

Annual Parochial Church Meeting, 2023 - St. Peter's Draycott

Agenda

27th April 2023 at 7:30 p.m. in Draycott church.

Agenda

Item	Report	Presented by/ on behalf of
1. Welcome		<i>Stuart Burns/ John English</i>
2. Attendance and apologies		
3. Minutes from meeting on 24 th April 2022 (confirmation of accuracy)		<i>Chris Green</i>
4. Vestry Meeting		
Proposed transition plan		<i>Chris Green</i>
Election of church warden(s)		
5. Statutory Reports		
Electoral Roll	A	<i>John English</i>
Report on PCC proceedings	B	<i>Chris Green</i>
The financial report and accounts	C	<i>David Cheetham</i>
The churchwarden's fabric report	D	<i>Chris Green</i>
Deanery Synod Report	E	<i>Thea Oliver</i>
6. Other reports		
Worship report	F	<i>Chris Green</i>
Covenants	G	<i>John English</i>
Safeguarding	H	<i>Thea Oliver</i>
School worship team	I	<i>Nicola Devitt</i>
Health and safety	J	<i>Richard Oliver</i>
Supporters of St Peter's	K	<i>Tricia Lumley</i>
Church magazine	L	<i>Rob Walker</i>
7. Appointment of Laity to the Parochial Church Council		
8. Appointment of sides men/ women		
9. Appointment of independent financial examiner		
10. Remarks from the clergy present		<i>Thea Oliver, Ruth Motion, Stuart Burns</i>
11. Any other matters of important to the Parish		

Reports

Statutory reports

A. Electoral Roll

John English (Electoral Roll Officer)

There have been some changes in the last year, and six names have been removed from the electoral roll, which now stands at 28.

B. Report on PCC proceedings

Chris Green (PCC Secretary)

At the start of the year, PCC membership was as follows:

Stuart Burns (rector); David Cheetham (Treasurer); Gill Dury, John English (covenant secretary, lay chair, electoral roll officer); Chris Green (churchwarden, secretary); Tricia Lumley (Deanery representative); Pat Mullay; Thea Oliver (Deanery representative, safeguarding officer). Earlier this year Pat Mullay was forced to leave for health reasons. We wish to thank her for all her time of service to the PCC – and of course she continues to be a very active member of our congregation.

We have also been joined by Roger Peel. We are most grateful to him for stepping up. Barry Rose also re-joined us for a few months but he has felt unable to continue.

The PCC has met seven times since the 2022 APCM. Since the start of the colder weather we have been meeting in the benefice office in Cheddar to save on church heating.

C. The financial report and accounts

David Cheetham (Treasurer)

(Please see separate report)

D. The churchwarden's fabric report

Chris Green (Churchwarden)

Quinquennial survey

In May we received the report from our survey (carried out in November by our architect George Chedburn). Works are divided into three categories A-C from most to least urgent. The category A works have been dealt with (fire extinguisher testing and path repair). A number of category B works were to do with damp and associated issues (pointing, guttering, drains), which we deemed priority. Most of these have been dealt with now, although some damp problems (such as the south transept) seem to persist. The north transept (previously affected by penetrating damp) has remained dry however. The survey can be seen in the church logbook, which is kept in the safe.

Churchyard

The 'no-mow' regime was implemented in the south-western portion of the graveyard (to the right of the path through the lime avenue and up to the new graveyard). This was respected by the council (who carry out mowing), and we had a good growth of wild flowers, such as ox-eye daisies. We carried out a botanical survey which will be repeated this year. Other measures for wildlife included installing animal refuges (bird and bug boxes, wood piles, compost heaps).

We have a new committee to oversee the churchyard, which is swinging into action again with the springtime upon us.

Energy

A big preoccupation of the winter was to minimize our heating bills, but the price increase has yet to be fully felt, and we have continued to hold services in the church more or less as normal. We are grateful to financial contributions that have helped us to do this. Following an energy survey, we took out a combined gas and electricity contract fixed for three years. This mitigates the volatility of the energy market and is with a supplier with good 'green' credentials ('Poizitive').

Gifts

A number of generous gifts enhanced our church and churchyard last year. Gordon and Colette Jeff donated their very superior upright piano to the church (we passed our old piano to the school, who didn't have one). The Oliver family donated a new noticeboard for the church, as a memorial to Audrey. And two splendid memorial benches were added to the churchyard by Norman Brade and Sarah Burns.

