

Church Life 2024

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Aims and purposes

This report details the activities and accounts in the The Parochial Church West Downland Benefice. Councils (PCC) of the six have the responsibility for, in cooperation with the Incumbent, the whole mission of the Church of England within each parish. includes our worship, pastoral care, evangelistic activities, and social action. They also have maintenance responsibilities for the fabric of the churches and the grounds.

The purpose of this document is to celebrate all that has been good in the benefice over the 12 months to 31st December 2024 and to consider the challenges we face as parishes and wider benefice in preparation for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

West Downland United Benefice

DOWNLAND

Committee

In 2024, our work as a United Benefice continued with regular UB meetings, thank you to both Evelyn and Peter for kindly hosting these. During the vacancy these meetings became vital to keep everything running and with the joining of Mike early in the year these meetings have only grown in their importance.

°°° / Place The regular meetings have to lead to lots of positive conversations, it's a really positive group for talking through service plans, what works and what doesn't and what should we try! This led to a very busy Christmas plan but we were able to offer lots of variety. Thank you Mike!

With each meeting are building we communication and sharing across the PCC's which can only benefit each one. What does become very clear in these meetings is that we often have a few people in each Parish doing a lot. We all agree that it would be great to share the workload and get more people involved and hopefully that will come this year.

A huge part of the UB meeting discussions this year has been the building of the United Benefice Council. Many conversations have come before what we present today. We started by looking at what we wanted from this, what was feasible and what was the best for all the parishes. I hope you agree that where we stand today with this proposal will be of benefit to

all and shows the true spirit and great working relationship the team has. Its a pleasure to be involved in these UB meetings and I thank all involved for bring ideas, commitment and enthusiasm.

Aims for 2025

Looking forward into 2025, we are focused on the following key areas:

- We started the year with a Wedding Couples morning - this was well received and something we will continue with
- Work on the structure of the PCC's, build up membership
- Moving PCC's over to a standardised Accounting system
- Moving to the Diocese Safeguarding System
- Build on the success of last year's festival services, use feedback to fine tune the offerings but continue to try new worshipping

• Run a trial Summer Holiday camp - will be one day this year

> Build the Pew Sheet to incorporate events from all around our parishes.

> > Thank you, Sarah

Safeguarding

Training

Great progress has been made in bringing all the PCC safeguarding training up to date.

The group sessions worked well and we will repeat this in the future.

Thank you to everyone who took part. There is only one member of the PCC's across the Benefice with training outstanding.

DBS Checks

Continue on a monthly basis, please do ensure you complete yours promptly when requested. It was noted that some have been chased on the West Downland email addresses when they are not using them. These will be followed up on alternative email addresses.

Incidents

There have been no incidents reported to the Safeguarding officer.

Policies

The Benefice Safeguarding policy has been adopted by all the Benefice PCCs.

Diocese Dashboard System

We are currently using other means to monitor the safeguarding and requirements, although the Diocese system has potential, it is time consuming (especially

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when duplicated over 6 parishes) and the current management system is working better for us. We will look again at this as things change for us as a Benefice.

Gill Judge.

Safeguarding Officer for the West Downland Benefice

Brightwalton w/Catmore

Background

The PCC of Brightwalton with Catmore has the responsibility for co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church – pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. During the year, the following served as members of the PCC.

Incumbent:

The Reverend Mike Griffiths (from January) Elected Members:

Churchwarden: Lady Matheson

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Mr Stephen Codrington

Mr Nicholas Arkell Mr James Gardiner

Committees

From time to time the PCC also operated through committees which can meet between full meetings of the PCC.

Standing Committee

This is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings subject to any directions given by the Council. Members: Incumbent and Churchwardens.

Finance Committee

This oversees the general financial work by monitoring income and expenditure and planning for major expenditure, as for the church renovations. Members: Hon. Treasurer and the Churchwardens.

ASPIRE Committee

This plans and coordinates the re-organisation of the Church. It includes designing and obtaining approval for the new Church layout, raising the funds to complete the works and managing the completion of the works.

The Worship Group

This has been created to deal with worship matters benefice wide, involving members of all six PCCs.

