

St Andrew's Church, Ombersley

Churchwardens' report 2017 - 2018

1. Worship, mission and outreach

This report covers the period of time during which Sheila Banyard has been the Interim rector for the United Benefice.

During her time with the benefice Sheila has worked hard to ensure that administrative details across the seven parishes are effective. She has also contributed to the ministry of the word through her weekly emails giving an outline of the readings for the coming Sunday and the message they are giving and how these link together. This message is then developed during Sunday worship. In the latter part of Autumn 2017 she was joined by Rita Holden – a non-stipendiary minister who has contributed to the life of our church as well as that of the benefice. Please see the accompanying report from Sheila herself.

The lay input to our worship life, which is increasingly essential, continues. This has involved both organisation and liturgical aspects – members of our own congregation organise and lead services, read, lead intercessions and give Sunday talks. The Churchwardens are immensely grateful to everyone who has supported us and the church in this way. The attached 'Statistics for Mission' dashboard clearly reflects what we all know that we are maintaining our congregation reasonably well, however the younger generations are now poorly represented

We have maintained our usual pattern of services and church events. Some of them are "joint" affairs with other churches in the 7 Parishes. Church inspired occasions included the enjoyable and profitable annual fête, Harvest Supper and the series of commemorations during Holy Week culminating with the Good Friday reflection and the Easter Bonfire. Breakfast churches have continued with the themes being Christian Aid, Harvest and Mothering Sunday. The Harvest breakfast was particularly successful being held in the Memorial Hall. A new venture this year was the family Nativity held at Little Owl Farm. This proved to be very successful and we are very grateful to the Mandy & Jim Howells whose suggestion it was and who supplied refreshments and free access to the animals.

During the year there were 8 baptisms (of these 2 were families who live in the parish), 10 weddings and 11 funerals. Baptisms and weddings give an opportunity to get to know families and couples during the preparation sessions and to welcome them to the services themselves. Baptisms at 12.30pm have meant an overlap of post service coffee with the arrival of the families and this seems to be a positive thing. Baptisms have also been developed with the presentation of a shawl and Jenny is hugely grateful to those who have taken on the ministry of knitting/crocheting!

Links with Ombersley Endowed First School continue to be strong. The school uses the church as a teaching resource and for Christmas and Easter services. Members of church form the 'Open the Book' team and visit school on a (roughly) fortnightly basis to lead assemblies. Year 4 children visit the Holy Week reflections and also climb the tower on Ascension Day (with appropriate safeguarding/risk assessments in place!).

St Andrew's Church is a member of the Ombersley Dementia Action Alliance, along with 19 other businesses and organisations in the village, and more are still signing up. Over 100 people in Ombersley have become Dementia Friends, and that includes many from our church community.

Handbells and Active Coffee are groups that attract people who might not necessarily see themselves as churchgoers. Handbells have 'performed' with the Malvern Priory group, both here and at Malvern and visited the Westmead Care Home in Droitwich. They also took part in a handbell rally of local groups at Areley Kings which gave lots of inspiration and challenges of new and different techniques.

On 30th June we welcomed the Girl Choristers from Worcester Cathedral who entertained us with a preview concert of their Huntingdon Hall concert as part of the Three Choirs Festival. On 30th November we held a St Andrew's evening and took the opportunity to invite all those who volunteer in the church in any way. Mulled wine and mince pies along with organ and hand bells made for a relaxed 'family' occasion.

The following Saturday was a 'Star day' with a range of activities to get us and the community in the mood for Christmas. This included making a star for the village Christmas tree in conjunction with the Parish Council.

Two events have involved working with the Ombersley Playground Action Group – they provided Father Christmas for the Star Day and also a welly walk on 'Mothering Saturday' returning to church for tea and cakes and children's activities.

Sadly our well-loved organist, Mike Griffiths, died in January after his long illness. He made determined efforts to be involved as long as he could and it was no mean achievement, but hugely appreciated, that he played his last services at the carol service and the Christmas Eve midnight communion.

2. Church Fabric and Fittings

The east windows of the church are still in a poor state of repair. The two unsuccessful bids for Heritage Lottery funding dampened our enthusiasm for pursuing this project. However the project has been revived, with an acceptance that we must seek support from other organisations. The two west windows are to be added into the project as there are many panes of glass missing which contributes to the icy cold of the Food Preparation Area in winter. These are now forming part of a larger long term project that will make the church fit for its 3rd century (2029)

The annual inspection of fire appliances was carried out.

Unfortunately, at the end of March 2017 there was a significant theft of lead from most of the roof area, chiefly the flashings and sacrificial lead, estimated at between 1-2 tons. This was a bold attack carried out in the early hours and going unnoticed at the time. Although reported, the police were unable to apprehend the perpetrators.

The lead replacement was undertaken and a recommended alarm system installed, costing over £5000. This, however, proved invaluable in that it thwarted a further theft attempt although further damage to the lightning conductor was sustained.

After a lot of discussion a Hiring Agreement was developed to ensure that there is clarity about hiring the church and what is expected of those hiring and of our responsibilities. A folder has been created that describes 'How it works'. This includes role descriptions and also details of how the church is prepared for the many services and administration required for eg weddings and baptisms. It is a document that is being continually updated and is currently stored in the 7 Parishes office.

During the year a new sound system was installed. It has had teething problems, but most of the time gives a good sound and has also increased the coverage of the 'loop' system. We are grateful for the donation that helped pay for this and the support of the Parish Council.

3. Parish finance

St Andrew's has again paid its Parish Share in full this year. The further increases mean that full payment may cause us some difficulty in the future.

The church continues to support 3 charities on an annual basis from the regular collection. These are determined at the autumn meetings of the PCC and the current charities are Acorns; Farming Community Network and Worcester Young Carers.

4. People

The Churchwardens' Report always contains a traditional ending. The fact that it is traditional and oft repeated does not lessen its essential truth.

Many people contribute to the well-being of St Andrew's and the church community – indeed too many to name individually.

So, again, the churchwardens express their heartfelt thanks to all those who spend so many hours working hard for, organising, running, and supporting church activities, whether in leadership roles, or quietly behind the scenes. This generosity underpins our church's very existence.

Jenny Batelen
Andy Horn

April 2018

To accompany this report:
Report from Rev Canon Sheila Banyard
Statistics for Mission Dashboard