

**Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the**  
**Polden Wheel Benefice**  
**Date: 19 May 2025 7.30pm;**  
**Edington Church (Refreshments from 7.00pm)**  
**AGENDA**

1. Opening Prayer
2. Appointment of Secretary
3. Apologies for Absence

**VESTRY MEETING**

4. Election of Church Wardens

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

5. Minutes of previous APCM 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024
6. Matters Arising
7. Election of Local PCC Representatives. (to be voted en bloc).
8. Election of Cashiers (to be voted en bloc)
9. Election of Electoral Roll Officer.
10. Election of Deanery Synod Reps (appointed in 2023 for 3 years
11. Appointment of Independent Examiner.

**REPORTS**

- a) PCC Annual Report, b) Church Warden's Fabric Reports, c) Treasurer's A/cs & Report, d) Electoral Roll Report, e) Deanery Synod Report, f) Safeguarding Report, g) Other Reports.

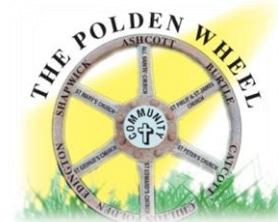
Chair's Reflection/Votes of thanks

Open Discussion

Dates: Archdeacon's Visitation, Next PCC Meeting, Commissioning of Wardens and PCC Members.



## **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** **(APCM) of the Polden Wheel** **Monday April 29<sup>th</sup> 2024** **Chilton Polden Church.**



The Annual Parochial Church Meeting for the Polden Wheel benefice took place at Chilton Polden church. Representatives from each of the six churches were present. All reports had been previously circulated and had been placed on the parish website. Notices had been displayed on church noticeboards. Copies of the full accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting and also placed on the website. These had been approved at a PCC meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April via Zoom.

Nominations for Churchwardens, Cashiers and PCC representatives had been carried out in the respective parishes and completed forms were to hand. There were no Deanery Synod elections this year since the current three year tenure remains until 2026.

Rev. Rich Tweedy chaired the meeting and opened with prayer and thanked Chilton Polden for their hospitality.

### **Appointment of Secretary:**

Mrs Freda Prime was appointed to act as Secretary for the meeting. Proposed by: John Harvey and seconded by Martin Melia. The question as to whether the documents for the meeting had been uploaded to the website was raised but it was not clear whether this had happened at that time.

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies were received from; Marion Folkes, Keith Prime, Alison Everett & Alison Sparkes

### **VESTRY MEETING:**

**Election of Churchwardens for 2024/25:** The following nominations had been received:

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Nominee</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Seconder</b>
Ashcott	John Harvey	Lyn Harvey	Freda Prime
Ashcott	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Burtle	Rosemary Tucker	Margaret Bell	Barbara Vowles
Burtle	Alison Everett	Sue Ball	Barbara Vowles
Catcott	Martin Melia	Bridget Frier	Sandra Pearson
Catcott	Corinne Reynolds	Stuart Frier	Dave Parkes
Chilton Polden	Anne Lush	L Simmonds	Chris Lush
Chilton Polden	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Edington	Rosie Tilbury	Nadia Wilson	Iona Stevens
Edington	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Shapwick	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Shapwick	Vacant	N/A	N/A

All nominations unanimously agreed by the meeting: Proposed by Margaret Trimm, seconded by Tim Hayne.

## **ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING.**

### **1. Minutes of APCM (30<sup>th</sup> May 2023)**

Minutes of the previous APCM were to hand and agreed. These were signed as a true record.

### **2. Matters Arising:**

The issue of communication was discussed in relation to Deanery Synod, noting that the 5 marks of mission put forward by the DMP had not been discussed as agreed, at PCC level and would need to be on the agenda in the coming months

The distribution of APCM Packs had been discussed last year and was not felt to have been very effective. This year the packs had been produced and CWs were asked to request the appropriate number for their respective churches. It was clear that this had not happened in all cases and we will need to do better next year in terms of promoting the meeting and ensuring that everyone has access to the relevant documents.

### **3. Election of Representatives on PCC from Local Committees:**

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Nominee</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Seconder</b>
Ashcott	Freda Prime	Nancy Routley	Henry Routley
Ashcott	Margaret Trimm	John Harvey	Lyn Harvey
Burtle	Margaret Bell	Sue Ball	Alison Everett
Catcott	Jackie Parkes	Corinne Reynolds	Martin Melia
Chilton Polden	Chris Lush	Lorraine Simmonds	Rosemary Tucker
Chilton Polden	Vacancy	N/A	N/A
Edington	Alison Sparkes	Rosie Tilbury	Iona Stevens
Edington	Vacant	N/A	N/A
Shapwick	Vacant	N/A	N/A

All nominations were unanimously accepted by the meeting. Proposed by Anita Hayne seconded by Chris Lush

### **4. Election of Local Cashiers:** The following nominations had been received:

Ashcott	Margaret Trimm	John Harvey	Lyn Harvey
Burtle	Sue Ball	Rosemary Tucker	Margaret Bell
Catcott	Stuart Frier	Jackie Parkes	Dave Parkes
Catcott	Dave Parkes	Sandra Pearson	Martin Melia
Chilton Polden	Anita Hayne	Brian Parsons	Chris Lush
Edington	Nadia Wilson	Rosie Tilbury	Chris Lush
Shapwick	Carolyn Fitzpatrick	Rosemary Hargreaves	Chris Hargreaves

All nominations were unanimously accepted by the meeting. Proposed by; Caroline Snell & seconded by Chris Hargreaves.

### **5. Election of Electoral Roll Officer:** Anita Hayne was elected to serve as Benefice Electoral Roll Officer for the coming year. She advised that next year would see the revision of all Electoral Rolls and she would seek to explain the procedures required nearer the time.

Proposed by Margaret Trimm and seconded by Dave Parkes

6. **Appointment of Sides Persons:** In line with the revised Church Representation Rules 2020, the sides persons for each church will be appointed at the first PCC meeting.
7. **Appointment of Independent Examiner:** Mr Stephen Fry was appointed as Independent Examiner for the coming year. Proposed by Caroline Snell and seconded by Anita Hayne.
8. **Appointment of Deanery Synod Representatives: To serve for three years.** The three year tenure of 2023 elections stands until 2026 therefore no elections took place. The current Deanery Synod representatives for the Polden Wheel who have six available places are as follows;

<b>Ashcott</b>	Vacant
<b>Burtle</b>	Sue Ball & Rosemary Tucker
<b>Catcott</b>	Corinne Reynolds
<b>Chilton Polden</b>	Vacant
<b>Edington</b>	Rosie Tilbury
<b>Shapwick</b>	Rosemary Hargreaves

9. **Reports (all reports had been previously circulated)**

**PCC Annual Report:** The annual report for the Parochial Church Council was produced as an overall report for the six churches. The information had been gained from contributions from every church and represented the activities from the parishes. An amendment was requested on p.2 under 'Background Information' para 3 Andrew Gordon Clarke, although having retired as organist, continues as a regular member of the church at Catcott. The report was proposed by Freda Prime and seconded by Martin Melia and carried...

**Churchwarden's Fabric Reports:** The inventories of all moveable items had been updated. **Ashcott;** The repairs that were highlighted in 2019 have not been successfully completed due to the refusal of one grant aiding body and the covid-19 pandemic. The schedule of work is ongoing and a questionnaire had been distributed around the village, seeking views as to the future of All Saints. This followed some Diocesan consultations and was followed by a Public Meeting which was reasonably well attended. It is hoped to secure grants to assist with re-ordering the church to make it more attractive as a venue other than worship. A break-in had seen damage to the wrought iron gates and masonry which has been repaired, together with various other repairs through the year. **Burtle:** No building work has been undertaken over 2023 but the quinquennial inspection took place and all louvres will be replaced during 2024. The condensation and wet weather had caused the internal paintwork to be damp and in a poor state. The advice is that part of the problem might be the underlying plasterwork. Burtle achieved their bronze eco church award. **Catcott;** According to the 2023 quinquennial inspection, the fabric of St. Peter's is in good repair. However, a number of recommendations were made in terms of work needing to be done. One of the priorities identified was the repointing of the buttress at the south east corner of the tower which is allowing ingress of water to damage the plaster in the gallery. Other general maintenance work had been carried out over the year, including the installation of a hand rail leading into the church from the south porch. **Chilton Polden:** During the year the plaster that was damaged by a leak in the north aisle roof. The services of an architect have been sought to advise on the maintenance of the Sunday School room. Lack of funds has prevented some work from progressing

**Edington;** the structure of the church is satisfactory. There have been foundation movements historically, mainly at the east end. There's been some cracking noted in 2013 in the NW corner due to a dry summer. The architect suggested engaging a structural engineer to comment on crack stitching to prevent further plaster damage. The fire extinguisher and lightening conductor checks have been carried out this year and certificates filed. **Shapwick:** The branch of the cedar tree which came down in 2022 has now been removed. Unfortunately there was a flood in the boiler room which had to be pumped out and further flooding has meant that there has been no heat coming through. A new Clavinova was purchased and the WI bench that was vandalised has been replaced. A reserved burial plot had been found to have unidentified ashes interred in it without permission. A faculty had been granted by the Chancellor to exhume and re-inter these ashes elsewhere.

