

**Parish of Aldingbourne, Barnham and Eastergate (ABE)**

Annual Meeting of Parishioners will be held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 at 7.30pm in Eastergate Primary School

**AGENDA**

1. Opening Prayer.
2. Apologies for Absence.
3. Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners 17 May 2023

*The meeting began with a prayer led by Father Paul*

1. *Apologies:  
Apologies were received from; Fr Tony Brant, Gillian Angrave, Gary Courtnadge,  
Beth & Roger Johnson, Pauline Bettany, Mandy & Tony Foot*
2. *Minutes of the 2022 meeting 27.04.2022:  
These were agreed as a true record. They were proposed by Andrew Dunlop and seconded by Sarah Tripp*
3. *Election of churchwardens:  
The following were elected: Five positions of the possible six were filled as follows Gary Courtnadge & Colin  
Mouque for Eastergate, Julian Buxton for Aldingbourne, Bradley Smith & Steven Maple for Barnham.  
Father Paul led the thanks and applause for all those who had served and were about to serve.*
4. Election of Churchwardens.

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Fr Paul Armstead (Rector)  
25 April 2024

**Parish of Aldingbourne, Barnham and Eastergate (ABE)**

Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd May 2024 in Eastergate Primary School following the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

**AGENDA**

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of Annual Parochial Church meeting 17 May 2023
  1. Apologies for absence  
These were as recorded for the parishioners meeting.
  2. Minutes of the APCM 2022 The minutes of the 2022 meeting were proposed by Roger Saunders and seconded by Bradley Smith. They were unanimously accepted as a true record of the meeting.
  3. Electoral Roll Report  
Steven reported that the electoral roll after revision is: 169 this is down by four following the removal of eight but addition of four.  
This can be broken down as 36 St Mary's Aldingbourne, 21 St Mary's Barnham, 73 St George's Eastergate, 39 others
  4. Report of the PCC The report of the PCC is the Trustees Report in the annual accounts and there were no questions arising.
  5. Financial Statements Chris Wells presented the Financial Statements from the year ending 31.12.2022 These are attached and were available at the meeting. They showed an annual loss of £29k Some reasons for this were huge increases in energy and insurance costs an increase of £7.600. An increase in our parish share from £65k in 2021 to £72k in 2022 with the target for 2023 standing at £79.500. The value of investments fell by £7.4k and only one legacy of £5k.  
There are 93 regular donors of whom 33 people are on to the Parish Giving scheme.  
Chris gave comparative giving numbers and noted that our average amount given is far below that of many parishes in other diocese around the country.  
Fr Paul said there were various ideas and plans in the offing aimed at increasing the generosity of giving in the parish. One immediate step is to reintroduce the use of the collection plate, with tokens to be issued to those who give through other methods. These will be put into the plate to be blessed and also to encourage others to add a contribution of their own. Other plans will be put into action in due course during the year. Fr Paul thanked both Chris and Andrew Dunlop for their time, expertise and stewardship this year.  
Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Lesley Bryant and seconded by Bradley Smith.
6. Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church. These had been duly circulated. Thanks to all churchwardens recorded, in particular for their work on the repairs and improvements identified in the quinquennial report.
7. Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod: Steven Maple told the meeting that the report had been made in writing and submitted prior to the meeting. The following were elected Deanery Synod representatives for the next triennium. William Holder, Chris Wells, Lesley Bryant and Steven Maple
8. Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the PCC  
There were five nominations to serve as PCC representatives this year: Peter Higgins & Lynne Sharrock (Eastergate)  
Sarah Tripp (Barnham)  
Gillian Angrave & Andrew Dunlop (Aldingbourne)  
This means we now have ten of a possible twelve members. No further nominations were received. Thanks and appreciation were given to the members who are continuing to serve.
9. Notice of Appointment of Sidesmen  
The following were appointed as sidesmen for the forthcoming year: Aldingbourne: Laurence Fosbury, Anne Fosbury, Beth Johnson, Lisa Martin, Sarah Nichol, David Nichol, Linda Bell, Shirley Renton-Rose, Norman Knight, Sharon Knight, Barbara Coombes.  
  
