

The Parish of Uley with Owlpen & Nympsfield



*St Giles
Uley*



*Holy Cross
Owlpen*



*St Bartholomew
Nympsfield*

Church Reports for The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 13th March 2016

11.30 a.m.

St Giles' Church, Uley

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Mission Statement

“Worshipping and Welcoming Together”

Our Five Marks of Mission

- To proclaim the good news of the kingdom
- To teach, nurture and baptize new believers
- To respond to human need in loving service
- To transform unjust structures in society
- To safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth

Revd Diana's Report for the Church Year

In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1. 11-12

During Advent and into the New Year a small group met in the St Giles' Room to follow Pilgrim- a course for the Christian Journey. We studied The Creeds, in week two we reflected on God as Trinity-Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Rublev's Icon, The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are depicted around a table with the central figure, God the Son pointing to the Eucharistic Cup. The relationship which exists between Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one of love, trust and purpose. From this relationship we learn that God is love and through the Trinity we are drawn into relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God "make room for us" and just as God, Father Son and Holy Spirit are one and yet distinct, so are we all in the body of Christ. We can rejoice in our unity-in- diversity, yet grateful for our interdependence on one another. In this way we can give thanks for the variety of gifts which we have received as the body of Christ.

Unity-in-Diversity and Mission Partnerships

Last year I drew attention to both this interdependence and unity-in-diversity within the Diocesan Vision of "Journeying Together" and the start we had made in developing our own "Mission Partnerships" between the deanery churches in Dursley, Cam and Lower Cam. With the appointment of Revd Sue Greatorex in Lower Cam, the Mission Partnership is now complete and new shoots are appearing. At the initial meetings between the parishes, four areas were identified where working together could be beneficial. These were:

- Christian nurture and Growing in Faith.
- Shared Wedding and Baptism Preparation.
- Support for the Elderly and Frail.
- Working with Children and Young People.

Over the year, members from the different churches have met together, including the clergy and from these meetings a number of actions have happened. This year wedding preparation will be facilitated by the clergy running a preparation day together. There is to be some "joined up" work with our young people in secondary school and this will be undertaken in partnership with initiatives already in the pipeline with Churches Together.

Loneliness has been identified as a real issue for the elderly and frail. At the moment we are pooling the resources we know about within the parishes, so we can put together a directory to let people know where there are activities or church events happenings in the mission partnership, and sign post those we know to what is happening and how they can get out and meet with others.

The first step in the "nurturing faith" initiative has been to run two courses using the Pilgrim Course, a course which aims to approach the great issues of faith, not through persuasion, but participation in contemplation and discussion in the company of fellow travellers. The choice was made to start with the "grow stage". Tony King the lay Reader at St James and I have both led courses as part of our partnership. We have both explored "table talk", which aims to get people talking about matters of faith in an informal way. Tony King ran an evening session, and here at St Giles' we had a Café Style church and introduced table talk instead of the regular sermon. It really

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does seem to make a difference when we get up and talk to one another, rather than sit glued to the pews and Café Style Church will happen again during the year. Of course all these things take time, but the benefits of meeting with different people from our local deanery churches, is beginning to bear fruit in making friendships, forming relationships and setting us out on our mission to share the love of God. There will be another evening hosted at St George's Cam in April, when the aim will be to find ways to put our hopes into action.

Unity-in-Diversity - Our Future

Another area in which it is good to report that we are finding unity in diversity, is the progress made over this year regarding the proposals for fabric changes in St Giles' church. I am deeply grateful to Peter Randall for bringing together a diverse group from both the church and the village to explore the proposed changes, and to carry out an extensive consultation in the village in order to make recommendations to the PCC on how we might go forward together.

Peter Randall has been so very generous in both times and resources to ensure that the recommendations from the Church/Village Liaison Group (Daffodil) were circulated through a full written report, and available to all which included a number of clear recommendations to the PCC. Currently the PCC is working with the Church surveyor/Architect to obtain schedules of work for costing as follows:

- C6- Levelling the west end raised platforms
- C7- Re-siting the font to the South-West corner
- D12- Re-siting the safe to the St Giles' Room corridor
- D13- Re- siting heating pipes around West-end.
- A1- Disabled Access path improvement
- B4- Levelling of Lady Chapel raised platform and re-carpeting

One important recommendation from the Church/Village Liaison group that did not form a part of the original proposals was the need to create disabled access through the Tower Arch into St Giles' Church. As a result, a new subcommittee of the PCC has been formed drawing its members from a range of interested parties in order to identify workable proposals and to engage in a process of consultations with all interested parties in line with Diocesan faculty recommendations, to find an agreed way to provide this access. Work on this has already started.

