

Parish of St John the Baptist, Heathfield, with Cotford St Luke

Churchwardens' Report for the year ending 31 December 2019 to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of October 2020 [deferred from April 2020] and to the Charity Commission.

The ecclesiastical parish of Heathfield with Cotford St Luke includes the small community of Heathfield and the new village of Cotford St Luke, built in the grounds of the old Tone Vale Hospital. We worship in the ancient church of St John the Baptist in Heathfield and in St Luke's centre at Cotford. The parish, with the parishes of Oake and Hillfarrance, forms part of the Deane Vale Benefice in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Rector (since 2010; Priest-in-Charge from 2002): Rev. Preb. Alison Norris, retired at end of July 2019. Interegnum from beginning of August onwards.

PCC secretary: Lindsay Hall

Elected Church wardens: Dawn Mitford-Slade (Heathfield); Alison Gabell (Cotford),
Assistant churchwardens: Philip Hall and Clare Reid (both Cotford)

Elected PCC members: Jane Elliot, Roberta Winterson, Katy Stirzaker, Judith Ashley, David Bleloch

Treasurer: Rod Latham

Deanery Synod representatives: Jane Elliot, Dawn Mitford- Slade

Structure, governance and management:

PCC members are appointed in the manner set out in the Church Representation rules. All who attend church are encouraged to register on the church Electoral Roll and may then stand for election to the PCC. The full body has thirteen members, including the clergy, the treasurer, and the two churchwardens who represent the Bishop. The Electoral Roll was fully revised in 2019, is reviewed annually, and now stands at 49 [with an active adult membership of around 30 adults].

In 2019 the full PCC met 9 times.

Objectives: The PCC has the responsibility of supporting and working with our Rector to promote the whole mission of the church: worship [prayer and praise, through liturgy]; discipleship [fellowship and teaching]; and ministry [service and evangelism]. It also maintains the church building, St John's, in Heathfield and St Luke's centre in Cotford St Luke.

Our aims, set out in our entry on the Charities Commission website, are:

To celebrate God's love through worship in a variety of styles and settings for all ages.

To care for and serve all people in our church, our community and the wider world.

To grow spiritually through teaching, listening, prayer, fellowship and service.

To make known the Good News of the love of God in Jesus.

To provide a centre in the village of Cotford St Luke [as well as our existing building in Heathfield] where everyone is welcomed.

Achievements and activities: St Luke's Centre: In July 2019 our rector, Preb Alison Norris retired, leaving us in interregnum. In August a new programme for Sunday worship was devised, keeping the timings and structure the same, but enlisting both lay and ordained preachers to lead worship. St Luke's centre remained the hub of community life that it had successfully become during the previous year. This, unfortunately, changed at the end of February when the Corona virus outbreak forced the centre to close.

The Management committee for St Luke's centre met less frequently in 2019, showing that the centre was running smoothly, with any issues being dealt with immediately and at a local level.

There were several fundraising events, including the Dog Show and Fete, in June - the emphasis again was on fun and community, not competition, and it was a great day. Many thanks to Derrick Reid, Dawn Mitford-Slade and Jane Elliott for leading this. Thanks to Pete Frost and Claire Bleloch for organising the regular quiz nights throughout the year, these nights have drawn large numbers and been a great way of both raising funds for the centre and having fun together. The farmers markets had become a regular event in the centre, they were an excellent way of both serving the community and raising funds. Special thanks really needs to go to Laura Hills who has worked tirelessly at fundraising in the last year, she has been instrumental in so many of the events, but most importantly the farmers market and craft fairs. No one will really comprehend how much work these events have taken to organise, set up for and clean up after, but I have witnessed the hard work she has put in and how hard it has been for her at times. Another person who deserves special thanks is Roberta Winterson, she has managed the catering side of all our fundraising events as well as running the café alongside Jane Durrant. Roberta is always coming up with ideas on how to make events more profitable and has so much determination. Derrick Reid is another person who has maintained the running of the centre, dealing with all the maintenance issues and being constantly on hand to help with everything and anything. Jane Durrant has done an amazing job with the frontage of the building, raising funds, planning and overseeing the installation of the patio in the summer of 2019. Many people have been involved at all of these events and in volunteering throughout the week in the café and in our outreach projects such as the baby group and bereavement café, I would like to thank them all wholeheartedly as none of this would be possible without them.

Special thanks need to go to our visiting priests, who have led us in our Eucharistic worship during this period of interregnum and also thanks to both David Bleloch and David Rhodes for leading us in our lay led services. We have been blessed to share in the wisdom of all these people.

