

# Parish of Ashford Hill with Headley Diocese of Winchester



Annual Report for the year ended  
31<sup>st</sup> December 2014

### **Highlights of the year**

- New banner of St Peter for St Peter's Church given and dedicated
- New system of verging for funerals and weddings
- High number of weddings at Ashford Hill church (8) and one at Headley
- Graveyard plan and record for both churchyards being created
- New choir for the parish launched
- Increased community use of St Paul's church for dances, concerts, receptions etc
- Roof and Spire appeal for St Paul's church launched
- Seeing Rev Trish licensed to her new post in Chichester diocese

### **Administrative information**

The parish of Ashford Hill with Headley is one of two parishes which together make up the United Benefice of Kingsclere and Ashford Hill with Headley, within the Diocese of Winchester, within the Church of England. The Incumbent is the Rev Lucy Thirtle. The Assistant Curate, Rev Trish Bancroft, completed her 4-year training in June and was licensed later in the year to another benefice.

Ashford Hill with Headley Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

There are two parish churches – St Peter's Headley in Newbury Road, Headley and St Paul's Ashford Hill. The correspondence address is The Vicarage, Fox's Lane, Kingsclere, Newbury.

The membership of the PCC during 2014 was as follows.

Vicar	Rev. Lucy Thirtle
Curate	Rev. Trish Bancroft (until June 2014)
Churchwarden	Penny Stewart (Vice-Chair) 1 position vacant
Deanery Synod member	Alison Goodyer
Elected Members (6)	Rachel Chamings Susie Sainsbury Evelyn Hiscock Colin Scott-Malden David Fowler Dave Chamings
Secretary	Emma Rivers (non-voting member)

### **Structure, governance and management**

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. Members are elected for a 3 year term. All regular worshippers are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. :

## **Officers of the PCC**

Vice Chair: Penny Stewart

Treasurer: Colin Scott-Malden

Secretary: Emma Rivers – Benefice Administrator (non-voting)

Safeguarding Officer : Emma Rivers

Electoral Roll Officer: Rachel Chamings

Certain tasks are delegated to sub-Committees as follows: (membership for 2014 only shown)

- **Fete Committee** Karen Parker (Chair); Andy & Di Tooley, Karl Jones, Jem Loxton, Rev Lucy.
- **Benefice Outreach Group (covering parish of Kingsclere also)** Rev Trish Bancroft, Susie Sainsbury (AHwH), Georgie Selby (AHwH), Alison Goodyer (AHwH); Maggy Wallace (K) Jane Freeman (K); Steve Jacques (K)
- **Finance Committee** (Membership: Colin Scott-Malden (Treasurer), Rev. Lucy Thirtle, Penny Stewart (from May), Tom Sneyd (co-opted); Paddy Dring (from October)

Full reports from these committees follow.

## **Objectives**

The Ashford Hill with Headley PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, Rev. Lucy Thirtle, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the parish churches and their churchyards.

## **Annual report of PCC**

The full PCC met 5 times during the year (plus one very short meeting following the Annual Meeting to appoint officers), with an average 79% attendance.

The main items of business were:

- agreeing with the Vicar which services and events to be held at each church particularly at festivals times
- monitoring financial position of the parish
- receiving reports on the state of the church buildings and churchyards
- discussion on the way forward for Ashford Hill church in the light of significant work required by the quinquennial report
- receiving reports from the Benefice Outreach Group and wider church matters
- discussion and feedback on the Deanery Mission Action Plan

The following sections give more detail on the life of the parish.

## **Worship**

The monthly Sunday pattern of worship continued through the year. In view of the curate's leaving, it was agreed that All Age services (time consuming to plan) would alternate with Parish Communion services at Ashford Hill on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday. Two memorable services before Trish left, however, were the Picnic Praise (a kind of outside café church) held in the churchyard of St Paul's on a glorious March day for Mothering Sunday; also the Blessing of Pets service – again held in the

churchyard. However, despite reasonable numbers attending, those from the parish itself were relatively low.

The Christmas services at Ashford Hill attracted very encouraging high numbers with the church being completely packed for the Candlelit Carol Service and a record high number for recent years on Christmas Day.

### **Mission & Outreach**

Following the Mission Audit exercise in 2007 a focus continues to be efforts ***“to extend the role of the church – people and buildings – as an agent for community gathering and activity and finding ways to use increased contact with the community for sharing with people of every age the joys and benefits of faith.”***

We were delighted to have 9 weddings in the benefice (a record for recent years) with 8 at Ashford Hill and 1 at Headley. One of the wedding couples chose to serve drinks after the service in a small gazebo outside the church which worked well.

