

## **2023 Annual Report**



This Annual Report aims to put the work of the Parish Church into perspective as a place of worship and how it relates to the wider life of the church, the parish and the community. It only gives a flavour of the church, taking a look at the outworking of our ministry and mission, showing how it relates to those outside and on the fringes as well as in the congregation. We are required to produce 'an Annual Report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and the activities of the parish generally', and we have tried to keep it readable and attractive for everyone who picks up a copy. We hope you enjoy reading it and get a sense of our life as a church.

*The Rector, The Reverend Tracy Jessop.*

### **Mission Statement**

To demonstrate the love of God to the people of our town and community.

### **The Parochial Church Council (PCC)**

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) serve the church and the people of God. They are Trustees of the Charity and come from a variety of backgrounds with a diverse range of skills and talents. The PCC have met roughly every 4-6 weeks. All meetings are planned and use a formal Agenda and Minutes are recorded. The PCC work as a cohesive team and support one another in their care of the church and its members; underpinned by their shared love of God and willingness to respond with loving service to the needs of the parish and its community.

Our PCC is made up of the following dedicated people:

The Revd Tracy Jessop (Incumbent and Chair)  
Roger Burbidge (Churchwarden and Lay-Vice Chair)  
Alison Harding (Churchwarden and Deanery Synod)  
Moira Morley  
John Mullins (Fabric Officer)  
Ann Rae-Sims  
Liam Warnes  
Audrey Sharp (Deanery Synod )  
Pamela Underwood (PCC Secretary)  
Lily Bothamley  
Elaine Burbidge Licensed Lay Minister (ex-officio)



## **Church Wardens' Report**

By the start of 2023 Rev Tracy was well into her stride as our new Rector. The only problem the churchwardens had was in trying to get her to slow down! Roger and I were happy to be re-elected at the APCM as were all members of the PCC who were willing to stay in post to provide continuity for the new Rector.

Sunday Worship continued with a regular 10am Holy Communion service; a non-Eucharistic 10am service on every second Sunday after an 8am said Holy Communion and Choral Evensong at 6.30pm. Congregation numbers began to pick up. We are very grateful for the continued support of the retired clergy who take our communion services when Rev Tracy is unable to do so. Other seasonal services continued and the church remained open daily for private prayer and for visitors.

The PCC met for its regular meetings every six weeks. Main topics were monitoring safeguarding, monitoring and reviewing of the sub-groups for fabric, finance, events, and the day to day running of the church. Many extra meetings were held to discuss the Entrance Project, often with the architect, and later in the year with our chosen building contractor. A major issue arose in November 2023, with the terminal breakdown of the boiler, leaving us with no heat for the coming winter. This resulted in the decision to postpone the second part of the entrance project, to leave us enough funds to partially finance a new heating system in 2024, hoping for grants and donations to top up. A few infrared heaters were bought as a temporary measure to enable services to continue.

Finance: the full picture is shown in the accounts (available in a separate document). Our fundraising activities and people's generosity and support allowed us to pay our Parish Share in full. We introduced a card payment machine and the shift to the Parish Giving Scheme means less of a burden of administration. The closure of most of the banks in Fakenham, has seen us move our accounts to Lloyds; thanks to Lily Bothamley for all her work during that marathon task. We are in a sound financial position.

Fabric: The Fabric team met regularly and attended to several 'self-help' jobs. Plans for the Entrance Project were finalised and King & Company of Cawston were appointed as our contractor. The work to provide the church clock with an automatic winding mechanism was more complicated than first believed, and after many difficulties, the clock was reinstated in the Autumn. Thanks to John Mullins for all his hard work.

Social and Fundraising events, including our regular Thursday morning service followed by refreshments and stalls. Other events included Book and Jigsaw Fairs, St. Peter's Fayre, Quiz, outing and the Christmas Tree Festival.

We would like to thank the PCC and all church members for their support during 2023.