The reports were accepted en bloc, proposed by Margaret Trimm and seconded by Dave Parkes.

**Electoral Roll Report:** The revised Electoral Roll report had been prepared by Anita Hayne with information from the six parishes. It had been previously agreed that contact details should not be displayed but names can be published but is purely at the discretion of the churchwardens. A certificate will be issued for display in the church porches, showing the final number on the new roll. There are 127 members on the revised rolls across the benefice. This showed a decrease of four members. Proposed by Anita Hayne and seconded by Caroline Snell. .

**Deanery Synod Report:** The Synod report had been prepared by Sue Ball. There had been three meetings of the deanery Synod over 2023, held at Street Mission Church in March, Lydford-on-the-Fosse in June and in October at Butleigh. At the start of the year there had been three representatives across the Polden Wheel which, due to ill health, reduced to two early in the year. As the proposed options for Shared Local Ministry was to be the main topic of discussion during 2023 it was decided that greater representation would be required. As a result two additional members were appointed to serve. At the March meeting a plan was put forward by the DMP group which embraced five marks of mission (Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform and Treasure) which were to be discussed at PCC meetings. The 2023 mark was 'Tend'. Much discussion regarding 'Shared Local Ministry has been ongoing throughout 2023. The new Synod term of office would run from July 2023 – June 2026. The full Deanery Synod Report is available.

The report was proposed by Sue Ball and seconded by Rosemary Tucker

**Safeguarding Report:** This was an additional report that was circulated at the meeting. It was agreed that this should be a standing item on every APCM agenda going forward. All DBS checks are up to date for staff and volunteers and training is in hand. Safer recruitment policies are followed and churchwardens will shortly be undertaking the mandatory leadership Training. The new Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub is being used with the assistance of Niki Hill.

Proposed by Freda prime and seconded by John Harvey.

10. **Finances:** Caroline Snell had done sterling work in producing a very readable set of accounts for the six churches and was warmly thanked for her efforts. In turn Caroline thanked the local Cashiers for their work in providing her with the information that was needed to prepare the end of year accounts and for keeping their respective records in good order. The accounts for the Benefice are prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 on

a 'Receipts' and 'Payments' basis. The Parish Share continues to be a heavy burden on all six churches and the new expectations from the Diocese has done little to reassure rural parishes going forward, Caroline Snell proposed that the accounts be adopted and this was seconded by Margaret Bell and carried. A full accounts summary is attached to these minutes and filed.

11. **Chair's Reflections:** Rich began his reflections by proposing a warm vote of thanks to all those who have given so much time and effort to the work of the churches in the area. The Churchwardens, Secretary and Treasurer were thanked by Rich all of whom devote a significant amount of time to the benefice. This year the services of our Treasurer, Brian Tilbury who died earlier in the year, were remembered with much affection and gratitude. Sue Ball, our parish Administrator was also warmly thanked for her amazing contribution despite having had a serious accident earlier in the year which resulted in several weeks in hospital. Rich expressed his personal gratitude for his own recovery from a heart attack in the early part of the year having had a stent fitted. He expressed his gratitude to all those who had stepped up so ably and willingly during his recuperation time. The highlight for Rich had been running Invitation to Explore and the Alpha course which he had spent time developing during 2022. The course is three weeks in duration and is aimed at introducing Christianity to people in a way that is rooted in the local area. The first sessions were held at the start of 2023 and around twelve people attended for the three weeks with six going on to attend the Alpha course that followed. He thanked Jon and Linda Johnson for the major part that they played in the success of the groups. Rich went on to say that we must not underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead in these times. He referred to the ongoing discussions and consultations that had taken place across the Diocese involving cut backs in the numbers of clergy. Glastonbury would need to lose 1.5 posts. In the event Diana Greenfield, Pioneer Minister moved to Wales and with Andrea Harwood's retirement as part time vicar of MOMSS would put that benefice into vacancy. He outlined the present plan that Moorlinch and Stawell would join the Polden Wheel with the expectation that a 'House for Duty' priest would take on some of the ministry.  
Rich felt that the ongoing difficulties around finances would increase in a painful way since, already some churches are unable to meet their full Parish Share expectations from the Diocese. Clearly the Diocese is also in financial crisis and there are plans in place to make changes as to how the parish Share is allocated to parishes which will do nothing to ease the financial burdens being experienced and are likely to become more pressured. Rural parishes being particularly vulnerable.  
Rich concluded by urging members not to be distracted from our primary purpose as Christians. Above all to remember that we are here to follow Jesus, we are called to be disciples. He ended with a reminder of the Great Commission which Jesus gave his disciples as he was about to ascend into heaven, as recorded at the end of Matthew's gospel.

## 12. Open Discussion

- a) John Harvey addressed the meeting and suggested that the way forward for parish Share obligations and finance in general. He said that the expectation of £60 per month for every church member would most likely not be met. He felt that a complete re-structuring of the Diocese, to include and promote more lay involvement was the way forward. Putting more financial burdens on struggling church communities would not be helpful or workable and emphasises the better use of church premises if they were all to remain open.

- b) The issue of Lay Pastoral Assistants was raised and it was disappointing that the group had been allowed to lapse without any involvement with those who had trained and were in post. A commitment was made to consider re-establishing the group and this will be discussed at PCC.
- c) Distribution of APCM Packs would need to be discussed as to the best way to ensure that the information was available to everyone for next year.
- d) Fees for weddings and funerals was raised, suggesting that we needed to be realistic in what we charge for these services. It was explained that these fees are set by the Diocese but that we do receive some income back from them
- e) Following the discussion on finances a very powerful and inspirational testimony was given by a new member Nigel Powell. Nigel was a strong supporter of tithing 10% of all income received and set out how God had blessed him and his family when they did this. Nigel urged that we take this away and pray about it and blessings would come.

**13. Dates:** Archdeacon's Visitation: Not to hand

Next PCC Meeting: Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May @7.30pm in Shapwick Church.

Commissioning of PCC and Wardens TBA.

The meeting closed with prayers at 8.45pm

Signed.....Date.....

# **The Polden Wheel Benefice: Annual Report: January – December 2024**

## **INTRODUCTION**

2024 has been a year of significant challenges within the Church of England and the need for God's guidance has never been more needed. On a global front, the issues that were highlighted in the 2023 Annual Report, have not gone away and we continue to support the people of Ukraine in our prayers and also, the aftermath of the Hamas massacre of Israeli civilians on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023'. Israel's response has left Gaza in a state of devastation. We continually pray for peace and the release of the hostages held. Much on the global stage is upsetting and worrying but, as Christians, we hold fast in the knowledge that God is faithful. The resignation of Archbishop, Justin Welby in November 24 has left many Christians saddened and disappointed. His resignation was prompted by increasing pressure to stand down over his failure to report prolific child abuser John Smyth.

The pattern of worship across the six churches remains unchanged with services on alternate weeks being the general rule. The decision not to share the communal cup at Holy Communion continues with the dipping of the sacrament at the altar rail but Catcott has continued with the practice of taking the sacraments to the congregation. Sadly we are not able to say that we see much increase in numbers across the benefice but there continues to be a small but strong core of members in each church. All six churches have a local committee of Friends/Supporters who oversee and administer the business at a local level. These groups are the mainstay and link between the church and the wider community and efforts are made to ensure that the many and varied fundraising events reflect the work of the church and its identity.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Polden Wheel continues to operate as one Benefice with a single Parochial Church Council representing six churches. Our vicar, Rich works collaboratively with his churchwardens and Lay Worship Assistants. Currently there are no Lay Readers in post in our benefice but there are six trained Lay Worship Assistants in post. In addition the services of Rev. Andrew Stevens, PTO is extremely helpful. 2024 has been much concerned with the financial state of the Bath & Wells, Diocese, Deaneries and parishes. Inevitably there is a need to reduce clergy numbers and costs and plans are in train to merge some benefices which will clearly impact upon the Polden Wheel. The PCC had a very productive Away Day in September where the future of our benefice was discussed.

After many years of faithful service as organist and member of St. Peter's, Catcott, Andrew Gordon Clark passed away and is greatly missed.

Engaging with our respective communities forms a key part of our church lives and a range of activities ensure that the church family plays a central part in community life beyond the church walls.

## **LEGAL/ADMINISTRATION**

**Administrator:** We are pleased to have the services of our administrator, Sue Ball who is based part time at the Vicarage office and is a valuable asset both to Rich and to others of us who often request her expertise and assistance. Unfortunately Sue suffered a very serious fall in 2023 and, although the consequences have been



far reaching for her, she is now able to drive again and is much improved. Sue's stoicism in the face of her disability has been inspirational.

### **Finances**

Caroline Snell is now well settled into the Benefice as our Treasurer. She has done an amazing job in negotiating her way around the complexities of six churches and their respective finances, at a time when significant financial challenges have to be faced. Her expertise and commitment is much valued. Clearly Brian Tilbury was a hard act to follow but Caroline has put her own stamp on the processes and engages well with the PCC whilst not being a member. Cashiers continue to support the Benefice Treasurer at a local level.