Barnham: no sidesmen appointed by custom  
  
Eastergate: Andy Butler, Mandy Foot, Tony Foot, Jean Rogers, Gill Lambourn, Louise Mitchell, Neil Mitchell, Liz Purdue, Mike Purdue, Lynne Stephens, Robin Thelwell, John Woodhead, Ros Woodhead, Richard Brown.

10. Appointment of Independent Examiner Chris Wells proposed that we reappoint Messrs Kreston Reeves for the coming year and that they have signalled their willingness to continue. This was seconded by Jonathan Stapleton and approved unanimously.
11. Rector's comments to the APCM

Of course, before I thought about what I might, no what I wanted to say tonight I thought I would cast my eyes back to what I said last year. I haven't been brave enough to look back at the parish profile and see what that said and what I have found since I've been here. No doubt it will have said — well let's leave that for another day.

What I did find was the advice about how I should approach this statement. I was told that I ought to talk about:- Past, present and future and say something nice. Oh, and keep it short.

Well, here goes and I will let you decide whether or not I met the brief this year and last.

But firstly, I must record on behalf of us all many thanks to all those who have helped me steer the good ship ABE through the last year. To the clergy, Fr Graham, Fr Tony and the Reverend Sheila, to the churchwardens, Hedda and those working with our young people, our treasurers and our parish administrator and all who worked tirelessly through the year. To you all, thank you!

But to you all! An equal if not more heartfelt thanks for supporting them by faithfully witnessing through your lives of prayer and worship, fun and fundraising, being here and there and especially when life might have been tough as individuals and a community. Thank you!

I was very struck by our epistle reading 10 days ago on Easter 5 from the first letter of Peter and have talked about it a lot and then when thinking about this evening it shone out again.

Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.

The community of the Parish of ABE is a collection of living stones, a collection that changes through the times and seasons as new stones join and other stones are replaced as people move on or we have seen them taken to a new House, with rooms made ready.

In 2022 we have said our thanks and farewells and commended to God our dear friends Ann Collis, Maggie Courtnadge, Judith Simmonds, Maureen Smith and Lady Kenya Tatton-Brown. Their lives are so intertwined with the life and history of our parish and we are so grateful to have had them as living stones in our spiritual house.

We also wonderfully welcomed 17 of our young people to take their First Communions and so they are most definitely living stones bringing their own character to our spiritual house

The thing about building a house is fitting stone against stone, ensuring that it is the right shape and edged appropriately. A builder can do that for a structure such as this, but it is God, the master builder who does it for our spiritual house.

'Living stones!' It is an amazing thought, and the mind boggles. But no stone is any use when it is lying around loose on the building site. So we, the body of Christ in this part of God's kingdom, are weak and powerless if we work as individuals, but what are our endless possibilities if, and when, we are built together into a living community. In the process we shall all get our rough corners knocked off us, perish the thought, as God undertakes the polishing process by which God makes us beautiful and strong.

A guidebook in Thailand once described a ruined city as 'falling into crumbles!' The church, the family of God, can easily crumble if just one member is missing from worship even one Sunday. My absence, unless because of sickness, is another weak spot in God's magnificent building work. God will never allow the community he built to tumble down; though it may change and adapt in ways that it hadn't seen before. But if we don't cooperate with the other believers, and won't show up among the worshippers as often as we possibly can, then God can always find a new stone to take our place. But we don't want the shame of becoming a rejected piece of rubble around the building site of God's Church; after all, the community is not only for this life, but carries on together in eternity after we rise again.

And that is my challenge for myself and I set it for all those who are on the electoral roll, all those who come to our churches and want to be associated with and as part of our communities. To be those living stones that are part of the building that is our spiritual house.

If we allow ourselves to be hewn into the stones that make this spiritual house then it has its many joys, it challenges and its responsibilities. And if we all take up our places then the opportunities for spiritual and numerical growth will be wonderful to behold.

Chris, our treasurer, has quite rightly challenged us all about the financial responsibilities and if each stone was able to regularly contribute then .. well then our conversations would be very different. Sadly we cannot live on fresh air.

We have our Summer Fair coming up soon. It is always the second Saturday in June and part of being a living stone is outreach to the community. This should be a priority in our lives and who knows it might be fun too!

Our prayer life, our attention to God, is a large part of being a living stone and the opportunities we have in the parish for Sundays and weekdays, prayer and study groups, Lent and Advent courses are to be used. Is there something extra you might like, or actually ought to do, is always a question worth asking.