*Alison Harding and Roger Burbidge (Churchwardens)*

## **A word from the Rector**

I want to start with 'thank you'. Thank you for the part you have in the life of the church. Thank you to our wardens, Roger and Alison, along with the entire PCC who have provided strong leadership and guidance for the parish. Our finance team, Lily, Roger, Mary and Alison have supported me in helping get to grips with managing the finances. John has led the Fabric Team, and they have dutifully brought a number of significant projects forward. Elaine has been a key asset in our ministry team along with our 'retired' clergy, Andrew, Christine and Joy. The choir have added depth to our worship, with Jonathan as our Organist. I also want to thank the Refreshment Team who work so hard all through the year and the team who deliver Stepping Stones.



I have now been your Rector for 18 months and I am thankful to be here, learning and growing with you all. Reflecting upon 2023, it has been a year of quietly doing the necessary work that needs to be completed, whilst listening, watching and discerning what we might be called to do as church.

Aside from the day-to-day running of a large, public building there is the work of the parish priest. Preparing for services, celebrating the Eucharist, writing liturgical orders of service to be proofed and duplicated, planning the rotas for



worship, praying the daily office. Visits are made to hospitals, residential care and people's homes, funerals are planned and held while others seek the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and marriage. Schools are visited, phone calls are received and made, pieces are written for various publications, the website and social media are kept up to date.

We saw the deaths of beloved parishioners, and the church still mourns their absence. Simultaneously, new people have joined and graced us with their presence, connections have been made through Stepping Stones, and regular Open the Book sessions in the junior school. Seasonal services of Harvest, Christmas and Easter worship give us a connection in schools to Fakenham families and the Tree Festival spreads the opportunity to engage in a spiritual conversation much wider.

Although we have a strong Sunday congregation, we are not a church that is here for Sunday mornings only. Our missional activities (church outreach) within and outside the church walls, encourages faithful discipleship that infuses faith in all parts of our lives, seven days a week. Our café on Thursday is a wonderful opportunity to make relationships with visitors and show Christian hospitality.



We were successful in applying for Bronze Eco Church status in April 2023. Most weeks we have an 'eco tip' in our church Bulletin and we completed a green energy audit. We are working towards the silver award and take reducing our carbon seriously.

In closing, I want to encourage all of us not to take our church for granted. Being that much of the congregation has been a part of this church for a while, it can be easy to become lethargic or indifferent to the ministries of our church. The reality is the parish church is extremely special. Most churches do not offer near the amount of ministry opportunities that we do, especially when you consider our small and dedicated team of committed volunteers.

Fakenham Parish Church is a gem in the county and our beloved church needs all of us to do our part. What might you do? Let's pray that in 2024 we will continue to build strength upon strength, growing the kingdom of God.

*The Revd Tracy Jessop*

## Worship

Our usual pattern of services in 2023 was:

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday 10am Parish Communion (Common Worship)

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday 8am Parish Communion Book of Common Prayer,

10am Service of the Word

6.30pm Choral/Said Evening Service

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday 10am Parish Communion (Common Worship)

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday 10am Parish Communion (Common Worship)

Attendance in services has increased by 6% in 2023 when compared to 2022.

We provided 34 funeral services, 9 baptisms, 3 weddings and 2 confirmations. 145 home communions have been offered in 2023.

Our Lent Course looked at the remake of West Side Story, 'A Place for us'. This explored the themes of belonging, difference, love, death and reconciliation through study and discussion of Lent passages from scripture. Around 20 people gathered for this.



The Fakenham Prayer diary was refreshed and each week the Bulletin carries the names of local streets who are prayed for.

Our seasonal services for Easter, Harvest, Remembrance, All Souls and Christmas proved to be popular with the local community. The addition of a Pet Service in October will be repeated due to popularity.

A new regular midweek, monthly communion service takes place at Meadow Walk. The Age Concern minibus also brings residents from Meadow Walk to church on the first Sunday of each month.

I would very much like to grow the pastoral team to enable the church to offer more support to those in need. My aim for 2024 is to deliver the Authorised Pastoral Assistant Scheme and to nurture new Authorised Worship Assistants to support our worship in church. If you feel a nudge of the Holy Spirit in any of these directions, then please let me know.

