

**Trustees' Annual Report - 2020**  
**For the Parochial Church Council of St Michael Aynho**

*Part of the Astwick Vale Benefice Churches with  
All Saints Croughton, St George Evenley, Most Holy Trinity Hinton-in-the-Hedges with Steane  
and St. Michael and All Angels Farthinghoe*

**Aims and Purposes**

**General.** Aynho St. Michael Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. This accords with the Church of England direction for the role of PCCs.

In March COVID 19 became a pandemic and impacted how the Church was used during the year in national lockdowns and with other restrictions. As St Michael's is a large Church, we managed to keep it open for services and prayer for the maximum time allowable by the various regulations and guidance which were issued by the Government and by the Diocese. Where services in Church were not possible the Rector, Reverend Sue Cooper, offered Zoom services.

**Special Note – Graham Gibbs.** At the outset of this annual report, it is important we reflect on the years of service provided by Graham Gibbs the Churchwarden. He has been our Warden for many years covering 3 interregnums between Rectors and seeing through the implementation of works after 3 quinquennial reviews of the Church. Most recently he has overseen the first redecoration of the Church in 25 years. All the time he has equally been a mainstay in his role with the choir and bell ringing, his involvement in fundraising activities (the fete and evening musical concerts), and he will be greatly missed as he handed over his role of Churchwarden in the middle of the year. He leaves the Church in a very good state whilst its community seems to have survived the worst of the pandemic. Graham, of course, has had the continual support and the help of his wife, Deborah, who has been equally closely involved with all aspects of St Michael's Church – particularly those things which really make a difference – refreshments after services and at fundraising concerts, endless cleaning to a very high standard, and her huge contribution in support of the PCC Treasurer in reclaiming Gift Aid on stewardship contributions, as well as the publishing of the Newsletter with Sybil Stevens.

Kathy White and Andrew Bellamy became the two acting Churchwardens replacing Graham in the course of the year at the Extraordinary Meeting of the PCC held on 16<sup>th</sup> September. Their appointments will need to be confirmed at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) to be held on 25th May 2021.

The PCC met during the year and continued to try and achieve its overarching aims:

- To provide a warm, welcoming, open church, where everybody is and feels valued.  
**Comment:** we managed to achieve this save for those “shielding” and for the organ and choir community who were shut out by the regulations affecting singing.
- To offer a variety of well attended services and opportunities for spiritual

development for all in the parish. **Comment:** the attendance held up remarkably well whenever services could be held in Church but we did suffer through not seeing fellow worshippers from the Benefice or from the wider community.

- To contribute to community life at all levels. **Comment:** all the feasts and festivals were celebrated without exception. To reach out we used “Fete pop ups” as opportunities to see neighbours and friends in controlled settings. We made a big effort at the difficult time of Christmas – for the elderly and alone – by both calling and the giving of gifts made by other friends in the community, particularly the young children and their parents; it seemed to have a positive impact and was appreciated. We have re-learned the importance of inter-generational contact and interest.

The PCC’s purpose is to support the Rector and enable parishioners to worship God and to help each other on their journey to learn more of the love of God. In striving to achieve our aims and purpose the PCC values being part of the larger Astwick Vale Benefice. It brings opportunity to worship together and to help, encourage, and support each other. **Comment;** we failed in the Benefice due the restrictions, and not sharing in each other’s churches has made a difference to how things feel. We absolutely must address this in 2021 to get back to a Benefice life and wider involvement.

Recognising the importance of the role the young will have in the future of the Church and in our own parish life, we strive to maintain our links with the Church school in Charlton. Through young parishioners with families, we have managed to establish a great little “Sunday Club” for the 6-year-olds and younger who give us some potential for doing more things than the lovely drawings they do each Sunday and their contribution to the feeling of life in the church. All so appreciated by our relatively elderly congregation of worshippers. The Year 1 teacher at Charlton School was marvellous in her encouragement of the children at Christmas and we will try to strengthen this going forward.

### **Objectives and Activities**

**General.** For the last 4 years the PCC has used the template of a Growth Action Plan to provide added focus to our responsibilities and activities. We review our progress against both the overarching vision statement and the Plan objectives over a 2 year period. The current Plan is our third plan. We will review its usefulness and determine what changes to make during the course of 2021.

Through the current Plan we have maintained an overview of worship throughout the parish to provide the variety of worship which reflects the needs of the parishioners. We try to involve the many community groups in the parish. Services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. At our PCC meetings we review the services and note those points which we consider need some adaptation for the next time.

