



## **St John's Church, Tolpuddle**

of the Benefice of Puddletown, Tolpuddle and Milborne St Andrew with Dewlish, and in the Diocese of Salisbury

### **CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT for the year 2023**

#### **PCC MEMBERSHIP**

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

The Vicar: The Revd Sarah Hillman

MEMBERS OF THE PCC appointed at the APCM 2022

Heather Saunders (Secretary)

John Taylor (Treasurer)

Hilly Cobban (Churchwarden)

Jayne Brayshaw (Churchwarden)

Ian Bishop

Philippa Francis

Sue Adams

Pete Weir

Representatives on the Deanery Synod: Philippa Francis and Ian Bishop

**PCC REPORT:** This will be given separately

#### **ELECTORAL ROLL:**

There were 28 on the Electoral Roll during 2023 after an annual review- with four additions and two removals therefore a net decrease of 2. Ian Bishop has been our Electoral Roll officer but now wishes to step down from this – we are very grateful for his input over many years.

**SERVICES:** The pattern of regular worship continued throughout the year, with the Go Fourth led by a lay team- sadly Geoff Higginson left halfway through the year, and Peter and Karen Wier have now also left the village.

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday- Common Worship Communion

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday- Sunday Reflection

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday- Family Communion

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday- Go Fourth

Morning prayer is held via Zoom every morning at 8.15

**CHURCH ATTENDANCE:** The numbers at the services through the year averaged the following numbers: (last years in brackets)

Parish Communion	9	(11)
Go Fourth	18	(19)
Sunday Reflection	10	(20)
Good Friday	14	(20)
Easter Day	23	(16)
Christmas Communion	15	(30) – this was held on Christmas Eve
Harvest	7	(16)- this was the Reflection Service
Carol Service	52	(40)
Crib Service	73	(68)
Martyrs Songs of Praise	22	(21)- the TUC weekend was cancelled due to the weather

**Parish Communion-** this follows the traditional pattern though Sarah does vary the format from time to time, within the remits of the Canon Law. The instruction in connection with the receiving of the sacraments has changed again and intinction is no longer acceptable- those who do not wish to drink from the common cup just take the bread. The intercessions are led by one of the churchwardens and others read the bible readings.

**Go Fourth** – this service follows a less formal pattern – and has been led by Alan Saunders, Jayne Brayshaw, Karen Weir and Hilly Cobban. Music is provided by a much reduced band - consisting of Martin, Heather, Alice, with Julie assisting. We are very grateful for their enthusiasm and choice of music. The theme for the service is usually based around the gospel with a reflection offered by the leader or another member of the congregation. Coffee and refreshments are offered afterwards- with help from Louis

**Sunday Reflection-** this service was introduced in 2022 year in response to a request for an evening service. It consists of readings and music, with a short bible extract and is very ably led by Dr Richard Hall together with Sarah. It is proving quite popular- as it offers something totally different.

**PARISH MAGAZINE** Liz Gould and her team delivered about 71 Parish Magazines every month. In previous years the PCC have funded a delivery to every house in the village at Christmas time but this year it was decided that was too expensive so we relied on other social media and the village newssheet. This latter is a new bi-monthly initiative which is circulated around Tolpuddle and Southover and alerts the community to all church events. However we do believe that the Parish Magazine is a valuable resource to all who live in the village and are very grateful to all the volunteers involved.

**FUNERALS :** None

**BAPTISMS :** Millicent Clare King  
Finley Jack Roberts

**SIDESMEN :** Our congregation is so reduced that there is no need for official sidesmen so the role has been taken on by the Churchwardens. They also assist with the candles, hymn board and other preparation for the service.

**CHURCH SACRISTAN:** Adrian Bonner has carried out this task with efficiency, although ill health meant that he had some periods of absence but we are delighted that he is back in action. The responsibility of changing the altar frontals according to the church calendar was carried out by the churchwardens.

**CHURCH MUSIC:** We have been very fortunate that Dr Richard Hall continues to play the organ for us on a regular basis together with a band at Go Fourth.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** This is attached separately

**CHARITABLE GIVING:** As had been previously agreed by the PCC we donate our charitable gifts on specific occasions and the funds are not recorded in PCC accounts. In 2022 we raised:

DEC – Earthquake Turkey & Syria	£1300 ( collection and Big Breakfast)
Water Aid	£95
Childrens Society	£200 ( Raffle and Carol Service)
Dorset Historic Churches Trust (DHCT)	£215 (Ride and Stride)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1810</b>

This sum is equivalent to 8% of turnover which exceeds the C of E target of 5%

The harvest produce was given to the Blandford Food Bank. Many of the parishioners were also involved with other events in the village.