*The Revd Tracy Jessop*

## Fabric Report

The Fabric Team; Roger, Alison, Hilary, Andrew, Judith, Gordon and John

### *Auto winding of the church clock*

This very attractive feature was first identified in the 2019-20 annual report. The report referred to the good news of a generous legacy of £10,000.00 given by the late Raymonde Nelson for the “upkeep and maintenance of the clock”.

In January 2023 Michlmayr a well-known watch and clock maker, removed our clock to their works in Norwich. Following reconditioning and the fitment of the new auto

winding mechanisms the clock was returned, much later than thought and reinstalled into the bell tower in June. Over the coming months the clock winding mechanism proved to be problematic and received several minor alterations and adjustments. Finally late in December and following some more delicate adjustments the clock was thankfully running as one of the best examples of a time piece of accuracy its makers Cooke of London had created back in 1840's .



### *Entrance for All Project*

In late 2019 the PCC were given the task to prepare a scheme to replace two temporary wooden and fairly steep access ramps. In January 2021 the PCC commissioned Spire Consultants to prepare an Options Appraisal. Early in 2023 the PCC decided to accept the proposals put forward by Spire, these proposals provided for a new entrance “well” and ramp, with a specially engraved glass door. Following the PCC’s instructions, Spire Consultants issued Tender Documents to five building companies.

Following an analysis of the tenders by Spire, and interviews, the PCC decided to offer a letter of intent to accept the tender from King and Co. The PCC had also decided to request permission for the faculty application to include permission to remove 3 rows of pews from the west end of the nave. This space would then be used to create a flexible area useful for welcoming and for other church activities. However due to the breakdown of our boiler and being aware of the need to provide for alternative heating this part of the project is now on hold until we are certain of future costs.

### *Gas Boiler*

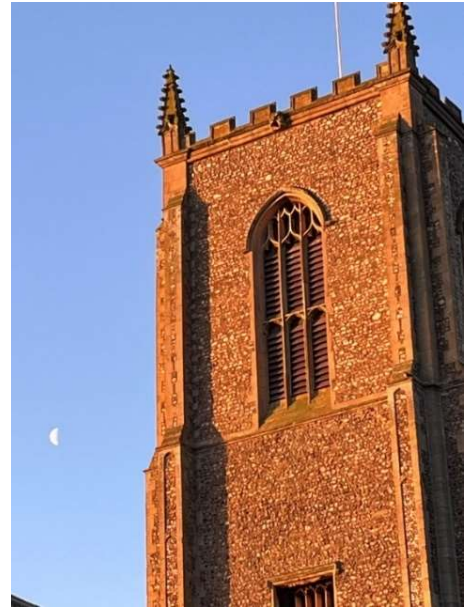
The breakdown of our gas boiler occurred in November and at a time just before the Christmas Tree Festival. In our aim to have a source of heating ready in time before the Festival’s first day, we quickly decided to purchase 5 portable infrared heaters. The heaters did offer some comfort at a low cost, albeit they are not ideal for long-term use.

## *Other Minor Installations*

Two infrared heaters for the Trinity Room; temporary cill below the south aisle east window; new hand dryer and splash back for toilet; new fire extinguisher for bell tower; new coach bolts fitted to the tower access hatch hinges.

## *Improved Contacts with the Town Council*

We are having regular meetings with the newly appointed Town Clerk, Lesley Meanly. The meetings are giving us the opportunity to discuss matters relating to housekeeping, such as the pruning of trees and shrubs and the cutting of grass. The Council responded very positively and quickly to our concerns about the weak grass in the Memorial Garden. One item receiving their attention is the plan to remove and to rebuild the aged and damaged brick wall standing alongside our southern entrance. In addition to the new wall, we are working with the council to make the Memorial Garden more attractive and maintenance free.



## *Maintenance*

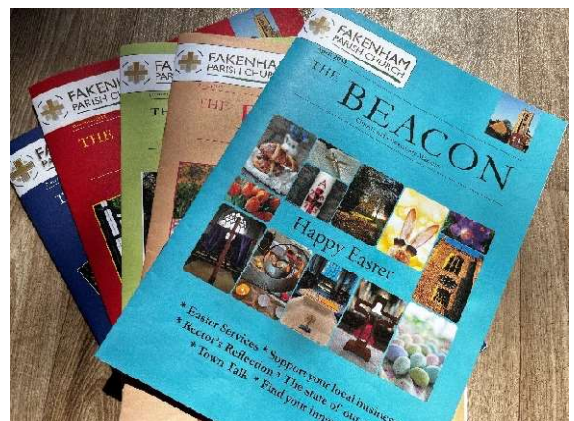
Fire extinguishers, lightning conductor, organ blower and humidifier have all passed their annual testing.