E. Deanery Synod Report

Rev. Thea Oliver (Deanery representative)

Since the last APCM report, Axbridge Deanery Synod initially scheduled three meetings: on 14th June (Bishop's Palace), 13th October (St John's Axbridge) and 28th January (Bagley Baptist church).

The **June** meeting covered various items including briefing on the Mission Plan, and feedback from General and Diocesan Synods.

The **October** meeting fed back on the 'five marks of mission', and also introduced the Axbridge Deanery Plan. The plan addresses the need to go from nine permanent full-time posts to seven, as the Deanery's contribution to addressing the diocesan financial deficit. An initial paper was presented outlining a way forward. The Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group (DMPG) asked all PCCs to look at this paper, think and pray about it, and then respond. It envisaged a change in how and where stipendiary ministers are deployed, and would require a major shift in the relationship between the ministers and parishes. (Thea fed back to Draycott PCC on this over two meetings, in February and March).

In **January** the Deanery Plan was further discussed, and an additional meeting fixed to allow PCC feedback on 22nd March.

In the **March** meeting, the following PCCs gave presentations:

Westbury sub Mendip, Priddy, Rodney Stoke, Draycott, Cheddar, Theale, Wedmore, Allerton, Axbridge, Shipham, Rowberrow, Crook Peak, Mark, East Huntspill, West Huntspill, TPOTS, Brean, Burnham on Sea, Highbridge. There was no representation from Berrow.

All the reports and additional questions will be considered by the DMPG and a plan will be presented to Synod in June.

Following this meeting, in **April** an updated proposal for deployment across the deanery has been formulated, building on the previous proposal in looking to find a way of working together and across boundaries and also takes into account some of the feedback from the parishes voiced at Synod on 22 March.

Future dates for Deanery Synod: June 6th and October 11th please consider coming along, especially if you would like to hear more and perhaps be involved in decisions for the future

of this Deanery. There is always a warm welcome, with tea, coffee and biscuits (sometimes even cake!). There is a vacancy for a Deanery Synod representative from St Peter's as Thea now attends as a member of the clergy.

NB. There is also a vacancy for a member of the Laity on The Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group (DMPG). Please consider if you are being called to join this steering group, meeting about 6 times a year either in person or on zoom. Speak to Thea if you would like to know more.

Other reports

F. Worship Report

Chris Green (Lay Reader)

Summary

- The year has seen a gradual return to normal following easing of Covid precautions. Some restrictions (such as mask wearing and refreshments after the service) were only relaxed during the year.
- Congregation numbers are up, but have not (yet) returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- We continue to enjoy an exceptional diversity of leaders and preachers in our services.

Church attendance

Average Sunday worship numbers were 17.4 in 2022 (not including Easter, Christmas or other special services), compared with 15.8 in 2021 (this compares with 18 in 2019). The communion services were more popular than morning prayer (17.5 vs. 12.6), as previously. In response, during the year the second Morning Prayer service on the 4th Sunday was changed back to Holy Communion.

Attendance at Easter was 26, a drop from 34 in 2022 (in 2023 it was down still further at 19). Christmas attendance in 2022 was much improved from 2021, however. There were 45 at the carol service, 21 on Christmas Eve and 49 on Christmas Day (last year the figures were respectively 30, 16 and 17).

Special services

We held a number of special services in addition to regular Sunday ones (such as Taizé services on Advent Sunday and Good Friday, and an Ash Wednesday service). New formats were the 'Sing for Ukraine' service at the end of October, and the Thank-You service on Advent Sunday; both were judged very successful.

Ministry team

We heard sermons from seven of our preachers over the year, and were led by an even greater number. Ruth Motion was ordained during the year and is now taking her full place as both celebrant and preacher. We are exceptionally blessed with such a strong ministry team.

G. Covenant Report

John English (Covenant Secretary)

Gift aid claims totalling £2,622.37 have been received. As of the end of December the number of covenanters remained at 20.

