

# ST.ANNE'S CHURCH, EPWELL - ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

## INTRODUCTION

The parish of St. Anne's Epwell is one of six parishes within the Wykeham Benefice in the Deddington Deanery of the Diocese of Oxford. It has an active Parochial Church Council (PCC) with one representative on the Deddington Deanery Synod.

## MEMBERSHIP

Following the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in May 2023 the following served as members of the PCC:

Mr Alasdair Lowe	Churchwarden
Mrs Carolyn Koch de Gooreynd	Churchwarden
Dr. Christopher Hurst	Hon. Treasurer
Julie Bruggenwirth	Hon. Secretary
Mrs Dawn Castle	
Mr David Long	
Mrs Allison Pollard	
Mrs Nicola McHugh	
Mr Andrew McHugh	

The numbers for church attendance during 2023.

Attendance - 62 people under 16	(105 people under 16 in 2022)
982 people over 16	(999 people over 16 in 2022)
509 communicants	(503 communicants in 2022)

At the 2023 APCM in May, there were 18 people registered on the Electoral Roll and a copy was on display in the church porch.

At that meeting seven PCC members were elected and Alasdair Lowe and Carolyn Koch de Gooreynd were nominated and elected as Churchwardens. At the meeting immediately following the APCM, the Officers and Standing Committee were elected and Chris Hurst (Treasurer) Julie Bruggenwirth (Secretary) and Alison Pollard (Deanery Synod Rep) agreed to continue in their respective roles.

Following the Annual meeting, the PCC met in July, September, November, February and March.

One Baptism took place in the church this year. In November Evie May Morris was welcomed into the family of the church.

There was one wedding held in St Anne's in 2023 and many congratulations go to Helen Kirk and Jake Gill.

Sadly there was one funeral in May 2023 for Doreen Grace Page.

Interment of ashes of Lynda Ann Hayward in March.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2023**

### **The Funds**

Over the year the financial situation looked reasonably steady. Much as last year the income exceeded expenditure, by £1980.

The regular input from Parish Giving Scheme and Standing Orders remained strong, and is the foundation of our income. Plate collections were much as before, at £1420.

The General Fund (unrestricted) gained about £2000 overall in 2023 compared with a rise of £1800 in 2022 and ended the year at over £10,900. A pleasing result.

The Project Fund, formerly the Heating and Lighting Fund (designated), remained at £1145, and the Carolan Fund (restricted) increased to £550 as a result of bank interest payments.

The Churchyard Fund (designated) stands at £257.

### **Receipts**

The third full year of the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) showed the strengths of this form of regular giving. Two notable features are the monthly crediting to us of the Gift Aid on the donations and the annual reminder about increasing the donations.

**As before I suggest we endeavour to add to our list of PGS donors and encourage existing Standing Order donors to switch to PGS.**

Regular giving and collections raised £6966 in 2023 compared with £6956 in 2022.

Tax recovered under the automatic Gift Aid provisions of the Parish Giving Scheme amounted to over £1100 in 2023.

The annual claim of non PGS Gift Aid is made in January rather than December. This means the Gift Aid income from the year 2022 appeared in the Jan 2023 accounts and amounted to about £1460.

Donations amounted to £2700 – about the same as last year.

Fund raising included the sale of cards and income from the Fun Day held in the summer.

Rent for the field was £300 and fees for weddings and funerals came to £1700, some of which is sent to the diocese. We get this back later via a reduction in the Parish Share.

## **Payments**

Insurance increased slightly to £1400 and electricity cost rose to £334. There were government subsidies during the worst of the fuel price increases. Fuel costs for 2024 are likely to be higher than in 2023, perhaps by £200. Parish Share contributions fell to £6700 from the £7000 the year before, because we receive a reduction during a vacancy.

Payments to visiting clergy amounted to £631, some of which we can claim from the Diocese during a vacancy. Benefice contribution remained at around £870 and the Deanery fee rose to £240. This includes our annual contribution to the cost of the Quinquennial Report.

Miscellaneous payments of £1448 included the cost of the new notice board for the porch, which was covered by a generous donation.

We contributed to the cost of a churchyard bench in memory of Caroline Long.

Maintenance was relatively modest this year. Electrical repairs to the outside lighting cost about £380.

Charitable giving involved donations to the Poppy Appeal, Children's Society, Banbury Community Church for the project on Bretch Hill, and FCN.

## **Summary**

The result for the year leaves the PCC with £12,862 cash at the bank, compared with £10,876 last year. The General Fund stands at £10,910, the Heating/Lighting/Project Fund £1,145, the Carolan Fund at £550 and the Churchyard Fund at £257.

