

ST. MARY'S CODDENHAM: ANNUAL REPORT April 2023 to April 2024

RECTOR'S REPORT – Benefice of North Bosmere

This will be my last annual report. In August 2023 I announced my intention to retire in August 2024. Work has begun preparing for both the period of Vacancy and the search for a new incumbent.

The global picture remains difficult; war in Ukraine continues, compounded by the violent offensives in and around Gaza. The Middle East conflict is having further impact on domestic politics and the ongoing cost-of-living problems. Locally, after another dry summer, heavy autumn rain has brought flooding and an as yet still to be quantified (but significant) negative impact on the farming community.

Against this background, parish life in general has nevertheless been more stable than at any time since the start of the pandemic. The highlight of the year for many was the parish pilgrimage to Iona in May. Initially planned for summer 2020 (delayed by the pandemic), 23 pilgrims spent a week on Iona, with teaching led by Ven Dr David Jenkins, Archdeacon of Sudbury.

The broader ministry of caring for one another continued unabated. From the opportunities offered in a coffee morning, through individual acts of kindness, the love of God is shared. More often than not this is unobserved, but by the recipient and by God.

Worship & Fellowship

Patterns of worship have continued essentially unaltered, based on 2 Sunday services per month per parish plus Evening Prayer on 3 Sundays per month (parishes of Hemingstone, Gosbeck, Coddendam and Stonham Aspal). Week-day services include: a monthly mid-week Holy Communion in Earl-Stonham parish room, a monthly Friday morning Holy Communion in Haysel House and weekly Zoom Morning Prayer. Zoom Sunday services continued throughout the year, being discontinued after Christmas morning. Compline in Creting St Mary during Lent.

Service and Soup, bi-monthly lunch-time fellowship, has continued. Post-pandemic the popularity of this activity has seen it now firmly based in Gosbeck Village Hall.

A weekly mailing (primarily by e-mail but with circa 20 hard copy) distributes the Sunday lectionary readings and notices together with a weekly reflection, word search and occasional information.

Study Groups

A variety of courses and study groups met during the year. Christianity Explored (7 weeks in January and February) proved a popular study course to begin 2023. During Lent there were 2 study groups (a study of ACTS, started in 2022, and Good News for God's People Lent Group). Further studies focused on Christian Basics, psalms, God's Big Picture and Hymns We Love. Advent saw some sessions discussing R C Sproul's The Advent of Glory devotions.

Occasional Offices

Weddings: Just one wedding, at Crowfield, in 2023. Funerals: A total of 29 funerals and/or interments were conducted across the 8 parishes (Includes Crematorium only for parishioners). Baptisms: 4 Services of Holy Baptism were conducted.

Schools

Rev'd Helen and I continue to support both schools. Each school held services in their parish church at least once per term, plus harvest. Creting St Mary also attend the parish War Memorial (located in the churchyard) for the Act of Remembrance at 11:00 on Friday 10 November. Of particular note for this year, Stonham Aspal were inspected by OFSTED in April 2023 who found that (the school) 'continues to be a good school'. Well done to Mr Hemmings and his team. In November, Bury Christian Youth brought their innovative Prayer Space to Stonham Aspal, taking over the church building for 3 days. Prayer Spaces enable children and young people to explore big life questions, spirituality and faith in a safe, inclusive, creative and interactive environment. (bcy.rg.uk).

Rev'd Philip Payne

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

We have been delighted to welcome several new regular worshippers to St. Mary's this year. Our Holy Communion services on the first Sunday in the month have been particularly well attended, including communicants from other parishes in the benefice. Church attendance at the major festivals has been encouraging, with an especially high turnout for our Easter Sunday communion service. The coffee mornings which are an important part of our involvement with the village community have also been well supported – our thanks to Sue Groom and the team for running these so successfully. The church continues its lead role in the Babies and Toddlers group (special thanks to Rev'd Helen and Debbie McDonnell) and we have met with other 'hub' organisations within the parish to exchange ideas.

We would like to thank the many individuals who have continued to support the parish both spiritually and materially – a special mention for the cleaners, flower arrangers and providers of refreshments as well as those who serve as sidespersons and lesson readers. We are very grateful to Rev'd Philip, Rev'd Helen and Judy Hailes for leading our services. Special events included a summer party in Neil Baillie's garden, a magnificent flower festival, the sell-out Co-op Band's concert in December and a concert for brass sextet and organ. A Pilgrimage of Song organised by InHarmony started with worship at St. Mary's, the walkers finishing their pilgrimage at Whitton parish church. In January Roy Tricker's talk on the history of St. Mary's was well attended, informative and entertaining. The Coddendam History Society mounted an interesting display and we hope in due course to be able to house some of the artefacts they have collected. This was the first of the monthly events we are holding in 2024 as part of our fund-raising campaign and as an enhanced contribution to parish life in Coddendam.

