

St Bartholomew's Church Yarnton



**Annual Parish Report
2024**

Aims and purposes

St Bartholomew's, Yarnton Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Oliver Petter, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Introduction

Thank you to all who have continued to support St Bartholomew's. We are so grateful to all those whose hard work and commitment enabled us to sustain the church's ministry in new as well as familiar ways, and to maintain our central offering of worship and prayer, and pastoral care in our community. We are blessed by all our congregation and friends. Particular thanks must go to our excellent and dedicated PCC led by our churchwardens Paul Tweddle, Assistant Churchwardens Gill Rowbotham and Alison Riggs (also PCC Secretary and Deanery Synod Rep), Treasurer Gary Brewerton, Secretary Alison Riggs, Safeguarding Officer Charlotte Rayner, and our Associate Vicar Rev'd Sue Spankie.

Objectives and activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St Bartholomew's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish.

Diocesan and Benefice vision

St Bartholomew's is the only physical Christian presence in our parishes and we welcome all denominations to join our worship. Our tradition is simple, traditional worship, although we are open to change. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. We try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.

- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work. We face the challenge of being physically located on the edge of the village which we serve, so there is little visibility of the church for village residents, and we are striving to reach out to all parts of our village through our missionary work.

The PCC has a commitment to the Diocesan Vision, as a helpful overview of our mission. Four points continue to have great resonance.

- To make a bigger difference in the world and serve the poor.
- To share our faith with adults, children and young people and grow the church in every place; rural, urban and suburban.
- To serve every school in our community.
- To put the discipleship of all at the heart of our common life and set God's people free.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Bartholomew's church. This is a major task with our historic building.

PCC

Thank you to all our PCC. PCC members in 2024 were: : Rev. Oliver Petter (Incumbent), Paul Tweddle (Churchwarden), Gary Brewerton (Treasurer), Alison Riggs (Assistant Churchwarden, Secretary, Deanery Synod Rep), Jill Rowbotham (Assistant Churchwarden), Charlotte Rayner (Parish Safeguarding officer), Douglas Fairhurst, Michael Fogg, Ann Moss, Neil Small (up to the APCM in May), Penny Small (Deanery Synod representative up to APCM in May), Julie Walters, and Jill Rowbotham. The late John Appleton remained a PCC member until his death in July, and he is remembered in this report. Rev'd Sue Spankie joined as Associate Vicar in April. During 2024 we developed the role of Assistant Churchwarden, which recognised the great contribution of two members of our community, Alison Riggs and Jill Rowbotham, and sought to honour and encourage their leadership within the life of St Bartholomew's

The PCC met on 24th January, 24th April, 4th July, 3rd October for full meetings with an Extraordinary Meeting on 3rd December with the APCM on 11th May.

Review of 2024 (*Achievements and performance*)

The principal pattern of worship continued to be the 8am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) and Parish Communion with Junior Church at 11am on Sundays. Alongside this we continued to hold a Wednesday morning 9.30am Holy Communion Service.

Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer were said from Monday -Friday (No Evening Prayer on Friday.)

Across the year the average number of people worshipping on a Sunday in St Bartholomew's was 48, including 6 children. Alongside this we had a regular gathering of 7 at Wednesday Holy Communion.

Alongside our worship in St Bartholomew's, we had our regular congregation at the Sanctuary Residential Care home on Rutten Lane. In the autumn we developed new regular worshipping communities in Floryn House Residential Care Home, off Sandy Lane, and at Erdington House.

Through the year

Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Services in Lent were well attended and had a good sense of momentum. In Holy Week, and through April we have had encouraging congregations, with some growth from last year:

Palm Sunday 52

Maundy Thursday 17

Good Friday 36

Easter Vigil 6am 15

Easter Day 11am Communion Service 65

Alongside the principal services within our Holy Week Calendar we held a successful Little Sheep Easter session, exploring the Easter story.

Licensing of Rev'd Sue Spankie as Associate Vicar

Sue was licensed as Self-Supporting Associate Vicar by the Bishop of Dorchester, +Gavin Collins on April 7th, the Sunday after Easter. Sue had been assisting with services for many months across the Benefice, and her pastoral gifts had been evident in her interaction with members of our church and village communities. We had already been most grateful for her dedicated ministry prior to her licensing and her contribution to the Benefice following her licensing has continued to grow. We have been grateful also to Sue's husband Gordon for his dedication and support.

Confirmation

On the Sunday after Easter, within the same service as the licensing of our Associate Vicar, we had a double Confirmation. Bishop Gavin confirmed two members of our congregation, Ann Moss and Michael Fogg. This was a wonderful occasion, followed by a party in the Village Hall.

St Bartholomew's Day 24th August

St Bartholomew's Day fell on Saturday this year so we kept the festival on Sunday 25th August. Bishop Gavin Collins, the Bishop of Dorchester presided and preached.

