



Reports

Bellringing

By Howard Pescott, Tower Captain

Over the last year the Graffham bell ringers have continued to go from strength to strength, including the addition of a new learner. Regular Tuesday practices have been supported by trainers, with a monthly second Saturday with other towers joining. This supports the band to grow their skills and to learn from others. Sunday and special occasion ringing has featured over the year, which is valued by those attending services and the wider community.

The band was included in a video which is available on YouTube, capturing the sound of the bells within our beautiful surroundings. Regular posts are also put onto social media and features in the parish magazine.

All the ringers have completed basic safeguarding training, and one member joined the Sussex County Association of Change Ringers after being assessed as a competent.

The AGM in February approved the recently updated risk assessment and was assured that the bells had had regular maintained. The bells remain in good order under the care of the steeple keeper team.

Whilst ringing is important, the band now have regular social activities including a summer party, tower outing and Christmas get together. Friendship and care within the band provides the foundation to support each other in this hobby you are always learning!

As Tower Captain I thank everyone in the band for their support, contributions and time to ensure that ringing can be heard across the village.

Deanery Synod

By Diane Bellis and Ann Brown, Deanery Synod representatives

As Graffham's representatives, we attended both Deanery Synod meetings in 2024.

On 16 May 2024, we met in St Mary's Petworth, when Gerald Gresham-Cooke outlined the role of Petworth Area Churches Together in the deanery. There was discussion about possibly raising the annual levy paid by each church member. The new Diocesan Secretary John Preston talked about his role within the Diocese. He appreciated that congregational numbers had still not fully recovered after COVID with a reduction of 35%, adding to the problems for parishes in raising money and recruiting volunteers. There was discussion about the onerous work for treasurers. He pointed out that accounts could be simple as long as they were audited annually. The problems of reduction in ministry were recognised and he suggested that the challenge is to do things differently.

The next meeting was on 17 September in Kirdford. Archdeacon of Chichester the Ven Luke Irvine-Capel told us about his role, overseeing the institutional life of the church, auditing parish records and checking on building and records to make sure all is in good order.

There are two meetings scheduled for 2025 which we will attend so please tell us if you would like to raise any points or even join us.

Electoral Roll

By Fiona Mackie, Electoral Roll Officer

Our electoral roll began the reporting year with 72 members on it. During the current year two have died, one moved away from the village and one member has been added leaving 70 members still living in or near the village. (Note: The Diocese advise that names no longer need to be removed from the Roll during the course of the year, thus 73 members remain on this year's Roll.). 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.

Notices were published on both church noticeboards in November 2024 advising of Preparation of New Electoral Roll from 23 March 2025, as required every six years. Application forms were delivered to the 70 existing Roll member's houses. To date 67 have been returned. Further to this, additional forms have been placed in the church for new applications. Five names, not on the present Roll, have submitted forms for inclusion on the New Roll from 23 March 2025 and two additional forms are expected to be received before 9 March. Therefore, the New Roll will start with a minimum of 72 names and potentially 75 names if the outstanding three forms are received on time. The closing date for inclusion is 9 March 2025 before its eventual publication and commencement on 23 March 2025, with the APCM taking place on 6 April 2025.

Fabric, goods and ornaments

By Ginny Barrett, Churchwarden

The fabric, goods and ornaments of our church are cared for by a dedicated Fabric Committee chaired by Stuart Lewis. The church has undergone further roof works this year and we are continuing our discussions regarding reordering of the vestry and repairs to the churchyard wall. Internal works to plasterwork will hopefully be completed this year as well as tree works in the churchyard extension.

The Church of England takes the climate emergency seriously and aims to be net zero by 2030. We therefore have less than five years to achieve this here at Graffham with Woolavington. Simple wins we hope to achieve soon include moving to a more ethical energy supplier and to change our banking to an ethical bank.

Flower arranging

By Diane Bellis

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 June 2024's Graffham Festival celebrations. If anyone is interested in joining the flower arranger's rota you do not have to be a professional, just enjoy flower arranging then please see or contact Diane Bellis.

Messy Church

By Rev Vivien

Following an initial enquiry by Annie Ghinn, drawing on her experience of Messy Church and recognising a benefit for Graffham families to meet in this way, a planning group was formed, PCC approval and funding obtained, and Graffham Messy Church became a reality in late 2024. The recreation ground committee has kindly allowed the PCC to hire the pavilion, which is a super bright location with the facility of the recreation ground around it. A trial session in November 2024 has led to six sessions being offered in 2025 in the first and second halves of each school term. Messy Church offers craft activities around a Christian theme, followed by a short act of worship and a shared hot meal. It is proving a popular format and so far, 34 families have taken part with an average of 20 children attending each time.