Margaret Baker and Ian Galbraith

FABRIC

Work completed since the last APCM

In the last year works have been completed to the tower louvres and associated stonework to stabilise and prevent birds entering. In addition, repairs to the plain tiles on the chancel roof have been carried out. It is anticipated that further tiles will require replacement in coming years however in discussion with the Architect and roofing contractor replacing a few tiles each year will be more economic than undertaking re-roofing works.

Quinquennial Inspection

The Architect completed the last quinquennial inspection in 2021 (the report was previously shared with the PCC). There are recommendations at the back of the report identifying Further Investigations, Priority A Works (12 Months), Priority B Works (2-5 Years) and Priority C Works (Next Quinquennium).

The key remaining issues are:

- Some areas of stonework repairs that are to be expected - nothing particularly serious and mostly to prevent significant problems in the future.
- A proposal to reintroduce opening vents in the clerestory to allow cross ventilation and reduce dampness in the walls. This would work in tandem with proposed drainage works.
- Drainage works
- Some leaded glazing repairs

Priority Works and Grant Applications

Quotations have been received for the stonework and leaded glazing works to support grant applications. These works have been prioritised for the next phase of works.

A faculty will be required for the glazing works (all works to stained glass manufactured before 1960 require a faculty) and we are currently waiting for a response from the diocesan advisor on stained glass who is currently very busy. To help move things along additional photographs have been taken and sent to her to avoid a visit to the church.

Stonework repairs do not require a faculty as they are like for like repairs but detailed specifications will be required before commencing work. Our Architect David Whymark is ready to do this once we have established funding is available.

There are some works that are general building / landscaping type works that could be carried out by local volunteers and an offer has been received to help with them.

External Drainage Works

The Architect prepared a specification for external drainage works which could be undertaken with removing the brickwork structure to the old boiler room and constructing a ground level access hatch. Given the likely cost and complexity of the works proposed by the architect we obtained an Archdeacon's Certificate to remove the concrete channel on the north side of the church and use temporary pipes to see if this solves the problem. It is believed that the concrete channel was actually directing water down the outside of the external wall and then preventing it from drying out. During the quinquennial inspection a lower cost solution was identified that would make use of the existing soakaways that appear to operate effectively. The PCC has not paid the Architect for the design work he carried and whilst he has not sent an invoice he enquired about payment in 2019 but then didn't contact us again. This matter has not been progressed but we should conclude it.

Forward of the Chancel Steps

There was a previous plan to create a flatter area in front of the chancel steps. Now that the old heating pipes are redundant we could potentially progress this work but there are no plans to do so at present.

Old Heating Pipework

We could look to remove this pipework and fit matching tiles. The electric cables that run the length of the aisle could be concealed in a conduit buried in the floor. There are no plans to progress this work at present.

Routine Maintenance

Lightning Protection: The lightning protection is due to be tested again. It was last tested in February 2022. The previous report recommended that we add surge protection and this could be done when the next test is carried out and a quotation has been sought.

Electrical Testing: Electrical testing was completed last year. There are no issues to resolve and a further test is not required this year. Gutter Cleaning has been carried out. Broken roof tiles have been replaced. Fire Extinguisher Testing has been carried out. The boiler was serviced last year and will require a further service now that we are moving out of the heating season.

Gavin Hailes

SAFEGUARDING

No safeguarding concerns have been reported.

Debbie McDonnell

FINANCE - Year ended 31 December 2023

General Fund

Income for the year is down £256 on last year, mainly due to wedding fees in 2022, not repeated this year. Although expenses were up 11%, we still managed a tiny surplus, allowing fund raising to concentrate on the church fabric. The Diocesan Parish Share and insurance premium continue to account for over 90% of expenses in the General Fund.

Fabric Fund

A number of fund-raising events were held during the year, raising £2,028; this is down on 2022, because the Open Gardens event is only held in alternate years. A major Appeal for £60,000 was launched in December, to fund the urgent work discovered in the Quinquennial survey, and this was kick-started by a donation of £10,000 from the Gardemaun Church Charity. Fabric Fund expenses amounted to £8,709, including £5,628 on repairs to the belfry. There is a balance carried forward of £19,042 towards future work.

Haysel House Fund

The Benefice Soup lunch has now outgrown Haysel House, and now meets at Gosbeck Village Hall. Both income and charitable giving have increased in the year.

Benefice magazine fund

The Ten Village News again ran a small deficit during the year, but there is still a comfortable surplus in the fund. The cover price was increased substantially at 1st January 2024.

Tim Thomas

FUNDRAISING REPORT

The Quinquennial Report 2021 identified a number of repairs needed to preserve the envelope of the church. The most urgent of these are repairs to the West window and two porch windows, masonry

repairs to the tower and West walls and drainage work. The total cost of these works is estimated to be in the region of £60k. The Gardemau Church Charity has donated £10k and will match fund up to £10k of locally generated fund raising, to which end a fundraising appeal was launched in January 2024. Every household in the Parish received a letter outlining the repairs needed and giving details of how to donate to the appeal.