All Saints Church, Brightwalton

Church Attendance

In December 2024 there were 34 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll.

The highest attendance was 252 people at David Gardiner's funeral. There were 220 people at Sam Picton's thanksgiving service, 153 people at the carol service, 135 people at the induction of the Rev Mike Griffiths and 133 people at the school harvest festival.

Events of the Year

There was one marriage, one baptism and one memorial service. There were two funerals. The school held several services over the year. There was a Christingle Service, pictures of which appear below.





Fabric of the Church

Our new roofer, Joe Harris, has repaired the damage to the lead gulleys done by squirrels. Squirrels had chewed through two thicknesses of lead which had led to water leaking into the church. Joe also cleared the gutters of debris, sludge and vegetation, including small trees which had blocked them. The roof is now currently watertight.

The lightening conductor failed its test, and remedial work was carried out by Stone Technical Services in October.

The glass of the light above the lychgate has been repaired.

The churchyard has been well-maintained throughout the year.

St Margaret of Antioch, Catmore

There were four services held at St Margaret's, Catmore with 136 attending the Christmas Eve Carols by Candlelight service, over 40 to each of our Whitsunday and Harvest Sung Evensong services and a small service for the interment of ashes. In total £1,141 was raised from collections for the Churches Conservation Trust in who's care the church rests. The church remains a regular destination for visitors from near and far (as Australia) with 158 recorded in the visitors' book excluding service congregations.

While the carol service is always popular, attendance at the two evensong services has more than tripled from pre-Covid levels. Sung Evensong, a rarely used

form of service in smaller churches, appears popular and my thanks go to the Rector for his fine singing not only of the responses but also the collects, and to our organist Judith Orpen who has emboldened us to take on the canticles and a few psalms as well as well-known We hope that the hymns. Knights Hospitallers, who claimed the advowson in the twelfth century, would be pleased.



We have pruned some of the trees in the church yard and work will continue to tidy it further while retaining its rustic charm. We are currently engaged in a prolonged battle with the resident rabbit population who so far seem immune to efforts to dissuade expansion of their excavations.



Do join us for our next evensong at 6pm on Whitsunday, 8th June and for a glass of wine in the churchyard afterwards.

Finance
Income from
parishioners
increased by 20%
in 2024, due to the
number of special
services. Planned
giving actually
declined by 8% as

two people who were long-term donors died. Expenses were lower thanks to less work being required on Sprayview Cottage so that the general fund had a surplus of £4,500.

Fundraising for the ASPIRE project continues, £23,000 was raised during the year and we are closing in on the target.

Reserve Policy

The policy of the PCC regarding reserve funds is that they will be used to pay for expenses as necessary. It is expected that a significant amount of money will be required to modernise Sprayview Cottage as and when the current tenancy ends. Any funds not used for expenses are to be put aside and used for charitable purposes, especially local community aid, where

possible.

Thanks

Very many thanks are due to Russell Exley for looking after the fabric of the church and the churchyard at All Saints.

We also thank Sue Ridgeway for her ongoing work as Principal Sidesman, ensuing both the regular and special Church Services at All Saints run smoothly.

We are grateful to all the volunteers who clean the church and arrange the flowers, in particular to Sue Ridgeway for organising this.

We thank Hugo Bailey for auditing the accounts.

We thank Judith Orpen for playing the organ and organising the choir.

Chaddleworth

Introduction

Last year's Report highlighted the Parochial Church Council's unanimous sigh of relief at the arrival of Rev. Mike Griffiths as Rector and it is a joy to report that the sigh has morphed into "Alleluia" this year,

Service Statistics

Total number of Services 107, a remarkable improvement on earlier years, Including:

- · Weddings 4
- Funerals 2
- Baptisms 2



The St Andrew's PCC is extremely grateful to Sue Ridgeway for her sterling work as an unofficial Churchwarden.

Comments

It was a particular pleasure to welcome the union of Isaac, Lady Eliza Mays-Smith's grandson and his bride, Olive and Page 5

the flowers in the church were beautiful. The wedding of Ellie Bunn and Dan Sherman was more stressful, since the Church suffered a power-cut immediately before the appointed time for the wedding. Thankfully, the arrival of candles and hard hand-pumping of the organ by Rev Mike's son, Jacob saved the day.