H. Safeguarding

Rev. Thea Oliver (Safeguarding Officer)

The Safeguarding officers for Benefice of Cheddar Draycott and Rodney Stoke, along with the Rector have continued to be in email contact to evaluate and assess the progress that has been made thus far in meeting the Diocesan safeguarding requirements for our Benefice and discover what more still needs to be done. To summarise:

- Since the last APCM Safeguarding report there have been no reported safeguarding incidents relating to St Peter's Church community.
- St Peter's PCC continues to work towards promoting a safer church.
- As PSO Thea has undertaken Leadership (level 3) safeguarding training (30.6.22)
- There are no children's activities undertaken in the name of the PCC as currently any "church activities" with children are with Draycott and Rodney Stoke First School as part of the school day.
- We have a social media policy whereby parents are asked to sign that they are happy for photos of their children to be uploaded to the Benefice website and social media pages. This information is collated and stored securely by the Benefice Administrator.
- St Peter's has on display a formal statement of adoption of the House of Bishop's "Promoting a safer Church"; a safeguarding policy statement, signed on behalf of the PCC.
- Contact details are displayed in church and on website for PSO, Churchwarden, Diocesan Safeguarding Team - including phone, email and website details
- Information is displayed about where to get help with child and adult issues and domestic abuse etc - contact PSO in first instance unless an urgent matter for the police.
- We do not formally hire out St Peter's, so we are not required have "Hire of Church Premises Agreement".

St Peter's PCC should take especial note of the following however:

1. Safeguarding must be a standing order on agenda of every PCC meeting.
2. DBS checks now have to be completed every 3 years
3. All PCC members require training in Basic Awareness (C0) and/or Foundation (C1) courses online. Thea can supply instructions to access them.

I. School worship team

Nicola Devitt (School worship team)

The school worship team comprises our rector, Stuart Burns, with Thea Oliver, Ruth Motion and Nikki Devitt. Every week during term time we take it in turns to lead collective worship at Draycott and Rodney Stoke First School. We prefer this to take place in the church building, but this year, due to rising energy prices we elected not to heat the church for this service, and instead the services have still been taken by us, but in the school hall. This is normally on a Monday afternoon, at school's request. Unfortunately, this doesn't fit in well with Thea's day job commitments, but she can be available at other times, so is able to continue her commitment to contributing to worship in school.

We follow themes that the children are learning about in school, and also keep the children in touch with the seasons and festivals of the Church Year. The senior team at school are very

keen to work with us, they communicate very effectively and are happy to incorporate any ideas that we might suggest. The children often contribute art work to decorate the church for the different seasons. They enjoy the church services and are enthusiastic participants.

At the end of the school year, we have the Leavers' Assembly. Last July the PCC suggested, and then generously funded, giving a Bible to each of the Year 4 leavers at this service. These were very well received, and we may find ourselves repeating the gesture in subsequent years.

We are pleased to be welcoming the children back into St Peter's church building this term, in the warmer weather. The school worship continues to be our best-attended regular service.

J. Health and safety

Richard Oliver (Health and Safety Officer)

Current issues

1. Footpath from road needs monitoring due to the growth of moss this is a slip hazard. This has been partially dealt with and will need monitoring.
2. Step in porch and boot scraper need repainting (probably an ongoing issue).
3. Broken roof tiles need monitoring.
4. Cross on the West roof needs monitoring (as all the others have fallen).
5. Matches continue to be left out in the main part of the church.
6. Choir stall pew fronts are loose, options: secure, remove or make removeable.
7. Inside damp on walls may result in mould and then mould in area above the safes. Likewise investigate source of damp on wall between altar rail and organ.
8. Shelves bowing on open shelf unit. May need support / repair / replacement.
9. Garden shed: A. Tools in shed need to be stored neatly (eg. bow saw left on table blade uppermost). B. removal of small wasp nest. C. Removal of unwanted items.
10. Outside shed front right paving slab insecure needs re-bedding; check the others.
11. Bier House needs clearing to make access easier. (RO to deal).
12. The gate from the old church yard into the upper (new) graveyard needs to be re-hung to allow better access for grave diggers.
13. Step outside vestry door slippery when wet

Up and coming issues:

1. A tree survey may be required in relation to rot in the crowns of the Lime trees along the church path. Perhaps a couple a year could be dealt with?
2. The tree next to the gate to the carpark (cypress?) to be monitored due to previous issues, interfering with electrical cables and often branches breaking in high winds
3. Continual monitoring of the rainwater hoppers and down pipes is needed to check for blockages due to jackdaws.
4. Wall between school and church will need maintenance due to ivy growth.
5. Likewise, the growth of ivy on some of the trees may cause an issue.
6. Ensure that electrical sockets are not overloaded.