My sincere thanks to all who served on the Church/Village liaison group and thanks to those members who have agreed to sit on the PCC subcommittee, for giving up their valuable time and experience to advise and assist in working for a church ready for the future.

Unity-in-Diversity - Our Church Ministries

I am deeply grateful for the growing ministries of those who work alongside me to share the faith with our children and young families. For those church members who plan and lead services, serve at the altar, lead the pastoral ministry and Home Communion team and those in the church community who take Bible stories each week into school as part of the "Open the Book" Team. Every year I have written that to remain as an effective Christian presence in our community it is important that new people come forward for training in ministry. This year Hilary Weeks and Pat Jones took the challenge, and completed the Diocesan Course on Leading Worship. Both Hilary and Pat are busy people with many family commitments, but they have been real pioneers here, by joining a group running in Berkeley and finding they had much to bring to the group from their own

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experiences of worship in the parish and their experience of working with young families through Experience Easter and Christmas and the 'GoMAD' Holiday Club. They are both now licensed as Worship Leaders. Hilary will focus on the All Age Worship held on the first Sunday of the month, The Ark for young families, Experience Easter and Christmas programmes for Uley School and her regular visits to Playgroup. Pat Jones will continue her ministry at the altar, taking Holy Communion to the Elderly, and regularly leads the monthly service at St Jude's residential home in Nympsfield.

This year The 'GoMAD' holiday club will be 8 years old and with about 30 children or more attending each session over a five week period each summer that means over 12,000 children have enjoyed having fun and games while finding out more about Jesus and getting to know a whole bunch of loving Christian people who go to church. Liz Rymer has been an inspiring leader of the Holiday Club, Tina Pugh has been a wonderful administrative support and liaison with the school, Hilary, Pat, Janet and Jo have provided constant backup, with many more volunteers to keep each week running. Last year due to the Village Hall kitchen re-fit all sessions were held at Nympsfield with a Family Service in St Giles in September to round everything off.

Now there's a great example of Unity-in-diversity. However for the club to continue Liz Rymer is dependent on regular and committed support each week. Could you help the team to continue in this important area of mission, all you need to do is talk to Liz Rymer?

Unity-in-Diversity - Our Worshipping Life

Let us give thanks for the small growth in our own church community, especially when we know how much the overall attendance in the national church is in decline. Much of this is due to the links we have made with our children and families in the village. Regular visits to playgroup, active participation in the life of our VC Primary School and church services especially at festival times, attract large congregations and these have all helped to make us feel joyful and optimistic about our worship together. Over the Advent and Christmas period more than 1,050 people came to worship at services. Of course some people attended more than one service but it is still a great many people coming into church, and finding the true meaning of Christmas.

Weddings and Baptism Services are also ways in which we are able to offer a warm welcome into our three churches for a much wider worshipping community. Over the years many of our wedding couples have gone on to bring their children back to the church for Baptism. It is through Baptism that many of our young families attend The Ark for under 5's and then go onto Playgroup and to Uley School. Through this an important link is formed into the church community, which begins by parents "wanting to have their baby christened".

This year we have had a number of sad losses from our elderly faithful worshipping community. We give thanks for their faithful lives of witness and service and are glad that we are still able to continue with the monthly BCP Holy Communion for those too elderly to make the journey into church. Many thanks to John and Judy Dauncy who have kindly allowed us the use of their sitting room for these celebrations to take place. This year Pat Jones has arranged this ministry, supported by Marion Kee, Sophia Schutts (until her sudden death in January) and Lorna Tutton. Pat has also regularly led the service at St Jude's Residential home in Nympsfield.

How lovely to see the Taize Services continuing to grow in strength and the regular use of the Marist Convent for these services. Many thanks to Marion Mills and Hilary Weeks who have

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faithfully led this service for many years. This outreach continues for Mums and Tots and sometimes Dads who attend The Ark group for under 5's. This group meets monthly, with a lovely nativity at Christmas and a Teddy Bear's picnic in the summer. Thanks again to Hilary who leads this group and to Anna B who faithfully bakes cakes for the children each month.