We are very thankful to our working parties for keeping the church free from weeds and from the growth of ivy. We give our warm thanks to the special ones for their regular interior church and carpet cleaning, as well as maintaining the toilets to a very high standard.

*John Mullins, On behalf of the Fabric Team*

## **The Beacon**

The re-launched Beacon has been published for more than 2 years and the feedback continues to be positive. It has 16 pages, of which 4 – 5 pages are income generating advertising space. It is very much a community *and* church magazine, and we aim to include items that are not only of interest to church people, but that will engage the interest of people in the wider community. The advertising revenue enables us to support a wide number of local charitable efforts.



Our team is Dee Jackson, Kay Hathway and Audrey Sharp on the editorial, production, contribution and advertising side, with Alison Harding coordinating the significant team of deliverers across the network of routes in the town. I'd like to thank this team who work month in and month out, without fuss or the need for intervention, to make sure this important part of church ministry is sustained. We also remain incredibly grateful to Barnwell Printing of Aylsham who are supportive and helpful to us. And finally, thanks to all our advertisers, contributors, bundlers and proofreaders for their role too.

*Audrey Sharp, Editor*

## **Children and Young People**

The weekly Stepping Stones sessions (our baby, preschooler and carers' group) continues to be the backbone of our provision for young people, with Stepping Stones Plus providing additional activities for older children during school holiday. 'Monday Church' is a short service with a story, prayer and songs with instruments, followed by refreshments, playtime and chat. We are very grateful to Jim, Sylvia, Pippa, Gail and Kevin who come to play wind instruments and guitars, along with the regular team of Margaret, Lynn, Jenny and Felicity.

We have a regular group of families attending. This is encouraging after such a gap caused by the pandemic, and several of the new families have also gone on to have their children baptised.

As well as offering a space for children to hear about Jesus and learn to socialise, the session is a good way of connecting grown-ups with childcare responsibilities. There are often problems shared and discussed, advice and guidance offered in a very supportive and friendly atmosphere.

In addition, we held an Easter workshop attended by more than 60 people and the Open the Book team continued to provide fortnightly assemblies in the Junior School. Revd Tracy visits the infant school for themed services too.



On a final note, the Stepping Stones helpers are concerned about succession planning as several of the helpers are elderly! Please pray about this.

*Revd Tracy and Margaret Simpson*



## **Social & Fundraising**

The social & fundraising events continue to play an important part in keeping the parish church at the centre of the community as well as raising funds for FPC. To do this we try to put on a variety of events to attract a wide range of people to attend. All of the events are free to enter church – people only pay for anything they want to buy. Among the events were: 8 Book & Jigsaw Fairs which attracted a regular clientele. The St Peter's Fair built on the 2022 event with great success with more stalls, sideshows and visitors. Those who took part in the sponsored cycle ride on one of the hottest days of the year raised £683.41 for church funds as half our share of the total raised. The trip to East Ruston Gardens was enjoyed by those who went. Two very popular first-time events organised by Revd Tracy and Dee were soup and pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and a Quiz in the Autumn.

Thursday stalls and book sales continued throughout the year providing regular income. During the late Autumn stocks were gradually reduced as the new entrance ramp will seriously curtail what storage space we have available. Once the work is complete we will have a clearer idea of what we can do.

Thank you to all who helped, organised or took part in any way. We must keep up this aspect of church life as part of our outreach. New ideas, help and encouragement are always welcome – nay vital – to help us cover our ever-increasing costs and emergencies.