2024 has been another difficult and challenging year with regard to the financial position of our rural churches. Dwindling numbers and rising costs have contributed to a situation where, in some churches, outgoings have exceeded income and the burden of the Parish Share has been heavy. It is of note that Ashcott and Chilton Polden have been unable to meet the full amount of the Parish Share and took the decision to offer what could be realistically afforded. It has been of huge concern that the Diocese, in re-organising the way in which the parish Share is collected, i.e. moving from individual parishes to a benefice collection, we are faced with an increase of some 15% which simply cannot be met. Going forward, over a five year period, the forecast is set at a 70% increase.

Clearly the digital giving devices in Ashcott and Chilton Polden churches are being used but a full evaluation as to their overall effectiveness in increasing income should be possible in 2025.

The Treasurer's report forms part of the overall reporting for the APCM. Some of our churches continue to hold a Gift Day each year and others are considering the possibility of doing so going forward and this will form part of the Stewardship campaign that is planned for 2025 which will reach out to local communities.

### **Parochial Church Council**

The PCC meets on a regular basis and all six parishes are represented. Only two of our churches have two churchwardens in post making a total of seven wardens across the benefice with one church without a warden. Some meetings, during the winter months, are held via Zoom.

These officers, together with one other representative from each church make up the body of the PCC. Where there is only one churchwarden a second representative may be appointed. The secretary and safeguarding officer is a PCC member but the Treasurer and Administrator are ex officio.

### **Electoral Roll**

Each church maintains its own Electoral Roll and posts names only, two weeks prior to the APCM. A report is prepared for the whole benefice by our Electoral Roll Officer. For the period 2024/25 there are 127 members on roll. 2025 will see the revision of the whole ER when members will need to re-apply formally. The timescale for this is in hand by the ER officer, in line with guidance/regulations received from the Diocese.

### **Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)**

The APCM for 2024 was held at Chilton Polden on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024 but the numbers attending continue to be low. The meetings are compliant with current legal regulations and procedures followed in terms of advertising and reporting. A comprehensive Annual Report is produced each year.

### **Deanery Synod**

The appointment of Deanery Synod representatives took place during May 2023 and two more towards the end of that year. This was due to the very vital discussions around the re-structuring of our Deanery. It sees a reduction in those attending and representing the benefice. We are grateful to all five members for their service in ensuring that we are fully conversant with discussions and decisions taking place. In essence the Deanery is required to lose 1.5 priests and considerable, prayerful thought and consultation has been ongoing throughout 2024. MOMSS (Moorlinch, Middlezoy, Othery, Stawell and Sutton Mallet) are now in Interregnum with the retirement of their priest. “The idea of a ‘House for Duty’ priest for Moorlinch and Stawell was introduced, but by the end of 2024 consultations and negotiations were still ongoing, and no final decisions had been taken”.

### **Safeguarding**

The PCC is mindful of its responsibilities in this regard, both for safer recruitment and those working directly with children and vulnerable adults. Our Safeguarding Officer for the six churches has responsibility for the wellbeing and protection of vulnerable adults and children and attends regular training events as arranged by the Diocese. An assistant SGO was appointed in 2023 and is most helpful particularly in the maintaining of the Dashboard and Hub. With the introduction of a new provider, ThirtyOneEight, in 2023, the criteria for DBS checks has changed and some posts no longer meet their criteria.

The Polden Wheel is compliant with current guidance and uses the Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub which is a tool that enables SGOs to keep track of actions that need to be taken in order to remain compliant. In the Polden Wheel we were 95% complete most of the time but there can be delays between PCC meetings where reviews take place.

The DBS checks for our staff and volunteers are all up to date, having been renewed during 2023 to bring them in line with the three year duration.

Regular briefings are given to the PCC and all decisions and reviews are ratified by them. Sensitive documentation is securely held at the vicarage office. During 2024, CWs and LWAs have been doing the Leadership Training course. In 2025 most volunteers will have to update their Foundation Training’.

The recent Safeguarding scandals that have been highlighted at the highest level in the Church of England this year has served as a salutary reminder of the importance of vigilance and awareness in relation to safeguarding in our churches.

### **General Data Protection Regulations**

The PCC gives due regard to the requirements of GDPR. The safe storage, sharing and retention of sensitive information is an ongoing responsibility with our

administrator taking the lead role on behalf of Rich and the PCC. The PCC secretary has the use of a designated laptop for church business.

**Disability Audit:** All churches are wheelchair friendly; some have ramps on a permanent basis and some on request. It is acknowledged that more could and should be done but there are some constraints in the nature of our ancient buildings. It had been the intention, during 2023, to carry out a Disability Audit across all six churches but this has yet to take place.

**Health & Safety:** there is no specific Health & Safety Officer in post either for the benefice or individual churches. Whilst this remains officially pending for the time being, there is a good deal of informal expertise in this area and all churches seek to ensure that they fulfil their obligations to the public and to members. During external activities such as tower opening days, Risk Assessments are in place. Running Man exit signs are in place in all churches together with other safety precautions such as torches and first aid kits and painted step edges. Some members have undertaken the Food and Safety Hygiene Certificate online and it is hoped that more will do so. In addition, the requirements of the Safeguarding Dashboard are fulfilled, to a large extent, with Risk Assessments and Role descriptions being set up for all church led activities.

## **DISCIPLESHIP AND EVANGELISM**

**Invitation to Explore:** following the success of the first course in 2023, it ran again in 2024. Afterwards, a small group went through the course Christianity Explored, presented by Rico Tice, which produced much good discussion. The course is not aimed at church members but those who are on the fringe or seeking answers to questions.

**Music Group/Support for Services:** our Music Group, Polden Praise brings much valued enhancement to our services across the six churches. This is often a challenging juggling act for them but communication via WhatsApp is very effective. We are also grateful to those who play the organ or piano at other times. As a backstop a digital media system of pre-recorded hymns and songs has been purchased and is being successfully used where necessary. We are mindful of the need to have the appropriate licences in place for using music that is not in our books. Our thanks to John Herbert who has willingly stepped up over this year when we have missed the services of Margaret Dobbs due to illness. We wish her well and look forward to her return soon.

A musician's combo, led by Jennifer Tweedy, provides music for the monthly Café Church.

The use of the projector and laptop in church appears to have lapsed and it is hoped that this will be used again as new personnel replace those who have moved on. It was good to have been able to use this at both Christingle services and also at Café Church.

Two of our churches have hung tower bells which are rung regularly for services in Ashcott and when it can be arranged in Shapwick.

## MINISTRY

**Lay Worship Assistants:** there are six Lay Worship Assistants across the Polden Wheel. LWAs have led Informal Worship in church throughout 2024. Role Description and Risk Assessments are in place. There needs to be a 'support group' created in order to ensure that lay service leaders are supported and encouraged.

### Regular Services

Services follow a pattern of 9.30am, 11.00am and 6.30pm (4.30pm for some during the winter months). The main festivals and celebrations in our churches are much enjoyed and represent a rich pattern of worship and fellowship across the six churches. Jennifer Tweedy, with the help of another parent has started a children's Sunday School 'Jesus and Me'. The children leave Informal Worship services to enjoy their own learning with videos and other age appropriate resources. This is small for now but hopes and prayers for its growth must be a priority.

We have always been pleased to be able to keep all of our churches open during the day and very much appreciate the faithful members who open and close them each day. Comments in visitor's books indicate that this is welcomed on many occasions when people are visiting the area and it is not unusual to find someone sitting quietly in the church. Service of Quiet and meetings for private prayer in groups take place in some of our churches.

**Café Church:** continues to be a popular format each month. Bacon (and vegetarian) rolls and percolated coffee make for an informal atmosphere where discussion, videos and worship songs are enjoyed. The numbers have grown slightly the year with some new faces have been welcomed, some of whom attended the Invitation to Explore and Alpha courses. It has been necessary to move to Shapwick Village Hall during the winter months due to the heating malfunction in St. Mary's. There has been no noticeable impact as a result of this.

**Messy Church,** It has not been possible; thus far, to reinstate this but we continue to pray that it will be possible to start Messy Church at some point in the future.

**Open the Book;** this has proved to have been a casualty of the pandemic when it was not possible to go into schools. It would be wonderful to see this group re-establish and begin to enact their stories for the children once more.

**Easter:** all of our churches being able to hold Easter celebrations.

The Maundy Meal held at the Pig & Wheel was disappointing. The 'Hour at the Cross' usually held at 2.0pm on Good Friday, was dropped this year and replaced by 'Stations of the Cross' which reflected Christ's suffering both then and now. It was well attended.

**Harvest Thanksgiving:** in 2024 our focus for Harvest offerings was dedicated to the Trussell Trust Food Bank once again. This is regularly supported by our churches with collecting boxes in all six churches. This was a Harvest initiative across all six churches and the generosity of all the villages has been so much appreciated. The dedication to this cause by Anita is much appreciated and she has established a good connection with the depot in Bridgwater. Several Harvest Suppers were held within communities.

**Remembrance Sunday:** once again an act of Remembrance was held outside, at the Catcott War Memorial. The benefice Remembrance service was held at Ashcott again this year when the names of the fallen in conflicts were read out.

