

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF
ST. MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH, GREAT BRICKHILL**

**Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31st. December, 2013**

**St. Mary The Virgin Church,
Lower Way
Great Brickhill
Bucks.
MK17 9AB**

Bankers:

**Barclays Bank PLC
Leighton Buzzard Branch
The Aylesbury Group
34 Market Square
Aylesbury
Bucks.
HP20 1TT**

Independent Examiner:

**Mr. D. Beatty
Roxburgh House
Pound Hill
Great Brickhill
Milton Keynes
MK17 9AS**

Church Architect:

**Mr. B. Deacon Dip Arch R.I.B.A.
Bruce Deacon Ltd
8 East End Lane
Wilden
Bedfordshire
MK44 2QN**

Report Of The Parochial Church Council (PCC) Year ended 31st. December, 2013

MEMBERS OF THE PCC

The following persons served as members of the PCC during 2013:-

The Reverend John Waller (Chairman)

Christine Agambar (Church Warden)

Valerie Beardmore-Baldwin (Church Warden – elected 23/4/13 & Deanery Synod Rep.)

Deanery Synod Representatives:-

Clare Amies

Jeremy Hopkinson (Co-opted) (Licensed Lay Minister; PCC Vice-Chairman)

Simon Bennett

Phillipa Cook (Secretary)

Robin Dawson (resigned 9/10/13)

Rosie Dawson (resigned 9/10/13)

David Duncombe

Kay Seaman (resigned 10/10/13)

Julia Turner

Joy Wilson

Neil Cook continued in the role of Treasurer, co-opted to the P.C.C., 28/05/13

N.B. The maximum number of lay representatives on the P.C.C. is 9, as per the prescribed formula for Electoral Rolls of 51 to 100.

OBJECTS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE PCC

The object of the P.C.C. of St. Mary the Virgin Church, Great Brickhill, is to further the work of the Church of England in the parish of Great Brickhill. The Council is constituted under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 and as amended by the 1969 Measure, and is required to co-operate with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in 2004 provision was made for the annual appointment of representatives on the P.C.C. All members of the church electoral roll are entitled to vote and stand for election. There is also provision for the co-option of members of the P.C.C., and the incumbent is ex-officio a member and the Chairman. The Wardens and Deanery Synod Representatives are also ex-officio members of the P.C.C.

ELECTORAL ROLL AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Membership of the electoral roll is open to any lay person who is baptised, over sixteen years of age and has signed a declaration that he or she is a member of the Church of England and is either (a). resident in the parish, or (b). has habitually attended worship in the parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment.

At the start of the year there were 52 people on the Electoral Roll. There was a revision of the Electoral Roll prepared for the Annual Meeting in April, at which time there were 53 people on the Revised Roll. Between April and the end of the year there were no additions, no deaths and two moved away. Hence the number of Electors at the end of the year was 51, eleven of whom are not resident within the parish.

The “usual Sunday attendance for Normal Services” during the year to 31/12/13 was 25 (in 2012 the attendance was 21). The increase is due to the average attendance figure for the Family Services having risen to 43. There were several special services held throughout the year which attract a larger congregation than for a normal Sunday – these figures are not included in the calculation for the “usual Sunday attendance for Normal Services”.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Reverend John Waller continues as Rector and takes the majority of the Services throughout the Benefice. Every other month visiting clergy take the Prayer Book Holy Communion service on the first Sunday. Father Colin Griffiths leads the service whenever possible and is often accompanied by Sister Hazel Smith.

The Morning Worship Service on the second Sunday is locally led. As a licensed Lay Minister Mr. Jeremy Hopkinson regularly takes Services at Great Brickhill and at the other Churches within the Benefice.

Extensive consultation took place through the year to develop a new Sunday Service pattern. It is expected that this will be finalised and come into effect in March 2014.

Thanks go to Marian Ridgway who arranges for clergy/lay cover for services within the Benefice for whenever the Rector is unavailable.

During Holy Week High Ash School organised an event in the church called “Experience Easter”. They spent the Tuesday setting up the stations around the church and all the pupils visited the church on the Wednesday to hear the older children tell the story of Easter. On the Wednesday evening parents and parishioners were invited to share the experience.