So as we look to the year ahead, as the living stones in this place, let us strengthen the spiritual house, are we firmly

*part of the structure, let us extend the house by finding and welcoming additional stones being added, let us listen to the master builder for what he is saying to each one of us.*

*If we do all of this then the growth of our life, our ministry and our mission will be marvellous.*

*As St Peter reminds us in his letter*

*you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

*Thank you for letting me walk alongside you on our journey of faith, hope and love.*

*Fr Paul*

*A.O.B. Bradley expressed appreciation for the impact Fr Paul has made on the ministry, outreach and other aspects of our community. There being no further business the meeting closed with the Grace.*

3. Electoral Roll Report.
4. Annual Report of the PCC (see the attached reports)
5. Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 (Treasurer).

***If you would like a full copy of the annual accounts please could you e mail or contact the Parish Office.***

6. Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church (see attached churchwardens' reports)
7. Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod.
8. Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the PCC (4 of)
9. Notice of appointment of Sidesmen.
10. Appointment of an Independent Examiner.
11. Rector's (brief) comments
12. Any other business.

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Fr Paul Armstead (Rector)  
25 April 2024

## **CHURCHWARDENS' REPORTS**

### **ST. MARY'S CHURCH ALDINGBOURNE**

2023 saw the coronation of King Charles and many people watched a very moving service from Westminster Abbey. The bells were rung at Aldingbourne to celebrate the occasion.

The year will also be remembered for the loss of the Revd Tony Brant, who passed away in July after a short illness. Tony has been part of the life of the parish for such a long time, leading us when we were without a Rector, visiting many people in St. Richard's Hospital, at home and in our care homes, as well as leading us in our worship. At St. Mary's, Aldingbourne, we will remember how he looked after Aldingbourne during the pandemic, taking our services on Zoom and then on our return to the church. We give thanks for everything that he did for our parish.

This year we have had fourteen funerals, two weddings, nine interment of ashes, and five baptisms. In December, we held a Blue Christmas service in the parish for the first time, for those who find Christmas a difficult time of year. Although there was only a small congregation, those that came said that they were grateful for an event like this.

We celebrated the festivals of the Christian calendar, Advent, Christmas and Easter. We hosted the Deanery Confirmation service, led by Bishop Martin. We welcomed families and visitors to our Christingle Service, Crib Service

and Christmas services. The Revd Canon Ian Gibson preached at our Patronal Festival in September. We remembered those who gave their lives in conflict on Remembrance Sunday and around the War Memorial in the churchyard on Armistice Day.

We continued to have a traditional language Mattins service on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, led by Bradley Smith and Peter Whitham, to whom we are very grateful. And finished with a Songs of Praise service with the Chichester City Brass Band, organised by Peter Whitham and including hymns from throughout the Christian year. The Rev Canon Simon Holland, Interim Dean of Chichester Cathedral, led the funeral of Ray Richardson, husband of Rosny, in May. The whole parish also gathered at St. Mary's, Aldingbourne for the funeral of the Revd Tony Brant.

We welcomed the Westergate Methodists to Aldingbourne as we said goodbye to the Revd Dan Balsdon, who is moving to a new role in the Methodist Church. We look forward to worshipping together with his replacement, the Revd Tongayi Matamba.

We welcomed the Revd Susan Paterson to lead our worship on a regular basis in the parish. She has recently retired to West Sussex with her husband Charles, having recently led a parish on the Isle of Wight. We are grateful to all those who have led our worship this year; Father Paul, Father Graham, the Revd Sheila, and the Revd Susan.

A significant amount of work has been done on the church following the quinquennial review. This includes work on the roof to prevent water coming in through the roof in the choir. We are grateful to Richard Meynell, our inspecting architect, for his guidance during the work. Work on the Norman arch at the back of the church, which leads into the kitchen, and one of the arches in the North wall of the nave, has been completed. Hopefully this will ensure that the arch will be conserved for years to come. We are grateful to Peter Martindale, the conservator, who carried out the work.

Our Queen's Platinum Jubilee Project has been to commission, raise funds for and welcome to the church a new set of falls (altar frontal, middle altar panels, and pulpit and lectern falls), designed by Polly Meynell. To date, green, white and purple sets of falls have been delivered and were well received by the congregation. We are grateful to Polly for all her work. The green set was blessed at our Patronal Festival.