The core of our worship through the Growth Action Plan process has been the establishment of a regular family Communion Service held at 11 o’clock - and to encourage all different ages to participate. This has worked for our two services on the first and fourth Sundays.

However, it is clear that the 11 o’clock service is not ideal for the young families so we have

moved one service to a 10 o'clock start and created a shorter Morning Worship service which is led by lay members. It is a short service and has become familiar to the congregation.

We have foregone Matins in the year for various reasons but two are instrumental in the early decision – one was the very sad loss of William Usher, who died in late September, and leaves a huge gap in the life of the Church here in Aynho; he had been both Treasurer and Churchwarden for many years but more importantly was the wonderful role he played as Lay Reader in the Ministry Team. He had a lovely, clear and meaningful way of sharing his faith and example with us all. The second reason was that the restriction on the singing and the role played by Peter Philips in leading us in sung responses in support of William. Currently we doubt whether we will reinstate Matins into our service pattern.

COVID19 has meant a year without the Choir leading us in hymn singing. We tried, with the choir only, the few times when it was permitted in between the two lockdowns but it is not the same as congregational singing and we regret its loss to our worship. We also miss the involvement of Marlene Phillips, a lifelong supporter of our Church, and very active in the Choir and in bell ringing. She died in April and her ashes are interred in the churchyard. We have used the new sound system to try and bring church music into all our services by playing the hymns recorded by choirs of our national cathedrals using a Spotify account to good effect.

**Conclusion.** In particular, we try to enable all people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work supporting local, national and international charities.
- Provision of activities for the cohesion of the local community

And, we will miss the active leadership of William Usher and Marlene Phillips in our church life.

## **Achievements and Performance**

### **Worship and Prayer**

We normally hold at least three Sunday services a month at St Michael's and one weekday service (Tuesday). Within the Benefice there will be a service on the 3rd and 5th Sunday in the month and services on other weekdays. **Comment:** it is the benefice services we need to re-establish.

We have an open baptism policy in which children and adults are baptised as part of the main worship of the family of the church; this includes a communion. We have an open confirmation policy which encourages and supports children to receive communion before confirmation.

**Comment:** In 2020 we had neither a baptism nor a confirmation.

We accept and encourage marriage and blessing services for all couples from inside and outside the parish and appreciate the time given by the Rector in her support of all the couples in their preparation. **Comment:** we had one marriage but no blessings in the year. (With Aynhoe Park changing hands we will not expect the same sort of numbers of weddings that we have held these last 5 years.)

We held a number of funeral services and interment of ashes during the year at which attendance numbers were restricted and attendees were socially distanced. The new burial ground on the south side of the Church has been brought into use.

We recognise the importance and attraction of services which involve families and our community life. We held successful services to celebrate the key feasts of Easter and Christmas, with a Carol Service involving Christingles in the church following a lovely Christingle workshop for the children the day before. Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday were well supported; the latter was a very well attended outside service as an Act of Remembrance, led by the Rev Terry Richards.

We decide at our PCC meetings how to respond to the needs of our communities – both near and afar – with charitable giving. Close to home we support the local hospice (Katharine House) and Banbury Young Homelessness Project, and nationally, Crisis at Christmas. We support Diocesan charities and national charities as well as responding to Disaster Emergency Committee appeals – and the financial details are later in the Report. As a result of the financial effect of the lockdown and restrictions we were not able to give as much as we would have liked (and have done historically).

Unfortunately, our Lent bible study was curtailed due to the pandemic and we were unable to hold one in the autumn. The morning Bible Study group has also been in abeyance but will be re-started in the late summer of 2021.

We are very lucky to have the benefit of the services taken by the Rev Hugh Warwick and the Rev Terry Richards in their support of the Rector.

St. Michael's Church enjoys a local bell ringing team, led by Peter Phillips, Tower Captain, but bell ringing has been inactive during the year.

We are very lucky to have our long-standing organist, Sybil Stevens, supported by Andrew Mills and when necessary, by Graham Gibbs and Jonathan Clinch. The strength of this team has weakened in the course of the year both because of the virus effect and a number of personal considerations combining as the year progressed. Sybil is considering her role after all these years (since 1965!); Andrew and his family moved to Farthinghoe in the summer; Graham might play when singing is allowed again; whilst Jonathan played us out of the first lockdown and has given us streamed pieces to access. We are grateful for all who given their time and skill.