A special Benefice Harvest Celebration was held at Rectory Farm in September. Over 100 people enjoyed the fellowship during lunch, followed by a farm walk and then a service, which was led by the Bishop of Buckingham. An altar was constructed of bales of hay and the choir sang traditional harvest songs.

The Family Services were the best attended form of service, with a number of young families regularly attending. Planning meetings are held to develop the theme and arrangements for these services. Following the success last year, the popular Crib Service was held on the Sunday prior to Christmas.

In February the Rector completed ten years as Rector of this benefice. This was celebrated at the United Benefice Service in June, which also marked the 25th anniversary of the Rector’s ordination. In October the Rector went on retreat to Sheldon, Devon and in November he attended the first part of a training course at Salisbury Cathedral.

The Rector holds regular meetings with the Wardens of the four churches. A “Prayer for Healing” meeting for the Benefice is held at The Rectory on a Wednesday evening once a month whenever possible, and is open to all who would like to attend.

Dr. Christine Agambar continued in the role of Church Warden and Mrs Valerie Beardmore-Baldwin was elected as Church Warden at the Annual Meeting. Generally they act as “Warden on Duty” on alternate months.

The PCC met in full on five occasions, plus an additional six meetings were held for the sole purpose of discussing the New Facilities. The Rector continued in the role of Chairman with Mr. Jeremy Hopkinson as Vice Chairman. There were three resignations during the year:- Mr. Robin Dawson, Mrs Rosie Dawson and Miss Kay Seaman.

The Gift Aid Envelope Scheme continues to be used for Church collections and whenever possible for fund-raising activities. Dr. Christine Agambar together with the Treasurer are in charge of the administration of the scheme.

Various fund-raising activities were held throughout the year, including the Snowdrop Walks, Farm Walk, Plant Fayre, Bike Ride and Christmas Fair.

Deanery Synod:

The representatives for the Parish are Clare Amies and Val Beardmore-Baldwin – their three year term of office comes to an end in April 2014 when there will be an election of Deanery Synod Representatives. Jeremy Hopkinson is co-opted to the Synod and continues in his role of Deanery Treasurer.

The main points during the year for the Deanery Synod were:

- There was agreed to be a continuing deanery involvement with three other deaneries in the Bucks Show.
- Michael Beasley addressed the Synod on his views of our Mission Action Plan (MAP) and talks about each of three significant areas of mission arising from the deanery MAP: Children, Prayer and Training, were given followed by discussion.
- The MAP for the Deanery was finalised and a copy has been distributed to every parish in the Deanery
- It was agreed that funds of £10,050 to assist in the implementation of the MAP would be made available from the Deanery Funds.

Music and Choir:

The organ continues to be played by various organists on a weekly basis. Mrs. Julia Turner organises the rota of organists for each service. Midland Organ Hele & Company carried out the first part of the restoration work to the organ. The piano is sometimes used rather than the organ and the CD's are played when there is no organist available. The PCC is most grateful to Mr Jerry Breslin and Mrs Juliet Bennett for their hard work in co-ordinating and organising the music and choir.

A system has been developed to work out a timetable of services that the choir will sing at within the Benefice. The timetable has now been adapted to accommodate the new service pattern. The choir benefitted greatly from this forward planning as it helped to both establish numbers for services and enable practice to take place. It is planned to fine tune this to develop a 6 monthly timetable (January to June and July to December) incorporating weddings.

The Benefice choir welcomed three new members to the choir during the year and now has twenty people on its circulation list with all of them singing during the year and attending one or more practice sessions. Average attendance at the practice sessions is twelve. Of the twenty members of the choir, six members are from Bow Brickhill and thirteen are from Great Brickhill and one from Little Brickhill. The choir members range from experienced singers to newcomers to choral singing. The choir welcomes new members from across the Benefice and advertises the details in the Great Brickhill monthly village newsletter and the Bow Brickhill newsletter and e-group.