7. The wooden flooring (main part of church on the left looking towards the altar) 3rd board in is loose.
8. Monitor the contents of the shelves in the Vestments cupboard and consider alternative arrangements. (Shelf bowing and top of cupboard very deformed).
9. P.A.T testing of electrical items. Small number of items makes it worth contacting the Church Wardens of St. Leonard's Church Rodney Stoke to arrange a joint visit.

K. Supporters of St Peter's

Tricia Lumley (SoSP member)

It has been another busy year for SOSP. Covid is well and truly behind us now and we are back in full swing. We have resumed our monthly coffee and cake sessions and numbers are recovering to pre-pandemic levels.

Our fundraising efforts have, as usual, many and varied. The team come up with imaginative ideas for projects which will bring people to our events and contribute some funds to the coffers. We do have long term plans to improve the kitchen facilities in the church to enable us to put on more ambitious functions.

Jumble sales still have a place in our fundraising, and it gives us all a chance for a clear out.

We take part in the Strawberry Fair, which is an important event in our village and we always make sure there are activities for children as well as our jar tombola and the very popular pig-racing (mechanical pigs of course). We also took the pigs to Wedmore for a village event, thereby extending our fundraising efforts.

In August we hold a treasure hunt and barbeque. The hunt starts at the church, in the process bringing people to St Peters, and ends at the barbeque at Valleys Edge Farm. This is such a fun evening and it would be lovely to have more of our church members there, you don't have to compete in the treasure hunt first and we have a lovely venue for a summer evening event.

Every September we host a wildlife talk in the church and last year our theme was local butterflies. In spite of our speaker having had a disaster with his slide show, he coped tremendously and the full church enjoyed a most interesting talk. Fairs and festivals in the church have been popular, especially our favourite soup lunches and ploughman's lunches.

All our fundraising events are intended to make the church visible in the village and this is much appreciated by the community. we always pack out the Strawberry Special for a curry night or carol singing. We also support the Summer Skittles at the pub and, while this is a social event, it is also bringing in funds as Mick and Lori have always made a very generous donation to the church from the proceeds.

As well as fundraising, we support other groups within the church and in the larger world. Whenever there is an event in the church, we are happy to help with refreshments. We also support Christian Aid, The Childrens Society and The Sisters of the Church (in St Paul's, Bristol). We hope our team goes from strength to strength and continues to make the presence of St Peters felt in our village.

L. Church magazine

Rob Walker (Editor)

Overview of the year

As the challenges of COVID-19 have faded away, the magazine has continued to appear 10 times a year in its well established 24 Page A5 Black and White format. We have maintained

our print run at 195 copies for each issue. Copies are delivered direct to all our regular subscribers while some are exchanged with Cheddar and, as a matter of deliberate policy, spares are always available 'at the back of the church'.

The key points are as follows:

1. The magazine continues to be printed using the facilities in the Benefice Office (Den) in Cheddar and the print run of takes about 3 hours to complete. It is the longest regular print job that the Den handles and, while the production standards have gradually improved over the years, they are not as good as would be expected from a commercial printer. The product retains a certain rustic charm.
2. Advertising has been maintained at previous levels. Almost all of our advertisers are regulars, and the current level represents, it is felt, a good and sustainable, balance. We lose one or two every year and pick up replacements at about the same rate. We have also got much better at collecting our advertising revenue in recent times with prompter invoicing and a more persistent approach to harrising defaulters.
3. Following the agreement reached at last year's round of APCM meetings, the cover price was increased to 60p in 2023 and it is due to be increased again to 70p in 2024 and so on year by year until further notice.
4. The magazine continues to generate a surplus year by year which is distributed annually to the churches in proportion to their numbers of magazine subscribers. The surplus is largely thanks to the charging regime adopted by Cheddar for allocating the printing costs. It is not a true profit in the sense that a business would recognise and it could easily disappear altogether if Cheddar's approach was to change.
5. It is pleasing to report that the number of social and church events has increased markedly in the last year resulting in more announcements of such events and less of more serious-minded content.
6. The magazine has also started to make copy and layouts available to the Cheddar magazine on a regular basis. A good half of our magazine content could easily be run in the Cheddar publication without it looking at all out of place if so needed.
7. It takes the combined efforts of about a dozen individuals to write, print, distribute and look after the commercial aspects of the operation. 'You know who you are' and I would like to thank everyone involved for their wonderful contribution.

