Jesus amongst both the parents and their children.

Julia Wright

Safeguarding

There are more people who are assisting at the Ark and they have new DBS certificates where appropriate. Those who are leading groups are all being encouraged to complete more Safeguarding courses under the headings C1, C2 and possibly C3. It is a continuing challenge to keep up to date with increasing cover requirements.

Sarah Hunt

The Parenting Course

In Jan/Feb this year, James and I helped to run 'The Parenting Course' at St.John's. The Parenting Course is a five week course put together by Nicky and Sila Lee. Nicky and Sila have a huge ministry which started at HTB in London, but their courses are now run around the world. There were 15 of us on the course, some from the Valley, some from nearby villages.

The evenings began at 7.30pm with a meal – Judith Mezger coordinated the food rota. A different couple prepared the meal each evening. It was always delicious, and everyone felt hugely blessed to arrive to a beautifully laid table and be served a meal. At 8pm we started the DVD. This was an hour in total, but split into shorter sections, with time for group discussions in between. The course seemed to be a huge success. Everyone was very engaged with the teaching and the discussion groups were greatly valued by all. People became increasingly open with each other and I think gained huge encouragement from knowing that other parents were facing similar battles!

James and I are keen to continue building on the friendships in this group and running with the interest these people have in investing in their families. We are hoping to run the Marriage Course at some point in the near future and hope that a large portion of this group would be interested in doing it - and then perhaps the Alpha course after that. We're planning to host a reunion supper soon to keep the momentum going.

We are hugely grateful to all those who have helped make it possible to run this course – Beccy Clark, Judith Mezger and her team of helpers and Vernon Tottle.

Julia Wright

Wednesday Night Worship

WNW is held on the first Wednesday of each month, from 8-9.30pm. It began in November 2018, led by James and me, along with another couple, Alice and Chris, who live outside the Valley, and overseen by Alex. The running of the evenings very much relies on the involvement of everyone who comes along. The aim of WNW is to have a time to meet with God and meet with each other.

The evenings follow a simple format:

- People arrive at 8pm. We have about twenty minutes of fellowship - people catching up with each other over tea and brownies.
- Then we have about twenty minutes of worship. This is modern worship, very informal and low key, with just one person on a guitar. In the four evenings we have had so far we have had three different people leading the worship.
It has been wonderful to have different people take turns leading the worship as it builds a sense of everyone helping to shape the evenings and everyone having a part to play.
- After a time of worship we have a slot which we call 'truth and testimony'. This is a time when someone shares a short message, about 5-10 mins. It's personal testimony with that person sharing a story of what God has been doing or teaching in their life. It is rooted in scripture, and the idea is that the message brings encouragement and builds faith amongst the group.
Again, we have had a different person each evening share in this slot, building the sense of everyone having a part to play.
- We then have a short time of discussion and praying for each other, in groups of three or so.

So far, we've had between 15 and 25 people at these evenings, a mixture of people who live in the Valley, and others who live on the outskirts. They are mainly but not exclusively people in their 30s and 40s. There is already a tangible sense of community in these evenings, of friendships growing. There is an increasing openness and people seem to really value the opportunity to be vulnerable in a safe place where they can receive prayer and grow in their faith. People seem thirsty for that faith-building friendship.

Our hope is for the group to continue growing in friendship and faith – for it to be a place where people really do meet with God, as well as meeting with each other. We don't know exactly how the evenings will grow. It seems to be fairly organic at the moment and we're open to God moulding the evenings as He wants.

We are keen for people who come along to feedback and help shape the evenings so that they can best serve everyone in 'Meeting with God and each other'. The evenings are very much open to anyone who is thirsty for meeting with God through this kind of worship, fellowship and prayer.

Julia Wright