The Bishop gave special thanks for the life of John Appleton, whose Funeral had taken place during the week, remembering his decades of service.

Flowers were presented to Pam Appleton.

We also remembered with thanks the ministry of the late Rev'd Jim Turner, who would have marked 25 years of ordained ministry in the early autumn.

Autumn - Monthly Sunday evening service

Ordinand Sam Haiser, and friends in the community gathered at Yarnton Manor worked with Oliver to trial a monthly service. The vision was to

offer a traditional Eucharist, with contemporary worship music, rather than our morning offering of traditional worship music. This ran from October to December within the trial period, and drew strong congregations.

Remembrance Sunday 10th November

A Village Act of Remembrance took place at the Rutten Lane War Memorial. Those in attendance once again represented a cross section of the community, with many children from the uniformed organisations, and wreaths laid by those organisations, as well as the War Memorial Committee WI, Yarnton Blues, Parish Council, Church and Gardening Club. Children and adults from these organisations were involved in giving the readings and prayers. Yarnton Band played as the full band once again which was a great blessing for the Act of Remembrance. Eliza Rayner, well known to our church community, played the Last Post and Reveille. There were approx. 200 people present, with many young people.

Advent and Christmas

Our Christmas services went well with huge numbers at the Village Carol Service, and the Crib Service. The Village Carol Service was marked by a power cut minutes before it began. The service proceeded almost entirely in candlelight, and was wonderfully atmospheric. Yarnton Band played flawlessly, and admirably by mobile phone light, and enabled the service to be so special. Yarnton Manor had generously offered hospitality after the service, and sadly it was not possible for them to welcome guests due to the power cut. We were grateful for the Christmas 'party bags', which were well stocked, and warm drinks in the open air. The Crib service featured a very large and impressively rehearsed cast of children telling the Christmas story with a tremendous contribution again from Yarnton Band in great number. It was a wonderful to hold a Christmas service in both the village residential care homes, as well as Erdington House, where 25 gathered in evening of Christmas Eve and ahead of our midnight services. Thank you to all who delivered our leaflets all around the village.

Attendance for principal and special services

Sunday 8th December Village Carol Service 150 people

Wednesday 18 th December Little Sheep Christingle 15 people

Saturday 21st December Children's Christingle Service 2pm 27 people

Tuesday 24th December Crib with Yarnston Band 3pm 150 people

Erdington House Christmas Eve Holy Communion 25 people

11pm 'Midnight Mass' 40 people

Monday 25th December Christmas Day all age Communion 30 people

Occasional Offices in 2024– Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals

Weddings 2 Weddings took place in St Bartholomew's.

Baptisms We held 5 Baptisms in 2024.

Funerals There were 15 Funerals of parishioners over 2022, 10 of which were in church. .

Parish Life

Electoral Roll

In 2024 we revised our electoral roll. The number on it increased to 57 , from 56 in 2023.

Deanery Synod

Penny Small stepped back as Deanery Synod after several years of service, for which we are thankful. Alison Riggs was elected as Deanery Synod representative at the APCM in 2024. The Synod provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church.

Safeguarding

The PCC adopted the new Safeguarding Policy as we do each year. Members of the PCC completed online safeguarding training as required by the Diocese. We have continued to be ever thankful to Charlotte Rayner for her work as Safeguarding Officer.

Ministry

Ordained ministry

As above, we were delighted that Rev'd Sue Spankie was licensed as Associate Vicar in April, recognizing a shared sense of her calling to serve within the Benefice.

The Rector continued to be supported by Rev'd Richard Armitage at our 11am service, and Canon Barbara Doubtfire at our 8am service. We are grateful for their care and dedication to God and God's people.

Lay Ministry

Dr Ben Knighton transferred his home church from St Mary Magdalen , Woodstock to St Bartholomew's, and formed a working agreement to offer lay ministry within our parish and Benefice. His license continued to be under the Dorchester Archdeaconry. We are thankful for Ben's commitment and devotion, and keen desire to support St Bartholomew's.

We were also blessed by the provision of ministry from Rev'd Sue Spankie, who joined led services with increasing frequency during an interim period of ministry, and who settled into our context sensitively.

We are grateful to our regular intercessors and readers for their contribution to our worshipping life, and to our welcomers.

Music

We were once again grateful to Malcolm Hawkins for playing for us throughout the year. Malcolm has been wonderfully faithful and consistent in playing for us on Sundays and for numerous occasional offices.

Throughout the year we explored some additional musical involvement , drawing on the gifts of ordinand Sam Haiser. He led Taize chants on his guitar, and accompanied hymns.