**All Souls Service:** this also took place at Ashcott in October when those who had suffered a bereavement during the year were personally invited to attend to feel supported and to light a candle if they wished to do so.

**Advent Christingle:** Two Christingle services were held again this year and, although numbers have reduced over time, these services continue to be well attended. The numbers attending at Chilton Polden were significantly more this year as was the donations for the Children's Society. This service provides a link with our two schools.

**Christmas:** Carol Services were held in most churches during December, with varying levels of attendance. The outdoor Carol Service on the Village Green in Shapwick was well attended. The annual Nativity held at Edington is always a well-attended event with a good number of children and families attending and participating. Ashcott church was delighted to welcome children from the local primary school, for their whole school Carol Service which saw a packed church. once again.

## **BUILDINGS**

The maintaining and running of the six lovely buildings across the Polden Wheel is often a challenge and we are mindful of the balance between our responsibilities in this regard whilst ensuring that the true mission of Christ cannot be found in bricks and mortar alone. With one exception, all churches had at least one churchwarden in post and all are dedicated to maintaining and overseeing their respective parish church buildings and fabric. We have been pleased to have been able to continue regular fundraising through 2024 which is a vital part of being able to maintain our buildings and churchyards. However this continues to require a good deal of effort from a few but is done with support from communities and fellowship enjoyed. There are many events that are planned and organised across the six parishes, some of which are 'one off' initiatives and others held on a regular basis. At these times the church promotes a community presence as well as raising much needed funds. All events are recorded at PCC meetings in order to ensure that we adhere to insurance guidance and regulations.

Since 2021 Chilton Polden have worked hard to maintain their EcoChurch bronze award status from A Rocha and, with significant progress towards their silver award, they hope to achieve this early in 2025. Burtle also have also achieved a bronze award in March 2023. It will be good to revisit the areas set out for each award during 2025 so that all six churches can become greener.

Caring for God's world is a responsibility that lies with everyone and it is hoped that steps will be taken wherever possible to bring all of our churches into new ways of becoming greener but this is work in progress. Several of our churches cease mowing parts of their churchyard in spring and summer to encourage wild flowers and insects: although it is not always well received, it is part of our stewardship of God's world. This year, Chilton Polden, saw the start of a new mowing contract, using the commercial arm of a local Community Interest Company who use the

outdoors to support mental health and this has brought excellent results in terms of wild flowers and the engagement of the community. Mental health has become a key issue, particularly as a result of the pandemic.

The reporting on finances and the fabric of buildings can be seen in individual reports from the treasurer and churchwardens who have prepared them for the 2024 reporting year

## **ACROSS THE BENEFICE**

**Communication:** it is essential in a large Benefice to ensure that good communication exists in order to maintain connections between the six churches and the wider community. Our website has been updated with Church Edit but more needs to be done to make it more 'alive' with photos and reports of activities. It is clear that we need to be better at promoting ourselves and our wonderful story whilst ensuring that six churches remain as connected and informed as possible. With the prospect of adding a further two parishes, although not yet agreed, is further reason to tighten up our communication networking across the six.

**Fair trade:** the review of our use of Fairtrade goods has yet to happen. It is clear that not all churches can honestly say that they are a Fairtrade church but fair trade items are purchased from the supermarkets.

**Food Bank Donations:** we have been pleased, once again, to support the Trussell Trust Foodbank in Bridgwater with collecting boxes in the churches. Over 2024 the amount donated amounted to 925kg which represent an increase of some 200kg from 2023. Special thanks to Anita Hayne for her dedication and commitment to this much needed cause.

**Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal:** is organised by Burtle church and is well supported with boxes being filled and collected across the benefice and also by non-church members. It was heartening to see this continue in 2024. 140 boxes were filled and sent, some of which were donated by Compton Dundon.

**History Booklet:** Most churches have a history booklet that is available to visitors. Our churches are opened every day and the visitor's book provides an indication of the number of visitors that enjoy our lovely churches.

**The Men's Breakfast:** This very popular event which is run collaboratively with Edington Chapel, has continued at a local pub and is much enjoyed. Rich has been able to engage the services of some very interesting and stimulating speakers.

**Service of Quiet:** For some time now, Catcott has held a 'Service of Quiet' led by Jackie Parkes each month and this draws a number of people who do not attend normal Sunday services. It clearly meets a need for quiet reflection in these challenging times.

## **IN OUR COMMUNITIES**

Whilst we celebrate our benefice identity as the Polden Wheel group, we are mindful that each parish has its own individual identity in terms of the way it interacts with the community that it serves.

**Ashcott:** The Big Breakfast that is run as a regular event in Ashcott Village Hall regularly attracts many from the village as well as drawing significant support. Other events have a good community following. **Burtle:** Cream Teas in Burtle, together with a Classic Car Run to the Shepton Mallet area and back proved very popular once again. Partnering with the Burtle Silver Band at Christmas was a happy event and the Shanty band helped to provide funds for Children's Hospice South West. **Catcott:** participated in the village 'Open Gardens' event, hosting a cream tea which raised valuable funds for St. Peter's. Catcott have also been proactive in organising or participating in fundraising for charities such as the Air Ambulance and Salvation Army Christmas Appeal. **Chilton Polden:** has successfully run various events during the year such as family bingo and cream teas. The 100 Club continues to raise much needed funds for them. **Edington:** A very successful cream tea event was held at Edington again this year and the regular coffee mornings have provided a much valued meeting place and fund raising opportunity within the community. The annual charity event for Macmillan Cancer Research was again very worthwhile. Regular Coffee Mornings are held in some villages, hosted by church and non-church members. **Shapwick** Fundraising events and general community events are significantly curtailed in Shapwick due to a lack of personnel. Rosemary Hargreaves attained a much-earned retirement from many years as churchwarden. Unfortunately the post remains vacant, which has had a significant impact on events at the church.

### **Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group**

Deanery Mission & Pastoral Group (DMPG) continues to work at Deanery level and the new Deanery Mission Plan was published in 2022. The introduction of a Deanery Facebook page is helpful. All six churches continue to look for ways in which our churches can be used more widely for community and outreach.

### **PASTORAL CARE**

We are mindful of those in the parish who need our care and our prayers. Pastoral Concern is a standing item on the local agendas.

### **Lay Pastoral Assistants**

At the present time we do not have a Lay Pastoral Assistant group.

### **BUILDING WORKS**

The churchwardens maintain oversight of their respective church buildings as far as they are able. It is fair to say that 2024 has proved to have been a challenging year with the COL crisis affecting pretty much everything. All of our buildings are high maintenance due to their age and, despite how much we love them, it is an ongoing pressure for those in office. (See individual reports).

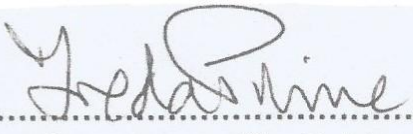
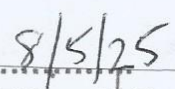
### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The fact that we live in uncertain and worrying times worldwide as well as here at home, has seen challenges for many in terms of the humanitarian horrors that have been witnessed on our screens. In particular we continue to pray for peace in Ukraine and Gaza. The rise in knife crime in the UK and escalating mental health issues all challenge the way that we respond as Christians. The Cost of Living Crisis has led to the need for people to be cautious about where they place limited financial

resources. In this regard we have seen two of our churches unable to meet their full Parish Share and it is hoped that the proposed Stewardship Campaign that is planned for 2025 will see increased, regular income.

Having said that, there are always things to be thankful for however difficult and challenging we find things and we are grateful to those loyal members who keep our churches going with a warm welcome to all comers.

The PCC would like to sincerely thank everyone for their generous support, creativity and faithfulness in supporting our churches and our communities. The need for growth is clear and the pioneering initiatives produced by Rich provide opportunities for those seeking answers to their questions. We very much hope that the uptake for 'Invitation to Explore' will continue to be blessed and successful and that members will be bold in making those invitations to friends and neighbours. The discussions regarding the need to reduce clergy numbers and re-structure our deanery has occupied a good deal of time over 2024 and much prayer is needed to support the ongoing deliberations which will see significant changes in our Glastonbury Deanery over the coming months, with the inevitable 'knock on' effect for parishes.

Signed: .....  ..... Date: .....  .....  
**Freda Prime: Secretary to The Polden Wheel parochial Church Council**



## **All Saints' Church, Ashcott**

### **Churchwarden's/Fabric Report for 2024**

The inventory of books and other moveable items has been checked and brought up to date.

The quinquennial inspection took place and Mark Taylor produced his report, outlining repairs and renovations required in three phases, urgent, short term and longer term. We are planning to undertake the first two phases during 2025 and planning on these is underway.

Through the year we have undertaken a number of tasks relating to the fabric of the Church. We have changed the lighting of the path so that churchgoers can see their way along the path from the gate to the main door. We have started a couple of things that are moving slowly, the replacement of the louvres in the tower and the repair of plastering of part of the north wall of the nave. We have treated some wood for woodworm where it was necessary. We have installed a Bluetooth device so that we can make use of recorded music in the event of live accompaniment not being available.