We are grateful to John Maltby and the Monday gang for keeping the churchyard so neat and tidy.

I would like to thank all those who help to run the church: the sidepersons and readers; intercessors; servers; cleaners; organists; bell ringers; Sarah Nichol who produces the duty rota; Kim Shaw and the lockers; the flower arrangers led by Sue Baxendale and Pauline Bettany; the Church Management Committee; and the Aldingbourne members of the PCC. We particularly thank those who have decided to give up their roles: Sue Baxendale and Annabel Beecheno.

We give thanks for the lives of Bill Collins, Grace Sparshott, Ray Richardson, Francis Baxendale and the Revd Tony Brant.

After five years as churchwarden, during a difficult period including the interregnum and a global pandemic, when the churches up and down the country were closed for worship and prayer, I am stepping down as churchwarden.

*Julian Buxton (Churchwarden)*

## **ST. MARY'S CHURCH BARNHAM**

The Sunday Mass is at the heart of our life at St Mary's, Barnham. Every Sunday we offer two celebrations: at 9.30am a said Mass following the Book of Common Prayer, and at 11.15am according to the modern rite. Mattins and Evensong are sung every Sunday, St Mary's being the only church in the Deanery to offer these services on a weekly basis. Evening Prayer is said daily, and sung on Tuesdays when there is a Mass immediately afterwards. Holy days are celebrated in style with worship and refreshments following.

Our worship is greatly enriched by music, and we are very grateful to our organists, Richard and Peter. Thanks are due to our team of servers, readers, Eucharistic ministers, and welcomers. The ministry and contribution of each person is greatly appreciated. Joan Thomas continues to ensure that our altar linens are always immaculately fair.

Fellowship plays a big role in the life of St Mary's. In addition to our annual Epiphany lunch – a three course Sunday lunch for over forty people - we have also enjoyed a number of suppers as well as a celebratory meal on the Patronal Festival. Our preacher on that occasion was the Revd Canon Bob White of St Mary's, Portsea.

Once again, we enjoyed our pilgrimages to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. It is always a joy when people experience the pilgrimage for the first time. Our monthly Walsingham Cell Mass is celebrated on the first Saturday of each month, and healing ministry is now offered quarterly.

Visitors often remark on the warm welcome they receive at St Mary's, and also on the appearance of the church itself which is beautifully cared for and decorated with flowers throughout the year by Mary Camerer Cuss.

The church building itself is in a reasonable state of repair with a Quinquennial inspection conducted in February 2019. Repointing of the ground gutters remains outstanding from the Quinquennial report and must be addressed urgently as rainwater is causing internal damage.

The churchyard is in good order and continues to be maintained at minimal cost to the Parish. Thanks are due especially to Graham Maple for his hard work, especially over the summer months.

Fr Graham Reeves has continued to serve St Mary's with great dedication during the year and we are all enormously grateful for his ministry among us. His preaching, which is of a very high standard, often attracts favourable comments from visitors. We are grateful too for Fr Michael Palmer's ministry. Together with Fr Paul as Rector, we are blessed to have strong and faithful leadership. We also wish to record our thanks to Vera Saunders for all her administrative and practical help during the year, and to Chris Wells for his financial work.

One of the biggest challenges limiting the future growth of St Mary's is the lack of a toilet and basic facilities; over the last 12 months our Jubilee Project group has been working towards the construction of a west-end extension which would include a meeting room; but regrettably the issues of general access, water, and sewage have proved challenging. The group is now working towards a slimmed-down plan for an external toilet, and a kitchenette within the church.

We have been pleased to welcome a few new faces to St Mary's during the year, as well as visitors and holiday-makers. Sadly, some are no longer able to worship with us on a regular basis owing to age and infirmity, and we are very conscious that the lack of basic facilities, and the challenges of parking, present a barrier for some people. We are very sad that we see so few children in church on Sundays. Not long ago, we had many families coming week by week, but almost all of them stopped coming when their children started at secondary school.

Attendance on Holy Days has been variable, and sometimes disappointing. We want to encourage everyone to come to church on the most significant dates in the calendar. They are wonderfully uplifting occasions. Many churches no longer offer weekday festivals, and it would be a great shame if we were to go the same way.

