

District Reports for Tring, Long Marston, Wilstone, Puttenham and Aldbury.

St Peter & St Paul, District Report for APCM 2022

It would be remiss of me to not mention and thank Ian Matthews and Chris Hoare for all of their hard work as church wardens of St Peter and St Paul, both of whom moved away from Tring last year – we wish them well.

We set up a warden team to look after the day to day running of the church, for both services and the many tasks of looking after our building and keeping it open. This is working well.

We have experienced a number of irritating minor vandalism to both inside the church and outside. This we believe is from the same group of teenagers who are causing problems wider in the town. We have informed the police and installed CCTV in the church which we hope will deter them.

In May and June of 2021 we continued the recent practice of streaming all 8am and 10am services held in St Peter & St Paul and the pattern of services remained unchanged from that prior to the advent of Covid. In July there was a slight change to the service pattern and in August we changed to only streaming one service and more extensive changes were made to the services. The 8am BCP service was streamed on 2nd and 4th Sundays and the 10am services on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month incorporated a Sunday Club into the services so the children would go out for the first part of those services to the Emmie Hobbs Room and join the congregation in the service again in order to take part in the Eucharist. Recently this has changed so that on some Sundays the children stay in and do activities in the Lady Chapel. After what seemed like a age we were also able to commence communal singing in the church, which was greeted with great joy by many of the congregation.

The season of Advent commenced and started to look something like the normal build up to Christmas and we did manage to have a Christingle service. On December 8th it was lovely to have Bishop Michael perform a Confirmation Service in the church for a number of candidates from across the Team Parish. Although a number of school services were scheduled in the run up to Christmas most were cancelled by the schools themselves as increases in infection rates meant this was the prudent course of action. However, Crib Services and other special services, including outdoors community carol singing all took place and were well received.

Throughout all this we adopted a cautious approach as far as relaxation of Covid precautions in our services was concerned and rightly so as Covid is still with us and so we frequently lagged behind the government guidelines.

In 2022 we managed to have Lent Groups, with some meeting via Zoom for practical reasons and not because they had to. The groups were well attended and the 'Living In Love and Faith' course certainly provoked thought and discussion and no doubt will continue to do so. It was a joy to have the 'Walk of Witness' take place on Good Friday for the first time in three years and all of our normal Easter services were also able to take place.

We have also recently reinstated the administration of wine to the congregation during the Eucharist and this is very much optional but it is good that it is available to those who want it.

Looking beyond services, in February we welcomed many to our Shrove Saturday event out in the churchyard, with pancake races and good conversations.

In April we hosted Tring Together Spring Fayre launch on Church Square, and held the petting zoo in the churchyard. We welcomed many people into church for refreshments and again had good conversations.

At our Annual church meeting in April, outline plans about a phased re-ordering of the church were announced. These ideas were greeted favourably by the congregation and we look forward to these being progressed.

Roy Hargreaves

Long Marston District report 2022

The new rota (alternating morning and evening services) is working but numbers are very low. Those who are regular understand that this is not feasible for long. We have struggled to get anyone new coming to Worship for All and have lost former attenders to sports. We held a very successful service to commemorate Ruth Osborne and there is now a memorial plaque in the churchyard.

Canon Jane Banister

District Report for St. Cross

Parish AGM 2022.

Like most churches, St. Cross is trying to recover from the effects of the pandemic. Sadly, in addition, during the last two years, the church has lost six regular members of the congregation, three of whom had made a major contribution to church life in the village.

However, the premise is to look forward and learn to adapt to the new social situation in which St. Cross and the rest of the country now exists.

We are very fortunate to enjoy regular services, which take place every Tuesday, and are grateful for the support which makes this possible. Even a small congregation can sing hymns with the right technical support! There is hope that we can rebuild the coffee morning from this base and welcome a few more people in to St. Cross.

Thanks to Olga Martin, the church is open during the day, and it is clear from the number of votive candles which are used that people do visit; hopefully they find peace and tranquillity within. The church itself is in good order and cleaned regularly, but keeping on top of the fly infestation has become quite a challenge; a cold winter would have been a great help!

The grounds continue to be maintained by Tony Bonham, using the mower gifted to the Friends of St. Cross by Andrew Minter. The Friends pay for the insurance and servicing on the mower, but Tony pays the running costs, and we are very grateful for his support and hard work.