Churchyard maintenance



The volunteer team that took over the maintenance of the Churchyard continued its excellent work and the Beech Hedge is developing well.

External events
The 80th
Anniversary of
D-Day was celebrated
with a short

Service at the War memorial and a parade of Scouts and other youngsters marched up the hill to the Beacon Field.

The parade was led by a Piper and drums, which gave sufficient energy to the marchers for them to pass through the "forest", where a sound system played wartime media, and through the "Trenches" of tall grass.

The beacon was lit, the Garston Gallopers Mor"rissed" and the swing-band encouraged dancing.

The PCC is of the opinion that this type of external event goes a long way towards achieving its goal of involving the Parishioners socially, with a view towards achieving a greater



sense of mutuality amongst them.

The excellent work done by the Rector in the local schools also goes a long way in this direction and the PCC is most grateful for this as well as for the fun,



happiness and respect that he has brought to the Parish.

For the Parochial Church Council April 2025

Fawley

The Parish was delighted to welcome Rev Mike Griffiths after his Installation as Rector at the end of January 2024 and were very grateful for all those who supported the church during the Interregnum.

There were 15 on the electoral roll, the same as the previous year

The members of the P.C.C. elected at the Annual Meeting in April were:
Chairman –

Rev. Mike Griffiths Churchwarden – Evelyn Bracey Hon. Treasurer -

Evelyn Bracey

Hon. Secretary -

Sarah Crane

Elected Members -

Roz Boadle

Gillie Rowland-Clark

Carolyn von Stumm

David Gavins

There were 3 PCC meetings during the year

Services and Special Offices

There were a total of 22 services in St Mary's Fawley:

13 services of Holy Communion

8 Special Offices:

1 wedding,

4 funerals,

1 Baptism,

Easter Eve service

Contemporary Carols

Average Sunday Attendance was 17 excluding special offices

Thanks go to all those who contributed to the Church throughout the year - to clean the church, arrange flowers, ring the bells and especially for maintaining the churchyard.



Fawley enjoyed the joyful musical services of Easter Eve's darkness into light and Modern Carol Service thanks to the enthusiasm and impressive IT from Rev Mike

The PCC has encouraged parishioners to donate through the Parish Giving Scheme and have (just)



successfully met all financial obligations during the year.

The church relies on substantial fundraising events throughout the year and special thanks go to Evelyn Bracey (Ride), Gillie Rowland Clark and Carolyn von Stumm (Bridge Tea) and Sarah Crane (church talks on The Land Around Us) for running successful events. We also hosted a play about Thomas Hardy.

The PCC are very grateful to Greenham Common Trust and the Berkshire Church's Trust for their contributions towards the repair of the church tower and (unsuccessful) attempt to exclude rooks from the church roof space.



Great Shefford w/Shefford Woodlands

The Service of Institution, Induction and Installation of Rev. Mike Griffiths as Rector took place on 31st January 2024 and Mike led his first service in Great Shefford on 4th February. The P.C.C. was grateful for the continuing support from visiting clergy and the Lay Team throughout January and with the extra work involved in reaching this point.



Membership

The number on the electoral roll for Great Shefford w/Shefford Woodlands was 27 three of whom live outside the Parish.

The members of the P.C.C. elected at the Annual Meeting in April were:

Chairman – Rev. Mike Griffiths
Churchwarden – Mrs. Phillipa Phelps
Hon. Treasurer – Mr. Richard Ball
Hon. Secretary – Mrs. Della Hodkin

Elected Members – Mrs. Denise Herrington

Mrs. Nadine de Chazal

Services and Special Offices

There were a total of 44 services in Great Shefford:

14 services of Holy Communion

13 Café Church services

17 Special Offices:

2 weddings,

2 services for U5s & 2 School services,

Carols through the Avenue,

6 Funerals,



3 Interment of Ashes.

1 Remembrance Service.

Average Sunday Attendance was 27.

