

# 2024 Report for the Parochial Church Council

## All Saints' Parish Church, Hartford

### Aims and Objectives

It is the shared responsibility of the incumbent, Rev Geoff Boucher, and the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of All Saints Parish Church Hartford to consult on all matters of general concern and importance to the Parish. Together, they co-operate to promote and provide leadership of the whole mission of the Church in Hartford through:

- **Prayer** – both personal and corporate.
- **Pastoral care** - looking after individuals.
- **Evangelism** - sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and inviting people to share in God's saving love for all.
- **Social concern** - helping those in need, especially those who are disadvantaged and persecuted.
- **Ecumenism** - encouraging fruitful relationships with other Christian denominations.

Our mission is to reach open hearts with the love of Christ, and to help all the people in the Community of Hartford to find Christ, to be found by Him, and to respond to His love through the life and worship of their Parish Church.

### Worship and Prayer

As of December 2024 the total number on the Electoral Roll was 90 of which 52 were residents and 38 non-residents of the parish.

The average Sunday 11am service attendance was 46 adults and 1 child. The average bimonthly 8.30am service was 6, the monthly 6pm service was 11 and the monthly healing service was 9. These figures are all up slightly on last year.

Various special services were held during the year, attendances were Ash Wednesday – 20, Maundy Thursday – 24, Good Friday – 34 adults / 3 children, Easter Day – 72 adults / 4 children, Blue Christmas 16, Christingle 46 adults / 61 children, Dance Nativity service – 82 adults / 32 children, Christmas Carol service - 98 adults / 7 children, Midnight service - 47, Christmas Day - 49.

During the year there were 6 baptisms, 3 weddings, 5 funerals in church, 3 funerals at the crematorium and 3 interments of ashes took place.

### Rector's Report

It is good to pause at the end of the year, breathe and reflect on the blessings of the last twelve months of which there have been many. There has been the familiarity and security of our regular fellowship and offering of worship. And there has been change, we have done things which we have not done before, we have welcomed new faces among us, and we have sent friends on their way with our prayers and love.

We said goodbye to Fr Sam Perez and welcomed Reverend Steph Pedlar. We supported a pilgrimage to Spain, installed new lighting, planted new roses, welcomed 500 people to an exhibition of Nativity sets, and we offered our prayers and praises week by week.

Fr Sam led a group of us to Spain in April to offer hospitality to pilgrims walking the Camino at a hostel on the route about 50 miles from Santiago de Compostella. It was a blessed and transformative experience for those who travelled and those who prayed and supported at home, and a wonderful climax to Fr Sam's curacy. Sam was already in the process of his own journey to discern where he would move, and we were delighted that he was offered an incumbency in the benefice of Shingay cum Wendy, and many of us joined him for his induction in October.

Just as Sam was preparing to move to his next post, Steph completed her theological training and came to join us. It was a delight for me to be at Steph's ordination as deacon in June and we look forward to all of us being at Ely Cathedral in June 2025 when Steph is ordained priest. Steph's many gifts and rich experience are already blessing us – a memorable Harvest sermon, our first Blue Christmas, a new prayer group and worship bags for the children amongst them.

We are fortunate in having a variety of worship leaders, preachers, readers and intercessors. Thank you to Elaine Levitt, Mary Adlam, Michael Diamond, Clifford Owen in particular. And thank you too to Tony Humes and to the choir who so enrich our offering of worship and every wedding we bless.

The monthly Healing Eucharist continues to be a time of restorative stillness and simplicity, and the Bible Study Group a place of open conversation, shared learning and wisdom. We particularly enjoyed reflecting together on the psalms.

There was great encouragement in the keeping of Lent and Holy Week. The services for Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, as well as Easter Sunday were well attended and meaningful. During Lent a group of us undertook the 'Living in love and faith course'. It challenged us to listen to one another, to others, to ourselves, to God attentively and patiently.

There continued to be plenty of social activity. Sunday tea and coffee; Crafty Saints and Chatty Saints; Lent lunches and Summer Cream Teas; Summer and Winter concerts and The Christmas Fayre. Thank you to those who planned, organised and did and all who participated and enjoyed.