The choir practices regularly on Monday evenings at St Mary The Virgin Church, Great Brickhill, under the enthusiastic and dedicated leadership of Jerry Breslin benefiting from both the organ and in winter months, the heating. The choir is very grateful to Jerry Breslin for giving his time to the choir.

During the year the choir has enjoyed the practice sessions and as a result continued to improve in both ability and confidence. The choir uses two anthem books, The New Oxford Anthem Book and the recently purchased New Church Anthem Book. The choir has therefore been able to further develop its repertoire of anthems. The Benefice Choir sung at the Benefice services, Easter services at both Great Brickhill and Bow Brickhill, the Remembrance Sunday service at Great Brickhill, weddings and funerals. In addition, the choir worked hard to prepare and sing at a concert at Stoke Hammond in the autumn and eight services, plus a wedding in December covering all churches within the benefice with the wedding being held at Woburn Church.

Bell ringing practice takes place on a Wednesday evening and the bells are rung before most services. David Middleton continues in the role of Tower Captain and organizes a team of ringers for weddings and funerals as required.

High Ash School:

High Ash is a Church of England school and the Christian ethos is central.

There are currently two Foundation Governors at the school, appointed by the Oxford Diocese. From April 2013 – 2014 these positions were held by Reverend John Waller and Mrs Juliet Bennett. Mrs Joy Wilson stepped down from her position as Foundation Governor and thanks are given to her tremendous contribution. A vacancy exists for a third Foundation Governor with work underway to fill the position.

The school has 274 pupils aged 4 to 11 on roll, and this has remained stable since the previous year. The school continues to be oversubscribed with half of the incoming pupils drawn from the school catchment area of Great Brickhill, Little Brickhill and Stoke Hammond. Half of the pupils are out of catchment with most of these children coming from Milton Keynes.

All Church of England dioceses and the Methodist Church use the National Society's framework for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). The framework provides a process for evaluating the extent to which church schools are "*distinctively and recognisably Christian institutions*". SIAMS inspection focuses on the effect that the Christian ethos of the church school has on the children and young people who attend it.

Parishes are encouraged to work closely with their schools. The parish has formal constitutional links via Foundation Governors however there is huge scope for schools and parishes to work together in the interest of good learning and community development. During the year work has continued to strengthen existing links and develop new ones.

There are a number of current opportunities for parishioners to get involved and new initiatives are currently being worked on. A summary of these and the year's events are outlined below.

- Collective Worship is held every day in school.
- Reflection Time with informal prayers are held once a month in school and all are welcome. Parishioners are encouraged to attend. Details are provided in the monthly pew sheet at St Mary's.
- The school through its newsletter invites the school to join services including Easter, Christmas and the Family Service at churches in Little Brickhill, Great Brickhill and Stoke Hammond.
- The School was delighted to welcome Bishop Alan Wilson to celebrate the work the children did during Easter week, and to bless the cross which they made with the help of a resident artist Melanie Watts.

- In May the Year 5 children had the opportunity to visit 'Lifepath' at Elstow Abbey learning about John Bunyan.
- The school choir performed at St Luke's Church, Stoke Hammond in June, St Mary's Christmas Fayre, entertained the senior citizens at their Christmas lunch at the Community Centre in Stoke Hammond and sang in MK City Centre at Midsummer Place
- The annual Leavers Service was held at St Mary's church in Great Brickhill.
- The annual Harvest celebration took place at St Mary's Church in Great Brickhill.
- The Year 6 children took part 'Christmas Cracked' and "Easter Cracked" run by the Bridgebuilder Trust Team.

Midweek Groups and Charitable Giving:

Due to falling numbers the fortnightly Wednesday morning House Communion finished in November.

The Thursday Group met fortnightly on Thursday afternoons for discussions, talks, tea and chat. The programme also includes a number of outside visits.

The Thursday Group took its usual break over the five week Lent period to make way for the weekly Lent Course. Two sessions of Lent Groups were held each week - on Thursdays, a series of talks by the Rector in the New Room at the Parish Hall, and on Wednesday evenings a series of bible studies, using the readings from the preceding Sunday. The chosen charity for the £185 collected at the Thursday Lent Lunches was for the Christian Aid relief appeal in Syria.