Fire extinguishers have been inspected and are in a satisfactory condition.

Gary Townsend has continued to maintain the churchyard to a high standard throughout the year. Towards the end of the year he advised us that he wished to give the work up so we advertised for and found a replacement in Mick Knight who is undertaking the work from January 2025.

I am pleased to report that All Saints' Church is open every day, normally from 10.00 until 4.00pm but sometimes longer.

Services have broadly continued with normally just two per month. The benefice continues to be wary of returning to drinking from the cup at communion services and intinction is carried out by the vicar.

The worshipping community is grateful to those who have provided music to accompany our services, particularly Polden Praise now being led by John Herbert, Jenny Cole, Margaret Dobbs and Adam Mellor.

We reported last year that we needed to contribute less to the Parish Share than was requested and we took the decision to reduce our Parish Share to Bath and Wells Diocese from the requested level to one that matches our regular income. This has continued through 2024. For 2025 the Diocese has changed the methodology of collecting its Common Fund, the money it needs to operate and this has meant that all rural parishes are expected to give significantly more while the majority of urban parishes benefit. We are continuing to pay what we believe that we can afford, approximately equal to the level of regular giving by church members. Benefice and domestic expenses still need to be found on top of this so fund raising is still vital.

Our GoodBox, a digital payment device which is a card reader for donors to use instead of cash, is in operation and produces a small income for us.

There are many persons involved behind the scenes in the day to day running of our Church and grateful thanks must be afforded to all of them who are too many to name, but they include the cleaners, the flower arrangers, those providing refreshments on social occasions and after services, the bell ringers under the leadership of Henry Routley and those overseeing supplies of fresh linen and consumables. The contribution from those who open their homes for meetings is acknowledged as it does contribute indirectly to cost savings. I must also thank those members of SAS who are very supportive and prepared to undertake tasks on behalf of the Church.

Finally, we thank our Vicar, Rich Tweedy, for his contribution to the ministry in the Polden Wheel and of course in Ashcott. He has continued to provide spiritual leadership and guidance. He leads a course for new church members who wish to learn more about the Gospel and arranges a regular Men's Breakfast together with other churches in the area, these being accompanied by a talk about the path through faith by a respected speaker, including Bishop Michael on one occasion.

John Harvey  
Churchwarden

## **Annual Report 2024**

### **St Philip and St James Burtle**

#### **Services**

2024 saw our regular pattern of two services a month, one Holy Communion and one Informal worship. We also joined other Polden Wheel Churches for united services. Special services were held at Harvest and Christmas. Polden YFC held their annual carol service at Burtle and we had community Carol singing around our life-sized nativity that again had been placed in the churchyard .

#### **Social**

We held several social and fund-raising events during the year including a quiz evening at the Duck, an evening entertainment by a Shanty Band also supporting Children's Hospice SW, a Cream Tea afternoon at Catcott Burtle Farm, and a Classic Car Run from Burtle via a scenic route to the Shepton Mallet area and back. We held a Harvest Lunch on the Saturday of our Harvest Weekend in September and in late November joined with the Burtle Silver Band in an evening of Christmas music and carols with refreshments.

The churchwardens are grateful for and wish to thank all who have helped the church throughout the year, the ones mentioned above and also musicians, flower arrangers and cleaners etc. and all who support the church financially.

#### **Churchyard**

An area in the northeast of the churchyard was left unmown again to encourage wildflowers and other wildlife. Much of the eastern end of the churchyard is covered with snowdrops and primroses in spring. We are very grateful to a number of volunteers who have helped with the maintenance of the churchyard, and also of course the Parish Council churchyard support grant.

The Terrier and Logbook are up to date and Health and Safety risk assessments reviewed.

Alison Everett and Rosemary Tucker.

Electoral Roll: 22

#### **Fabric Report**

The louvre panels in the Bell Turret were removed by steeple jacks in the autumn because of loose and fallen slats. The wood was not in very good condition so new louvre panels are being made and will be installed during 2025.

The paintwork inside the church is still of concern but some improvement has been made by washing down the walls with water.

The lightning conductor and fire extinguisher have had their annual checks.

# **St Peter's Report to the APCM 2025**

## Fabric

St Peter's is generally in good repair. There is some concern about damp penetrating a section of the West wall at the level of our gallery, and this is something which we are monitoring. We are conscious that St Peter's lacks a toilet, kitchen and disabled access, and are exploring ways in which we can get grants specifically to provide these without altering the appearance of our Grade One Listed building. Informal discussions with members of the DAC and interested villagers are at an early stage.

We lost a large cherry tree in our churchyard to the storms in November, but fortunately it missed the church and boundary walls.

## Activities

During the year we continued to hold monthly Services of Quiet, as well as monthly BCP Communion services, with attendance reaching or nearing 20.

Fundraising for the church is, as ever, at the heart of our activities, but we sought to raise money for other causes during the year. This included regular collections for the Bridgwater Food bank, donations from the opening of our church tower in June, which were given to the Air Ambulance, and gifts of new toys, clothing and Christmas fayre, generously donated by the people of Catcott and given to the Salvation Army to distribute as part of their Be a Star Christmas appeal for families in need.

To support our own income, we held monthly Coffee mornings, sold cream teas at the Catcott Open Gardens Day, held our annual Gift Day, raising £1,203, staged a Harvest Light Lunch and participated as stall holders at several local events.

## **St Edward's Chilton Polden**

### **APCM report 2024**

#### **Fabric**

We have continued to complete work identified in the Quinquennial report, having the mortar under the coping stones on the South side of the Nave roof replaced to prevent water ingress and pointing other areas on the South West corner for the same reason. The continued water ingress has prevented us from painting the South West corner following the replastering last year.

Unfortunately, our one remaining bell rope became dislodged in the year, and on investigation to replace both ropes, it has been identified that further restoration of the bells is required, for which we shall need to fundraise and seek grants to complete the work.

We held our annual churchyard tidy at the beginning of the year, which is very well supported by villagers, and this has been a regular event since Covid, enabling us to undertake various jobs and keep the churchyard looking good. This year saw us start a new mowing contract using the commercial arm of a local Community Interest Company, 'Seed of Hope', who use the outdoors to support mental health, and they are very knowledgeable about wildflowers and have created a mowing regime that has seen our wildflowers thrive. We are very grateful to the Chilton Parish Council, who provide us with a grant towards the mowing of the Churchyard and who provide a Village Christmas Tree each year.

We have used the funds raised at our previous Christmas Tree Festival to purchase a new Church Notice board and are now in the process of obtaining quotes to erect it.

Due to ongoing financial pressures, we have not been able to pay our parish share in full this year, and whilst we work hard to cover the costs for the year find ourselves at a slight loss again this year, even without paying the full parish share.

#### **General**

The numbers at our services vary greatly, however, it is fair to say they have not returned to the numbers we saw in previous years, and we have been saddened to see some of our congregation leave for other churches outside the Polden Wheel in the year.

We continue to hold 2 services a month, each attracting different congregations, and are very grateful to the visiting clergy who preside at our Holy Communion.

Whilst we had no Easter Day services or Christmas Day services, our Christingle Service proved to be very popular in attracting Families to church over the Christmas Period, and we were able to send an increased amount on previous years to the Children's Society.

With people leaving sadly, the Friends Group has now dwindled to just 3 people and we are looking to attract more people to it.

Our 100 club continues to prove a popular way for the villagers to support the church, and we are very grateful to Karen Squires for running that.

Our other fundraising events, of Family Bingo and Cream Teas, were well supported throughout the year.

The church would not be able to run without the continued support and help of all those on our various rotas; sidesmen, readers, organist/musicians, flowers, locking and unlocking, and cleaning and we are very grateful to everyone who helps in whatever way including delivering Spokes.

Anne Lush Churchwarden April 2025

# St. George's Wardens/Fabric Report for APCM 2025 reviewing 2024

Accessibility plan: there is reasonable access along the path and into the church. There is also wheel-chair access to the altar. No plan to improve at the present, as it is adequate.

Health and Safety – a risk assessment is carried out each time there is an event and are discussed at the friends meeting.

## Overview:

*Fundraising* - St. George's church has a small 'Friends Group' who organise events and raised £1,775.45p. during 2024. Events included coffee mornings, providing money for the church and a much needed meeting point in the community. This year we held a gift day with coffee served outside the church. We held our annual cream tea, a harvest lunch and a Christmas card delivery service.

*Fair trade* - at the moment we are buying fair-trade goods at the supermarket.

*Churchyard* – we are part of 'Caring for Gods Acre' scheme. The grass is left to grow allowing wild-life to blossom. Many different insects and butterflies now visit the churchyard and wild orchids are seen in the summer. Paths are cut to enable graves to be attended.

*Flower group* – chair person Margaret Tolchard, organises the rota; they provide beautiful displays throughout the year. Thank you to all on the group.

## Outreach:

*Newcomers* – All receive a welcome letter from the church community, welcoming them to the village, informing them of Spokes, (church leaflet). Each year, we invite newcomers to an event where they can meet other villagers.

*Macmillan's Cancer Research* – Coffee afternoon and raffle which raised £260 .

*Stamps* are collected for Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance.