The Christmas Message was shared widely in 2024. We were delighted to host Marjorie Carrier's inspiring collection of 130 Nativity sets from all around the world. The children of Hartford Infant and Primary Schools all visited the exhibition and enjoyed craft activities and the gift of a knitted and blessed angel from the Crafty Saints. Clifford Owen led an ecumenical group of Carol Singers around the Birds Estate and into the Barley Mow to tuneful effect. Amanda Smith choreographed a beautiful Dance Nativity by the children of the White Swan Academy enjoyed by a packed church. The school returned for a Christingle Service and the Carol Service filled the church again.

The church building and churchyard continued to be cherished. Pauline and David cleaned and maintained the church each Friday morning and welcomed visitors; the flower arrangers were as inspired as ever; the brass was maintained at its brightest and best.

In October a new lighting system was fitted to the church providing direct illumination to the Nave for the first time, along with lighting to the roof space and the facility to control the level of light throughout the building.

In November a skip was hired and the old roses along the footpath were dug out and the soil replaced with new. 39 new roses were planted. Around 18 people took part and enjoyed two wonderful days of fellowship working together under a clear blue late autumn sky.

Throughout the year prayers were offered for the missionary and charitable organisations which we are delighted to be able to support financially.

The church website, quarterly newsletter and weekly pew sheet served to bind us together and to include those of us worshipping in the church and the wider community.

The PCC met five times during the year. Thank you to all members of the PCC, for your contributions and for the variety of activities in which you engage. Thank you to Sue Craven whose awareness, service and care as Churchwarden is such a gift to us. We are so grateful to Pam Fearon who has served as PCC Secretary and Paul Fearon who has served as Churchwarden and Treasurer for the remarkable leadership, ambition, organisation, creativity and hard work that they have given to us, and we offer them particular and deep thanks in the knowledge of their plans to move to Cornwall in 2025.

- Reverend Geoff Boucher

## **Deanery Synod and Diocesan Synod**

### **Diocesan Synod**

Met three times March, June, and October, always with a busy agenda, especially as the June meeting was the last of the three-year triennium. Elections took place over the summer and new members (and this old one) met in October for business.

The challenge of working without a Bishop continues as the selection process failed. Bishop Dagmar continues as Acting Bishop with support from senior management. Safeguarding is always on the agenda and the independent auditor was very encouraging about the work done in Ely. The new building at Lancaster Way was reported on and by October was in use, with great success. Other matters over the year included Net Zero Carbon, Assisted Dying bill, Living in Love and Faith. A report on General Synod in March finished with "you can watch all five days on U Tube"

### **Deanery Synod**

Meetings have been across the Deanery. March -Brampton, July -Fenstanton, November -Catworth. Work continues the four Deanery development groups, and the November meeting about Safeguarding was productive. Again, the Deanery agreed to pay the parish share shortfall out of reserves. – Elaine Levitt

## Churches Together in Huntingdon and Godmanchester

### **WOPCU** [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity]

All Saints Hartford took the initiative in January 2024 by hosting a midday prayer meeting for the Week of prayer for Christian Unity (normally from 18th-25th January each year) Attendance was encouraging and several representatives from other churches were able to attend and lead one of the sessions. I am sure ASH would have hosted the 2025 WOPCU meetings as well but lime washing will have prevented it. No other churches have offered to host. This is symptomatic of the general malaise surrounding ecumenical matters these days but we work and pray in the hope that a fresh vision for what we can do together locally will eventually emerge.

### **CTHG** [Churches Together Huntingdon and Godmanchester]

So once again CTHG has remained 'in limbo' without formal meetings. The Bank account was closed down and the balance given to an agreed list of three charities. (Revd. Charlie Newcombe actioned this with agreement from the other churches)

Nevertheless two CTHG activities have continued to thrive:

1. The Thought for the Day 3 minute talks which go out at 0915 on HCR104fm are pre-recorded by a rota of around 25 contributors. Hartford has four of them! (Geoff, Steph. Elaine and Clifford)
2. The Saturday Bi- monthly Men's Breakfasts at the Barley Mow are generally well attended by around 30+ men. Many local churches are represented at these breakfasts and there is much encouragement to take away.

Ladies Breakfasts have started taking place again.

The Food Bank continues to meet a local need and it has the 'push' of Godmanchester Baptist Church behind it.