The local community choir, Sing Wilstone, continue to use the church for their weekly meetings. Looking forward, there is every hope the decking replacement will be completed this summer and many thanks are due to Rev'd. Huw and John Whiteman for taking on this project when personal resources at St. Cross were unable to continue.

With Rev'd Jane's help and guidance, we hope to revive St. Cross's 'social' calendar, focussing on celebrating the completion of the decking, and then maybe around Holy Cross Day in September. There is an Advent concert planned for early December, with Richard Grylls and his choir, to which everyone is welcome.

The church family are acutely aware they no longer have the 'manpower' to revive the fund raising events of the past but are looking at more manageable options for the future, representing the church and joining in with village events, and maintaining the church's role in the village community.

Alison Cockerill.

ST.MARY'S CHURCH, PUTTENHAM DISTRICT REPORT Year end 2021 – 2022

Covid-19 had a very serious impact on services and service attendance during 2021, reducing the congregation from between one to three people. At a DCC meeting, we resisted the suggestion of becoming a Festival Church and, as soon as we were able, with Covid precautions in place, we endeavored to restore our congregation for Evensong. This has been reasonably successful with a congregation averaging between 15/18 people.

Communion is currently only administered on special "high" days.

An afternoon 3.30 p.m communion is proving very unpopular, in general, with the return to a morning communion much preferred.

DCC meetings have been very sparse, and it is hoped that with the general relaxing of Covid restrictions, we can resume our meetings in a more regular fashion for 2022.

We started a Thursday Coffee Morning mid last year which proved popular until the onset of winter. We closed down during the period of hard frosts, etc., but re-opened at the end of March. However, so far we have found it very difficult to attract people to come back in any number. This is a shame as it provided a small but steady income for St.Mary's by way of donations.

Christine Rutter (Churchwarden) 29th April, 2022

St John the Baptist Churchwarden's report

Sunday Worship

Services have been held every Sunday throughout this year with two services on the first Sunday of the month (BCP at 8, Worship For All at 10).

Weddings, Baptisms and Confirmation

There have been 9 weddings and 7 baptisms this year, including Isabella, Jessica and Thomas Sypko, and Ray and Afra Willmore's first grandson Barnaby in April. Paul and Victoria Sypko and Callum Munro from the Aldbury congregation were confirmed in November 2021 (and Paul was also baptised). There have been 6 funerals and 9 interments of ashes.

Christmas

Christmas was still affected by COVID in that the local population was aware of a rising infection rate and local events were cancelled. A Christmas Open Day was held on Saturday 11th December on Church of England theme 'The Heart of Christmas'; attendance was lower than the previous year, possibly due to very poor weather which kept people away from the parallel School Fair held outside because of COVID. The Messy Church Christingle was well attended and Carols by Candlelight and the Crib Service were both extremely well attended with over 80 in the congregations. Many thanks at this point to Pete Williams for the supply and lighting of hundreds of candles, and to Pete and Sandra for organising the Christmas tree and crib construction.

Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.

Lent Groups were run every week by Jill Timms in Tring Station and Michelle in Aldbury following the Living in Love & Faith course. Holy Week services in Aldbury included Good Friday's 'Last Hour at the Cross', the Sepulchre service, and the New Fire on the Saturday evening. Easter Sunday was poorly attended with many being away on holiday; 28 attended the service which was followed by fizzy, cake and chocolate eggs.

Rotas

Nearly all rotas are now covered, even though the same small group of people is often on them all. We now have weekly rotas for coffee, flowers (thanks to Jill Timms for organising that), church cleaning, readings and intercessions. We still need more on the cleaning rota and more intercessors. The special daily COVID cleaning rota was maintained up to July 2021 so that the church could be open for private prayer.

Recently we have started using servers in 8 am and 10 am communion services again with a training session in February. Harry Sypko (age 12) recently joined the servers' team, and while he is learning the ropes, thanks to Tim James for leaping into the breach when neither Peter nor I are available. We still need more servers.

Churchyard maintenance

Ian's report mentions the churchyard working parties. Thanks should also go to my husband Ian who mowed the churchyard all last year while Duncan McDermott was ill, and Mark Milner who strims the church farm side of the churchyard.