Messy Church can only happen with the generous support of a great team of volunteers: Henrietta taking care of advertising, Henrietta, Holly and Rich helping to set up, Annie masterminding craft activities with Holly's support, Annie, Holly and Rev Vivien contributing to the time of worship, Nettie supervising a team of kitchen helpers including Bridget, Barbara, Dinah and Beanie, and Cindy taking charge of housekeeping. Rev Vivien and Howard have also addressed the extensive safeguarding requirements of a church activity involving children to make Messy Church compliant with diocesan regulations. If anyone else would like to join this team of volunteers and help Messy Church happen – there are all kinds of ways that you can – please see Rev Vivien.

Everyone's enthusiasm is clear and infectious, allowing this initiative to develop and become more secure each time we run a session and review afterwards. It is a great resource for families to come together and enjoy learning about faith in creative ways. There are even plans to offer 'Messy Church Goes Wild' as a summer session. We are grateful to Bianca and the Pitt family for allowing us to use the woodland and a field on the Lavington Estate as a location for this, and we look forward to seeing how it all works there.

Praise be to God for making such a wonder happen in our parish!

Musical activities

By Brian Lanaghan and Jan Brind, Organist and Choir facilitator

We have been continuing our use of the new *Ancient & Modern Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* hymn book, which includes both traditional and contemporary numbers. Overall, the congregational response has been very positive. A small, loyal group of singers has been meeting on the first Saturday morning of each month for 'Come & Sing' practice of new hymns and communion pieces.

Hymns for Sunday mornings are chosen and recommended to Rev Vivien by Jan Brind every two months in advance, using the Lectionary as a guide. Either Brian Lanaghan or Martin Ridley play for most Sunday morning services at St Giles, while Ben plays for the Sunday evening services at All Saints Chapel. When there is no organist available at St Giles, we rely on the 'hymn machine' – thanks to Ginny Barrett for operating the machine and also for recently updating its list for the newer hymns.

The musical highlight of the year was the mid-December St Giles' Service of Carols and Lessons, at which Master Edward Caldwell again opened with a moving solo for the first verse of *Once in Royal*, followed by a number of choir anthems including excellent solos from Martin Ridley, Philip Trower and Seaford College's Louisa Young.

Since then, St Giles has been very fortunate to receive the gift of a beautiful baby grand piano, which after an eventful initial delivery has been restored and retuned, enabling a much appreciated variety of accompaniments during morning services. This has replaced the Broadway upright, which was kindly given many years ago by Richard and Alison Davidson; we are delighted that this has now been reunited with their family in mid-Sussex.

Safeguarding

By Howard Pescott, Safeguarding Officer

As the new parish Safeguarding Officer, I can confirm that I have completed the safeguarding leadership, recruitment and domestic abuse training. My DBS has also been renewed successfully.

The PCC approved Jan Brind as a PCC recognised worship leader and additional lay ministers of communion were recruited. They have all completed the required safeguarding training.

In May 2024 the parish Safeguarding Quality Protects Level 1 was assessed by the Diocese and we were awarded Level 1. Since then, the Diocese is moving over to a new assessment process which supports local ownership and management of safeguarding called the Safeguarding Dashboard. A lot of the SQP resources are relevant, but are currently being updated. This has 3 levels, and we have achieved level 1 and now working to level 2. As part of this process, we are reviewing activities to ensure they protect all those involved with Messy Church being the first priority.

The PCC has formally adopted Canon F16(2) which ensures that consideration is given to safeguarding for people who are responsible for the use of the church for events (eg. concerts).

Regular safeguarding reports have been provided to the PCC over the last year, and a safeguarding action plan was recently approved.

The next year will require the assessment of all parish responsible activities with the aim of achieving level 2 on the Dashboard.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and I have appreciated the support from Revd Vivien, the PCC and the whole church community.

Finally

To all of you who have:

Created,
Decorated,
Orchestrated,
Cleaned the church,
Prayed, cared or shared,
Baked, boiled, or brewed,
Posted, e-mailed or phoned,
Welcomed, ushered or listened,
Reported, edited or photographed,
Shifted pews, pianos, stalls or trees,
Washed up, cleared up, or tidied up,
Organised, co-ordinated or arranged,
Read the word and spread the word,

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Floristed, de-floristed, weeded or seeded,
Scrubbed up, spruced up, scoured or swept,
Managed, manufactured, mended or minded,
Balanced books, paid the bills, phoned the bank,
Ding-donged, sang, conducted, tinkled or whistled.

THANK
YOU!