Two new initiatives that I have tried:

1. Carol singing around the Blvd Estate on December 17th. Although this was a Hartford Church initiative, Geoff was keen that other churches should be invited along and indeed we had several from other churches join us. It is likely that we will have a similar event in 2025.
2. ECUPRAISE: Following on from a Songs of Praise service that I took at St Neots United Reformed Church in August 2024. I suggested that CTHG might like to invite different churches to try out similar events locally. We talked about it(!) but nothing has immediately come of it other than the Carol Singing.

One small ecumenical encouragement: our team of around 25 Day Chaplains at Ely Cathedral now includes four retired Methodist ministers and three Baptist ministers + a couple of LLMs.

To sum up: local inter church relationships are very much at a personal and informal level. (eg in Godmanchester the ministers of the three churches there are in regular contact) We still need fresh vision to fire up the quarterly committee meetings that we had a couple of years ago.

- Clifford Owen

## **Achievements and Activities**

During the year many social and fund raising events have taken place and been enjoyed by members of the congregation and the wider community.

These have included 2 Lent lunches, Huntingdon Male Voice Choir Concert, 2 cream tea afternoons, Summer Coffee Morning with Craft Stalls, Harvest lunch, Christmas Fayre, Enchanting Concert, and the Nativity Sets Exhibition.

The numbers attending and the atmosphere at these events have been very encouraging. This has been positively enhanced by the circulation of Hartford Connects which sends out News about All Saints Church Events and the Quarterly e-Newsletter by email. There are currently 178 people who have signed up for Hartford Connects.

Details of our fundraising and charitable giving are listed in the Treasurers Report in the Annual Accounts.

### **Newsletter**

The All Saints Newsletter, usually about 20 pages in length, is produced quarterly and distributed electronically to 178 people via Hartford Connects and published on our website.

There are regular articles - The Rambling Rector, Money Matters and The Hartford Chronicles written by the Rector, Treasurer and PCC Secretary respectively. There is always a feature page along with reports and pictures of what has happened in recent months plus a diary and details of forthcoming events for the next quarter.

### **Crafty Saints and Chatty Saints**

#### **Crafty Saints**

Continues to meet weekly and numbers vary but there is always a good feel to our meetings. The group made items for the coffee morning held in the summer and the craft fair. We knitted a lot of angels for the Nativity week, and we were pleased some from the congregation helped us as we ended up with over 400, we think. We lost count!

Anyone is welcome, even if you do not craft.

#### **Chatty Saints**

A small group has continued to meet on the first and third Monday of each month throughout the last year. We enjoy chatting and playing board games. As well as playing Rumikub Avis has introduced us to a new game which involves travelling around the country to visit various places of interest. It is great fun and has improved our knowledge of the geography of the British Isles considerably. We meet on the first and third Monday afternoons of every month from 2 pm to 4 pm and would welcome newcomers - it really is a fun afternoon.

– Mary Adlam and Elaine Levitt

## Financial Review

The annual accounts are prepared on a receipts and expenditure basis. The total income for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 was £85,156 and the total expenditure was £101,059 resulting in a deficit of £15,902 for the year. The deficit was funded by a transfer of £22,000 from reserves.

Total funds held in the four bank accounts were £109,387 at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, a decrease of £11,165 compared with December 2023.

We continue to live in uncertain times with the wars in the Middle East as well as in Ukraine both of which create instability in energy and commodity prices.

Whilst the church does enjoy strong financial reserves, 85% of our financial reserves are held in either Restricted or Designated Funds and can only be used for specific purposes.

Please see the 2024 Annual Accounts for full details. – Paul Fearon

## Structure, governance and management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At All Saints the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent, associated clergy, elected and co-opted members drawn from members of the congregation who are on the Electoral Roll.

The PCC meets five times a year to discuss and make decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including how church funds are spent. A smaller Standing Committee meets prior to the PCC meeting to prepare the agenda and collate information for PCC consideration but it has no powers to make decisions unless specifically instructed by the PCC at a prior meeting or in an emergency.

To facilitate the worship and outreach activities that take place at All Saints it is important that we maintain the fabric of our church and church room. We are very grateful to the small army of unsung heroes who regularly carry out cleaning and maintenance tasks in and around our church and those who look after the church contents and consumable supplies.