The year ahead will present a number of challenges, not least as we seek to build up the congregation, and equip the church building with basic facilities; however we must look to the future with confidence, trusting in the prayers of Our Lady and all the saints.

*Bradley Smith and Steven Maple (Churchwardens)*

## **ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH EASTERGATE**

The church and churchyard have continued to be maintained and lovingly cared for over the past year and are appreciated by its regular congregation and many visitors alike.

### **Church Building and Repairs**

It is pleasing to report that no significant building or repair works have been necessary during the past year. Minor maintenance work has been undertaken as required.

Re-shingling of the bellcote roof is still needed, and a French drain along the south wall has to be installed, both outstanding items from the 2014 quinquennial inspection. Significant grant funding is still to be sought to enable these works to be carried out and for faculties to be obtained. The next quinquennial inspection is due to be carried out in 2024.

The two defective night storage heaters in the vestry were replaced this year with modern wall-mounted convector heaters. The photo display on the vestry walls was also updated and improved following the recently completed redecoration of the vestry.

### **Churchyard**

The churchyard continues to be well maintained and we are grateful for the services of Arun District Council's Community Payback team, which has returned this year to cut the grass each week, at no cost to the church. To facilitate this service we have recently bought two second-hand strimmers and have arranged for our two petrol

mowers to be serviced. It has been necessary to purchase a shed to store this equipment, which will be erected behind the flint wall in the churchyard extension.

It is still hoped that the large bonfire site, also located in the churchyard extension, can be repositioned to create additional grave space.

The 18c Boniface box tomb, situated opposite the west door of the church, has suffered structural damage and requires repair. Consultation with members of the DAC, and two stonemasonry companies, has been undertaken and a faculty is about to be applied for to have this work carried out later this year. The cost of this will need to be met from Parish funds.

We thank all those who help tend the churchyard in many ways with dedication. Many visitors regularly express appreciation for the high standard of upkeep of this beautiful and peaceful space.

The church equipment stored in the Granary continues to be kept tidy. Last summer a major sort-out and clearance of the granary was undertaken which has resulted in there being more space available and easier access to all equipment and stored items.

Following a decision taken in 2023 by the St George's management committee, regular church and vestry cleaning has resumed after a break of many years. Several two-person teams now clean the church on a rota-ed, fortnightly cycle. The church benefits greatly from such regular cleaning and maintenance, and we are immensely grateful to our dedicated volunteers who have stepped forward to undertake this valuable service to the church.

### **Proposed Audio-Visual system in the church**

The church committee has decided that the church's worship and social life could be greatly enhanced by audio-visual equipment linked to the Internet. Good progress has been made during the year to achieve this goal. The system will comprise a projector and drop-down screen. It will be beneficial during certain services, PCC and other church meetings, Sunday school groups and, potentially, events such as concerts and presentations. Subject to future wi-fi connectivity, it will be possible to show content directly from the Internet. The projector will be mounted at a high level on the first roof beam in the nave. The screen will be suspended behind the chancel arch and will be out-of-sight from the nave when raised.

Positive discussion with the DAC and church architect has been held. The congregation has been consulted and the PCC has approved the proposals. A faculty is soon to be applied for.

Fundraising has been ongoing in memory of Maggie Courtnadge who passed away in 2022. Maggie greatly supported such a system and was the inspiration for the current project. We are well over 50% of the way to meeting the estimated cost. The momentum for Maggie's Fund has not diminished, and this will be the source of funding for the project.

### **Children and Youth Participation**

The pre-school children's group 'Play-and-Pray', which meets in the church each Friday morning, continues to be popular and to thrive in numbers. The group continues to be led by Hedda Wells and assisted by Sharon Priest, and we are very grateful to both of them for their dedicated service.

Hedda also leads the school-age children's 'Sunday Seekers' group, which generally meets on a Sunday morning in the school hall. This group is also well attended and thriving, and is ably assisted by some parents. Again, we are very grateful to Hedda and her team for their dedicated service.

On the first Sunday of each month an All-Age service is generally held, often on the farm green or in a barn, when the weather allows. The service is usually well attended - particularly on 'Ice Cream Sunday', which will be held on the green on 7 July this year.