*Food bank* - There is a box at the back of the church for donations, organised by Anita Hayne from St. Edwards, Chilton Polden.

*LPA's* -: Rosie Tilbury, (church warden) has attended a basic training program course.

## Services in 2024:

St. Georges' has one regular holy communion service each month and one informal service with Polden Praise Music Group every other month. We also host a monthly mid-week communion service led by retired Revd. Andrew Stevens. Thank you to all those who help make our services possible.

*Carol Service December 16<sup>th</sup>* - 26 attended.

*Nativity on Christmas Eve* – attended by approximately 60 adults and 15 children. Thank you to Jemma for organising this event.

There was one wedding and three funerals at St. George's during 2024.

The church is open between 10am and 4pm, later in the summer. There is a visitor's book and welcome leaflet about the church. There is also a booklet on the history of the church and record of graves which was updated in 2020 by the Edington and District History Group and is on sale at £4.00. There is a plan of the graves on the wall by the font. We continue to manage the

churchyard as in 'Caring for God's Acre' leaving the grass uncut to attract wildlife such as wild orchids, butterflies and other insects. During the spring we are blessed with snowdrops, hundreds of daffodils and primroses.

#### **Fabric**

The structure of the church is satisfactory. There has been rain coming in the holes of the bell ropes making the paint fall off on the inside wall. The architect suggested larger cowls on the ropes. I have asked three builders, so far, who all said it would be very expensive to get the scaffold up to the height of the bells on the roof and have never come back to me. I am hoping to get it done this year by a builder who has said yes and that it would not cost so much. When it has been done we also need to wait for the inside wall to dry out and have it repainted. The fire extinguisher and PAT testing have been carried out this year and certificates filed. The log book and Inventory are up to date.

Rosemary Tilbury (churchwarden)

## **Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Shapwick 2024**

Services at St. Mary's have followed their normal pattern, but the venue has had to be changed during the winter months, due to the ongoing lack of heating in the church. The village hall has been very suitable for Cafe Church but, after three services of Holy Communion in the Village Hall, it was felt that the service ought really to be held in the church. Two portable heaters were purchased to take the chill off the building but were not very successful in so doing.

Investigations into various possible forms of heating for the church have been ongoing and Mike Motem has very kindly overseen the process.

The vicar's wife, Jennifer, has started a children's service in which the children are in the main congregation at the beginning of the service and then leave for their own activity. So far numbers have been small, but the children who have come have enjoyed it.

An unfortunate incident occurred when ashes of an unknown person/animal were found to have been buried in a plot that had been reserved by a village family. A Faculty was submitted and permission obtained from the Diocesan Registrar to exhume and re-inter these ashes.

In November the WI, once again decorated the churchyard and church gates with a wonderful display of handmade poppies for the season of Remembrance. The display was featured on BBC Points West.

The Parish Council put fairy lights in one of the churchyard trees at Christmas and Mike Motem very kindly donated a beautiful Christmas tree for the decorations inside the church.

Our traditional 'Carols by Candlelight' service was held in December and was well attended and an open air carol service was held on the Village Green on Christmas Eve and was also well attended.

Our Church Warden has retired and, so far, no one has come forward to take her place.

We are very grateful to Rich and Jennifer for all their hard work in the Parish.

Rosemary Hargreaves

20<sup>th</sup> April 2025



## **Fabric Report. St. Mary's Church, Shapwick 2024.**

In January the Pump Station in the churchyard was checked and serviced by Butter Hall Engineering.

Some roof tiles were replaced by S C Baker and Sons Ltd.

Due to very heavy rainfall in January, the boiler house was flooded. This caused damage to the boiler and therefore no heating in the church.

The church Clavinova will now only function with a speaker attached and the sound it produced was not pleasing. The cost of repair was excessive, so the decision was made to purchase a new instrument.

A Smart Meter has been installed in the church.

The water heater in the kitchen has been serviced and repaired.

The church hoover is no longer working and a new Gtech has been purchased.

The annual fire protection inspection has taken place and PAT testing has been carried out.

A branch was removed from one of the churchyard trees as it was thought that it might come down in a storm and could cause damage to the church building. Another branch came down in the autumn and caused damage to a gravestone. We are unaware of any living relatives to have this repaired.

The church gutters have been cleaned and repaired.

Rosemary Hargreaves  
20<sup>th</sup> April 2025

## THE POLDEN WHEEL

### Treasurer's Annual Report – for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

The Accounts for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis, which means only transactions that were paid into or out of the bank accounts in the year have been included. No consideration is given to expenditure incurred in the year but not paid in the year.

Planned Giving Income, including the Yellow Envelopes, brought in a total of **£39,286** which is very similar to the £39,575 in 2023.

Gift Aid receipts from HMRC were just under **£10,257** for 2024, and just under £6,900 in 2023

Collections from Services brought in **£3,324** in 2024 and £2,232 in 2023

Net fundraising income, including Café Church and the 100 Club, brought in **£15,682** in 2024 compared with £12,680 in 2023.

There were Donations of **£6,650** in 2024, £4,570 in 2023

Parish Share payments totalled **£34,446** in 2024 and £31,910 in 2023. In both years the payments were significantly lower than the amount the Diocese had asked to be paid.

A handrail was fitted to the tower at St Peter's Church, Catcott and almost all churches had repair and upkeep bills to pay in the year, resulting in a total cost of Repairs to Building & Equipment in 2024 of **£13,287** (2023 £6,657).

Churchyard upkeep costs totalled **£7,540** in 2024 (£7,051 in 2023 which included a one-off cost of about £1500 for additional clearance in one churchyard). Parish Councils gave grants of **£3,582** (£3,190 in 2023) towards these costs

The huge achievements of generating much income from fundraising, together with income from funeral & wedding fees, donations and other sources, whilst also being prudent with expenditure, has meant that overall there was an increase in the finances of **£10,117 to £89,742** (£4,718, from £74,907 to £79,625 in 2023). A banking issue meant that some £3,300 of that £10,117 was not paid over to the individual churches at the correct time (and not until 2025) so they were unable to utilise it during the year under review.

My sincere thanks go to the Cashiers for their work on maintaining the records of the day-to-day transactions. And thank you for all the support I have received from the PCC members too.

Caroline Snell 11 April 2025



DRAFT

**THE SIX CHURCHES WITHIN THE POLDEN WHEEL  
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

31.12.2023

		All Saints Ashcott	St Philip & St James Burtle	St Peter's Catcott	St Edward's Chilton Polden	St George's Edington	St Mary's Shapwick	TOTAL
<b>General Fund:</b>								
58,357.49	Balance at 1st January	5,449.68	8,939.23	12,456.36	3,801.97	11,040.44	25,060.69	66,748.37
10,165.31	Add Surplus for Year	1,379.68	4,584.18	-	-	-	3,707.06	9,670.92
(1,720.43)	Deduct Deficit for Year	-	-	(900.14)	(805.73)	(1,222.86)	-	(2,928.73)
(54.00)	Deduct transfer to restricted fund	(976.65)	-	-	-	-	(105.00)	(1,081.65)
<b>£66,748.37</b>	Balance at 31st December	<b>£5,852.71</b>	<b>£13,523.41</b>	<b>£11,556.22</b>	<b>£2,996.24</b>	<b>£9,817.58</b>	<b>£28,662.75</b>	<b>£72,408.91</b>
<b>Restricted Fabric Restoration Funds:</b>								
3,257.92	Balance at 1st January	3,257.92	-	-	-	-	-	3,257.92
-	Add Contributions	476.65	-	-	-	-	-	476.65
-	Deduct Usage	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>£3,257.92</b>	Balance at 31st December	<b>£3,734.57</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£3,734.57</b>
<b>Miles &amp; Hurman Extraordinary Repair Fund:</b>								
525.14	Balance at 1st January	525.14	-	-	-	-	-	525.14
	1/3 Transfer from Miles & Hurman	500.00						500.00
-	General Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	Transfer to General Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>£525.14</b>	Balance at 31st December	<b>£1,025.14</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£1,025.14</b>
<b>Restricted Bell Fund:</b>								
1,042.45	Balance at 1st January	-	-	-	-	-	1,096.45	1,096.45
89.00	Add Contributions	-	-	-	-	-	105.00	105.00
(35.00)	Deduct Usage	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.00
<b>£1,096.45</b>	Balance at 31st December	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>1,201.45</b>	<b>1,201.45</b>
<b>Restricted Organ Maintenance Fund:</b>								
500.00	Balance at 1st January	-	-	-	-	500.00	-	500.00
-	Add Contributions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	Deduct Usage	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>£500.00</b>	Balance at 31st December	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>500.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>500.00</b>
<b>£72,127.88</b>		<b>£10,612.42</b>	<b>£13,523.41</b>	<b>£11,556.22</b>	<b>£2,996.24</b>	<b>£10,317.58</b>	<b>£29,864.20</b>	<b>£78,870.07</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>								
521.74	Cash	33.10	-	-	150.00	-	-	183.10
57,300.97	Bank Current Account	7,625.02	11,587.47	7,276.06	2,138.59	10,317.58	28,574.98	67,519.70
740.40	Bank Current Account - 100 Club	-	-	-	707.65	-	-	707.65
13,564.77	CBF Deposit Account	2,954.30	1,935.94	4,280.16	-	-	1,289.22	10,459.62
<b>£72,127.88</b>		<b>£10,612.42</b>	<b>£13,523.41</b>	<b>£11,556.22</b>	<b>£2,996.24</b>	<b>£10,317.58</b>	<b>£29,864.20</b>	<b>£78,870.07</b>