*Roger Burbidge*

## **Bereavement Café (previously known as the Support In Loss Group)**

We changed our name! We wanted to give the message that this is a session where you can drop-in as you need too. We continue to meet on the first Wednesday of every month, and the number of people who come varies tremendously each month. We went through a period several months ago when nobody came at all, and we began to wonder if the group was really needed but since then numbers have picked up. Some people come once others come more often but in all cases I think most are released to realise that what they are going through is quite normal and is accepted without any judgement.



We have five members in the team and all have experienced bereavement themselves.

*Judith Smyth*

## Refreshments Team

The Thursday team. Week on week a dedicated team work tirelessly to offer a warm welcome to visitors, congregation and parishioners. Delicious offerings of homemade soup, filled rolls, scones and cakes as well as tea and coffee are available for a very reasonable rate. The church finance is well and truly boosted with this income stream which this year generated over £15,000.

The Sunday team. Following the main Sunday service our team of volunteers provide welcome refreshments. Who wouldn't enjoy a cup of filter coffee or a cup of tea along with biscuits and cakes. All donations from Sunday coffee are gifted to Christian Aid.

We are looking for additional volunteers to assist the refreshments team, either on Thursday or Sunday.

Thank you to everyone involved in the provision of hospitality, from washer upper to baker and all in between. Thank you for all that you do in this church, you are appreciated by us all.

*Dee Jackson*

## Church Flowers

There were 9 pedestal arrangers and 9 arrangers for the entrance vase, some do both. One pedestal arranger resigned this year so we still need more people. Rising cost of flowers was a concern, as was the need to be environmentally friendly. To keep costs down we supplemented fresh flowers with silk and home grown and purchased less expensive supermarket flowers in the latter half of the year. Other innovations have been decorating windowsills with tinned goods (Harvest) and decorated trees (Christmas). The tins and fresh produce were donated to the food bank and community fridge.



Carole Read (Fakenham Flower Club president) gave a demonstration to arrangers in May on using chicken wire for pedestal arrangements and we intend to use this rather than oasis in future. Jean Burge made two silk pedestal arrangements which can be used when no arranger is available and can also be used to keep down costs at other times. Many arrangers supplemented fresh flowers with silk ones in the pedestal and it is difficult to tell the difference. Donations towards flowers from the congregation was much less than previously and there was no income from wedding or funeral flowers.

Thank you to all arrangers who worked so hard.

*Margaret Tomlinson*

## Mothers' Union

The MU met regularly throughout the year praying and learning together. The year started with our annual Wave of Prayer on 4 Jan. Our schedule for the year included:

Jan: Epiphany Luncheon

Feb: The story of Mary Sumner and the beginnings of Mothers' Union

March: Goat Lunch raising funds for the Worldwide Literacy Project in Ethiopia

April: Sing a Sunday Song at Meadow Walk, joined by a few residents

May: Speaker from the Norwich based Baby Bank

June: Coach to Bishops Gardens and Strawberry Tea

July: Knit & Natter. Making bunting and stringing it ready for hanging

Aug: Attended Area Service celebrating Mary Sumner Day at Dereham

Sept: Outing to Gooderstone Water Gardens

Oct: MU Festival Service at Norwich Cathedral

Oct: Members Day Swaffham, Rise Up Campaign against Domestic Abuse

Nov: AGM: Followed by Crafting Christmas Tree Decorations

Dec: Advent Praise and Meditation

We have a new committee with fresh ideas and a keen commitment to the work of the Church and Mothers' Union.



As part of our local community work, we link with Steven Newing House and

have provided the young people with cleaning materials and have purchased 8 large fluffy throws from Aldiss. These are given to young people when they leave the safety of the hostel to live independently.

We supported the purchase of the clothing rails for the newly established Church Children's Swap Shop and A-board for publicity. Our members wash, iron and sew on any missing buttons on the items of clothes donated and staff the stall on Thursday mornings.

The Goat lunch held in March raised £180 in aid of our Diocesan Refugee Fund to purchase new bedding for families arriving in Norwich under the UNHCR/Home Office scheme. At the Cathedral Festival Service we helped make a 'recycled' banner from waste materials.

The Christmas Tree Festival tree raised £179.53 for a literacy project in Ethiopia enabling women to read, write and be numerate which allows them to establish a small business or market stall which helps to feed and educate their families.