Thanks go to all those who contribute to the Services throughout the year and especially to Shirley Harniman for continuing to steer the Café Church team made up of Kingsley Harniman, Denise Herrington, Della Hodkin, Jodie Croysdill and family, Nadine de Chazal and family and Tracy Ball.

Those who work to clean the church, arrange flowers, maintain the churchyard and ring the bells to call people to church are also greatly appreciated.

There were a total of 11 services in Shefford Woodlands:

7 Prayer and Praise

2 Holy Communion

1 Evening Prayer

1 Morning Prayer

Average Sunday Attendance was 14.



Thanks go to Anne Minoprio, Tracy Ball and Richard Ball for all they have done this year to prepare for the Prayer and Praise Services and to the band of musicians who work so

hard to put on this service.

We started our 2024 fundraising events with a very successful Curry and Quiz night in Great Shefford Village Hall. Sadly we were unable to run the Duck Derby this year as the water levels in the river were so high it was judged unsafe.



Instead Emma Richardson organized an online Auction of donations which she had managed to get for the fundraising efforts. A big thank you must go to Emma and the Fundraising Team for all their hard work. Other fundraising events were a Lent Lunch, the Harvest Supper and Carols Through the Avenue.

Leckhampstead

Background:

Leckhampstead PCC has the responsibility for co-operating with the Rector, the Reverend Mike Griffiths, in promoting within the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church - pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Since June 2010

the Parish has been part of the West Downland Benefice along with Brightwalton with Catmore, Chaddleworth, Fawley, Great Shefford with Shefford Woodlands and Welford with Wickham. The West Downland Benefice and East Downland Benefice form the Downland Group.

Membership:

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church

Representation Rules. During the year, the following served as members of the PCC:

Rector: Reverend Mike Griffiths - Chairman

Elected Members: Ian Brown Deanery Synod Polly Capron Health & Safety, Flower &
Reading Rotas, UB Benefice Rep

Mary-Ann Brown – Church cleaning rota, Catering, Fundraising Committee, UB Benefice Rep

Caroline Dennington - Secretary, Electoral Roll Officer

Alison Hartwell – Church Website, Marketing, Fundraising Committee



Michelle Standing – Treasurer, Fundraising Committee

Keith Powell – Fabric of Church, Fundraising Committee

The full PCC met 4 times during the year, in person.

Committees:

The PCC has one Committee, which meets as required between the full meetings of the PCC:

Standing Committee: This is the only Committee required by law. It has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any general directions given by the Council. In addition, the PCC has responsibility for the 'Friends of St James Church' which it set up in Sept 2010 to raise funds from



people who are not part of the worshipping community but who wish to support the fabric of St James'. This group reports to the PCC.

The members are:

Keith Powell: Chairman & Administrator

Polly Capron: Committee Member Philip Seymour: Committee Member

Electoral Roll

The number included in April 2024 was 32, being similar to this time last year.

Church Attendance:

We had one layled Morning Prayer service in January before the induction of Mike Griffiths our new Rector. Since then, we have a rota with St James's having a 9am traditional communion service on 3rd Sunday of the month and a more modern one at 10.30 on 5th Sunday. We also have 4pm service on the 1st Sunday of the month which started as tea and prayers but has developed into Evensong. We average 17 for the 9am service. We had 59 attendants for Easter Day, 39 for Harvest festival followed by soup lunch with saxophone

accompaniment, 34 for Advent Carols and 19 adults and 2 children for a crib service on Christmas Eve.

Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals

We had one Baptism on 3rd November, one wedding on 7th September - congratulations to Lee and Emily Williams.

Fundraising:

The Fundraising Committee kicked off a series of events to raise funds to supplement the income of the church. We held two events:

our first Pop-Up-Pub in the church in September 2024 and hosted The Blackheart Orchestra in November 2024. We also organised a Music, Cheese & Wine event to take place in December, but had to postpone due to low numbers. In addition, we ran our annual village lottery (the 100 Club). Fundraising in 2024 raised a total of £1,997.13.