That all who come and worship have found a welcome, in well maintained and obviously loved churches in the parish is a tribute to the dedication and loyalty of our parish churchwardens Jo Rymer and David Valentin and the assistant churchwardens Ann Hardy, Pat Jones, and John Wood. It is also a tribute to those who regularly clean the churches, arrange flowers for services and weddings and help with refreshments after services. I thank you all.

But the welcome people find in church would not be complete without the commitment and dedication of David Walker our organist. David has taken his organist duties well beyond what we could expect, meeting with wedding couples and bereaved families to discuss their music, rehearsing the choir for the wonderful Christmas Carol Services and many other festive occasions and supporting a variety of all age services often on the piano. His dedication means that we have a small church choir which sings regularly once a month at Sunday Services and an arrangement with St James' Choir in Dursley to sing at weddings and funerals when needed. Being a church organist is a big commitment and we are grateful to Pauline Thomas who is now our Deputy Church Organist and is able to stand in for David not only for Sunday Services but for Funerals too. At other times Pauline kindly volunteers to play for all our Baptisms.

Unity-in-Diversity - Families, Children and Young People

Third, let us give thanks for the continued strong bonds with Uley VC Primary School, the ministry from the church community, particularly the children's ministry team and foundation governor Sarah Jane Smallpage as we work together to uphold the school's very Special "Christian Distinctiveness".

We are glad to welcome Zoe Mandeville as the new head teacher and her commitment to working together to provide a daily act of collective worship, welcoming the "Open the Book Team", preparing the children in readiness for Experience Easter and Christmas, an activity which Hilary Weeks and the team has led for several years and the regular school/church services of celebration at St Giles'.

All this helps to maintain our church distinctiveness. The very important contribution of the foundation governor's in all this is detailed elsewhere, and thanks indeed to Sarah Jane Smallpage who is our elected foundation governor. The role of school governor is an exacting one, with many hours spent in meetings and required reading. As the parish priest I also serve with Sarah Jane as ex officio foundation governor, and am in my ninth year supporting the school in this way.

Grateful Thanks

As we work together in partnership none of this could be possible without the love and dedication of you all. As I write I am aware of the many people who make this all possible and I thank you all. I know they won't wish me to single them out, but special thanks to David Valentin and Jo Rymer for their love, loyalty and support to me as parish wardens in the ups and downs of parish ministry, who serve us all so faithfully as parish wardens, act as vergers to all our wedding and funerals and support in so many unseen ways.

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Grateful thanks also to John Wood the chair of Fabric Committee, Prue Vernon our hardworking and tireless Church Treasurer and Fund raiser, to Janet Bannister our nominated PCC Secretary and to Lorna Tutton the Minutes Secretary to the PCC for preparing agendas and writing up the PCC minutes. Each one giving freely of their time in ways which often go unrecognised or thanked. To Charlie Kee for all the “many jobs” too numerous to mention, but without which our churches would be the poorer and to each member serving on the PCC and to our three Deanery representatives. Special thanks to David Thomas who as our deanery representative and Deanery treasurer has had the arduous task of supporting parishes in the deanery through the process of agreeing the new arrangements for apportioning parish share. Thanks also to Hilary Weeks and Liz Rymer for their work with our children and families and also to all on the wider children’s team. To Pat Jones, David Rix, Bryan Harris and Hilary Weeks who form the altar team preparing for worship each Sunday. To Pauline Thomas who manages all our wedding and baptism registers and to Marion Mills who washes all the altar linen. A final thanks to Louise Amato our parish administrator who regularly keeps me at least a month ahead in all things parish wise as well as maintaining our excellent website (www.stgilesuley.org.uk), all the while producing wonderful posters for our services.

Please forgive me if I have missed you from the list of thanks, there are so many hidden ministries which keep us in partnership together.

Finally a thank you to you all for all the love, and support you show to me, Peter and the family, and for all your encouragement and prayers as we continue in partnership to share the transforming good news of Jesus in our homes, our work and in our community.