PCC sub-committees have been set up to focus on two main areas of fundraising events and grant applications.

A calendar of monthly events has been drawn up for the year. This is in addition to our regular fundraising events of coffee mornings, concerts and flower festivals.

Grant applications are also being sought to help us reach our target. Applications are being made to The Historic Churches Trust and Suffolk Historic Churches among others. We hope that grants, together with our fundraising events will help us reach our target this year so that the work can commence.

Angela Thompson

SERVICE AND SOUP LUNCH

Another successful year ended with the 20th Birthday Lunch in Gosbeck Village Hall on 20th February enjoyed by over 40 including guests.

The fellowship continues on the first and third Tuesday of every month due to the continued commitment of the team. We are extremely grateful to the Day Foundation for paying for the hire of the hall. The donations from the participants more than cover the rest of the running costs. The event is considered a Benefice Fellowship so we contribute to the Quota. We gave £500 to the Care and Activity Group for Young Adults with Special Needs that meet in the village hall and have bought a coffee maker with two flasks which provide much appreciated real coffee. A child's table was purchased for the Baby and Toddler group that meets in the Coddendam Centre. All decisions, whether financial or other are discussed by those who come. Birthdays continue to be celebrated with special cakes at most meetings.

The speakers/worship leaders have agreed to a rota and are much appreciated, together with the two musicians. Phone calls and visits show continued care and value of all. The team and participants are all part of the same fellowship. Thanks be to God.

Judy Hailes

CODDENHAM BABY AND TODDLER GROUP

The Group is flourishing! We regularly have between 17 and 20 children with parents, grandparents, carers etc. Our group of volunteers does a brilliant job of welcoming families, making drinks, organising activities and chatting to families. We do need a few more volunteers to help out, not necessarily regularly – a bank of helpers would be great, and we have asked all the benefice churches to ask for support at their APCMs.

We are grateful to the Gardemau Trust and the Soup Lunch for purchasing 2 new tables for the children to use. These will also be available for church use if required. The Gardemau also funds our rental fee at The Coddendam Centre which allows us to keep our subs to £1.50 per family.

Debbie recently attended a diocesan workshop on mission in toddler groups. We recognise that we don't overtly share the Christian message but families are always invited to appropriate Church events and

some have attended. We are able to help families in various ways and feel that we are showing our faith in that way. It is however a difficult balance to achieve a Christian input without putting some off.

Debbie McDonnell

STONHAM ASPAL PRIMARY SCHOOL The school has had an OFSTED and SIAMS inspection during the last year. The new head, Ben Hemmings, led the staff through both inspections. The outcome of the Ofsted inspection was 'Good'. SIAMS no longer give grades but the school was given a very positive report. Both reports can be found on the school website and make very positive reading.

The school is facing some financial challenges with a falling roll and greater demands on finance from payroll etc. Governors and staff are actively looking at ways to maintain the great offering the school provides without having to make any cuts. Unfortunately, the Preschool closed unexpectedly in September 2023 but is due to reopen in September 2024 as a privately owned nursery providing full day care. This should be a great asset to the village and the school.

Debbie McDonnell

DEANERY SYNOD MEETINGS

There were three scheduled meetings of the Gipping Valley Deanery Synod this past year and one extraordinary meeting. This extra-ordinary meeting was held on 6th June 2023 to discuss how to present our views on "Living in Love and Faith" to Diocesan Synod. The first scheduled meeting was held on 28th June 2023 and the guest speaker was Councillor Keith Welham. He spoke about how County, District and Parish Councils work with and support churches. There was also further discussion on "Living in Love and Faith" following the aforementioned meeting on 6th June. Please see minutes of the 28th June meeting for full details. Updates on clergy vacancies, Deanery Plan, etc were given. The second meeting was held on 24th October 2023 and the speakers for this meeting were Edward Creasy (Chair of Diocesan Board of Finance) and Gary Peverley (new Diocesan Secretary). They spoke about how the diocese is the largest charity in Suffolk and how it provides outreach and ministry as well as worship events. They also spoke about wanting to make the diocese less remote and building relationships with parishes. An interesting talk - full details were in the minutes provided earlier. There were also updates on "Living in Love and Faith", clergy vacancies, safeguarding, Deanery Plan, Parish Share, etc. The third meeting was held on 14th March 2024 and the main item on the agenda was "A Welcoming Church". A talk was given by Kevin Stanford (Lay Chair) based on a Welcome Guide from the Diocese of Exeter. The usual clergy vacancies were discussed and updates on Safeguarding, Parish Share, Treasurer's Report, etc were shared. Please note: I have requested that meeting minutes be sent out more quickly (these are usually sent out months late when the agenda for the next meeting is sent out!). All of these meetings are held in Earl Stonham Village Hall.

Frances Collins

ELECTORAL ROLL

There are 28 names on the roll.

Angela Thompson