The Drop-In Centre continues to open each week on a Monday afternoon at the Parish Hall. Monies received by the Drop-In, in excess of expenditure incurred, were used towards the carriage cost of sending Shoe Boxes under the auspices of "Link of Hope", an organisation which works with the many poor and needy families in Romania, Moldova, Albania, Bulgaria and Ukraine. A total of 47 shoe boxes were despatched in November 2013.

The annual Macmillan Coffee Morning was held in the Parish Hall on 28th September. A splendid total of £1,202 was raised.

The charities supported by our Outside Giving are:- National Churches Trust and Bucks. Historic Churches Trust. This year's Christian Aid House-to-House Collection in Great Brickhill raised a total of £778. The sum of £450 was sent to the Poppy Appeal from the Remembrance Sunday collection in Church. The Christmas Card Tree and collection at the Charity Evensong in December raised £533 for The Lodge Trust. The sponsored Bike Ride raised £290, the amount being shared with the Bucks Historic Churches Trust. There were two special collections during the year:- £85 for the Philippines Typhoon Appeal and £244 for Water Aid Harvest Appeal.

The total of disbursements to charitable causes during the year was in excess of £4,200. This represents approximately 11.5% of the Income Received (excluding Assignables) for the year.

Church Rota and Communications:

Various rotas are drawn up (flower arranging, coffee, churchyard mowing, church locking, cleaning, reading, intercessions, clergy, assistants at Holy Communion, organists) to ensure the smooth running of the Church. The Monthly Rota detailing all the rota information on a single sheet is displayed on the Notice Board in the Church porch.

A weekly Pew Sheet is prepared for all services for which the P.C.C. and members of the congregation are most grateful. The schedule of Services and other items of news are sent each month for inclusion in the Parish Newsletter. The Church continues to pay the Editor of the Parish News an annual amount to cover the cost of including Church items in Parish News.

The Benefice website (www.brickhillschurches.org.uk) has a section dedicated to each of the four churches. The website includes the schedule of all the Church Services, a calendar of events, photos, contact lists etc, plus information about the diocese and deanery. Each week the readings for the following Sunday are given on the front Home page, along with the monthly service sheets for the four churches. The Great Brickhill Monthly Rota Sheet and the weekly Pew Sheets are uploaded as soon as they are available. The number of "hits" to the website continues to increase— in both May and July the figure was in excess of 10,000. The largest number of hits on any one day since the website was set up in December 2009, was reached on 19th December, a record 1006.

Children and Youth:

Marco Loxley, the Youth Leader, reported the following:-

“ The Youth Cafe in the village has continued to grow well, with a new intake of year 7 students who joined in September. The Youth Cafe is still very much committed towards delivering the good news of the Gospel to young people in relevant ways.

Over the summer Pulse took a group of young people from across all of our Youth Cafes to Soul Survivor. Our visit was working in close partnership with Churches across Milton Keynes who we have been plugging to many of our young people. A number of our Great Brickhill participants have experienced this event before on many occasions, however it was still a great success for those who were a part of it for the first time.

Pulse is continuing to hold a weekly Cell Group in the village, which serves between 3 & 6 young people each week. Our meetings involve a time of social together as well as in depth study and prayer time. This has proved to be a great developmental project to our young people and we pray that it continues into the future.

Over the last year Pulse has been very closely involved with the planning and delivery of the Milton Keynes Mission Week entitled "Hope MK". During the week of October half term we saw 19 Churches working in partnership together to deliver projects all across Milton Keynes. These projects were all led by young people and were geared towards blessing the community. Over 150 young people were serving during the week and taking huge leaps of faith to see break through in the lives of others. Two young people from Great Brickhill Youth Cafe headed up the largest project team of the week and delivered a Youth Cafe / Outreach project in the city centre. The project and their achievements were a credit to themselves and their Youth Cafe. Our awesome God really showed up and did some incredible stuff in the lives of young people.