Future developments

I have announced my intention to step down from the editorial chair by the end of this year at the very latest. Having enjoyed ten years in the job, I think it is a good and healthy time for there to be an editorial change. It has always been my intent to 'get out while the going's good' and hand it over as a going concern when it is still on the up. There are all manner of exciting opportunities out there on the horizon right now and so, enviously, I wish 'Half your luck' for the future.

NB. I commend the editorial policy of this magazine to future editors- it has stood us in good stead for 10 years now. Please see previous APCM reports.

Remarks from clergy

1. Rev. Thea Oliver

To set the scene...

When I spoke to a very wise clergy friend about feeling that God was calling me, she advised me to try knocking on doors and if they open go on through... in fact she said if a window opens... climb through that too... if God wants you in there the way will be made clear...so I spoke to Stuart and started the process that has so far got me standing before you now as an Ordained Self-Supporting Minister (OSSM) a role described as “the fool on the edge of both worlds”... a locally deployed focussed priest, sent to train by this benefice and returned to serve in this benefice, a role that perfectly fits William Temple’s soundbite “The church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members”. You may have heard the quote that “There are five Gospels- Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the Christian- but most people never read the first four” and we are warned to: “Be careful how you live. you may be the only Bible some person ever reads.”

This is even more true of those who are called to put our heads above the parapet by wearing a clerical collar, perhaps especially in a small rural context where everyone knows everyone else. Off duty anonymity in this goldfish bowl world would be difficult for any minister, but especially one in my position as where my sending benefice is also where I am to be deployed.

I feel very strongly that being called to be OSSM is not a consolation prize. My nursing vocation came first but God’s call to ministry was also there. I felt that this sideways move into ministerial training came when the time was right, the children had grown up, I had reduced my working hours, thus enabling me to connect these different but interlinked worlds.

Am I OSSM because of my age? No, it is because my calling is to minister where I live and work through my strong social connections, built up over 30+ years

Of course, I could continue to do most of this without being ordained, but I felt strongly that God was calling me to Eucharistic ministry.

In fact, during my pre-training meeting with Bishop Ruth, she seemed to infer that ordination might not be the best option for me as she told me that once I am ordained “the church will lose a very valuable Lay resource”. I have reflected long and hard on this statement and although I can agree to a certain extent, I hope and pray that as an ordained person I will be able to encourage and support more Lay involvement in the life of our churches. Also, if I don’t lay down some of these responsibilities no one else will come and take them on.

I love being part of the ministry team and supporting Stuart by serving this benefice, it is such a privilege to be involved in leading the various types of worship, preside at communion, Sunday by Sunday and take home communion to the housebound and to care homes. Leading collective worship at Draycott and Rodney Stoke and Shipham CofE First Schools is a wonderful way to connect to the community and bring Jesus to the children. I treasure the opportunities to minister to our neighbours when I’m asked to take Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals for families who I may have known for many years and who may never usually enter the church, but who come to us in their time of need be it sadness or joyful.

And now, having completed 3 years of curacy I have been signed off by Bishop Ruth.

After my health issues last year I have recognised that I should slow down and restrict my activities, I still work 3 days at Wells Health Centre, my “benefice working days” are Thursdays, 2 Sundays and any 5th Sunday a month. My working agreement spells out that I should under promise and over deliver, rather than vice versa, so I can do a little more when I feel I can,.. Or when necessary. This gives me a better home/work/church life balance.

A date for your diaries is the 29th June 2023 when Bishop Michael will be coming to St Andrew’s at 7pm to licence me as Associate Priest in the Benefice of Cheddar, Draycott and Rodney Stoke. All are welcome to this service and the refreshments afterwards.