The community has supported the Church with its fundraising efforts over the years. The fete at Aynhoe Park could not take place but notable has been the inspired setting up of "Fete Pop-ups" selling local produce (jams, cakes, vegetables) and bric a brac and which raised £2,500 for church funds. We are particularly grateful to all who supported these pop-ups with produce and with their purchasing! But huge thanks go to Amanda Limb, Annabel Bellamy and Douglas Ward for all their organising and example setting.

### **Pastoral Care**

Within our village community the Rector and members of the church regularly visit parishioners during times of ill health and bereavement. This can be at home, in hospital, or at a residential home. They offer a listening ear and practical help by shopping, delivering prescriptions, and transport to hospital appointments. COVID has presented us with challenges and we hope to return to normality in 2021.

The monthly prayer meeting, held in a village home, welcomes requests from anyone who feels that they would benefit from this support and it will be re-started later in 2021.

### **Ecumenical Relationships**

We have no Ecumenical links within the Parish albeit that the churches across the Benefice welcome those of all faiths and those of none to any of the services.

### **Safeguarding**

The duty of safeguarding of all people is taken very seriously by the PCC which has adopted a suitable safeguarding policy which is consistent with the Church of England House of Bishops' "Protecting All God's Children". The policy is reviewed annually. Regular reports are given by the Benefice Safeguarding Officer. PCC members have received 'Basic' safeguarding awareness training and all the C1 level. The PCC is very grateful for the work done by Carrie O'Regan, the Benefice Safeguarding Officer.

### **Deanery Synod**

Two members of the PCC represent us on the Deanery Synod. This provides the PCC with an important link between the parish, the deanery, and the wider structures of the church. No Deanery Synods were held this year but the Rural Dean kept in touch with regular emails offering various service options and an open contact for any help that we needed.

### **Growth Action Plan**

The Growth Action Plan took effect at the beginning of 2018 and has lasted through the year. Our vision statement has survived very well and the objectives which have not been mentioned earlier in this Report include:

- Not forgetting those who have been regular church goers but are now too old and infirm to attend
- Encouraging preparation for lay led services when needed.
- Establishing an occasional Evensong service in St Michael's
- Supporting a regular Church youth group
- Inviting visiting speakers to our services

### **Electoral Roll**

As at 31 December on the Church Electoral Roll there are 45 parishioners, 3 of these are not resident within the parish. No names were added during the year and 8 were removed either through death or because they no longer qualified. The average weekly attendance, counted during October, was 22 due to the pandemic but this number increased at festivals and Christmas as explained above.

## **The Church and Churchyard**

**General.** Our aim is for the church to be open to all on a daily basis for private prayer and quiet meditation with the added opportunity to be informed about the history of St Michael's. We are pleased to have the services of our Verger, Jane Wade, to organise access, and to keep

the Church clean and safe. Though church opening times have been limited for safety reasons we have kept the church open on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursday to allow individual private prayer outside standard services. This seems to have been much appreciated – and the votive candle stand certainly helps individuals in their support of private prayer.

The church, newly redecorated, is a beautiful space and is enhanced by the work of all those who regularly arrange the flowers. A special mention must go to Jenny Pusey who has been a long-term organiser of the “flower ladies” and we are thankful for all she has done over many years. She continues to help Annabel Bellamy with advice and arranging. So, too, are we grateful to Barbara Watkins, who has left Aynho to live in Herefordshire; she contributed to the Church in so many ways – weekly flowers, organising the flower festivals, leading the WI contribution to the cakes and teas at the Fete reflect just some of her sustained involvement.

**Maintaining the Fabric.** We are in the final year since receiving the last Quinquennial Report carried out by Acanthus Clews of Banbury. The priority work and our approach to it, focuses on the following in the Church:

- Church Tower. A Bell Safety Inspection was last carried out during the year and minor work was completed as required. All bells are safe to use.
- Electrical. A full electrical check of all the church wiring was completed during 2018. We are examining improving the electrical supply to the Church in 2021.
- Heating. The oil-fired CH boiler is still working after its service. It is going to be a challenge to replace. Alternatives will need to be considered.
- The lead roof causes concern and we have undertaken maintenance repairs to stop the leak over the chancel and this seems to have been successful. We are beginning to consider how and when we replace the lead roof as it reaches its centenary year in 2023. This will be a financial challenge never mind how we decide to approach the replacement.

The Churchyard is in very good condition with the area of the graves very well maintained and the paths giving safe access. We were very grateful for a generous donation which allowed paved access to be instituted from the main gate to the Preaching cross down the north wall. This has made access much easier for those visiting graves at the East end of the churchyard. New burials now take place on the South side of the churchyard alongside the new paved path from the south door.