## Churchwardens' Fabric Report for 2024

**January** –

**February** – Initial discussions with Jeremy Lander re lime washing; gutters, downpipes, drains and lobby roof light cleaned

**March** – assessment of church lighting requirements; assessment of lime washing requirements; replacement Rowan tree planted; swallow nesting box installed in porch and netting over light fitting; further assessment of lime washing requirements

**April** – assessment for Faculty ready specifications for new lighting; repairs to mortar on chancel floor; Fire Alarms checked

**May** – lime wash testing

**June** – Churchyard monuments checked for safety

**July** – organ problems rectified and organ tuned

**August** – annual boiler service and safety check

**September** – Health and Safety inspection carried out

**October** – lime wash trial; blind for fire doors in church room replaced; lighting installation started; Fire Alarms and Fire Extinguishers serviced

**November** – old roses / old soil removed from rose bed along main path, replaced with new soil / compost / roses; PAT testing carried out

**December** – replacement of 2 fire extinguishers and heat detector, service of emergency lighting; replacement of 3 batteries and 2 complete units in emergency lighting

The Log Book and the Church Property Register are up to date and held electronically on a memory stick in the safe. – Sue Craven and Paul Fearon

### **Church Flowers**

We have had fewer special events this year and not so many weddings but the church was beautifully decorated for Harvest and Christmas and Amanda and Vic's wedding, and of course all other regular and special services.

As planned, Remembrance poppies were in church for longer which was lovely and we only had foliage for the remaining weeks of Advent, until the Christmas decorations went up.

Our number of volunteers has changed a little and Glenys has now fully retired, we thank her for all her help with the flowers over the years. Sue has also come off the rota but helps with bigger events and does a lot of tidying up and watering so very many thanks to her. Ann and Lesley are now ready to go solo which is very welcome.

Our main thanks go to Pam Fearon for everything she has done regarding flowers over the last few years. She has given us so much help and encouragement and organised so many fantastic flower festivals. She has decorated the church beautifully for Remembrance Day and her weddings have been amazing, and much appreciated. Pam has also prepared all the posies for Mothering Sunday and liaised with the schools and encouraged the children to support our events with their own window designs. Thank you so much Pam and we wish you all the very best as you move on. We will miss you but will remember all you have taught us.

Thank you again to our very loyal, generous and skilled group of ladies but we always welcome more help and men are not excluded from joining us of course, if they are interested.

Thank you also to those who provide support in other ways especially foliage for big events.

– Pam Clark

## Choir and Organ Report

There are seven lady members of the choir as well as Clifford adding his voice when he is available. It was a pleasure to welcome Susan into the choir in the last year.

Choir practice takes place at 10.00am each Sunday before the 11.00am service so that voices are warmed up ready to lead the singing during the service. The choir has sung at several weddings and at least one funeral as well as the Carol Service and other additional services. A Songs of Praise service was held on 30 June at which members of the congregation chose some of their favourite hymns, we also hosted the Sea Sunday service on 14 July, the choir enjoyed singing at both these events. I also played the organ for a service during the week of prayer for Christian unity. Clifford organised carol singing around the Bird Estate on 17 December, some of the choir came along as well as other members of the congregation and a few people from other churches. It was a wonderful evening beginning with a treat of sloe gin generously provided by Alistair, which undoubtedly loosened up the vocal cords!

As always I am extremely grateful to Helen for playing the organ in my absence, particularly the Blue Christmas and Nativity Services when I was already committed to playing elsewhere. Thanks also to David for continuing to play at Evening Prayer and also providing background music on the organ at many of the social events held in church.

The organ was tuned on 3 July and a minor problem rectified. - Tony Humes

## Health and Safety

Following my annual H&S visit to the church in September, I have the following comments:

1. I note that all comments made in the last inspection have been actioned. In particular I am delighted to see the new flammable storage cabinet in its place in the tower room.
2. Church Body including Tower Room and Vestry. All these rooms are tidy and well-maintained, and I am particularly pleased to note that the rats' nest of wiring around the organ seat remains absent. I know you keep the wiring at the base of the lectern in check – would it be possible to keep them wholly constrained by cable ties to prevent them spilling out in front of the lectern?
3. Church Room. The church room continues to be well-kept. I remain unsure about the need for an intumescent strip on the boiler room door. I will seek professional advice and let you know without further delay. The kitchen is similarly well-kept. Looking at the PAT test certificates on the electrical items in the kitchen, I note that some are older than others. Items such as kettles, microwaves and fridges are in constant use. I recommend that these, together with the cooker, vacuum cleaner, photocopier and sound system are checked on an annual basis as they are sometimes used several times per week. Other items such as the slow cookers could be checked biennially.
4. Toilets. The grouting at the rear of the basin in the disabled toilet is broken and missing in places. I will bring some grouting and take care of this. *(this has now been dealt with)*
5. Church Grounds. The path at the front of the church is uneven and broken in places. Additionally, there are a series of loose bricks in the wall between the front of the church and the river, together with native plants growing through and loosening the mortar between the bricks. I understand the Town Council holds responsibility for these facilities; I recommend they be apprised of the need for repairs. The extractor fan egress on the external roof appears to be covered in moss.