2. *Rev. Ruth Motion*

2022 created many amazing opportunities for me in the benefice for all ages

- Children and young people - First school assemblies in Draycott and Rodney Stoke school and church visits from both Draycott and Cheddar First. Fairlands Middle School asked me into talk about Christianity and equality to Year 8. Working at Kings and being an priest, presents its own benefits at challenges, but is certainly easier to build connections between Kings and church. Child friendly services like Christingle, Crib Service, Good Friday, Harvest, and Mothering Sunday have been encouraging and have grown over the year. A Youth Club organised and run by people from all five denominations - Infinity and Beyond, continues to grow; we began with Kings age group only and have had to lower the starting age to allow more young people to come along. Baptisms allow us to welcome new people into our churches. Messy church is thriving. Holiday Club was great, but also exhausting.
- Adults - Helping with Weddings at St. Peter’s and St. Andrews has been great fun and I look forward to doing my first solo one in 2023. Services of all kinds has encouraged/forced me to try and to enjoy services that are different from my previous experience. Training LWAs from across the Deanery was fun. I have enjoyed Quiz nights and a Treasure Hunt. Carol singing in the pub is a special experience. All age services provide a different way of worshipping and enjoying church together. Talks to lunch clubs and ladies groups have enabled me to talk to people from different churches and with no church at all. Pastoral visits are both a joy and a wonderful pastoral challenge. Leading Lent groups and Advent groups both in person and on zoom provided a chance to get to know people better and to think differently about our faith.
- Oldies - I enjoy attending SALT when my school commitments allow. Funeral ministry I found difficult to start with, but is one which I enjoy despite being with families through their most challenging time. Care home communions have grown on me, seeing and hearing people know every word, despite not always knowing where, or even who they are, shows how deeply held their faith is. Pastoral Visits and End of life visits, are so often an amazing experience.

New experiences that I had in 2022

- Festive Night
- Pilgrimage to the Holy Land
- Carol singing in the Strawberry Special
- Platinum Jubilee celebrations
- Deliverance ministry - Ghost busting
- Draycott Treasure Hunt
- Radio 4 interview
- Podcast recording for the National Pentecostal Church

My Priesting on 25th June 2022 was a truly Spirit-filled and wonderful experience. I was able to preside at Holy Communion for the first time in St. Andrews on the 26th June surrounded by family and friends, both from the benefice and further afield. Since my Priesting I recognise that being able to preside at Communion is a privilege, it is both private and public and, perhaps not surprisingly, it is different in each of our three churches!

I have thoroughly enjoyed working as part of such a great ministry team. I have been encouraged to try new things and have been supported through any difficult times. With less than a year to go, before I am signed off as a Curate, I wonder what will happen next!

3. Rev. Stuart Burns

In 2022 St Peter's kept its head above the water financially through the sincere generosity of a fairly small number of donors. St Peter's is part of a benefice which, cumulatively, gives the diocese significantly more than the share that would be indicated by having only one stipendiary cleric. Thank you, David, that you continue to manage our church's finances so judiciously and constructively. Congratulations and thanks especially to SOSP who work hard to raise funds for our small church. Regarding the care and funding of St Peter's, I am tempted to plagiarise and distort the greatest ever Briton, by writing, "Never in the field of human ecclesiasticism, has so much been owed by so many to so few"!

St Peter's is extremely fortunate to have the PCC members it has, who work so hard and faithfully to keep the fabric of the building in such a good condition. Thank you very much, PCC members, and in particular Chris, often assisted by David or Richard O, for your unstinting commitment to preserving St Peter's church building. We are also very grateful for all the work and awareness-raising that people here this evening have done towards the rewinding of parts of our churchyard.

We are very grateful to those who clean our church, prepare it for services, provide flowers, have led it's music (thank you, David, Barry and Ian) - all of these enabling us to continue to hold Sunday worship in St Peter's every week of the year, bar a few benefice service Sundays, (which is not often the case in smallish, rural churches).

I also express my very sincere appreciation for the excellent Ministry Team we have, including lay leaders and also our several priests, retired or self-supporting, who use their vocation and their gifts with always-generous availability, to serve the spiritual life of our church. I especially acknowledge all that our retired priests, Hilary, Judith and Julie do for us, when they might be expected rather to rest on their laurels, as they deserve to do! Thinking of our curates, Thea and Ruth, (both self-supporting), the worship and witness of our churches, as well the pastoral care we are able to give, are all greatly strengthened in all sorts of ways, by their always-willing service; their ministry in our church schools is especially strategic. I am thrilled that Thea is about to become a permanent Associate Priest in our benefice, after completing her time of curacy so competently and fruitfully. We are truly blessed, in a way that few benefices are, with the diverse and large Ministry Team that we have.

My penultimate comment is to acknowledge the absolutely rock-solid, kind and supportive churchwardenship of Chris in our parish, and it is a relief to have heard that he will be able to continue in this leadership for a little while longer.

I thank you all for your friendship as we share in fellowship and stewardship of the church together, and I do hope and pray that we can expand our service to our village in the year and years that are before us.