Pastoral Care

Rev'd Oliver Petter and Rev'd Sue Spankie visited all church members who requested it, to celebrate communion with them either at their homes or in hospital. Oliver continued to visit The Sanctuary for a monthly service of Holy Communion for residents. From the autumn added a second monthly service – a “bible study” with hymns. We were thankful to the Activity co-ordinators at the Sanctuary who facilitated these visits.

From the later summer we began visiting the new residential care home in our village – Floryn House. Visits evolved into a monthly service.

Ad hoc pastoral visits continue to all three homes.

Thanks are due to all our clergy and ministry team for their dedicated pastoral ministry. We remain hugely grateful to the ways in which members of our community care for one another and support in pastoral and practical ways.

Mission and Evangelism

Children and Young People

Junior Church

Our Junior Church ran at our I Iam Parish Communion on a weekly basis. A growing community of local families have become involved in the Junior Church. Over 2024 30 children attended the Junior Church at least once. In 2024 two families staying at the Manor joined in with our worshipping life and made a great contribution. We are very grateful to Rachel Gardner for leading this central aspect of our ministry to children and young people. The Junior Church has worked hard to grow in faith and spirituality as a cherished part of our Christian community. Each week they sing songs, hear and reflect on one of the days readings, and respond with creative activities and a time of prayer.

Little Sheep

Little Sheep is our group for toddlers and their parents/carers and had a wonderful year. Rachel Gardner oversaw a team of parent helpers and the community of children, parents and carers continued to flourish. The autumn

always sees new families coming, and the community evolves and grows. This represents an important pastoral space for parents and carers within our village, as a free drop in session, with careful pastoral care underpinning it. Special thanks is due to Jane Black as Rachel's co-host every week, for her pastoral care and endless practical support.

Study Group

In autumn 2023 we joined our Begbroke and Yarnton study and fellowship groups together for an alpha course in the autumn. These evenings included a meal together, as well as study and conversation. There was an exciting sense of community building up through these sessions and the group often had 18-20 people. This group continued into the winter and start of 2024.

In 2024 we continued to hold our Tuesday evening group most weeks throughout the year. It remained a shared Yarnton and Begbroke group, meeting sometimes in Yarnton Village Hall, whilst mostly in Begbroke Village Hall.

The numbers attending ebbed and flowed through the year. The group grew together in faith and fellowship and it was a significant presence within our Benefice life. Our study group continued to be an important part of our learning, prayer and fellowship, and a central part of our mission and formation as disciples of Christ.

We held the following series in 2024:

The Bible Society Bible Course (final sessions)

(A Shrove Tuesday party)

A study of the Letter of St Paul to the Romans over 15 weeks.

An Alpha Course from September – 8 weeks.

A series of film nights with Christian reflection in December.

Special thanks go to our clergy leading sessions, and in particular to the tremendous team offering catering through the year. The combination of bread, soup and cheese proved highly successful!

Caring for God's creation

Our Eco Action sought to consolidate our work following our Bronze award received this in spring 2022, and have sought to work towards the silver award. The Eco Church awards set a programme of work to foster a more sustainable church life, working on: worship and teaching, management of church buildings, management of churchyard, community and global engagement, lifestyle. This is in every sense a vital part of our mission.

Parish Walks

We held a walk between all three of our Benefice churches on 26th May, ending with Evensong and tea in Holy Cross. We continuing to seek to support the Deanery wide initiative to create a series of pilgrim paths through the Deanery. Volunteers are welcome to support this initiative.

The church in the community

Community Drop in

Community Drop in The Community Drop runs every Monday in Yarnton Village Hall, providing tea, cake and good company for many people each week.

Whilst the church was integral to its foundation , it was handed over to an independent committee at the end of 2023. Members of the St Bartholomew's community and friends remain foundational to the drop in.

The aim of the Drop in was to foster good company and friendship in the village No monies were required, rather donations were requested. The drop in raised monies through the year, making a surplus.

Regulars valued the social interaction and warm atmosphere, and many found it to be quite a lifeline in a village where one can feel isolated.

William Fletcher School

William Fletcher School The school have visited for their three traditional annual services: Harvest, Christmas and Founder's Day. These have been joyful occasions and it has been a delight to welcome the children, teachers and new headteacher Mrs Martin. Rev'd Oliver Petter is a school governor.

Village News

We continue to be grateful for our page in Yarnton Village News, and the possibilities of publicising church activities through it.

Church Life

Open church Keeping the church open is an essential part of our ministry. The sanctuary, silence and stillness of our ancient house of prayer is deeply important to many in the village. Thank you to all those who kept the church open.

Foodbank The Foodbank collection point continued to be heavily used, and we held a special collection for North Oxfordshire Community Foodbank at Harvest. Thank you to those who took our collections to Kidlington each week

Church cleaning Huge thanks are offered to all those who assisted with church cleaning during 2024. We are especially thankful to Jill Rowbotham for her help, and for co-ordinating the monthly Saturday morning cleaning session, and the monthly regular helpers.

