

**Trustees' Annual Report - 2023**  
**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.

2023 was a full year in which we continued in vacancy across the Benefice. We have kept St Michael's Church open and provided regular services within the capacity of the retired clergy and lay readers in our Ministry Team for which we are very grateful.

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.
- To offer a variety of well attended services and opportunities for spiritual development for all in the Parish.
- To contribute to community life at all levels.

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.

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 maintain a great little "Sunday Club" for the 8-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.

**Objectives and Activities**

**General.** We need to review how we do things in the Parish and the time is ripe for some changes to our growth strategy. We look forward to leadership from a new rector and have been slightly sitting on our hands maintaining the status quo whilst we advertise the post and pray for applicants. We interviewed one applicant in 2023 but, transferring in from Oxford Diocese, he chose to go to a benefice in the Towcester Deanery.

Through the current Plan, however, 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.

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.

## **Achievements and Performance**

### **Worship and Prayer**

During the year we held at least two Sunday services a month at St Michael's one of Holy Communion and one of Morning Worship. Within the Benefice there is a communion service on the 1st and 3rd Sunday in the month plus additional services during the week for Feast days and for Holy Week. When the Ministry Team has been unable to cover those planned services we have received the help from across the Deanery and we are particularly grateful to the Reverend John Duncan (King's Sutton) and Reverend Sylvia Lafford (Brackley) in this regard.

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 2023 we had three Baptism.

We accept and encourage marriage and blessing services for all couples from inside and outside the Parish and appreciate the time given by the Clergy in support of all the couples in their preparation. **Comment:** we had one marriage but no blessings in the year.

We held seven funeral services and four interments of ashes during the year.

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 and a small nativity scene in the church. Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday were very well attended and supported. On 7<sup>th</sup> May we held a celebratory Benefice service of Thanksgiving for the coronation of King Charles III which was celebrated in the community exuberantly over a long weekend.

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. After a review of our income we managed to make a much larger contribution to these charities (and others), returning the level to pre-COVID amounts. We decided also to find ways for the

Church to make a contribution into the Aynho community – an outreach effort really – and supported with allocated funding and calling it the Community Fund. We supported community efforts to lay on a tea party for the elderly during the Coronation and the organisers of the Children’s Christmas Party in the Village Hall. Both were great successes. We fundraised by laying on the Winter Christmas Fair.

This year we also reinstated the practice of making a bit of a fuss about our Patronal Day (29<sup>th</sup> September). We invited guests from amongst the community, the Ministry Team, those who help in the church and churchyard, and some from neighbouring villages. We hosted a party, entertained and thanked about 80 persons overall, with lots of children coming along and dressing up to find the little dragons hiding amongst the paths in the churchyard. We had a lot of fun and will continue to celebrate St Michael on the Patronal Day in future years.

We were not able to hold either a Lent or Advent Bible Study group this year.

We are very lucky to have the benefit of the services taken by the Ministry Team and we are expressly grateful to Reverend Hugh Warwick, Reverend Terry Richards, Carrie O’Regan and Mayleng Chong for their unstinting efforts to support the parish and the wider Benefice. The Benefice marked the retirement of the Reverend Hugh Warwick during the summer with a gift and the delight of having the Archdeacon down to take his final service at Hinton.

St. Michael’s Church enjoys a local bell ringing team, led by Paul Bennet from Evenley; they have rung for weddings and as a touring group ring fortnightly in practice. The bells were rung for the King’s Coronation.

We are very lucky to have our long-standing organist, Sybil Stevens, assisted by Graham Gibbs, and Andrew Mills on big occasions. We are grateful for all who have given their time and skill.

### **Pastoral Care**

Within our village community we have tried wherever possible to keep up with parishioners during times of ill health and bereavement. This can be at home, in hospital, or at a residential home. Whilst in vacancy this has been very difficult and we are aware that this is an area that will need to be addressed when a new Rector is appointed.

### **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 Parish Safeguarding Officer. PCC members have received ‘Basic’ safeguarding awareness training and have all completed the C1 level. The PCC is very grateful for the work done this year by MayLeng Chong on the PCC, and as the Parish 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. 3 Deanery Synods were held this year. Four PCC members attended the first one when

Archdeacon Richard Ormston spoke on the functioning of the Diocese, the plight of rural parishes due to the lack of clergy wanting to be in them and the need for laity to become more active in the benefices. The Rural Dean, Father Matthew Robinson, continues to give us huge support during the vacancy.

### **Growth Action Plan (To be refreshed in 2024)**

The Growth Action Plan has endured since 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 of 31 December there are 44 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, 3 of these are not resident within the Parish. Two names were added during the year and none were removed either through death or because they no longer qualified. The average weekly attendance on a usual Sunday, was 23 including an average of 2 children, but this number increased at festivals and Christmas.

## **The Church and Churchyard**

**General.** Our aim is for the church to be open to all daily 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.

### **Concerts**

A programme of concerts was continued throughout the year inspired by one parishioner, Sue Chapman, who brought 4 more cultural events into the village and to use the lovely space of St Michael's to host them. It was a wonderful initiative and attracted a lot of support. A varied programme of music was offered, and the costs were subsidised from the new community fund created within the Church accounts. We plan to reduce the commitment in 2024 to rest the organisers!

**Maintaining the Fabric.** We are into the second year since the Quinquennial Inspection conducted by Acanthus Clews of Banbury. In the course of the year:

- We have had our fire inspection.
- Church Tower. A Bell Safety Inspection was last conducted in the year. Two knockers on the bells were damaged and were replaced by the wonderful local Tower team located in the Deanery; we are very grateful for their work and the

saving of costs.