Once again we managed to pay our full Parish Share over the year. At present the full Share is increasing at about 2 or 3% per year – a remarkably low rate given the recent inflation/cost rises. The diocese does all it can to cushion any changes in Share charged to deaneries.

Thank you to everyone for their efforts as regular donors, occasional contributors and fund raisers. When need arises, people are very generous. We run on a lean budget.

That said, we need to raise our income steadily to cope with increasing running costs and the list of maintenance tasks. Fund raising via events are being planned.

We intend to inform members of the community how much it costs to run the church and ask for financial assistance, regular or otherwise. An article in the Epwell Echo is the first step in the campaign.

Another task for 2024 is to establish a 100 Club, in collaboration with other Epwell organisations. We also hope to move forward on plans to have a broadband facility in the church.

Chris Hurst. Parish Treasurer.

## **GENERAL**

Regular maintenance and cleaning throughout 2023 has meant that St Anne's church building and its contents are in a good state of repair. We are always grateful for the help we receive in maintaining the church building and the PCC would like to thank Allison for her commitment in overseeing the care of the churchyard. She has worked tirelessly to keep the churchyard looking neat and tidy, giving up her time to regularly mow the grass. The PCC is keen to keep the paths and edges tidy but in general to respect the natural feel of the churchyard and preserve the wildflowers.

The year began with Holy Week and the Benefice Palm Sunday service on 2nd April. We carried out the traditional procession around the village following Mabel the donkey, singing and carrying Palm crosses, before the service in the church.

We held a lovely Mothering Sunday service with families and children taking part in the readings and prayers. Dawn had provided some beautiful posies for the mothers at the service and were greatly enjoyed when distributed to those who were unable to attend.

The Lent Lunch in the Village Hall was well attended and included a talk by Andrew McHugh, in which he highlighted the need for support for young people in Banbury who need work

experience and mentors to give them opportunities in life that they may not have within their home and community. The event raised £240 for the charity Brighter Futures.

In April we learnt that Reverend Neil Bowler had been appointed as Priest in Charge at The Priory Church of St Mary, Bridlington. We were greatly saddened to see him go as he has been a huge asset to the benefice and the parish of Epwell. On completion of the afternoon Father's Day service, which was his last in Epwell, we hosted a tea of thanks and farewell.

In September St Anne's was used by the community to host an Art and Flower Show as part of the village Fun Day. The entries were varied and unique and all together contributed to an amazing display of creativity in the church.

As part of our mission to reach the wider community, we organised a Feast of Autumn Puddings in November. It was a lovely event and villagers enjoyed a relaxed supper together and over indulged in delicious puddings, brought and shared by all.

The Harvest Festival service in October included drama and prayers by young people coordinated by Dawn. Donated produce was forwarded to Polly, to support her work with the homeless in Banbury and the collection was given to support the valuable work done by the Farming Community Network.

The Remembrance service in November followed the traditional 2 minute silence at the village war memorial before the church service led by The Reverend Brian Fairbank.

On Christmas Eve the village came together to hold a Crib service when villagers young and old retold the Nativity story expertly overseen by Dawn. Some of the cast included past members of EDGE that were home visiting family for the holidays and this added a special something to the Christmas message. Members of the congregation also played their part by placing the figures in the crib scene accompanied by all the traditional carols.

Later in the evening there was a more informal gathering with an opportunity to come and sing carols and listen to readings around the Christmas tree.

The services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were well attended and the PCC expressed thanks to Dawn and the Castle family who very kindly donated a splendid Christmas tree.

Throughout the year St Anne's PCC has tried to keep the church at the centre of the village and reach out to, care for and involve as many people as possible. Our churchwardens, Alasdair and Carolyn, continue to promote and adapt church activities to ensure accessibility for all through a mix of traditional services, informal gatherings such as Lent lunches and fundraising events.

As a PCC we continue our mission to open up our Lay led services to involve more of our parish and benefice who may want to take a service or give a reflective talk, in the hope that

it will broaden our Christian lives and allow for a wider involvement in the community. As an example, we welcomed Ian Flemming from the village who worships at the Southam Road Evangelical Church in Banbury to led our service in February.

Thanks are also due to all those who have supported the parish in so many other ways in 2023 - with refreshments after the services, readings, flower arrangements, church cleaning and maintenance, help at fundraising events and with their attendance at services and their generous giving.

Julie Bruggenwirth

April 2024

PCC Secretary