Review of the Year:

During 2024 we have been able to enjoy the refurbished church now that it has a new roof, under-floor heating, kitchen and toilet facilities and, best of all, movable pews. However, due to the increased cost of heating, water & gardening services, coupled with lower donations, our expenditure is higher than our income. We have kicked off a fundraising programme to support this deficit. We hosted a number of major services this year including the Harvest service, Carols Around the Christmas Tree and the Crib Service. We also donated to Loose Ends in Newbury over the Christmas period. Many thanks to everyone for all contributions.

We continue to keep the community updated through our website (www.stjamespcc.com) with information on upcoming services, upcoming fundraising events and news.

Fabric Review

There were no further enhancements to the fabric of the church following several years of refurbishment to protect St James for the future. Instead, we enjoyed the new heating, kitchen facilities, toilet and moveable pews and have been able to host a number of

fundraising events for the benefit of the community and to help us fundraise for the upkeep of the church.

An annual inspection of the Fire Extinguishers was undertaken.

Finance Review

The summary of the 2024 accounts are included below. It has been a challenging year financially as our reserves are low, caused by lower than usual donations, increased costs and previous focus on restoring the fabric of the church. The PCC initiated a programme of fundraising to support our running costs. The Parish Share was paid in full and on time.

Finally

The health of the church is demonstrated through the lives of its members in the local community. We give

thanks to everyone for their support in this way. We also thank people, and trusts, who while not worshipping members, help to sustain St James Church with their talents and their gifts. In looking forward we recognise that we face challenging times as we seek to foster Church growth within our

local community and undertake the responsibility of maintaining the fabric of the church.

On behalf of the PCC: Michelle Standing, Caroline Dennington Polly Capron, Alison Hartwell, Keith Powell, Mary-Ann Brown, Ian Brown & Reverend Mike Griffiths

28th April 2025

Welford and Wickham

PCC Membership

The Rector and the Churchwardens, Mr Charles Puxley and James Lofthouse are ex-officio members. Mr James Puxley, Mrs Dottie Channing-Williams, Mr James Dacy, Mrs Frances Wadsworh, Mr Colin Tett and Mrs Lynn Woodhead make up the other Members of the PCC. Elected to PCC during 2024 were Jodie Croysdill and Debbie Puxley.

Although we do not have any committees, we do have two independent fundraising groups; The Friends of Welford and he The Friends of Wickham Churches.

The PCC has authorised the Rector and Churchwardens to make decisions on their behalf if



necessary.

Church Attendance

There are nineteen names now (April 2025) on the Electoral Roll, one more than last year. The average

Sunday attendance is about twenty adults, although numbers have often been more and the overall trend is an increase in congregations for which the rector

deserves credit. The recent arrival of Mike has shown marked increase in congregations which is very encouraging. The 9am Sunday services at Wickham have proved popular more so, strangely than 10.30



services at Welford. The Christmas (remarkably over 250 people) and Easter services were well attended both major sources of income. The services associated with Wickham School are always popular. Our services are held twice a month a 9am Holy Communion on the second Sunday at Wickham and a 10.30 Holy Communion service at Welford on the 4th Sunday.

Review of the Year

There is still the continual problem of heating at Wickham Church and we need to raise money for this project. Wickham has only electric heaters mounted on the walls and no working boiler. However, a great deal of work has been carried out at Wickham with repairs to the electrics and general tidying up, long needed. At Welford we recently installed new radiators connected to the boiler and a very marked improvement in heating was noticed. There is a major problem with the boiler at present which various experts looking at it. Problem is only half resolved currently. The Welford organ has had substantial work complete recently and the various organists report very favourably.

The PCC's finances will be presented by the treasurer before the APCM. Latest figurate are not yet available at the time of writing. The treasurer has done his customary excellent work through the year for which we are very grateful. Expenses, excluding the Parish Share have been paid in full. We have paid half of the Welford& Wickham allocated Parish Share of £5,189 against £10,300, due to our finances. Trying to raise over £10,000 is a remarkable achievement for a small parish with very few generous donors. All future building and renovation expenses will need to depend on Grants or charitable Behests. Mr Paul Baird our professional Fundraising Advisor has been successful

in the past t advising and assisting large amounts of Grant Aid, however, much more money is needed and so our work goes on.