The church is still seen as the main provider of children's activities in the village. Claire Reid leads on organising our Sunday children's activities and for this we are very grateful as our children are receiving great spiritual nourishment. In addition to Sunday school and Toddler Church, we now also provide a Baby group on Monday mornings and a Baby and Toddler group on Friday mornings.

Lay-led house groups continue across the benefice, meeting weekly or fortnightly and open to all.

Church attendance: Average attendance at the weekly Cotford services is now around 30-35 adults and 5-10 children; and 12 adults at the monthly Heathfield Communion service – though many more attend special services, such as Come to the Manger at Cotford (200+ children and adults] and Christmas Day at Heathfield (50 communicants). We are seeing an increase in the commitment of those who do come regularly; and it is good to see the children pleased to be in church and comfortable with worship.

Regular Sunday services: St John's Heathfield: 08.30 Communion (monthly on 2nd Sunday)

10.00 Family Communion for the Benefice (some 5th Sundays)

St Luke's Centre, Cotford St Luke: weekly at 10.00 (except 5th Sunday)

1st Sunday - Family Communion

2nd and 4th Sundays – Lay led worship and Sunday School

3rd Sunday – Lay led informal fellowship

People also attend other services at Oake and Hillfarrance churches in the Benefice

Other regular services and activities: Toddler Church, Thursdays, weekly at Cotford in the Hub at 14.00

House Group – most Monday evenings, at 42 Graham

Midday Prayers throughout the week across the benefice

Special services and events:

Lent study groups

Lent Meditations in the week before Easter, across the benefice

Mothering Sunday, March

Palm Sunday

Good Friday witness walk from Cotford via Heathfield and Oake to Hillfarrance, this (could not take place due to the shutdown, but would have)

Easter Day services

Cotford Dog Show, Fete and Cream teas, June

Cotford Harvest service, September

Remembrance Day service at Cotford

Advent meditations across the benefice

Christingle service, Family Carols at St Luke's Centre and Come to the Manger at St Luke's Centre

Christmas Day at Heathfield

Other activities and acknowledgements: At Cotford: A successful church at Cotford is vital to support the long term health of the village and the viability of Heathfield church.

We are very thankful for the excellent Music Group, who led us in many services.

We are thankful also for all those who help with services, events, and study groups, Sunday school, Messy Church and Toddler Church; for those who provide our flowers and refreshments, and notices and newsletters; for those who support the youth and children's work; and for all those who have worked on fundraising [and 'fun-raising'] projects.

At Heathfield: The beautiful little church at Heathfield continues to complement the worship at Cotford with a regular monthly early morning communion service for the benefice and an occasional morning service on the fifth Sunday in the month. With its tranquil rural setting it lends itself to meditation, as well as small weddings, baptisms and funerals which can't be held at Cotford. We have a small team who do so much to care for the church - thanks to Jacqueline and Andrew Hay-Berry, Sue Harris, Derrick Reid, Mo and Dave Bridgwater and Fenton. Our main concern is the state of the building - bulges and cracks in the ceiling and the north wall of the nave, and repairs needed to the vestry door and the south chancel door. Decisions will have to be made soon as to when and how we tackle these problems - prayers and cash needed! - Dawn Mitford-Slade.

In the parish generally:

There are considerable challenges ahead – the times are not easy. We are going to need to build up our congregation after a large gap in being able to publicly worship together. The wider rural church has ageing congregations and many historic buildings. We have a beautiful old church to maintain and a new church to pay for. There are going to be continued opportunities to engage with our community and re-build the connections that we had with it previous to the Corona-19 outbreak.

This year has been a real challenge and everyone has stepped up to the mark and contributed far beyond what can be expected of them. This year will present new challenges, but also a great deal of excitement as we will hopefully be blessed with a new priest. There will be lots of jobs that need filling and this should be seen as an opportunity for all of us to use our God given talents. We do not want anyone to feel taken for granted or overworked but we also don't want anyone to feel overlooked, so please do talk to us about what you feel able to contribute to running of our

churches. We are thankful that we are part of an active Christian community in a beautiful part of the country, and we look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm.

Dawn Mitford-Slade, Ally Gabell - churchwardens

Health and Safety; and Safeguarding: The parish's Health and Safety policy is reviewed in February/March each year, with copies held in Cotford and Heathfield. We encourage everyone to read it and take notice of its advice, and suggest improvements – it is everyone's responsibility.

There were no significant problems with Safeguarding brought to our attention this year.

DBS checks were satisfactorily carried out for those new to children's work in the parish.

The Safeguarding officers [Lindsay Hall, Philip Hall] have attended training provided by the diocese and can provide initial advice if anyone has any concerns.