

Parish of Graffham with Woolavington

Annual Parochial Church Meeting 17 March 2023.

Reports.

Bellringing.

The Graffham bell ringers have continued to develop their skill over the last year and maintained the number of ringers in the band. The regular Tuesday practices remain supported by visiting trainers, with a monthly 2nd Saturday practice which is open to other tower bands. Ringers are assessed as competent when they can ring rounds and ring a bell down, and then become members of the Sussex County Association of Change Ringers (SCACR). The majority of ringers have completed the basic safeguarding training. Howard Pescott was nominated as Tower Captain, and following references and DBS was confirmed into the role. There has been regular maintenance of the bells, and an inspection completed by Taylors Foundry praised the condition and upkeep of the tower. Several special occasions were celebrated over the year, and the band were proud to ring before the Coronation of His Majesty. The band is looking forward to develop over the next year and will be increasing publicity about ringing and the band. The bells ring out across the village and are valued by the community.

Report by Howard Pescott, Tower Captain.

Flower arranging.

Saint Giles has nine flower arrangers who work a monthly rota to arrange flowers for weekly services. Besides this, all flower arrangers get together to do the flowers for the main church celebrations such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest. They have also decorated the church for King Charles III coronation celebration. If anyone is interested in joining the flower arrangers' rota you do not have to be a professional, just enjoy flower arranging then please see or contact Diane Bellis.

Report by Diane Bellis.

Musical activities.

In the past year the musical side of worship at Graffham has been active. 2023's highlights included the Coronation celebration service, at which Parry's "I was glad" was sung with great gusto; the Harvest Festival was suitably upbeat with an unforgettable Samba tune for "It's another Harvest Festival", while some of the old and bold choir members performed solo verses for "Oats and Beans and Barley Grow", suitably clad in hoe down gear. December was a marathon, agreeably launched by choir members leading an amazing turn out at the White Horse to belt out favourite Christmas numbers, as a warm up to St Giles' Service of Carols and Lessons, at which Master Edward Caldwell performed a memorable opening solo for "Once in Royal", leading up to festive choir anthems including a stirring performance of "O Holy Night", with soloist Sally Blunt trilling out the coloratura top notes to raise the roof.

Since then monthly Saturday morning practices have been instituted to introduce people to some great (more modern) hymns in our new red hymn books – anyone who would like to exercise their vocal cords would be very welcome to join.

Report by Brian Lanaghan and Jan Brind, Organist and Choir facilitator.

Deanery Synod.

There have only been two meetings since the 2023 APCM both of which Diane Bellis and Ann Brown attended. The agenda follows the same pattern beginning with prayers and including finance report and a chance to hear what is happening in the Deanery churches. There is usually a speaker with a topic of interest. In May Dr Katherine Prior spoke of Parish Capital projects. She outlined how a parish could set about a major project and gave some suggestions as to how to find funding. In September it was Graffham's turn to host the meeting. Unfortunately terrible weather with subsequent flooding and fallen trees made it difficult to attend but nevertheless a brave few came. At very short notice the Rural Dean was let down by the booked speaker who was going to talk about environmental issues and the church. Reverend Vivien, Ginny Barrett and Ann Brown hastily put together a talk on what we do at St Giles and how we view the wider environmental issues that concern us all today. Rev Vivien, Diane Bellis and Ann Brown will attend the two meetings arranged for 2024 and if anyone has something they would like to raise at any Deanery Synod meeting we will happily do so. *Report by Diane Bellis and Ann Brown, Deanery Synod representatives.*

Fabric, goods and ornaments.

The fabric, goods and ornaments of the church are still being cared for by a dedicated Fabric Committee chaired by Stuart Lewis. Notable occurrences this year have been the installation of a bench commemorating Queen Elizabeth II and repairs to the nave roof. Further information is being sought regarding remaining roof repairs, reordering of the vestry and repairs to the churchyard wall. Internal works to plasterwork are on hold until the church is properly watertight.

The Church of England takes the climate emergency seriously and aims to be net zero by 2030. Direct energy usage is tracked annually by the diocese. Our heating oil consumption has stayed at a similar level for the last three years. We tend to use around 100 litres of oil a month over the coolest months solely to prevent the boiler and pipes freezing. Heating for services is on top of that. Since the installation of our pew heating and air curtain our monthly electricity consumption at St Giles has gone up around 25 units (representing a rise of around 160% and costing an extra £11 per month). We have six more years to fit in with the Church of England's aim of being net zero.

One option we continue to explore is the replacement of the oil boiler with a form of electric heating. An architect is in the process of being instructed to look at this amongst the further works being considered. *Report by Ginny Barrett, Churchwarden.*

Electoral Roll.

The Electoral Roll for the period March 2023 to March 2024 has been updated and is as published on the church noticeboards as of 3 March 2024. At the start of the 2023 revision there were 69 names on the Electoral Roll. During this revision period one person is no longer on the Roll and four names have been added resulting in a new figure of 72 fully registered names. Further to this it should be noted six other village residents have confirmed wishing to register but, despite written reminders, have so far failed to submit completed forms. Looking ahead, the "six-year preparation of the new Roll" will take place in 2025 when all existing members will be informed of the need to reapply for inclusion on this Roll.

Report by Fiona Mackie, Electoral Roll Officer.

Safeguarding.

Our priority this year was to complete the SQP - Simple Quality Protects Level 1 programme. Following the Diocesan recommendation, we put a small sub-group of PCC members together (namely the priest in charge, PSO and churchwarden), to take the parish through the level. The level covered four core areas - safer activities, safer practices, safer structures and safer people. This was a valuable exercise as it showed us everything which we needed to have in place, to ensure that our parish's safeguarding was in good shape. I am pleased to report that the SQP Level 1 has now been achieved. This demonstrates that we have a high standard of safeguarding provision within our parish here at St Giles Church.

I report that our DBS records and Safeguarding training have been kept up to date and our Photograph and Video Permissions form for families, has recently been revised. Rev. Vivien and I updated our Leadership Training module last year and Jan Brind will be invited to complete hers, following the recent application to become a lay worship leader within our parish. Other PCC members have successfully renewed their safeguarding foundation module, which will be valid now for three years. We continue to encourage anyone within our church and congregation to take this basic level of safeguarding training, as it is important for everyone to understand that safeguarding is 'everyone's responsibility' within our parish.

Lastly, after 5 years as the Parish Safeguarding Officer and after 1 year as a PCC member, I have decided to step down due to work and family commitments. I have enjoyed the role very much and would like to thank the rest of the PCC for their dedication, especially Rev. Vivien, Ginny and Michael for all of their support.

I am delighted to hear that Howard Pescott has been nominated as the new Parish Safeguarding officer and that the PCC will be invited to support this nomination at the end of this meeting. I personally would like to wish him the very best of luck in the new role and feel that the parish will be in very good hands moving forward.

Report by Sonya Gillespie, Safeguarding Officer