There was also a record number (11) of church funerals, some of which had large attendances for individuals who had been well known in their particular spheres. One of those was for David Wynne, OBE, a nationally renowned sculptor one of whose works, The Black Christ, was created for and hangs in Ashford Hill church. His family brought down a couple of his sculptures on the occasion of his funeral and the wake was held successfully in the church following on from his burial.

Ashford Hill church also saw an increasing amount of community use. A fundraising Valentine’s Dinner Dance was held in February and later in the year, it was used for a charity fundraising dance performance, a private barn dance as well as several other musical concerts during the year - Kingsclere Singers in May; Newbury Spring Festival one in May; in October we welcomed back former organist, Martin Thorne, his son Hedley and his nephews Simon & Sean Baggs for a reprise of a concert given by the same performers (minus Hedley) 23 years ago

As usual, we were pleased to welcome the children, staff and parents of Ashford Hill School for their Harvest, Christmas and Easter services.

Responsibility for new outreach initiatives lies mainly with the benefice outreach group. One of these in this parish was the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday evening service in November at which the speaker was Nigel Butler, a local resident, who is also a pastor at an independent church in Newbury. See later report.

In September, a new choir was launched by Georgie Selby and Vanessa Martin (organist). The choir has supported the singing at 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday services at Ashford Hill and is for all ages (see later report)

### **Lay Ministry**

Penny Stewart continued to hold singlehandedly the role of Churchwarden. With two buildings and one in need of substantial work and ongoing maintenance, this situation is unsustainable for the long term. A churchwarden for the Ashford Hill end of the parish is urgently sought.

However, the lack of a churchwarden combined with the high number of weddings, baptisms, funerals meant a new solution had to be found for finding vergers. A new team of occasional vergers – Lorainne Cusworth, Marilynne Simmonds, Sheena Crisford and Ali Goodyer at Ashford Hill and Ann Hoddinott and Annie Hill at Headley proved very successful with all the above enjoying the chance to share in an important part of the church's ministry.

Gary Cusworth also stepped up to oversee the volunteer team which maintains the churchyard at Ashford Hill and a great deal of clearance work took place during the year.

Two new teams of 'graveyard planners and recorders' emerged – Ann Rixon and Lorainne Cusworth for AH and Ann Hoddinott and Annie Hill for Headley. Both teams are thoroughly enjoying the detective work and research needed for creating a detailed plan of the respective churchyards.

We continue to be indebted to Marilynne Simmonds, Alison Goodyer and Wally Kingston for keeping the churches clean week by week.

### **Stewardship of our resources**

#### Buildings and Churchyards

The main focus of the year was the consideration of the recommendations of the 2013 Quinquennial Inspection reports for both buildings. There was nothing unmanageable on the list of recommended work for St Peter's. Some of these, such as woodworm treatment and closer inspection were carried out during the year. Towards the end of the year it was discovered that remedial work was necessary on the bell mechanism and work was put in hand for obtaining quotes for this.

Grass-cutting and care of St Peter's churchyard was taken on by Ray & Pete Coventry during the year. This has proved a very satisfactory arrangement.

The list of actions recommended for St Paul's included some substantial and urgent items which would clearly require large amounts of fundraising. A discussion as to the long term future of the building was held by the PCC with some feeling that preserving such a large and expensive building in such a small village given current and predicted future patterns of churchgoing was unsustainable in the long term. It was felt that an open meeting should be held to raise the issue with the local community and to discover the strength of feeling for its preservation. This was held on 14 July and attended by some 70+ people from the parish and beyond.

As a result, it was agreed that a fundraising appeal should be launched and many present put their names forward to help and support in a range of ways. Paddy Dring was an enthusiastic driver of this and volunteered to help launch a task group.

By the end of the year, a task group and fundraising group had met. The more urgent task was the need to carry out investigations to clarify the exact extent of the need for work to the spire and roof. Paddy Dring took on the role of liaising with the architect in consultation with Penny (our churchwarden) and the Vicar.

By the end of the year, funds had started to be raised – from a concert given by Martin Thorne, from donations in memory of the husband of a church member and a second hand sale. The Cheam chapel choir had agreed to launch the 2015 fundraising events calendar with a concert to be held in the church at the end of January.

Unfortunately no one has yet stepped forward to lead a fundraising appeal or run the task group. Again, we will need others to take on a share of the responsibility for all the work involved in pursuing and delivering a major building project.

On other matters, installation of two new noticeboards for each church was completed.

### **Finance**

- Regular reports were received from the Treasurer. The full financial report for the year appears at the end of this report.