### **Structure, governance and management**

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

The PCC Meetings were held on the following dates in the year with the main subjects discussed:

**Wednesday 19th February 2020** - During this meeting which followed the usual agenda, the Accounts for 2019 were approved in advance of the APCM. The revised service rota was confirmed with a lay-led service planned on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 9.30am. The first Lay-led service had taken place and it was led by the Churchwarden, Graham Gibbs and went very well. Questions had been asked of the families with young children who attend services about how we can ‘do better’ for this group. A good response was received and suggestions made which can be followed through. Preparations for the APM/APCM on the 31st March were

discussed.

**The Church was closed completely on Government instructions from late March. Services re-started on 5<sup>th</sup> July following risk assessments, guidance on how to make it safe for services through the use of social distancing measures, hand sanitizers and the wearing of face coverings.**

**31st March Planned APM/APCM 2020.** In compliance with instructions from the Peterborough Diocese this was at first postponed, then cancelled. Initially the date of Wednesday 16th September was proposed as the new date for the APCM but although Notices were posted for this meeting it too had to be cancelled due to the Corona virus situation.

**5th August 2020** - This meeting was held in accordance with Covid regulations in the Churchyard by the North Door of the Church. During the meeting the wording on the gravestones was discussed and the PCC agreed that the word 'Mum' could be used. The Newsletter which Sybil Stevens and Deborah Gibbs have managed to keep going throughout Lockdown will no longer be printed by Hamptons. Texprep are presently doing the printing but this is expensive. Alternative printers are being sought. Further to the APCM preparation, Graham Gibbs announced that he would not be standing as Churchwarden at the forthcoming APCM. The Rector thanked Graham for all the help and support he had given during his long tenure as Churchwarden.

**16th September 2020** - The proposed APM/APCM was again cancelled after instructions were issued by the Bishop of Peterborough on 11th September that APCM's should be postponed until further notice. However, in order that certain Church business could be carried out an Extraordinary PCC meeting was convened in compliance with 'The Rule of 6' (UK Government policy of 14th September 2020). This meeting took place in the shade on the south side of the Churchyard. The meeting nominated Kathy White and Andrew Bellamy as co-opted Churchwardens (with their appointments to be confirmed at the next APCM). Andrew Bellamy was also appointed as Vice Chair of the PCC. Graham Gibbs was co-opted onto the PCC having tendered his resignation as Churchwarden. Norman White volunteered to take on the role of Treasurer, as Andrew Bellamy had stepped down after being co-opted as Churchwarden. Members of the PCC who were unable to attend the meeting had all previously contacted the Secretary and were in favour of the co-options and appointments.

**26th October 2020** - This meeting was held in the Apricot Room at the Cartwright Hotel with all participants socially distanced and wearing masks. The usual agenda was followed and it was decided that the monthly Lay-led service will be at 10am in future.

Full details of all meetings are recorded in the Minutes which are approved meeting by meeting and signed by the Chair.

PCC Meetings follow the standard Agenda below:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of previous PCC Meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Worship Update
5. Safeguarding and Training

6. Secretary's Report / Correspondence
7. Churchwarden's Report (including about the fabric of the Church)
8. Treasurer's Report
9. Deanery Synod Report
10. Stewardship and Fundraising
11. Any other Business
12. Date of next Meetings

The meetings follow a standard review of those items which matter to the Rector, PCC and parish. The focus for each meeting is the review of services.

Without an APM/APCM being held the PCC continued in its establishment as per the composition in the previous year (2019).

**Ex Officio members of the PCC:**

Incumbent: The Reverend Suzanne Cooper (Chair)

Reader: Mr William Usher (until his death in late September)

Warden: Mr Graham Gibbs (until his resignation)

Acting Wardens: Kathy White and Andrew Bellamy (from 16<sup>th</sup> September)

**Elected members:**

Sybil Stevens	2018-2021	
Annabel Bellamy	2018-2021	
Norman White	2018-2021	(Deanery Synod Representative)
Helen Boswell	2019-2022	(Vice Chair)
Dr Mayleng Chong	2017-2020	(extended)
Kathy White	2017-2020	(extended)
Ted Sutton	2017-2020	(Deanery Synod Representative) (extended)

**Appointed officers in 2020:**

Jane Wade	Verger
Andrew Bellamy	Treasurer (until Sep)
Norman White	Treasurer (from Sep)
Annabel Bellamy	Secretary
Kathy White	Electoral Roll Officer
Carrie O'Regan	Benefice Safeguarding Officer
Mayleng Chong	Parish Safeguarding Contact

**Readers**

William Usher	Lay Reader (until his death in late September)
Carrie O'Regan	Lay Reader

**Volunteers**

We would like to thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make our church the lively and vibrant community it is. In particular, we want to mention our churchwarden, Graham Gibbs, who has worked so tirelessly on behalf of the PCC assisted by Kathy White. The day to day and week to week activity in the church throughout the year could not happen without a host of other parishioners volunteering for all aspects and the PCC would particularly like to thank the flower ladies, choir and organists, bell ringers, tea/chocolate makers, church cleaners, church openers/locker uppers, 'welcomers' and sides- persons.