In Christ,

Revd Diana

Churchwardens' Report for the year 2015-16

The present parish churchwardens were re-elected at the Annual Vestry Meeting in March 2015, and this is their sixth annual report, covering the year to February 2016.

The year has been full and generally rewarding. The work of ministry at all three churches has continued at a high level and we have had the privilege and pleasure of verging at a number of well attended services. The parish finances remain sound, the fabric work at all three churches has been kept under constant review with a number of essential projects completed, and progress was made on re-ordering changes at St Giles Church. The churchwardens respect and gratefully acknowledge the vital support of the PCC and the dedicated teams of others, and record our particular gratitude for the understanding and confidence shown in us by Revd Diana. Much as we strive to assist in her dedicated and conscientious ministry to the parish, we also know something of the inevitable burdens of the extra ministry borne alone by our Priest in Charge.

Our purpose, and indeed the primary point of our churches, is assisting the spreading of the Gospel through worship and outreach. From time to time, and amongst the many other diversions, it's good to remind ourselves of this. In the year to December 2015 there were 124 services in our three churches and the average congregation at the main Sunday morning service was 30, slightly fewer than in 2014 but again disappointingly less than 25% of our electoral roll. Apart from 81 regular Sunday and weekday services there were 5 Taize services, 5 Ark services, and 11 school, Christmas nativity and carol services. These latter services attract congregations of well over 150, notably 223 at the Christingle service and 158 at the Owlpen carol service. For the record, the Easter Day morning congregation was 119 and the Christmas morning attendance was 92. In addition, a total of 27 baptisms, weddings, blessings, funerals and thanksgivings took place in the year, and away from our churches in the village community as a whole there were 60 communions taken by Revd Diana, Pat Jones and Marion Kee to the homes of those unable to travel. These are statistics eagerly collected by the Church of England in their annual search for trends, and ours stand up well against 2014.

The parish finances are reported and explained elsewhere by our conscientious and hard working Treasurer, Prue Vernon. Demographics might perhaps suggest otherwise, but givings were only slightly down in total and there was a small surplus for the year. Our agreed 2015 parish share was paid in full and we now know with relief that the Diocese has rethought its previous proposals for hefty increases from 2016, so our parish share should be manageable. However without the significant help of other income in the form of parochial fees and direct fund raising we should not be able to balance our books and it is to Prue's credit that we pay our way by some unending and meticulous effort on her part. She is very much involved in our fund raising, and alongside all the usual activities last year she introduced us to the exciting sport of sheep racing.

Directly contributing to the soundness of the parish finances, as well as to the ministry in the parish, is the amount of time and effort put in willingly and largely without recompense by small and dedicated teams of people – the assistant churchwardens, sidespeople, servers at worship, helpers with hospitality after worship, those on flower and cleaning rotas, volunteers who Cherish the Churchyards and others. We're not alone in being a parish run on a shoestring and dependent heavily on voluntary help, but our volunteers deserve special recognition and our grateful thanks.

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Care of the fabric of our churches is managed by the Fabric Sub-Committee chaired by Dr John Wood. His detailed report can be found separately. In summary, essential repairs were done to the long roof valley gutter at St Giles, securing a part of the church which had long been a worry. Lead on the tower roof at St Bartholomew's had also been repaired, as has damaged exterior masonry on the porch there. The Cherish the Churchyard working party has repaired a collapsed churchyard wall at St Giles, and overhanging trees have been cut back. A start was made on the churchyard trees at St Bartholomew's, and all our churchyards continue to be kept tidy through regular maintenance. Fabric work is as always ongoing, and we are continuing with work in the churchyard at Nympsfield, as well as repairs to the tower bell mounting and further repairs to the church walls there and at Holy Cross. Looking further forward and following the report of the St Giles Church Village Liaison Group published in 2015, we are currently taking professional advice on some of its recommendations, such as the lighting at St Giles and improvements to the welcome space at the west end and to our rather bad disabled access there and around the outside paths. As Revd Diana reports elsewhere, this is as a result of some excellent work done by the Group under the chairmanship of Peter Randall, for which we are most grateful.