- The Church clock was serviced – it and the carillon continue to work well.
- The plans to replace the complete heating system in 2023/24 were started on time in September, after receipt of the Diocesan Faculty in the Spring, with the laying of the new power cable from the Church car park to the Vestry. The Church was closed after the Christmas service, all the furnishings stored in the Cartwright Chapel and at the empty Rectory, in readiness for the work to be continued).
- The Churchyard is in very good condition with the area of the graves and the paths very well maintained giving safe access.

### **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.

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. Churchwardens' 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, and Parish. The focus for each meeting is the review of services. Full details of all meetings are recorded in the Minutes which are approved meeting by meeting and signed by the Chair.

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

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023.** During this meeting which followed the usual agenda, the Accounts for 2022 were approved in advance of the APCM. Local fees for 2023 were agreed. The Heating Project was reviewed; the faculty application was withdrawn, and a replacement submitted for the new HALO heaters.

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March.** A Special meeting was held to formalise Heating Project actions: it authorised application for the Faculty, public notice about the Faculty, and the application for grants and financial expenditure.

**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April.** A short meeting was held following the APCM to confirm appointments and responsibilities.

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June.** The Meeting made some financial decisions about paying the Parish Share in full, increasing the charitable giving back up to 10% of the income received, and

creating an outreach/community fund. We discussed the “Welcome” leaflet and started to draw up a list of representatives for each street; this is to be taken forward. Plans for the Patronal Day on 29th September were made.

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> August.** More planning for Harvest Festival, the Patronal Day, and Remembrance. Heating Project timeline pushed back – Phase 1 power supply now in late September, and the new HALO heaters to be installed in January (2024).

**Monday 6th November.** The meeting reviewed the success of the Autumn schedule and planned the Carol Service and Christmas service. Discussed bringing back the common cup at communion. Agree the application for a Diocesan Loan (£40,000) to help cash flow through the expensive period of the Heating Project. Approved the application for a Faculty (List B) to bring WIFI to the Church.

PCC continued in its establishment as per the composition:

**Ex Officio members of the PCC:**

Rector - post vacant

Wardens: Kathy White and Andrew Bellamy (Chair)

**Elected members:**

Annabel Bellamy	2021-2024
Norman White	2022-2025 (Deanery Synod Representative)
Mayleng Chong	2021-2024
Sybil Stevens	2022-2025
Ted Sutton	2022-2025 (Deanery Synod Representative) (extended)
Caroline Boswell	2023-2026

**Appointed officers in 2023:**

Jane Wade	Verger
Norman White	Treasurer
Annabel Bellamy	Secretary
Kathy White	Electoral Roll Officer
Mayleng Chong	Parish Safeguarding Officer

**Readers**

Carrie O'Regan	Lay Reader
Mayleng Chong	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, 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 functioned as side-persons during the year, after appointment by the PCC:

Annabel Bellamy  
Jenny Pusey

Gillian Reynolds  
Jane Wade

Ted Sutton

### **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.

The Church page on the Apricot Village website has been populated with information and space is provided on the main page for the Church Newsletter where the Rector posted her Pastoral Letter each month until she retired; in vacancy the Churchwardens offer their "Ramblings".

### **Financial Review**

The annual accounts for St Michael's Church for 2023 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 28 days prior to presentation at the APCM. The Treasurer has submitted an Annual Parish Finance Return summarising the finances for 2023 and giving details of regular giving.

Being without a Rector for the whole year obviously restricted our ability to hold a full range of services. This had a financial as well as a spiritual impact and directed the energies of those who "make things happen" towards keeping the ship afloat rather than rebuilding those activities which had been lost or diminished in previous years. After a false start in 2022 we finally commenced our Replacement Heating project.

Bearing all of this in mind the following points are relevant:

It has been a busy year financially with diverse activities having to be managed, so this makes the accounts a little difficult to interpret at first glance. The raw figures suggest that we have suffered a loss of £25,457 but this includes the income and expenditure on the Heating Project (a net spend of £32,899), meaning that the underlying activity actually achieved a surplus of £7,442.

The catalyst to this achievement was the deal that our esteemed churchwarden negotiated with our neighbours RH, amounting to £24,000 in the year. This allowed us to pay our Parish Share in full (absorbing £7,000), increase our charitable giving (by £1,800), earmark an available resource for activities in the community (£5,000) and agree to engage paid help to relieve that same churchwarden of churchyard labour (£1,800).

Other income did not fare so well, being below the previous year in almost all categories; these are areas in which we will need to concentrate this year.

As far as expenditure was concerned, it was very well contained apart from those areas already referred to; the lions' share of the increase over the previous year was inevitably in the Parish Share.

### **Reserves Policy**

The PCC's aim is to keep 25% of running costs in reserve plus £5,000 to cover emergency building work which cannot be planned into the Quinquennial cycle; this was previously calculated to give a target Reserve Fund figure of £13,500. We shall strive to manage our costs without using the Reserve Fund, accessing the Aynho School Trust Fund to cope with any substantial one-off item of cost.

### **The Future**

2024 will see the completion of the Heating Project and we dearly hope to have a new Rector in post in addition to a warmer church at the end of it. We will continue to control the finances and we hope to report an exciting new era with our hoped-for new Rector.

### **Approval**

The Church Accounts for 2023 were approved by the PCC of St Michael's Church, Aynho on 17th February 2024 and signed on its behalf by the Chair.

*{Signed - AB}*

Chair of the PCC, Andrew Bellamy

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

The approved Statement of Accounts for 2023 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 (5 March 2024)