Bell ringers We were grateful to our band of bellringers for their ringing. We mourned Ernie Canning in 2024, who had been a regular bellringer and weekly worshipper at our 8am Holy Communion, and who was much missed.

Tea & coffee We are most grateful to all on our rota of volunteers who served refreshments after Sunday services. This was greatly appreciated by regulars and visitors alike, and is a core part of our hospitality.

Flowers We were grateful to Pauline Watt Smith, Sarah Eaton, Joanna Bailey, Jane Black and Julie Walters for their floristry in the church. The displays, seeking to draw in seasonal greenery and foliage, were once again extremely beautiful, and brought joy to many. We were very appreciative of Fraser Budgens in Yarnton for donating flowers that were still blooming, but could no longer be sold. Thank you to Julie Walters for liaising with Budgens.

Fundraising We once again are enormously grateful to Pauline Franklin who completed the annual Ride and Stride raising money for St Bartholomew's and for the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. Pauline has ridden for many years and raised thousands.

Ordinands in Training The parish remains committed to supporting the learning and formation of future clergy. We were delighted to have members of the community at Yarnton Manor joining in with parish life, within Sunday worship and Junior Church, and at our Tuesday evening study and fellowship groups. Their contribution was excellent.

We welcomed Pater Balchin on a month long placement in September. Peter lives in the village with his family and was an excellent presence, helping out during the serious flooding, and being involved with much pastoral outreach across the placement.

Sam Haiser began a weekly placement from October to March and threw himself into parish life, supporting music and offering pastoral support.

The Lanier Theological Foundation at Yarnton Manor

We have continued to enjoy getting to know our neighbours at Yarnton Manor. The restoration of the Manor was completed to superb effect, whilst work to the library was ongoing. It was a blessing to welcome members of the community to our worship and fellowship. The Rector and his family were infinitely grateful when the Manor offered accommodation for many weeks on the spot when the Rectory was unexpectedly out of action. We look forward to building on our friendship in Christ and partnership in the gospel.

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Remembering the faithful departed.

2024 was a year where we mourned several members of the church community who were dedicated to St Bartholomew's.

John Appleton had been foundational to the ministry of St Bartholomew's for more than 50 years, and churchwarden for much of that time. He had taken on the roles of vergers and sacristan in addition, and found joy in a weekly pattern of care for the church and its worship and fellowship. He also was a man of genuinely profound prayer and spirituality. John set a pattern of daily prayer which five Incumbents were blessed by. John was a Christian friend to many, and is much missed as a friend. Such dedication and witness to a village church is precious indeed and rare. John and Pam were together at the heart of our hospitality and welcome, and at the centre of pastoral care and keeping in touch in the village. We mourned John and gave thanks to God for his life on 22nd August, and it was fitting that our Bishop visited on 25th August for St Bartholomew's Day and reflected on Christian service.

Rev'd Jim Turner was well known to many in our church and village communities in Yarnton, as well as in the surrounding area. He had been assisting as a priest in the Benefice of Yarnton, with Begbroke and Shipton on Cherwell since 2016. Prior to that he was well known as part of the team in his home parish of Kidlington and Hampton Poyle. Jim was a faithful priest and pastor who continued to be devoted to offering ministry well into his ninth decade. He did a wonderful job in overseeing the vacancy between

vicars in our Benefice, which ran from late 2017-summer 2018. Jim and his wife Maureen made many friends both in church, and in the community, through attending gatherings such as the Yarnton Lunch Club and latterly the Monday Community Drop in. Jim was a natural story teller and gifted preacher. As a preacher he would always gently turn our attention to Jesus Christ and help his hearers to see the world in the light of Jesus, who was for him “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6) His contribution to the Benefice will be fondly remembered.

Josie Green had been involved in the life of St Bartholomew’s for over 50 years, and very present along with husband Chris. Josie had been involved with church cleaning and bellringing, and led the Senior Club for many years. She was in touch with many in the community and a faithful friend.

Ernie Canning was a faithful , regular weekly worshipper , and a bellringer and church cleaner. He was a gentle and kind man, who was another cherished member of the church family.

Mary Roper lived a remarkable life, up to the age of 101. She moved to Yarnton in her latter years and until the pandemic was a regular worshipper and a loyal friend to many.

Liz Burden was a resident in Yarnton for decades. Liz was a kind and wise friend and source of strength for many in the village and church community.

A prayer for our parish shared by the late John Appleton:

O God, without whom our labour is but loss, we pray that Your blessing may rest upon our parish. Bless our clergy and all who call upon your name in this place. Deepen us in your love and strengthen our desire to serve you, give us faith, love and courage without measure and as we daily offer ourselves to you, so we may all gladly give of what you have given us so may the work of Your Holy Church go forward and Your Kingdom be enlarged through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