It is clear that considerable and regular effort is made to keep the church and its fabric and contents well-maintained: the Church Wardens should be commended for their work. - Vaughan Clark

## **Safeguarding**

In September 2023 Colin Jones became the Parish Safeguarding Officer [PSO] having taken over from the Reverend Geoff Boucher. In September 2024 he also took on the role of DBS Administrator from Paul Fearon.

### **Brief Introduction to Safeguarding**

All Saints Church will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and vulnerable adults. It will work to continue to strengthen and review these environments. This will be done by training, support, communication, learning, governance and quality assurance processes.

.Recently the following procedures have been produced to control Safeguarding matters. These are:-

1. Child Protection and the protection of vulnerable adults.
2. Rehabilitation of Offenders
3. Employment and safer recruitment policy
4. Use of Social Media.

### **Safeguarding Report**

1. All members of the PCC have received the training as required by the Diocese Safeguarding department.
2. The Clergy are trained and reviewed by the Diocese.
3. There have been no reported Safeguarding issues during the past 12 months.

### **Brief Introduction to Disclosure and Barring Service [DBS]**

The ***Disclosure and Barring Service*** (DBS) helps Church Leaders make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect. It cannot provide guarantees that our workers are all safe, but it is the best tool that we have, along with other safer recruitment practices, to protect our community.

### **DBS Report**

1. Currently all the members of the PCC have been reviewed and received their certificates. Anyone joining the PCC will be reviewed.
2. The Clergy are reviewed and registered by the Diocese. – Colin Jones

## **Administrative information**

All Saints Parish Church is situated at The Hollow, Hartford, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 1YF. It is part of the Diocese of Ely within the Church of England.

The Rector, the Reverend Geoffrey Boucher, who is responsible for the benefice of All Saints Hartford and St Mary the Virgin Houghton with Wyton, resides at The Rectory, 3 Rectory Lane, Wyton PE28 2AQ.

PCC members who have served at any time during 2024 are listed below.

**Ex-Officio Members:-**

The Rector - Reverend Geoffrey Boucher

Curate – Reverend Sam Perez (until 01/09/2024), Reverend Steph Pedlar (from 30/06/2024)

Associate Ministers – Reverend Clifford Owen, Reverend Catherine Wright

Licensed Lay Minister –Elaine Levitt

Churchwardens - Paul Fearon, Sue Craven

Deanery Synod Representatives –Elaine Levitt, Helen Dowzall

**Elected Members:-**

Mary Adlam (until 23/04/2024)

Pam Clark (until 23/04/2024)

Derek Colbert (until 23/04/2024)

Pam Fearon

Tony Humes

Colin Jones

Carol King (until 23/04/2024)

Peter King

Amanda Smith (until 23/04/2024)

Lesley Grant (from 23/04/2024)

Genevieve Triggs (from 23/04/2024)

Bev McCallum (from 23/04/2024)

**Appointed Positions:-**

Treasurer – Paul Fearon

PCC Secretary – Pam Fearon

Fabric Officer – Victor Phillips

Organist – Tony Humes

Authorised Worship Leader – Mary Adlam

Health and Safety Officer – Vaughan Clark

Gift Aid Coordinator – Helen Dowzall

Electoral Roll Officer – Helen Dowzall

Churches Together Representatives –Reverend Clifford Owen

Safeguarding Officer –Colin Jones

DBS Administrator – Paul Fearon (until 23/09/2024), Colin Jones (from 23/09/2024)

Data Protection Officer – Patrick Hawkins

Website Administrator – Haleema Hawkins

Flower Arranging Coordinator – Pam Clark

Independent Examiner - David Ebdale

Newsletter Editor – Amanda Smith