THE POLDEN WHEEL					
RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNT					
31.12.2023	FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024				DRAFT
		The Six	The Polden Wheel Benefice		
		Churches	Bank a/c	Bank a/c	
			Street	Bridgwater	TOTAL
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>					
2,227.21	Offerings - GASDS	2,877.14	-	-	2,877.14
5.00	Offerings - non GASDS	447.00	-	-	447.00
8,881.15	Gift Aid Envelopes	8,514.41	-	-	8,514.41
30,094.00	Planned Giving - Gift Aid	30,362.00	-	-	30,362.00
600.00	Planned Giving - non Gift Aid	410.00	-	-	410.00
9,666.00	Fees	9,387.00	-	5,487.00	14,874.00
4,570.15	Donations	6,650.16	-	-	6,650.16
-	Legacy	-	-	-	-
6,541.20	Income Tax Recovered on Gift Aid donations	9,759.87	-	-	9,759.87
55.81	Interest on late HMRC repayments	497.51	-	-	497.51
14,461.93	Fund Raising Events	19,205.65	-	-	19,205.65
(2,283.04)	Less Expenses	(3,491.71)	-	-	(3,491.71)
1,297.00	100 Club	1,260.00	-	-	1,260.00
(795.85)	Less Expenses	(1,292.75)	-	-	(1,292.75)
1,570.88	Fund Raising Events for Specific Charities	766.69	-	-	766.69
(1,576.08)	L Less Amount donated	(836.55)	-	-	(836.55)
	Grants				
3,190.00	Parish Councils	3,581.50	-	-	3,581.50
-	Listed Places of Worship	747.24	-	-	747.24
-	Ecclesiastical Insurance	278.80			278.80
140.00	C of E Energy Grant	0.00	-	-	0.00
100.00	Rent - Chilton Polden Church Hall	0.00	100.00	-	100.00
0.00	Hire of School Room	0.00	-	-	0.00
0.00	Miles & Hurman Charity Trust	0.00	-	-	0.00
1,743.20	Bank Interest	2,489.53	179.08	49.71	2,718.32
£80,488.56		£91,613.49	£279.08	£5,536.71	£97,429.28
<b>PAYMENTS:</b>					
31,910.02	Parish Share of Common Fund	34,446.67	-	-	34,446.67
-	Polden Wheel Benefice Fund	12,900.00	(12,900.00)	-	-
1,451.67	Visiting Clergy, Organist, Verger & Bell Ringer Fees	595.90	49.00	2,113.00	2,757.90
234.50	Deanery Levy	84.00	-	99.00	183.00
	Church Running Expenses:				
4,951.30	Heating & Lighting	6,308.46	-	-	6,308.46
95.00	Cleaning	48.00	-	-	48.00
607.74	Water	731.26	-	-	731.26
5,523.93	Insurance	5,839.82	-	-	5,839.82
7,050.76	Upkeep of Churchyard including Gates & Paths	7,540.01	-	-	7,540.01
849.85	Maintenance of Equipment	981.20	-	-	981.20
6,657.00	Repairs to Building	13,286.80	-	-	13,286.80
321.91	Church Consumables	-	448.88	-	448.88
1,312.67	Quinquennial Survey Fee	1,700.00	-	-	1,700.00
	Other Expenses:				
597.28	CCLI & PRS Licences	47.40	625.04	-	672.44
127.00	RSCM Membership	-	133.00	-	133.00
6,968.00	Administrator's Salary	-	7,332.00	-	7,332.00
618.40	Photocopier Rental	-	618.40	-	618.40
1,294.61	Photocopier usage	-	1,202.98	-	1,202.98
172.78	Postage & Office Consumables	-	642.46	-	642.46
3,982.27	Vicar's Expenses	-	1,800.15	-	1,800.15
455.00	Website	-	215.00	-	215.00
196.14	Donations & 10% Charity Giving	247.35	-	-	247.35
393.28	Sundry	114.43	62.00	-	176.43
£75,771.11		£84,871.30	£228.91	£2,212.00	£87,312.21
£4,717.45	Excess receipts over payments	£6,742.19	£50.17	£3,324.71	£10,117.07







# Diocese of Bath & Wells

## The Electoral Roll for the Polden Wheel Benefice: New Electoral Roll Year 2025

As a Benefice of six churches with one Parochial Church Council, there is now one central Electoral Roll which is currently overseen by the Electoral Roll Officer. As this is a year when a new full Electoral Roll is created, each church has displayed the necessary notices and made its new roll available for inspection for 14 days prior to the APCM, in line with GDPR regulations and general concerns over sensitive information.

These figures represent the new electoral rolls, as provided by the parishes for this APCM, and I am very grateful to each of the church contacts for supporting me in this process in this new electoral roll year.

The Polden Wheel Benefice listed **133** members across the six churches.

Ashcott **22**, Burtle **29**, Catcott **33**, Chilton Polden **14**, Edington **21**, Shapwick **14**

Anita Hayne

Electoral Role Officer

April 2025

## Synod Report 2024

There were four Deanery Synod meetings during 2024, which were attended by at least two of the five Polden Wheel synod members on each occasion.

**The first meeting** was on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at the Mission church in Street. The meeting opened with worship then the business began with Revd Ana Lawrence making a presentation about the current stage of the Shared Local Ministry plan; also thanking everyone for their taking a part in the consultation. The outcome of this was that Option 2 was the clear preference, although the Polden Wheel Benefice preferred Option 1; however, they are happy to work with Option 2 as this is the most realistic option for the long term stability of the deanery. The Archdeacons of Wells and Taunton are to discuss the transfer of Othery and Middlezoy to the Taunton Archdeaconry with the understanding that both Archdeacons are open to this proposal. Another issue to be decided, in this case by the diocese, is the location of the house in Street to be used for the House for Duty post in Option 2; reassurance was given that this issue would be raised in the final report to the diocese. Another concern was about the period of handover for the MOMMS benefice until a House for Duty priest is found and the amalgamation of the parishes with Polden Wheel completed. It was made clear that MOMMS vacancy would run its course in the usual way; likely to be a 'long term' so it was asked whether it is possible to second a cleric from a different benefice to support the MOMMS benefice. Revd Preb David MacGeoch advised that this should be asked of the Archdeacon and Area Dean when they come to visit MOMMS at the start of the vacancy. Further concerns were raised over the status of the parish of Greinton and Sutton Mallet. It was made clear that this issue had been discussed at the start of the consultation process and that a recommendation had been made to the diocese that the status of these parishes be resolved prior to merger. Revd Rich Tweedy advised that the House for Duty priest needs to be in place before a merger can take place and reassurance was given that this is the recommendation of the Synod to the diocese. The Polden Wheel has no readers and Chapter has discussed sharing readers more over the deanery as part of seeking to share resources more widely over the deanery.

There was then a discussion led by Revd Dr Jane Durham with the synod split into houses to discuss two questions on our options, which were 'How do you feel now?' and 'What key points should we raise with the Archdeacon?'

The House of Clergy asked whether readers' licence should be to the Area Dean if they are to be shared across the deanery, whether readers can be better equipped for ministry across the extended benefices and can worship assistants also be deployed across the deanery. They also sought assurances about the transfer of Othery and Middlezoy to the Taunton Archdeacon, the resolution of the Greinton parish situation, and that a House of Duty priest in place before mergers take place. They also felt that there was a need for central administration if there was a commitment to work together as a team.

The House of Laity also felt that the House of Duty priest needs to be in place before any merger of parishes and the appointee should be able to stay for substantial length of time; also that the house's location and its condition to be is 'fit for purpose'. They asked if new readers, lay worship assistants and lay pastoral assistants be recruited across the deanery; also about how the vacancy will be filled. Also that it is important that communication is good throughout. They felt that there were too many limitations in place when considering this process and expressed concerns for the people affected especially Rich Tweedy.

After this discussion the synod voted, to comply with the wishes of the archdeacon, to agree with option 2 and this was proposed and seconded accordingly. The Synod was then briefed on the next steps by the Area Dean. There was then a question raised about the appointment of a new Dean of Wells, whether this will mean the return of Anne Gell as Archdeacon, and whether she would be of the same mind as the current Archdeacon? Hope was that this will be decided before Anne Gell returns later in the year.

There followed an updating presentation on the Deanery Mission Plan by Rev Dr Jane Durham. There is a need for a deanery champion for 'Tell'. Morning Prayer on Zoom on Tuesdays at 8:30 is not well attended, suggested that it be moved to 8am, so agreed to move the time 8am from then on.

Minutes of the last meeting were approved by Synod and signed by the Area and Lay Dean. There were no matters arising. Notes from the last DMPG were noted by Synod.