The PCC oversees everything. Ours is elected annually and the present members have met six times since the last Annual Meeting. In addition, the Standing committee and sub-committees dealing with fabric, finance, fund raising, worship and other purposes have met regularly, a full and demanding programme. All sub-committee recommendations come to the full PCC for consideration and decision, a fundamental discipline always maintained. We have given time and consideration to the Parish Mission Action Plan and to the Mission Partnership discussions with Dursley and Cam. The PCC also spent considerable time digesting the recommendations of the Liaison Group and from this has sanctioned a request for our architect to contribute professional advice on how we might make progress with some of them. Members of the PCC serve on the Deanery Synod and report back on its meetings.

Finally, and with great sadness, we record our shock at the recent sad loss of two PCC members, Valerie Easton and Sophia Schutts. Their sudden passing deprives the PCC and the parish of two unfailingly supportive friends, who not only made telling contributions to the PCC's work over many years but were also regular members of the congregations at St Bartholomew's and St Giles. May they both rest in peace.

Jo Rymer and David Valentin
Parish Churchwardens

Secretary's Report – 2015/2016

After the last APCM I decided to retire as secretary to the Parochial Church Council, a role I held for over 20 years. The decision made at the PCC meeting following the annual meeting was that we would have a Minute Secretary and I would still hold the PCC secretary title for the sake of diocesan communications. This has been the case for the last year.

Mrs Lorna Tutton has been the Minute Secretary for this time and I believe has done a sterling job. Thank you Lorna.

As a PCC this year we still continue to work towards an answer to the re-ordering at St Giles. We were fortunate that Mr Peter Randall took up the mantle to chair the St Giles Village Liaison Group to bring a report to the PCC to help us to go forward. The group has given the PCC a full report on their findings. Decisions now have to be made with the church community and the wider community to say what will be the best way forward for all concerned. Personally I find this an exciting time. Being physically challenged myself some of the changes will make life that much easier. Also for some of our less able members we hope this will make St Giles more accessible.

Every PCC meeting begins with prayer and we continue to have a short Eucharist on at least two occasions before our meetings during the year. The Eucharist gives members a chance to be close together and to show that they are not only a body of people who sit on a committee but a group brought together spiritually to worship God and to show this to the rest of the community.

We are still fortunate to have our young families worshipping with us on a more regular basis. It is good to see this happening with couples who have married in our churches and then bring their children for baptism. This shows we are a growing church community. Being a long standing church member it gives me great pleasure to see our congregation at such good numbers for most of the year now.

We are also fortunate to have good music with David Walker and the choir each month. Our numbers in the choir vary greatly but our enthusiasm is never dimmed. Thanks also go to Pauline Thomas who deputises as organist and will practice choir members for special services.

As a PCC we are concerned about the decline of our very treasured and loved older members. Those who are no longer able to attend our churches, those who have left the church/village due to frailty or those who have died. Many years of experience go with these people and much wisdom and love for the church community. We must never forget the loyalty and support these people put into their church lives and made us, in many cases, the church people we are today. They must be forever in our prayers.

Thanks to Louise Amato who keeps our website up to date and so easy to negotiate. If you have not tried it, do so!!! I think it is one of the best in the deanery. Communication in the parish has improved but we urge you to keep up to date with information in the pew sheet or on the website.

I am still a member of the Wotton Deanery synod and the Board of Patronage. This year the Board has had many interregnums but no appointments made. This is mainly because parishes are joining to become combined benefices. This in turn has made finding clergy to take on five, six, seven or even ten churches quite daunting.

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Thanks go to Diana, David and Jo for their friendship and support especially while we have struggled to get Mum moved and settled in her new home.

I am sure that Lorna will have found as I did that she has had support from all PCC members throughout the year. It has been a very smooth handover as far as the secretary's work has been concerned.

In past reports I have always asked that you as our church members should support and give time to PCC members. In return I hope to be able to continue to support my fellow PCC members in any way I can. This of course can only be done with God's help and love.

Yours in Christ

Janet Bannister

Summary of work carried out by the Fabric Sub-committee in the year 2015/16

1. Parish wide

The Fabric Sub-committee has met 8 times this year so far, with a further meeting to be held on 7th March. Last April, Charlie Kee retired as a committee member. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for the huge amount of work he has done over the years. He has been a wonderful support for us all. Weather permitting, a small group of volunteers meet on the last Saturday of the month at 9.00 am at St Giles for the “Cherish the Churchyard” working party. Work has also been carried out at Holy Cross by this group. If you would like to help to join this happy band to maintain the beauty of our Churchyard, please turn up on the day or ring John Wood on 860236.