Other ways of raising money have been discussed and taken place and we are planning more local events involving the churches. Covenants and donations are at an all time low. As in many rural parishes, small congregations means that a large amount of work falls on a few people.

Rev Mike's Report

What a first year we have enjoyed together! It is so good to celebrate all the good things that God has been doing amongst us as we have sought to be the People, Place and Purpose that we are called to be.

I said in my report last year that it had been a joy and delight to read about the activities and events that have taken place. Even more so again this year! I remain astounded by the abundance of creativity, commitment, passion, care and dedication that is evident across all our churches and it is wonderful to see such flourishing across the benefice in so many areas.

In the "Rector's Charge" at the last APCM, I challenged us to 'Come and See'. Come and see what God is In our Schools, in our communities, in our churches and in the lives of those people we serve. And Boy did you do that. We now have a usual Sunday attendance (across all the services combined) of over 50 people. This is a significant uplift on how things were during the vacancy. More than 300 people have been fed in the Rectory on a Tuesday evening. We have trialled the first of the Pilgrim courses. We had a band of 12 musicians lead our contemporary carol service in Fawley, nearly 30 in the Choir for the 9 Lessons and Carols service. We continue to develop the worshipping "vocabulary" of each of our unique Parishes and yet we get to share in the richness of our diversity in each place that we gather.

This year, after the 'come and see', the invitation is to look at ways we can 'Join In". There is so much that happens across the benefice that needs our Time, our Talents and our Tithes in order for us to be all that we can be under God. This might be in helping to read the bible or lead the intercessions in our services, helping with cleaning/gardening or helping with the tech, supporting initiatives financially. Please do prayerfully consider the ways in which you can "Join In" this year.

I'd like to finish by once again extending a huge thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to support the life and liveliness of this Benefice. It is a joy and a privilege to serve with you. With my love and prayers, Rev Mike x

Financial Accounts

	Brightwalton with	ith	Chaddleworth		Fawley		Great Shefford with		Leckhampstead -		Welford with Wickham	kham
	2024	Compared to lastyear	2024	Compared to lastyear	2024	Compared to lastyear	2024 Compared	to lastyear	2024	Compared to lastyear	2024	Compared to lastyear
Expenses Parish Share Benefice Contribution Insurance Utility Church Maintenance	£8,206 £1,847 £1,514 £1,438 £1,696 £3,233		£7,603 £1,500 £2,139 £872 £383 £0		£6,412 £1,500 £3,533 £1,106	++ + •	£11,928 £1,500 £4,747 £2,961 £560				£5,685 £1,728 £3,080 £1,584 £2,890 £1,590	•
Service Consumables Fundraising Costs Other Parish Specific		→→	£428	—	£326 £4,014 £234	' 	. 650		700		£120	
Total Expenses	£27,459	•	£12,924		£17,124		£21,746	+	£32,631	T	£16,678	
Income Life Event Fees	£1,209	+	65,849		£1,590	•	£4,483				65,469	•
Service Donations Planned Giving	£1,995 £3,633	+	£2,561 £3,350	<u> </u>	£4,383 £3,759		£904 £9,479				£3,016 £10,367	←
Special Services Gift Aid Fundraising Events	£1,102 £1,794 £23 830	-	£535	4	£989 £4 683	4-6	£3 716				£182	
Other Donations Other Income	£555 £1.626	•	- £454	→ '	£3,445	• •	£4,231 £107				£150 £248	
Parish Specific	£11,160	•			<u> </u>						83,000	•
Total Income	£46,904	+	£9,749		£18,849		£22,920		£19,041		£24,432	
Closing Balances												
Current Account Restricted Funds A Restricted Funds B	£59,375 £37,430		£25,263 £11		£948 £849		£6,059 £7,539 £2.001				£11,323	
Total	508,803	+	£25,274	•	£1,797	П	£15,599	$\ \ $	£4,346		£11,323	4

NB. This is a summary created from the submitted PCC accounts. All PCC's are reporting slightly differently, so this should be used as a guide on the general position across the Benefice, for a full breakdown on individual PCC's please see the printed individual accounts.