

ANNUAL REPORT for the year ending 31st December 2023

St Giles, Horsted Keynes

Rector's APCM Report 2024

These are a few highlights of another busy but fulfilling year.

To my Chaplaincy of the Bluebell Railway, I added, for one year, being Chaplain to the High Sherriff of West Sussex, Andy Bliss, who lives in the parish. I have only been able to go with him to a small fraction of the numerous events he has attended, these being a mixture of uplifting services in Chichester and Arundel Cathedrals, and inspiring visits to charities. I purposely chose two that we support as a parish: a summer party for families supported by FSW and the opening of a new wing at Crawley Open House.

I always find enjoyment and fulfilment in Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals, and it is special when they are of people we know well. Thus, I look back with great pleasure on the Baptism of Kasper Spetch and the Marriage of Will and Lilly Lamb. We went on to have a spate of four baptisms in about six weeks in September/early October.

Although they will have their own report, I feel I must mention some fantastic FOHKC events: the amazing panto, Aladdin, the Barn Dance at the Bluebell Vineyard and the Open Gardens, for which we had such excellent weather.

On Rogation Sunday afternoon, Fr Peter led a prayer walk from the Clark's Farm back to and around the village. It was thought provoking and inspiring and I hope that we can continue to mark Rogation Sunday in similar ways.

Also in May we celebrated with people across our nation and commonwealth the coronation of King Charles III.

It continues to be a joy and a privilege to have Fr Peter as our Curate. We rejoiced with him as he was ordained Priest and celebrated the Eucharist for the first time. I am greatly blessed to have such an outstanding colleague, as are we all to support him in, and see him growing into his priestly ministry.

After a very long process of discussion, called 'Living in Love and Faith', the national Church of England agreed to authorize prayers for the Blessing of homosexual unions (although not actual Marriages). Fr Peter and I expressed publicly our willingness to lead such services. The process continues to cause painful divisions in the national church and Anglican Communion. Interestingly, early in 2024, the Pope authorized such blessings in the Roman Catholic Church, albeit in very limited circumstances.

At the end of the summer term, Hillary Douch retired after a highly successful time as Head of St Giles' School. A new leadership arrangement came into place with Jamie Savage as Executive Head of both Ardingly and Horsted Keynes schools, and Alison Coulson as Head of School here at St Giles. This is working very well and Fr Peter and I enjoy working closely with her and our church school.

Christine and I are immensely grateful for all the support you give us in so many ways. It was lovely to celebrate our 40th Wedding Anniversary with you in August, in church/yard, and with family and friends in the Martindale.

Marion Lott received the Order of St Richard from Bishop Ruth at the Cathedral: something which is given for long and outstanding lay service of the church. Very well deserved!

Very sadly, not long afterwards, our previous holder, Peter Vince, died. He too had been a servant of Our Lord and his church here for many years, as well as an intelligent, characterful and humorous friend to me, and to so many of us. As he wished, we held a Requiem Mass for him, and it says a lot that every one of my surviving predecessors attended. It has taken a team to replace him as Sacristan alone, but they have risen magnificently to the task.

We authorized all our servers to administer the chalice, and found some new sidesmen and women.

Andrew Slater continued to organize a choir to sing on special occasions such as Christmas and Easter.

Katie Spetch, Christine Murdoch and helpers run a Friday afternoon (term time) 'God is our rock' after school club.

Slow but steady progress continued to be made on the annex so many have hoped, prayed and planned for, for so long, thanks to a great deal of hard work by the steering group.

The APCMs are an opportunity to thank people too numerous to mention by name and, as always, I apologise if I leave anyone out: Fr Peter for being such an excellent colleague. Churchwardens, Secretary, Treasurer, PCC members; organist, pianists and choir; servers, sides-people, sacristans and verger; cleaners, churchyard workers and flower arrangers. These and others are so important in caring for the church building and parochial administration. Then there are those – some the same, some different – who do so much in terms of our outreach: headteacher and staff at St Giles' School, P & P Editor, leaders and helpers at First Steps, 'God is our rock' Friday after School Club, Friends of HK Church, Friends of our Church School, HKafe, HK Help, Life and Faith Group, Village lunch; all who lead on our bi-monthly church charities. All the folk who simply turn up to be part of our worshiping community. Last but by no means least, my dear wife, Christine, for all her support in so very many ways.

It is a great joy and blessing to serve in such a special village, with a warm and supportive congregation and community, very beautiful church and lovely Rectory.

'God is here! As we his people meet to offer praise and prayer,
May we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share....
Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom, In an age of change and doubt,
Keep us faithful to the Gospel, help us work your purpose out.'

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

Achievements and Performance:

The Electoral Roll was reviewed. 119 were on the roll, 5 new and 2 died; 20 not resident in the village

The maximum number attending on any Sunday in October was 50, including 15 children, the average number being 45. Both these figures included people attending by Zoom. 17 people attended the All Souls Requiem, with 15 taking Communion. Attendance at Services is fairly constant with higher attendance at Family Services, though remains lower than pre-pandemic levels. The Zoom invitation is sent most Sundays to the majority included on the Electoral Roll but there are usually few attendees. There were no regular Home Communion arrangements but any requests were fulfilled. The Eucharist was celebrated each month at Westall House with a good number of residents attending.

There were 11 regular P.C.C. meetings throughout the year, in the Rectory during the winter months to reduce heating costs, and in the Martindale Centre at other times. All Sub-Committees met as required, reporting to and represented on the P.C.C.

4 children were baptised. There were 2 weddings and 3 funerals.

HKPCC highlights of Church life for the benefit of the Community included in 2023:

- Chichester Diocesan Lent Course on the Old Testament was followed at two places and times.
- HK Help continues to provide support to the community, including transport for medical needs, as required, though there is little demand.
- HKafe continues to be held in the Martindale Centre during term time, led by the Youth Worker from All Saints Church, Danehill, Josh Watson and catering for secondary school age children.
- First Steps, the baby and toddler group, meets at the Martindale Centre during term time, giving an opportunity for small children and their parents and carers to meet in a safe environment.
- St. Giles Church of England Primary School holds a weekly Collective Worship in church and a termly Eucharist. All services are attended by a significant number of parents and carers. The Junior School Carol Service was held in church and was very well attended.
- Village Lunch is held monthly in the Martindale Centre. Food is cooked by a varied team of volunteers and is enjoyed by an increasing number of people, from the village and beyond.

The Friends of Horsted Keynes Church (FOHKC) continues to support fund raising to maintain the fabric of the church and churchyard. This included the amazing panto, Aladdin, the Barn Dance at the Bluebell Vineyard, the Open Gardens, for which we had such excellent weather and the Serendipity Concert in church in December.

The Parish and Parishioner (P&P) editor continues to produce and publish the magazine 10 times a year. Volunteers collate and distribute these to all houses in the village and copies are posted to those requesting them.