

ST MICHAEL'S HORTON APCM 2019 REPORTS

Vicar's report

The past year has seen some major changes in personnel:

- Joseph completed his training and left to be vicar of St Hilda's Ashford in July
- Kathy Atkinson, our Lay Minister in training, had to move away because of her job
- Maggie our Parish Secretary has been ill

This means that as vicar I have less support for administration, pastoral care and cover for services than I did a year ago. I need to find help with these as a priority.

Against this background it is perhaps not surprising that attendances have been in gradual decline over the past year to the point where we average less than twenty people at most Sunday services.

There seems to be a corresponding loss of energy; fewer people stay for coffee after the services or make the effort to come out for events such as Lent Courses and Men's Breakfasts. These matters are vital for the future of St Michael's and I commend them to your prayers.

There are however many signs of hope:

- Special events such as Harvest, Remembrance, New Year and Travelling Home are very strongly supported by the community at large. Many thanks to the hard work of our volunteers who make these events possible.
- Tuesday communion attendances are holding up at around eight people most times, some of whom do not attend on Sundays
- Crafty Church is attracting new members
- There is continuing if limited support for home groups and Better Portion.

A further effort to reinvigorate our life as a Church came with the re-launch of informal services, of which the first for over a year took place on Mothering Sunday. A concerted attempt to promote the service brought in 6 adults who are not Sunday regulars, which just about made up for those who couldn't attend because of Mothering Sunday commitments. No doubt the clocks going forward that morning didn't help either. We need to work consistently and patiently to build this initiative up. I look forward to the next one on 12 May.

I thoroughly enjoyed doing a Blokes' Confirmation Course last year.

Looking ahead to the coming year, I am hoping to meet with the new vicar of Datchet and Colnbrook, the new Roman Catholic priest for the area and the Minister of Datchet Baptist Church with a view to producing a co-ordinated missional plan for our parishes. I believe that as a larger grouping we will be able to attract resources better than as single small parishes. We could invite a Christian band... a Mission Team... a Drama Group such as Riding Lights... we could employ a Youth

Worker or a Family and Children's Minister... Exciting!

Following the recent announcement by the Rev Carolyn Urwin I, like many others, am concerned how best to support Wraysbury Baptist Church going forward and will be meeting a representative of the Baptist Union for discussions soon. Please pray!

Thinking big, imagine what we could accomplish in future in terms of growing the two churches if we could engage an Administrator, a Family and Children's Worker and a Pastoral Care Worker, like Vicky... May I challenge you to commit this dream to your prayers please.

Colin Gibson

Wardens'

St. Michaels has continued its ministry in Horton throughout the year and has welcomed all those who have attended the church as well as ministering to many who do not attend regularly. We are concerned that the congregation numbers at the main service seem to be dwindling despite a number of efforts to attract an increase. The service on Tuesdays continues to attract a regular attendance and is greatly appreciated by those who come. We would be grateful for any suggestions as to how we might proceed.

The main festivals of the year have been enjoyable and successful. The harvest lunch was convivial, and we donated all the produce to the Salvation Army in Slough. They were most appreciative and we have decided that we will continue to send it to them in future.

The Remembrance observation was particularly memorable as we marked the centenary of the ending of the Great War. Carolyn had researched the histories of all Horton parishioners who had participated in the conflict and we mounted an exhibition in the porch which we left open for the month November. The Act of Remembrance was very well attended and we were very grateful that Nicki Bouch sounded the last post again. We were also strongly represented in the well-received commemoration which Margaret Lenton organised in Wraybury during the afternoon.

Our Christmas Eve Christingle service was popular as ever and we were grateful to all who contributed in any way. Attendance at the Christmas Day service was low but many of our regular congregation were away.

We celebrated New Year with our usual lunch which was appreciated. The numbers seemed a little lower than usual, but a number had succumbed to illness and were unable to attend.

We again shared a Lent course with St. Andrew's and the Baptist church. Holy Week was busy as always.

And Easter came in its glory.

We are so happy with our lovely group of Tuesday communicants and hope they will feel encouraged to attend our Sunday service. They are a most welcome part of our family.

We really enjoy our time together and we hope more will come.