**CHURCH CAMPING:** A new venture had started in 2021 to provide a B&B service in the church. A team comprising Fiona Cope, Marion Regan, Mandy Silvester, Jayne Brayshaw and most recently Julie Bonner run the Airbnb advertising, setting up and dismantling the sofa bed and breakfast table, meeting, greeting and checking-out the guests and preparing for the next guests. In 2023 it was necessary to invest in various expensive items and there were not as many bookings but a net profit of £674 was raised. The season closed at the end of September 2023 as it is too cold in the winter months and the future of this initiative is at risk as the church is not weatherproof and also the demanding work load for the team. The feedback from the guests has been consistently full of praise.

**FABRIC:** The WC was refurbished to allow for a proper washbasin and hot water. Routine maintenance has been carried out by various members of the congregation including John Taylor, Ian Bishop, Adrian Bonner and Anthony Gould.

**CHURCH INVENTORY:** A full inventory of the church had been carried out in 2019 and revised prior to the Visitation by the Archdeacon in June 2023. She found it all in order though showed a little concern about the possibility of asbestos. It has been reviewed prior to the APCM.

**CHURCH BELLS:** We have 4 bells - Treble,<sup>2<sup>nd</sup></sup>,<sup>3<sup>rd</sup></sup>, and Tenor which are now being rung again prior to most services by John Taylor. The bell ropes still need attention at some point.

**CHURCH CLEANING:** The PCC is very grateful to Jane Keenor who has taken on the role of cleaning the church since Fiona Cope resigned.

**CHURCH FLOWERS:** Marion Regan has done a wonderful job as our flower coordinator, and occasionally calls on others to help- together they have brightened the church and the entrance planters throughout the year. Marion has been using wild and garden flowers, dried flowers in the winter and reducing the use of oasis where possible. We are very grateful to Phil Coxall who brings branches of holly for the Christmas decorations.

**CHURCHYARD:** ( written by Anthony Gould). *The first point of note is that the Church has been very grateful for the help people from Tolpuddle and beyond have voluntarily given in order to keep the Churchyard reasonably tidy. This includes Alwyn, Morten, Kate and Andy, Nick, Dave, Richard, Matt & Fiona and John from Weymouth who regards himself as a friend of the Martyrs and brings up a heavy-duty strimmer in order to help us. Our sincere thanks also to Richard King who parked a trailer outside the church wall so that we could clear the accumulated rubbish.*

*The Second point would be that the very wet weather over the winter has meant that we had difficulty in getting on to the churchyard with machinery. We will do more to tidy up that which has not been cut in front of the Church but we will be generally but not obsessively observing NMM (no mow May). We remain true to the concept of a "Living Churchyard" and that is generally appreciated, I think. The church mower is kept in Anthony's shed but it is showing signs of wear and tear. We need a larger capacity mower for the Churchyard but not immediately. The mower he has for their own garden is more powerful and cost about £430.*

Anthony feels that he ought now to give up the role of managing the Churchyard and co-ordinating helpers, due to his advanced age. We are truly grateful for all he has done for us for many many years.

**CHURCH SECURITY:** The church has been treated with Smart Water to increase our protection from thieves.

The church is open all and every day and locked at night. We are very grateful to Jane Keenor for taking on this responsibility. .

**EVENTS:** In the spring of 2021 the Church Events Committee amalgamated with the Village Hall Committee to form The Tolpuddle Events Committee (TEC) – Hilly Cobban and Heather Saunders representing the church.. A constitution has now been drawn up, with Nick Batchelor as Treasurer and there have been some very successful events- notably the Music in the Meadow, Harvest Supper, Music Evenings, Film nights and a hugely successful Bonfire Party. Carol singing took place in the recently opened Martyrs Inn with a Brass Band but was not well attended. There was a very successful children's party held in the hall, with Father Christmas, which was organized by a group of young mums and was financed by TEC

**OUR FUTURE:** The Church of England is in a state of flux, with congregations reduced and many churches in need of serious investment- and our church is also suffering, although thanks to careful financial management and the generosity of many of the village who donate regularly using the Parish Giving Scheme, we are able to meet our commitment to the Diocese and Benefice. The installation of a Sum Up Machine for contactless giving has also enhanced the income. Despite the apathy to worship our Church is still very much a part of the community, which is clear from the way that there is always support for fund raising events.

We are very fortunate to have a service every Sunday, offering different levels of worship, but it will be very difficult to justify this in the future with such a reduced congregation. There have been a few memorable moments during the year- we remember particularly the Carol Service at which so many groups from the village were represented including the landlord from the Martyrs Inn and also a wonderful reading from Robert Angus. The Crib Service was also very uplifting and we thank Julie Bonner for her help with this. We have been delighted to welcome Margaret Rickard to some services, and also the introduction of the Flex Team and its regular craft groups.

We have a testing time ahead with essential repairs to the roof as well as ongoing maintenance. Many of us feel that this historic building should be preserved and thank all those who invest time and money to this end.

**Hilly Cobban/Jayne Brayshaw- Churchwardens**