### **Patronal Festival**

St George's Patronal service was held on the morning of Sunday 21 April. We were privileged to have as our guest speaker the Bishop of Horsham, Bishop Ruth. A bring-and-share lunch was held in the church following the service, and concluded an enjoyable and social celebration of the life of our patron saint.

### **Those who maintain the life of the church**

The services, activities and life of the church could not happen without the marvellous work and support of the many who give their time so freely. These include sidespersons, sacristans, servers, intercessors, readers, organists, children's group leaders, flower arrangers and those providing refreshments. Often overlooked because they are rarely seen are our cleaners, those who help maintain the churchyard and those who open and close the church each day. We pray that our many weekday visitors, perhaps strangers, will find inspiration in a building which has been cared for and used for worship for centuries.

To you all we give a big 'thank you' for making St George's Church the flourishing and loving Christian family that it is. As usual, we give special thanks to Vera and Roger for their guidance on many issues, and who do so much for the benefit of St George's and the wider parish.

We give especial thanks to Fr Paul for his leadership and guidance in the church's ministry. Also, to Revds Sheila, Susan and Graham for their ministry and work in the parish. And we remember with much fondness and gratitude the dedication and work of the late Fr Tony who was such an inspiration and friend to so many at St George's and the wider parish.

Gary and Colin are glad to have this opportunity to contribute to the life of this parish. We thank everyone for the valuable support that we receive.

*Gary Courtnadge and Colin Mouque (Churchwardens)*

## **ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT**

The current Electoral Roll closed for new admissions on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The Electoral Roll following the revision ended with 172 members, in the period since the last revision 5 new members have been added with 2 members being removed.

Of the 172 members of the roll 132 people live within the parish boundary 40 people living outside the parish.

From information known of the names listed we have identified:

38 of the people attend or associate themselves with St Mary's, Aldingbourne,

57 of the people attend or associate themselves with St Mary's, Barnham,

74 of the people attend or associate themselves with St George's, Eastergate.

A full revision of the Electoral Roll will be undertaken before the 2025 APCM.

*Steven Maple – Electoral Roll Officer*

## **DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

Deanery synod has met three times since the last APCM, the 18<sup>th</sup> of July at St Richards in Aldwick, the 29<sup>th</sup> of November at St Mary's in Felpham and on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February in Barnham community hall.

### 18th of July at St Richards

At this meeting our very own Fr Paul was welcomed as the new Rural Dean with Rev'd Jo King as the Assistant Rural Dean. Bishop Ruth gave a talk about the highs and lows across the Diocese and the various Deaneries. The lows were items such as recruitment and increased tensions in society around issues such as Safeguarding. Bishop Ruth then talked about the great things she had witnessed such as the various inventive ways the Gospel was being taken to the community. We finished with a discussion of the following questions: from what you have heard what really excites you? What could our Deanery envisage doing? What would you choose to hear more about during the next year?

### 29th of November at St Mary's

Amongst the regular Deanery business such as welcomes, farewells, rural Dean's notices we were given two talks. The first talk was a discussion between Rev'd Jo King and a member of her congregation. This conversation centred around new members of the community, mainly those moving to the new estates which are being built and how we can raise awareness of the church's presence in the community and potentially welcome them to our congregations. The second talk was from Rev'd Steve Gurr a Chaplain at HMP Ford in West Sussex and was titled "Pastoral care – more than tea and sympathy".

### 8th of February in Barnham community hall

This Synod took place Saturday 3rd February at 10am at Barnham Community Centre and was a follow on from Bishop Ruth's talk about the various ways that our faith is being taken to the community. This meeting focused on the different and creative ways that the churches of our Deanery are promoting the Gospel. After a short introduction from Fr. Paul we were then free to look at the various stalls that had been set up around the hall. We were then treated to a cafe style service. This type of service had been talked about by Bishop Ruth which had piqued the interest of many of the members of the Deanery Synod. It was great to take part of this informal service and was very interesting to see how creative the various churches of the Deanery are being. Time was left to have tea and chat with the other members about what was going on in their parishes.

*Will Holder*



## **PARISH NEWS DISTRIBUTION**

The total magazine distribution is 559, plus copies left in all three churches. We have a total of 40 deliverers to whom we are extremely grateful.