As far as the fabric of the church is concerned, it is generally in good shape. The very obvious costly leaks in the south aisle have now been dealt with, and once the water damage has settled we must consider redecorating. There is another problem in the north choir aisle, and we have asked the contractors to investigate. The repair of the collapse of the church yard wall was costly, and we must be vigilant in identifying weaknesses. Our architect has suggested that we approach the maintenance systematically in stages. The churchyard covers a large area and the boundary walls are extensive, so it would be unrealistic to try and deal with them all at the same time.

With regard to our buildings and all the architectural problems we have been fortunate in our help from our architect, Virginia Westwood. She has always given us practical and realistic advice. Her retirement means that we must seek a replacement and she will be very difficult to replace. It has been a pleasure deal with her, and we can only hope to find her equal if not her like. Carolyn has been researching possibilities and for the time being Virginia will remain in post.

The vestry furniture should be replaced and there is urgent need for storage for the archive material which increases as more material is uncovered by Carolyn. We are hoping to install some audio-visual equipment to enable us to make some creative additions to our services.

We must make a plea for help. The day to day running of the mundane aspects of church life is falling on a very small number. We need help with cleaning, opening the church, and all the tasks which crop up from time to time. We are also concerned that the social time we used to enjoy after our Sunday service seems to have faded and the congregation disappears very quickly at the end, so much so that we have not been able, nor needed, to serve coffee. This means that we do not have an opportunity to welcome and get to know any newcomers who might join us. The Tuesday congregation enjoy their social time very much, and we really hope that we can reinstate our Sunday coffee time and cement our already strong friendships.

We are very grateful for all the help we do receive, so freely given. While the upkeep of the building absorbs a great deal of time, St. Michael's is a community of people first and foremost. We support and care for each other and we must not lose sight of that fact. It is a privilege to be part of this family.

Carolyn Wheeler

Angela Inger

Lay Licensed Minister

Reflecting on the past year, I realize that 'reflecting' is where my heart finds fulfilment.

Each year now we have the "Thy Kingdom Come" initiative, which seeks to encourage exploring various ways to approach/vary our prayer life. St. Andrew's Church hosted the event and though not heavily attended, nevertheless it is a lovely opportunity to stop the world and seek the quiet heart journey.

In a similar vein Alison Maitland launched a 3 pronged outreach idea. "Stitch" which really captured the gifted sewing ladies with its sights set on Africa and a simple solution to sanitary towel needs. The second prong was "Hush" a chance to sit in a home, and quietly find God in a piece of poetry, a flower, the sky at night. The third prong which is to be launched is "chat", the opportunity to open up and chat; find out how much we have in common, how little we know about the various cultures that make up our community.

During the last few years we have run Advent Reflections in St. Michael's. Just half an hour before the Tuesday morning Communion service. Thought provoking life lessons to ponder!

The Bereavement Group meets quarterly to check through Vicar Colin any one requesting a visit from one of our members. This Group is also involved with the Festival of Light Service and it is proposed that they will be actively engaged in drawing together material which will speak of God's presence in their lives and the hope that Christ brings, if we can hear his voice through the sadness which engulfs us at times.

The House Groups continue to flourish and enjoy exploring God's Word and leading, in our lives. Bless all our leaders for their encouragement to those seeking to understand and engage with God's message.

Better Portion, under Mary Townend's leading continues to succeed. It encompasses all that the early Christians enjoyed; fellowship, teaching, prayer, and food. We have a team who will provide sandwiches/cake and all sorts of other goodies too. In all that we share in that group we are aware of God's presence with us.

The Lent Course this year which ran for 6 weeks at The Baptist Church was wonderful. We were blessed with a steady attendance at each session and with so many lovely rich male voices, the singing was truly uplifting. We had teaching; an opportunity to 'try' to answer a selection of questions; feedback afterwards and singing to cheer every heart. One of the best Lent Courses I felt this year. Thanks to everyone who made this such a success.

At St. Michael's each year for many years we have had the Good Friday Meditation – Christ's last hour. Comprising 3 speakers this again encourages quiet contemplation of our walk during Holy Week, and where our faith journey takes us.

Ongoing development for St. Michael's is investment in an audio/visual system. Consideration of need and simplicity of operation has been given and we now need to move forward.

We are blessed with so many talented people and the ability to share our commitment to God and thence to our neighbour is the joy which keeps our Christian faith seeking His will, His leading.

God bless you all for your fellowship and love.

Beryl Walters