2. St Giles’ Church

(a) Over the last few years, the roof gully between the Lady Chapel and the main body of the church has proved troublesome. Charlie Kee fitted a temporary plastic membrane which prevented any further leaks. This year the problem was dealt with more permanently by a new layer of lead by Q&M Services. Although we were originally advised by the DAC that no Faculty would be required, this proved not to be the case. David Valentin therefore had to make an application for a Faculty prior to this work being carried out.

(b) 5 metres of the boundary wall between the upper churchyard and 67 The Street was replaced by Tony Greenstreet. Subsequently the remains of another adjacent wall were removed by a “Cherish the Churchyard” working party. Yew trees will be planted to delineate this boundary.

(c) David Thomas has researched and fitted a new dispenser of boiling water for the St Giles room. This will allow drinks to be made without the hazard of using a kettle.

(d) Following the decision of the PCC to implement the recommendations of the Church Village Liaison Group, the Fabric Committee is working with David Newton, our Church Surveyor, to enable him to produce a specification and schedule of work for the following work:

- (i) Levelling of pew platforms at the west end and at the front of the Lady Chapel;
- (ii) Relocation of font;
- (iii) Relocation of safe;
- (iv) Relocation of west end heating pipework
- (v) Levelling of outside paths and steps to improve disability access.
- (e) Investigation of improvement to the internal lighting continues.
- (f) A five-yearly inspection of the electrical installation was carried out in April 2015.
- (g) A bench donated by Cotswold Wardens in memory of Jim White has been installed in the lower graveyard.
- (h) Annual servicing of the boiler, clock and fire extinguishers.

3 St Bartholomew’s Church

(a) Splits in the lead cladding of the tower roof have been repaired by Q&M Services.

(b) David Newton, our church surveyor, has inspected woodwork in the tower middle stage, and found little woodworm damage apart from in three joists, which are to be replaced. Through the DAC, Whites of Appleton, who carried out the work on the St Giles bell, have inspected the

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bell hanging and have quoted for the work they deemed necessary. A second quotation is being obtained.

- (c) Wayne Fisher has replaced damaged stonework on the Porch gable.
- (d) Further stonework damage is being examined.
- (e) Broken and missing roof tiles will be replaced.
- (f) A five-yearly inspection of the electrical installation was carried out in June 2015.
- (g) Following this, and a burn injury, professional advice has been sought on the reasonable options for making safe and possibly updating the pew heating system.
- (h) Invasive trees on the west wall of the churchyard have been removed or cut back.
- (i) Pollarding of three of the sycamore trees in the churchyard was completed. The other three trees will be done this year, along with more clearance of plant overgrowth on the south wall.
- (j) Another small collapsed section of the south churchyard wall is to be repaired.
- (k) Annual servicing of fire extinguishers.

4 Holy Cross Church

- (a) Wayne Fisher is to replace damaged stonework on the coping stones of the Vestry gable.
- (b) Essential repairs to a fallen section of the north churchyard wall are in hand.
- (c) Annual servicing of fire extinguishers.

I would like to thank all members of the Fabric Sub-committee for their tireless work this year.

Dr John Wood
Chairman of the Fabric Sub-Committee

Children, Young Families and The Ark

The Children and Young People sub-committee continue to meet regularly to share ideas, plan family worship and activities for children during school holidays. We continue to strengthen links with young families, Uley toddler group, playgroup and School.

It has been another good year for welcoming children and young families into church life. Although Sundays are full of other potential activities we are blessed to have committed young families within our worshipping community. Three church-going young families have moved into the village and joined our congregation. The monthly Ark group has proved popular with village newcomers, as well as regulars and is a wonderful opportunity for young mums, grand-parents and their pre-school children to get to know each other. I feel privileged to be involved with the young families in this way. Very young children have a definite sense of awe and wonder in the space of the church building. I hope they will retain a sense of belonging within a church community throughout their lives. I also visit playgroup regularly to tell a bible story and sing a song with the children.

Our First Sunday family services this year have included a Glastonbury themed service, a Café church service, Shoebox Saints and our family nativity service. We will continue to develop our First Sunday family services to include the children more, by singing child friendly hymns and songs, accompanied by musical instruments and with the words projected. Children and parents also to read and help with interactive prayers and craft activities.