Expected revenue from 546 magazines is £2,730.00 (postal deliveries not included). Our grateful thanks go to Anne and Laurence Fosbury for the monthly challenge of co-ordinating the collection and deliveries of the magazine.

## **PARISH NEWS ADVERTISING**

We had a good response to our annual request for renewals of ads, and we took the opportunity to increase our advertising rates by a small amount. Our rates for the year are currently:

Full page - £480.00                      Half page - £240.00                      Quarter page - £120.00                      Eighth page - £60.00  
and obviously we pro rata that down for new advertisers that come on board.

The magazine continues to be supported by sixty-two regular advertisers and enquiries are received throughout the year so hopefully we will see a few more added to take us through to the end of 2024. We receive positive feedback from many of the advertisers and it's good to know we are providing information on a wide range of services.

We were able to increase revenue with the addition of some one-off adverts from local events such as 'Goodwoof'. Local community events are free of charge but sourcing some larger scale events was a useful boost.

We are also grateful to many of our regular advertisers who take out an ad in the Summer Fair programme – that adds to funds.

We are still hoping to find a willing volunteer to take over the advertising who might be able to increase awareness and boost funds further.

*Sarah Tripp, Advertising Manager*

## **PARISH NEWS TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Parish news generated an overall income of £9095 (compared to £7498 in 2022)

Advertising income was £6190 up from £4473 the previous year. Subscriptions were slightly down at £2905 compared to £3025 in 2022. Printing and administration costs were also down £4327 (£4523 in 2022).

The contribution of funds therefore in 2023 was £4768 (up from £2975 in 2022).

Our grateful thanks to Helen Pearson for looking after the accounts.

## **SUNDAY SEEKERS**

Sunday Seekers meet at Eastergate School during the Family Communion at St George's Eastergate for children aged 4 upwards. The sessions are timed so that the children join the service for communion. Average attendance is 10-15 children. Children younger than school age attend with their parent/carer. They attend the All-Age Service on the first Sunday of the month.

There are currently 8 adults on a rota consisting of 2 planners/leaders of sessions and 6 helpers. They are all DBS checked.

We have subscribed to Roots – an online resource website which covers young children, children, teenage and All Age services. It follows the church year and is a much-valued resource.

We have started a second round of "Welcome to the Lord's table" to prepare 5 children for their first communion.

## **YOUTH GROUP**

There is currently no provision.

## **PLAY & PRAY**

Pray and Play is a toddler group for the under 5s and their parent / carer. They meet every Friday morning in term time at St George's.

The session starts with prayer, singing and music, followed by a story and related craft, tea / coffee for parent / carer and play time for the children.

There is one main leader and a small team of dedicated helpers, mainly Sharon Priest who has run the group in Hedda's absence.

Once a year Play & Pray leads a family service to share their way of worship with the congregation. This usually happens in July and has become Ice Cream Sunday.

This group is going strong and average attendance is between 10 - 12 children.

### **MESSY CHURCH**

Natalie Cartwright, Catherine Annison and Hedda have successfully revived Messy Church in our parish and we held 4 sessions in the past 12 months.

They consist of an introduction to the overriding theme, a large range of activities, worship and sharing a meal (tea and cake). The sessions are aimed at ALL AGES but tend to be attended by families. We would like to encourage all adults to take part in the activities too as some are particularly designed for them and can be beneficial and fun for all. We are working on ways to share this message.

### **NIPPERS AND SLIPPERS**

Is an initiative started in 2018. Once per term 10 – 12 older members of the congregation (organised by Maureen O'Brian) from all three churches come to Eastergate School to join 12 -15 pupils from the Reception Class for an hour of shared time.

We start in a big circle with a song and circle games. Then there is a shared story which leads to linked craft activities followed by one to one story time which is equally valued and enjoyed. The Slippers enjoy the energy and the Nippers soak up the attention.

There are currently 2 sessions per term.

The slippers have also supported the school with Prayer stations. Over 2 days every class came into church and did a carousel of activities led by an adult.

### **SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

There have been no significant Safeguarding issues to report this year.

We have been reviewing our procedures and are updating DBS checks and training to ensure that the parish complies with the Diocesan 'SQP' requirements.

I would like to thank John Hayes and Sarah Nichol for their support, and the many others who have played their part in these arrangements. *(Peter Higgins)*