

St Mary's Ashendon – report 2023

It is with much gratitude that we celebrate the retirement of Peter and Felicity Smettem from the Parochial Church Council and in Peter's case as churchwarden. Felicity has been a member of the PCC for 36 years and Peter has been Churchwarden for 25 years. The legacy that they leave behind is tremendous: they have been at the centre of almost every activity that church undertakes. We can be grateful that under their guidance the church fabric is in as good a condition as can be expected from a building that was constructed in the twelfth century, that our finances are stable and in reasonable health, and that the church has a voice that is heard throughout the village (not least because of the refurbished bells). As they point out that they are not leaving the church, so we hope we can look forward to more years of continued contribution from them both. We thank both of them from the bottom of our hearts for all they have done for the church.

We are running at three services each month: Lego church, worship which involves building Lego models (for both children and adults); a service of Holy Communion which is well attended (given the size of the village) and a more informal service of morning prayer. We are actively looking at how we can further develop our worship to include more people who would be interested in our activities but not in a formal service.

We have started broadcasting our monthly Communion services and our major Festivals on Facebook. There is a small following, which is impressive given we don't really advertise this service. This is in addition to the weekly Zoom service of Compline held every Sunday, technically managed by Peter Johnson and Imogen Holbrook.

The number of members of the village who support the church in one way, or another is breathtaking. This ranges from everything from keeping the church clean, tidy, and beautifully decorated with flowers through mowing the churchyard, organising, and helping run events such as the Harvest Supper and the Christmas Bazaar to the clerical work involved in administering a church. The attached list has 20 headings (which is certainly not all the activities) and lists 56 individual names, plus the WI (behind which stand yet more names). That is around 20% of the village (Our apologies to anyone we have accidentally omitted). We are grateful for this support and to celebrate this, we had a service of thanksgiving for all this support ("Love your church").

Looking forward we are not without our challenges. Looking at the infrastructure, the roof of the church is starting to show signs of needing replacement (it is over 70 years old) and there is movement in some of the stonework that will need close monitoring. Looking at our worship, attendance at some of our festivals is waning, such as Mothering Sunday, Harvest and Remembrance. We need to find new ways of keeping ourselves relevant in the modern world. However, we believe that we are well placed to face these challenges and look forward to report on them in the years to come.

Ashendon St Mary's Helpers

For Cleaning and Flowers Pam Rand, Shirley Rand, Richard Lewin, Sue Lewin, Jan Pike, Geoff Pimm, Ruth Pimm, Margaret Lloyd, Carol Smith, Liz Johnson, Sian Miller, Gill Walker, Claire Burton, Fiona Jacob, Vanessa Bates, Felicity Smettem, Vicky Ewers-Blue, Imogen Holbrook, Suzie Crwys-Williams, Ginny de Lusingnan, Georgina Meadows-Smith, Richard Bates and Peter Smettem.

For Ashendon Voices Fiona Jacob, Shirley Rand, Mary Nash, Vanessa Bates, Jan Pike, Felicity Smettem, Imogen Holbrook, Luisa Pullin, Sue Paine, Jean Watson, Belinda Watt and Claire Burton.

For Opening and Locking the Church Imogen Holbrook, Felicity and Peter Smettem, Belinda Watt and Peter Johnson.

For reading in the services: Felicity Smettem, Belinda Watt, Vanessa Bates, Imogen Holbrook, Jessica Holbrook, David Crwys-Williams, Sue and Chris Paine, Julian Chester, Ruth Chester, Zoe Chester and Ollie Chester.

For the new information Plaques Geoff Pimm

For Providing the Altar poppies at Remembrance. The WI

For providing the Angel Decorations at Christmas Carol Smith and the WI.

For organising the front Churchyard Mowing Richard Bates

For Organising the bottom Churchyard Mowing Paul Horwood

For Mowing the Churchyard Richard Phillips, Andy Howes, Peter Smettem, Martin Saunders, Paul de Lusignan, Julian Chester, Paul Horwood, Ashley Holbrook, Richard Lewin, and Gill Walker.

For Hedge Cutting and Ivy Clearance Peter Smettem and Peter Johnson

For Weed Killing the Pathways Chris Paine

For Playing the organ over Christmas Tom Johnson

For moving the Organ into and out of the Church Tom and James Johnson, Dan, Tom and Jen Collins (of Westcott)

For collecting the Bernwode News annual subscription and delivering the Bernwode News Kevin and Mary Nash

For preparing for Holy Communion Imogen Holbrook, Felicity Smettem and Vanessa Bates.

For producing the Christingles Felicity Smettem

For Organising and helping with the Harvest Supper. Felicity and Peter Smettem, Vanessa and Richard Bates, Sally Dorling, Tans Theobald, Ginny de Lusignan, Sarah Chester, Belinda Watt, Thea Gemmell, Shirley Rand, Vicky Ewers-Blue, Paul De Lusignan, and Harry Theobald

For organising the Church Bazaar Pam and Shirley Rand

For helping with the church Bazaar Jan Pike, Vanessa and Richard Bates, Margaret Lloyd, Belinda Watt, Shirley and Pam Rand, Felicity and Peter Smettem

For Refreshments after the Services Imogen Holbrook, Vanessa Bates and Felicity Smettem

For broadcasting the monthly communion service on Facebook Peter Johnson

For organising and providing refreshments at Lego Church. Vanessa and Richard Bates, Belinda Watt, Felicity and Peter Smettem, Imogen Holbrook, Thea and Ross Gemmell

For Administrative duties Kevin Nash as Treasurer, Peter Johnson as Lay Chair, PCC Secretary and Gift Aid Secretary, Peter Smettem and Richard Bates as Churchwardens, Liz Johnson at Parish Safeguarding

Officer, Suzie Crwys-Williams for auditing the accounts and Roger Pike for circulating service details.

For Special Fundraising. Julian Chester