Five new members were enrolled in September, bringing our numbers up to 24. Ann Rae stood down as leader after serving for 30+ years.

*Eunice Norwood*

## Churchwomen's Guild

The Churchwomen's Guild is an ecumenical group who offer support in various ways to members and visitors alike. We meet every 3rd Monday of each month at 2pm in the Trinity Room of the Parish Church. All are welcome to attend and listen to monthly speakers and organisations on various topics. We are a friendly group and break for questions, tea and coffee afterwards.

Our programme in 2023 was:

- January - A business meeting.
- February - Fakenham Community Police Officer.
- March - Members enjoyed afternoon tea at Bawdeswell Garden Centre
- April - Caroline, a long-term member of Riding for the Disabled
- May - Fakenham Fire Officer
- June - This visit to South Ruston Gardens was thrown open to all.
- September - open meeting.
- October - The Revd. Tracy Jessop on the Holy Land.
- November - Kay Hathway on the work of foster panels in social care.
- December - Christmas lunch at Langham Glass

*Trish Homan*

## The Electoral Roll

The Church electoral roll is the foundation of the whole structure of synodical government in the church. It contains the names of everyone who can vote at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. It has been revised for this year in accordance with Church Representation Rules.

In 2023 there were 95 names on the Electoral roll of which 17 lived outside the parish. The Roll is due to be fully refreshed in 2025.

*Pamela Underwood*



## Deanery Synod: Burnham and Walsingham Deanery

The current representatives are Alison Harding and Audrey Sharp. There are three meetings in the year and occasionally other events. This past year we looked at:

March: The issue of the needs of people with disabilities.

July: Young People and Families Project Organiser

November: Rural Ministry - challenges and joys

Financial constraints continue to present challenges to the Deanery and vacancies continue to be an issue. The recent installation of Revd. Robin Stapleford in the Hindringham group has created stability in that benefice. The Burnhams and Holkham and Wells benefices are likely to join together. The lack of priestly presence in the rural parishes is something of which the lay people in the Deanery are very much aware and they are concerned about the addition of parishes to a priest's already heavy workload. This issue arises at each meeting. Revd Tracy also covers 8am services across the deanery as time allows.

Fakenham is one of the few parishes in the Deanery that has paid their parish share, and this is very much appreciated.

*Audrey Sharp – Lay Deanery Synod representative for Fakenham*

### **Christmas Tree Festival 2023**

The tree festival team members were delighted that CTF 2023 was another happy and successful 8 days. The festival is about much more than the money, but nonetheless the charities all raised very pleasing amounts, a grand total of £16.8k and the church operating surplus was £16.9k.

Once again the huge number of visitors included many people who generally have little or no contact with the church, ours or any other. To welcome them in is a great opportunity for engagement with what the church is about. Similarly, the army of volunteers includes many who may rarely go to church at other times. Without these volunteers, the festival could not happen, and we particularly appreciate the hours of help given by members of the congregation, friends and relations and other Fakenham residents who roll up their sleeves, metaphorically and literally, and give generously of their time.

I dare not thank any individuals for the huge contribution they make, for fear of missing someone, but you know who you are!



*Anne Peppitt*

## Fakenham & District Churches Together

We have had a busy programme in 2023, beginning with our usual daily services for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity each led by a different denomination. In February, a Guitar Concert in St Anthony's Catholic Church for peace and reconciliation, our Good Friday Walk of Witness to the Market Place for a short service and a very successful Pentecost Picnic in May in St Peter's Garden, were the main events.

Our AGM in June included a fascinating talk by David and Lynda Mills, on their work with Aid Africa, based in Malawi. We welcomed back Revd Cliff and Christine Shanganya from the Methodist Church, now in Slough, for another fine Gospel Concert in August.

Joint quarterly Prayer Meetings for Fakenham began in September, and all denominations participated in the Town Remembrance Services in November. In December, we joined to sing carols at the Baptists' stall in the Market Place.

The Fakenham Churches Together bond has grown over the 12 years of their existence. We thank God for this and pray this can be seen and understood by the people of Fakenham. We are, after all, one in Christ.

*Moira Morley Secretary/Treasurer*







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