### **Sides-persons**

The following acted as side-persons during the year, after appointment by the PCC:

Annabel Bellamy	Mayleng Chong	Andrew Bellamy	Gillian Reynolds
Ted Sutton	Jenny Pusey	Kathy White	Jane Wade

### **Administrative Information**

St. Michael's Church is situated just off Roundtown in Aynho. The parish is part of the Diocese of Peterborough, the Brackley Deanery, and the Astwick Vale Benefice within the Church of England.

The correspondence address is The Rectory, Croughton Road, Aynho, Northants OX17 3BD.

### **Communications**

Our parish Newsletter is distributed monthly to the whole community in Aynho, and we are thankful for those who create it and to those who distribute it. The Newsletter keeps our parishioners informed of the important matters affecting our Church and articles that help develop our knowledge and trust in Jesus; it acts as the single village mail drop to the 300 homes in the village and covers most community activities. It is supported by local businesses and self-employed trades people. During the year the distribution went on-line with only printed copies going to those households without internet access. Following comments from many parishioners that they missed having a personal delivery to their door, we re-instated the printed copies for everyone.

The Church page on Apricot Village website has been populated with information and space is provided on the main page for the Church Newsletter where the Rector posts her Pastoral Letter each month. We have a GAP objective to continue to seek the development of the church section.

### **Financial Review**

The annual accounts for the St Michael's Church for 2020 are published in detail at the end of this Report. In accordance with the Diocesan rules the annual accounts have been prepared by the Treasurer, independently examined, and approved by the PCC. They have been published on the church notice board for 20 days prior to presentation at the APCM. The Treasurer has submitted an Annual Parish Finance Return summarising the finances for 2020 and giving details of regular giving.

In summary

- Despite the unprecedented financial blows suffered as a consequence of COVID-19 the underlying financial position of St Michael's is still sound. This has been achieved by careful control of costs, particularly by restricting our payment of the Parish Share to the Diocese. This has to be a one-off solution as the Parish Share is what provides and houses the clergy so needs to be met in the long run. Fortunately, as far as ordinary expenditure is concerned, we have access to sufficient reserves to meet our day to day needs.
- Our total income was £49,000 less than the previous year at just over £26,000. Even when taking account of £30,000 "special transfers" in 2019 this still left the underlying income at only 59% of the previous year.
  - The amount from the stewardship scheme, collection plate and general donations fell to around two thirds of the previous year.
  - Despite a number of fund-raising initiatives, the absence of the fete meant

- that there was a shortfall of £6,500 in this source of income.
  - A loss of wedding fees gave a further shortfall of £2,500 in other income.
- Expenditure was tightly controlled in the year, with normal costs some £7,000 below last year
  - The cost of Ministry (excluding the Parish Share) was £1,829 less than in 2019
  - Parish Share was £7,903 less
  - Oil showed a saving of £2,726 (a positive impact of the lack of services)
- Our charitable giving during the year was reduced to £2,621, which nevertheless represents a slightly larger proportion of the church's normal income from individuals in the year. The detail of the giving is on the last page of the statement of the annual accounts below.

### **Reserves Policy**

It is PCC's aim to keep 25% of running costs in reserve plus £5000 to cover emergency building work which cannot be planned into the Quinquennial cycle; our target for the Reserve Fund is met at £13,500. To achieve this, we will put money aside from our income or conduct fund raising to ensure the reserves are there when needed.

### **Approval**

The Church Accounts for 2020 were approved by the PCC of St Michael's Church, Aynho on 10th February 2021 and signed on its behalf by

*{Signed - SC}*

Chair of the PCC, Reverend Suzanne Cooper

### **On the following pages are:**

The approved Statement of Accounts for 2020 which include

- Balance Sheet
- Statement of Income
- Statement of Expenditure
- Statement on the Aynho School Trust Fund – income, withdrawals and valuations
- Details of the Charitable Giving made and the recipients

And on the said Statement of Accounts  
The Independent Examiner's Report (8 Feb 2021)