Links have grown between the church and the toddler group, playgroup and school providing some continuity for the children who are regularly hearing stories of Jesus and God's love. The children's knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith will continue to develop at Uley School. We contribute towards this with Open the Book and the Experience Easter and Experience Christmas sessions held in St Giles.

A record number of 98 Christmas shoeboxes were dispatched in November 2015 making a total of 432 since we started in 2010.

Thanks go to Anna Blackler for her homemade cakes for the Ark, to Tina Pugh for organising the shoebox appeal in school and the Christingle making, to Amanda Voss for her help with the Nativity, to all who help with the Easter and Christmas stations and not forgetting the Uley Community Stores for providing the oranges for Christingle.

Hilary Weeks

Holiday Club Report 2015

This year we decided to hold just one holiday club running during July and August, instead of one at Easter as well. Due to the refurbishment of the kitchen in Uley Village Hall during August, all the sessions had to be held at Nympsfield Village Hall, which unfortunately is quite a lot smaller than Uley. Again our numbers were high, averaging over 40 children per session, so space was a bit of a problem. To add to the difficulties, the weather wasn't always kind to us, which meant we were stuck indoors for the whole session some weeks. However, despite this, a good time was had by all!

Each session has a theme and includes a bible story and a short time of worship, followed by a range of activities to suit all interests i.e. dance, drama, arts & crafts, design technology, sport, games and music. Snack time and packed lunches are also important elements of the programme! This year's theme was 'Peter and the Life of the Early Church'. As we were thinking about the missionary life of the early church we invited Chris Carter to come and tell us about, and show us pictures of, the school she and her husband have built in the Gambia.

For the first time this year we celebrated our Holiday Club at the family service in September. We were very grateful to Peter Cheesman for giving his time and expertise to the planning of the service and also contributing his acting skills to the service! We were pleased to welcome a few new families and also to have the opportunity to share some of the things we'd done with our regular church members.

Once again the holiday club was a great success and my thanks go to all my loyal helpers without whom it could never happen. However, having said that, two of our longstanding helpers are not able to offer their services for 2016, so we are very much in need of new volunteers. If you enjoy working with children and have a bit of time to spare on Mondays during the school summer holidays, please get in touch with me. The last thing we want to have to do is to terminate this very successful outreach event due to lack of helpers.

Liz Rymer

'Open the Book' School Assemblies – Report for 2015

We have been privileged to be able to present our 'Open the Book' assemblies in our school throughout the year and they continue to be very popular with the children.

For those who are not aware, 'Open the Book' is a national project which offers primary school children an opportunity to hear all the major stories of the Bible, presented chronologically or thematically, over a period of three years. Any primary school can take part in the project providing there is a team of volunteers from the parish who are willing to go into the school on a regular weekly basis to take the assemblies. It is not meant to be run by school staff! Each assembly is planned in detail with an introduction, a story, a thought and a prayer. All the team has to do is deliver it!

We are currently following Year 1 of the programme. In some schools the team themselves dramatise the story but here in Uley we involve the children. It is unrehearsed but the children respond to the challenge and enjoy performing. All the children from Year 2 upwards get an opportunity to take part during the year – sometimes we use the entire school for a crowd scene! We receive very positive feedback from these assemblies from parents, staff and children – the children look forward to our visits and especially to their turn to perform.

This year the school has seen a few changes, in particular, the arrival of the new headteacher, Zoe Mandeville. She has experience of 'Open the Book' from her previous school and has been happy for us to continue in the way we've been used to doing it. Another change has been the timing of the assemblies. It used to be in the middle of the morning but now the school has returned to the old practice of having it at 9.00am which, I have to say, suits us all much better!

We continue to be a team of four and, as always, I would like to express my grateful thanks to Angela, Dee and Lorna for the time and effort they put into these assemblies. If anyone else is interested in sharing this very rewarding experience and joining our team, please make contact with me – I'd love to hear from you!

Liz Rymer

Foundation Governor and Uley VC Primary School Report

Over the last year we have enjoyed working actively with Uley Primary school to help and assist our new Head of School, Mrs Zoe Mandeville, in growing and developing the school. There has been some fantastic activities that the pupils from our Uley VC Primary School have been involved in with our church and Mrs Mandeville has expanded and consolidated a lot of the activities that the school enjoys and takes part in.