Financial report was read by the Treasurer, Peter Sage, advising that the signatories for the deanery account have been amended to add Rev Ana Lawrence as the third signatory and the account will be need to be administered online in future so will need to find out about process from the bank; also about moving some funds into investments of saving accounts. Peter wishes to stand down but will remain until someone is found. Current funds stand at £3259.97 and it was suggested that annual levy be revised in March and reduced. This is for DMPG to decide.

Date of next meeting set as 15<sup>th</sup> May

**The second meeting** of the year was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May at St John the Baptist's, Glastonbury, and began with an opening worship.

The meeting commenced with Rev Ana Lawrence giving an update on the Shared Local Ministry plan. She shared the results of the AMPG on 23 April 2024, which was to approve Option 2 in principle on condition that there was conversation between the Acting Archdeacon of Wells and the Archdeacon of Taunton. Synod to be updated in July. AMPG cannot guarantee the house in expanded Polden Wheel area.

She advised that there are a different number of scenarios that may emerge from the discussions, such as neither parish being transferred (in which case we'd have to go back to Option 1), one parish is transferred (and consideration given to where the other parish) is or both parishes are transferred. There is also the possibility that no decision is made or that other options are considered. Any proposals will still need to go through relevant DMPGs etc

There followed an update on the Deanery Mission Plan with members of the Common Good group speaking about the ministry of the Common Good Group in Baltonsborough, which includes the Lord's Larder and other fund raising activities in the village; thereby helping to support children in the village and raising funds for charities. It has also re-energised the PCC, increased confidence to do more and resulted in 8 new Electoral Roll members, a new PCC member and a foundation school governor.

Synod was also told about the Coffee/Chat/Snacks in Street Mission Church on a Saturday morning, which began as a warm space, now a group that is more than that by reaching out to the isolated and lonely.

There is also the Glastonbury Talking Café run by the Mental Health Team from Wells which is also attended by the housing team, CAB, IT and various other groups.

The speakers were all thanked for their input and the inspiration that they gave.

Rev Ana Lawrence advised the synod that there are a number of vacancies for the synod and also for the DMPG as some benefices do not have representation. There followed a discussion about how Synod numbers are calculated. Currently 2 vacancies for house of clergy and 3 for house of laity.

There are also parish vacancies with MOMMS in vacancy from end of July and Glastonbury from 6th September. The process regarding dealing with vacancies was explained .

The Role description for the Deanery Treasurer has been sent and Peter Sage was thanked for his work over the past 7 years.

Rev Dr Jane Durham spoke in her role as the Deanery Mission Enabler about the Mission Plan, focusing on Tend for Sept 23-Sept 24 and Tell for Sept 24 – 25. Common Good and others were thanked for their input at the meeting, and suggestions for a deanery champion for Tell were invited. A programme for Multi-parish Benefices was introduced called Thrive to be run deanery wide starting in September with 3 to 4 from each benefice, plus clergy, meeting every 2-3 months looking at a theme and taking to their benefice and putting it into practice.

The new Diocesan Lay Ministry Pathway has a course for Lay Worship Assistants and also a general foundation course to run in September – October, with maybe another LWA course in the New Year.

The minutes of the January meeting were accepted and signed and there were no matters arising. The notes from DMPG on 30 April were tabled

Peter Sage (Deanery Treasurer) gave the Financial report - £3065 in the bank, the levy is under review and will be requested in due time. Membership statistics are obtained from the diocese. A new formula may be ready for the next meeting.

There was a farewell to David MacGeoch after 16 years in Glastonbury, 11 as Area Dean. Thanks were given for his work, care, compassion, and pastoral care and he was presented with a token of the Synod's thanks. David MacGeoch replied encouraging the synod to continue to be Glastonbury Jurisdiction, and recalled some of the achievements of the deanery, including the appointment of the DME. He also expressed his thanks to Mary for Deanery & Diocesan input.

Date of Next meeting: 3 July 2024 at 7:00pm Venue to be confirmed

**The third meeting** of the year was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 at St Mary's church in Shapwick and began with opening worship. Revd Dr Jane Durham asked for good news stories for the parishes.

Revd Ana Lawrence reported to the synod about current vacancies in deanery and diocesan synods and also about the two clergy vacancies in MOMMs and Glastonbury with Meare. She then went on to update the synod about the Shared Local Ministry Plan. A cross-archdeaconry meeting between the two deaneries to discuss and other conversations are ongoing. The same group will meet again in Mid-September, and it is hoped that a more 'concrete' answer can be given in October.

Revd Dr Jane Durham then briefed the synod on the Deanery Mission Plan with the main points on a slide presentation. She also advised the synod of the Diocesan Day of Prayer on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2024, followed by an update on the Thrive course, its communication and publicity. Revd Dr Jane Durham went on to provide information on the Lay Ministry Pathway and the courses available, with the foundation course running the autumn in Street or Glastonbury

Rev'd Ana Lawrence introduced Sonia Beaty and suggests that Sonia be Co-Opted (non-voting member of Synod) as the Deanery Treasurer which was agreed unanimously.

Mary Masters, Deanery Synod Secretary, updated the synod on the deanery budget and levy. DMPG has approved the budget for deanery expenses, including those of the Deanery Mission Enabler, and the synod summer BBQ. The suggestion was for a new budget of £20 for the expenses of the deanery treasurer, £200 for the catering at the Archdeacon's visitation and a small discretionary budget for laity travel expenses to ensure members can attend synod, giving a final budget of £1,240. Also to reduce the parish levy from £3.50 down to £3.00 per person. Both proposals were approved by synod unanimously.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed and no matters arising. The matters from the DMPG were noted by synod.

Date of next meeting set as 16<sup>th</sup> October in the Brue Benefice. Rev'd Andrea Harwood was presented with a card and flowers with thanks as she is moving on.

**The fourth and final meeting** of the year was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> October in the Brue Benefice and began with an opening worship.

This was followed by a Thrive introduction and taster with an information leaflet available.

Next was a presentation about Parish share with a reminder that there was a consultation period during 2024 on the new methodology, which was then explained. There was then a discussion and questions asked about the possible impact of non-payment and legal implications for trustees. The synod was reassured that there would be support from the diocese. It was also pointed out that figures are based on on 2022 Stats for Mission less Fresh Expression. Various initiatives are being considered by diocesan staff, eg simplifying grant applications. The current structural deficit is 1.6 – 2 million and they are running out of reserves to plug the gap.

Deanery Mission Enabler reminded Synod that for the past year our focus has been Tend and we are moving on to 'Tell' from September 2024, with Rev Rich Tweedy as the Deanery Champion.

Deanery Treasurer, Mrs Beaty, reported that the deanery outgoings for 2024 were £851. The Bank Mandate has been enacted and there is now online banking. Deanery Levy letters to go out shortly.

Rev Ana Lawrence updated the synod about Shared Local Ministry and said that the respective deaneries are still exploring 2 parishes maybe moving to Sedgemoor with another cross-archdeaconry meeting in November.

Date of next meeting 19 Feb 2025 in Street

## **Safeguarding report for Polden Wheel Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)**

**May 19<sup>th</sup> 2025 (Reporting period; January – December 2024).**

The Safeguarding in the Polden Wheel is overseen by Freda Prime, Safeguarding Officer, and assisted by Niki Hill who is also fully trained. The Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub are used as a valuable tool in keeping up to date with training, DBS checks, reviews and policies. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is kept up to date in terms of reviews and compliance and safeguarding is a standing item on the PCC agenda.

### **Security of Information.**

The SGO maintains a database on the church laptop, regarding training and DBS checks etc. However, all sensitive information is held in a locked cabinet in the church office. GDPR in general is overseen by the Parish Administrator and the secretary has use of a laptop specifically for church use.

### **Training**

During 2024 most churchwardens and volunteers in leadership roles, undertook the mandatory Leadership training which consisted of, either a face to face training at Flourish House or via Zoom. There are two sessions, one week apart and a degree of 'homework' is required. I am grateful to all those who have committed to this and successfully completed it. The remainder will be completed early in 2025. During 2025 a significant amount of other training will need to be updated which includes my own. This can be done, individually, online or in a group with a Diocesan Facilitator. Some concerns have been expressed about the vulnerability of some to complete this challenging material alone and I am mindful that pairing up or a group option may need to be arranged.

### **DBS Checks**

All appropriate DBS checks are up to date but some criteria has changed with the new provider ThirtyOneEight. A database of those requiring DBS checks is maintained on the church laptop.

### **Reviews**

The PCC are regularly updated and are required to review actions, policies and training as appropriate. Some communication that is non sensitive is done by prior notice by email and this works well, giving members time to read documents ahead of the meeting. There are some gaps in actions which centre around ongoing formal support for volunteers and this is being addressed. Policies are in place as required and displayed in the churches where appropriate.

The resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby in November has served to not only heighten awareness of the importance of safeguarding at all levels, but also the need for vigilance within our churches and an awareness of what action needs to be taken in all circumstances. I am confident that continued reporting ensures that, should the need arise, correct and prompt action would be taken and the appropriate people made aware.

I would like to thank Rich and PCC members for their patience and support in maintaining this challenging role for the Polden Wheel.

Freda Prime  
Safeguarding Officer.