Music

Jackie Robinson cheerfully continued to provide us with a weekly dose of **live organ music** even when we weren't allowed to sing, and Tim French has recently started helping out as organist when Jackie is away.

Congregational singing inside the church started again as soon as it was allowed in July 2021; congregational singing in the churchyard for opening and closing hymns had been happening before that from April. Caroline has mustered the **Festival Choir** for big services at Remembrance and Christmas in 2021.

Bellringers have been ringing 6 bells for the occasional wedding from April 2021, and for Sunday morning services from 6th June. On 5th September the "Young at Herts" team of young ringers held a training session at Aldbury for the National competition at Worcester. The Western District of the Herts County Bellringing Association held its monthly meeting at Aldbury with ringing on 13th November. Four novices expressed interest in practice ringing, but so far only one has regularly attended on Wednesday evenings. Visiting bands of ringers have rung three quarter peals. The bells passed an inspection by Taylors of Loughborough in April. Philip Denwood as bellringer also continues to take care of the clock, but has recently trained up Ian Brown and now Michael Pearce as a clock care support team in the village.

Outreach

The **Tuesday coffee morning** has run every week in the Chapter House since November 2021 and although the regular attendance is small (5 or 6 people) it is greatly valued for the community it offers by those who come.

The **Toddler Group** kept going during Lockdowns via WhatsApp, and have held fortnightly meetings since September 2021 mainly in the Chapter House. Membership is healthy with over 30 families. It is run by a group of 5 mothers.

The church is linked with **Aldbury Refugee Support Group**, with half of the group being church members. The group met in the Chapter House and is holding a stall at the May Fair to raise awareness of ways to help.

A **monthly book club meeting** has been run in the Chapter House by Caroline Ellwood since December.

The Chandos Ensemble held a concert in the church in November which was well attended and raised £260 for the parish, and another is planned for 15th May.

DCC

The DCC met again by Zoom in January for the first time since before COVID. The Annual District Church Meeting was held on 2nd April and two new members elected to join the existing council. A DCC secretary has not yet been appointed.

Friends Of Aldbury Church

Trustees are currently Tony Tollinton, Neil Capp and Shirley Chamney, and Annie Eggar will be appointed as a trustee at the next meeting in the autumn. FOAC continue to provide the publications for sale at the back of the church to raise funds. This year they have paid for the new water heater, Mark Battram's work, a locksmith, and have just agreed to pay £18,000 for external stonework. It is reassuring to know it is there with funds available for fabric maintenance when needed.

Fundraising

A large amount of money has been raised this year through a filming contract, on top of income from recording sessions, Chapter House hire for birthday parties, a U3A tour, and the 4 church stalls at Aldbury May Fair on 2nd May.

Highlights

I have a few highlights to mention.

A highlight of the past year has been the transformation of this church into St Jude's of Berrow for the approved scenes in the film Lord of Misrule. Use of the church for filming last November raised nearly £4000 for church funds. I have just been told we have made the cut and the film should be released next spring.

Another highlight has been the visit from Rt Revd Michael Beasley, Bishop of Hertford in February when he took a lively Worship For All service and then spent a day in Aldbury School. He clearly enjoyed himself.

A recent personal highlight for me has been acting as tour guide to Weston Turville U3A Visiting Churches group. Thanks to Caroline Ellwood and the internet for historical information, which is safely stored in my short-term memory, so you'd better ask me about it soon. A party of 17 visited and the event raised over £150.

Heating

A further highlight of the year will be the heating bill, no doubt heightened by the need to comply with COVID guidelines by leaving the door open even on cold days last year, and the massive fuel price hikes we all now face.

Still on heating, the year has involved 2 separate late night mopping up sessions and a few SOS calls to the plumber. Radiator valves and pipes in the Chapter House and toilet have been repaired, a water heater replaced, the heat exchanger removed, flushed and descaled. The 2 boilers in the vestry are only 2 years old but did not work at all for 6 weeks in January and February while the problems were investigated and put right.

Moving to electricity, Pete Williams and Ian Munro have fitted LED spotlight bulbs at high level in the nave and aisles. Light switches and light fittings have also been repaired in the Chapter House, the tower and over the pipe organ.

Personal thanks particularly to Pete for being a constant source of wisdom of all kinds and to Ian for his know-how and of course to Michelle for putting up with me.

Jane Brown.