Easter experience was once again a wonderful experience with the children enjoying some peaceful reflection on the story of Easter as each group walked around the church visiting the stations and taking part in the activities. The questions and thoughts of the children were exciting, thought provoking and insightful and it was wonderful to see the children enjoying the church.

We have also had some great activities and services throughout the year and Experience Christmas, Christingle and the Family Nativity Service are but three.

School Assembly in school has moved forward and is now called Worship and is being beautifully lead by the pupils who have a creative and great way of leading this which is being encouraged by all staff and supported by Rev Diana.

We are looking forward to more activities in St Giles throughout 2016 as well as further work and activities within the school. As Foundation Governors we will help to support the School in further developing services, activities, the RE curriculum as well as inputting in many other aspects of the school. This is my fourth and final year as Foundation Governor and I have thoroughly enjoyed spending time in our school and also sharing time in St Giles with our delightful pupils and walking with them on their Christian journey. I will miss this and everyone that has supported me in my role. Special thanks to Rev Diana Crook, Chair of Governors, Mrs Nic Kelly-Davies and to all the children who have embraced my involvement in their journey.

SJ Smallpage

The Parish of Uley with Owlpen and Nympsfield,
Churches of St Giles, Holy Cross and St Bartholomew

Report from Wotton Deanery

Wotton Deanery comprises 37 parishes in the area extending from Uley with Owlpen & Nympsfield in the north-east and Sharpness in the west to Thornbury and Chipping Sodbury in the south. Revd David Russell was appointed Area Dean in Autumn 2015 following Canon Jane Kenchington's move to a new benefice in Solihull.

The life of the Deanery is overseen by Deanery Synod, a body comprising all clergy serving in the Deanery together with elected lay representatives from each parish. Synod meets typically four times each year. The format of meetings varies to accommodate particular requirements at the date of each meeting but as, as well as opening and closing acts of worship and a mid-evening refreshment break, typically includes a talk from a visiting speaker, a discussion session and a Deanery business section. Brief summaries of meetings are produced for circulation in the parishes – please talk to one of the Synod representatives if you are interested in seeing these summary reports.

2015 saw a fundamental review of the method of allocating between benefices the requests for Parish Share (the financial contribution requested from all parishes which in total pays for the majority of the costs of the Church of England in our Diocese - principally the stipends and housing costs of our clergy). The aims of this review were to produce a system where each parish's contribution reflects partly the costs of the clergy presence in that parish and partly - based on the size of the parish – a contribution to the overall cost of the Church across the whole Diocese. Our Deanery, along with all others in the Diocese, received a presentation on the draft new scheme from Diocesan Board of Finance and Finance Department staff early in 2015. During the ensuing period of consultation, we - in common with the other Deaneries - submitted numerous comments and suggestions for changes to the scheme. Many of these were acted upon and/ or incorporated in the final scheme agreed by Diocesan Synod. The new system, which has come into effect for Parish Share allocations for 2016, poses challenges to many benefices, as the Parish Share expected of them will rise steadily over the next few years to reflect the diversion of some Diocesan investment income from across-the-board support of the Parish Share fund to more closely targeted mission purposes within the Diocese. Detail is awaited as to whether support for rural ministry in small scattered parishes might be available from this fund alongside support for mission and outreach in areas of urban deprivation and in large new housing developments.

Other visiting speakers and topics during 2015 were:

- Rev. Bob Callaghan (National Coordinator of 'Inclusive Church') touching on topics including gender, ethnicity, disability, mental health, poverty and sexuality
- Penny Stradling (CMS Oxford) with a presentation on 'Fresh Expressions of Church'
- Cate Williams (Diocesan Mission and Evangelism Officer) on 'mission beyond the Church - extending "on your doorstep" themes and looking at rural Church in the community'.

The Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group continues to monitor Parish Share matters and developments relating to the Deanery Pastoral Plan. Of the DMPG sub-groups, the Discipleship Group continues to meet regularly along with its offshoot Deanery Reading Group.

Deanery Synod members representing Uley with Owlpen & Nympsfield until the 2017 APCM are:

Revd Diana Crook
Janet Bannister
David Thomas
David Valentin

David Thomas