We are always looking for new opportunities to grow and develop the Youth Work in Great Brickhill. As Pulse begins to further establish itself across Milton Keynes, we are hoping to develop more significant networks between Cafes and young people. It is our prayer this year that we are able to get ourselves a building or a large independent office to operate from. We are continuing to strive towards making this happen.

Please accept our thanks for the continued prayer and financial support that goes on behind the scenes.”

REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS

The format of the Accounts has been changed in order to comply with the Charities Commission Rules.

The Church had a surplus of £1,746 for the year (2012 surplus £2,743), which increased the General Reserves to £9,559. There was an increase in Church Collections and Gift Aid Donations including tax rebates, amounting to £2,508. General Donations decreased by £1,295.

The total Expenditure (excluding the figure for Assignables) increased by £1,253. The amount of Outside Giving was £500, the same as for 2012.

Payment of the Parish Share:

This year the P.C.C. paid its Parish Share of £21,724 in full - this was the same figure as last year. The Parish Share will remain at £21,724 for 2014.

Restricted Items:

As well as general income the P.C.C. has received donations which are restricted as to their use, the money having been given for specific purposes. Under the Charities Act accounting regulations, the restricted funds have to be identified separately in the main accounts. The P.C.C. is able to confirm that it holds sufficient and appropriate assets to meet the conditions of expenditure of all restricted funds. Details of the balances of funds and the assets which are held to represent those funds are contained in the Balance Sheet.

The total for Restricted Funds at the end of the year was £99,507. Two additional Restricted Funds were set up during the year for:- i). a project to support the bells (due to a late grant from the Central Council of Church Bellringers for the restoration of the bells); ii). a project and appeal to raise funds to renovate the organ.

PROJECT ST. MARY 2000

Bruce Deacon was appointed as the architect to propose a scheme to accommodate the new / some of the new / facilities within the church building. An open presentation weekend was held in June to show and explain the proposed plans. The Rector explained that the church building has been adapted and developed throughout its history and in recent years through the St Mary's 2000 project tremendous work has been done on the roof, the tower, and the re-hanging and improvement of our bells. It is now time to provide the new facilities that will better equip the church for today and for the future, in a way that is achievable and sustainable.

The church building is already well used – for regular services, and as a place for quiet and prayer, as well as for a variety of special services and events, ranging from small to very large gatherings of people. The aim of the new facilities is to make the building more comfortable and accessible for the current users, and to facilitate greater use of it in future. The right balance is being sought between respecting the history and tradition that the building reflects, while also making changes to enable the mission of the church for today and for the future.

The original proposal was for a meeting room, a kitchen, loos, an office and storage. While these requirements were still deemed valid, there was general agreement that loos and a kitchen were the highest priority. The PCC looked at which of these new facilities should be provided inside the existing building, and how much should be in a new extension. Several factors were considered:- maintaining the current seating capacity of the church; not providing new facilities in the building that could affect the feel of the space, and possibly the

acoustics; current guidance (which is different from when this project was conceived around 20 years ago) that external building work will only be permitted if there are powerful reasons why the facilities cannot be provided in the envelope of the existing building; not to increase maintenance burden on future generations; the cost of interior facilities is likely to be considerably cheaper and hence quicker to achieve than building externally; whether it is morally right to be spending more than we need.

The new proposals provide all the functions called for in the original statement of need:- a tea point at the rear of the church in the North corner with a minimum number of pews being removed; loos in an extension to the north of the building, which will also provide some additional storage; the Lady Chapel partitioned off with glassed screens, to be used for meetings, or as a space for children during services, or as a quiet space; the vestry re-ordered to provide an office area.

Through long discussions by the PCC during the year, and the consultation weekend held in June, it became clear that there is a clear majority in support of a different shape of project from the long-standing plans. This has raised questions about how the PCC should handle or use the existing funds that have been raised, so guidance is being sought from the Diocese, and the Charity Commission, to ensure that this is dealt with in the right way.

The new plans have already received a very positive response from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (the DAC) and so the PCC is confident that they will enhance the appearance of the Church in Great Brickhill and help in its continuing life and mission in the village.