### **Reserves Policy**

- The PCC continues to hold a Restricted Development and Fabric Fund which at the end of 2014 stood at £14492. It was agreed during the year, in light on the anticipated expenditure for remedial works to the roof and spire of St Paul's to 'undesignate' the long-standing Floor Fund for St. Paul's which at the end of 2013 had stood at £11394. This was transferred to general reserves. The unrestricted amount at the end of 2014 was £17,190
- St.Peter's also benefits from its own restricted fabric fund of £16,200 thanks to the McSwiney bequest. This compares with £16120 last year.
- It is PCC policy to invest funds balances with the CBF Church of England Deposit Fund.
- Our thanks go to Colin Scott-Malden for his continuing work on maintaining the accounts.

### **Benefice Matters**

The parish continues to enjoy good relations and collaborative relationships with the parish of Kingsclere. The Outreach group continued as a joint initiative. Following Rev Trish's departure, the running of the group was taken over jointly by Maggy Wallace and Georgie Selby with membership from both parishes.

The churchwardens of both parishes continued to meet regularly with the incumbent, which keeps good lines of communication open and insight into the respective joys and challenges of each parish.

However, it does need to be said that in many activities such as discussion groups and outreach initiatives there is often a disproportionate participation from the community of Kingsclere.

## **Reports from Sub-Committees or other officers**

### **Fete Sub Committee**

Despite a very wet morning for setting up and the fear of a wash out, the skies miraculously cleared to leave a sunny afternoon for the fete. The hard work of the committee paid off and it was encouraging to see a good number of new Ashford Hill villagers helping with the event. After a slow start, a happy time was had by all and the event increased its profits on the previous year to a total of £4817. Grateful thanks to Karen Parker and the Committee.

*Rev Lucy Thirtle*

### **Report of the Benefice Outreach Group**

The Outreach Group continued its work under the guidance of Maggy Wallace and Georgie Selby following Trish Bancroft's departure. A range of activity was undertaken including:

Choir: a new choir was started at Ashford Hill, with Vanessa Martin as organist and Georgie Selby as Choir leader. Choir practice is every 3rd and 4th Sunday. A number of different events have already been held including carol singing; singing in the United Benefice Choir; and introducing some original new pieces to the congregations. Monthly special events are held that are open to everyone.

Gospel Women: an interesting and challenging series of evenings were held in the run-up to Christmas, looking at the contribution of women in the gospel. This will be run again in 2015/2016 as there is clearly more for us all to explore.

Visiting preachers: the idea of inviting visiting preachers to talk at evening services started in December 2014. The first guest was Nigel Butler from the Kennet Community Church, who reminded his listeners that Jesus was with us all year round, not just to be 'taken out of the attic' for Christmas.

BMAP (see elsewhere in report). The group's work is currently being amalgamated with those working on the Benefice Mission Action Plan (BMAP) as a contribution to the Diocesan Mission Activity to ensure that mission/outreach activities continue to be offered, developed and expanded. The group will re-convene in due course.

*Maggy Wallace*

### **Choir report**

The choir started in September 2014. We have participated in various Church events. At Christmas we not only sang in our benefice choir (Kingsclere and Ashford Hill & Headley Choir) we also went carol singing. We have developed a programme of exciting activities open to everyone on the 3rd Sunday in the month. Our choir practices are on the 3rd Sunday at 4 pm and 4th Sunday at 9.45 a.m. We are delighted to welcome new members to join us. Thank you all for your support and help.

*Georgie Selby & Vanessa Martin*

### **Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee only met once during the year. With the certainty of continuing challenge on the Finance front, the Roof and Spire appeal and Tom Sneyd looking to hand on his role as Stewardship Promoter, it is essential that this

committee meets on a regular basis so that it is able to be proactive rather than reactive in putting the parish on a secure financial footing.

Rev Lucy

### **Parish Magazine**

Once again 2014 was another good year for the magazine with some new articles and plenty of adverts which created a profit of £903 for church funds. Again we must thank our printer and all distributors for their support and help as without them the preparation and delivery of the magazine would be extremely difficult.

*Sandra & Michael Everitt*

The PCC is very grateful to Sandra and Michael Everitt for their unstinting efforts with the magazine which has seen it go from strength to strength and produce a welcome income to the parish's finances.

### **Whitchurch Deanery Synod Report**

#### **(Synod Reps – Alison Goodyer and Rev Lucy)**

February saw the final meeting of the Synod's triennium and an enjoyable meal at Overton church rooms was shared by members. The new synod had its work cut out with the need to draw up with a tight deadline the deanery Mission Action Plan – an action plan which would focus on the Diocesan Strategic priorities as identified during 2013. A draft was circulated for PCC consideration during the summer and representatives were able to give feedback at the November synod after which the final MAP was approved and 'launched' at a service at the cathedral in late November.

The Deanery Finance Sub-Committee met to discuss the arrangements for the new Parish Share (Common Mission Fund) formula and the implications of the new system for parishes in the deanery.

The Synod continued to receive very encouraging reports on the deanery link with Mityana diocese in Uganda. 11 schools in the deanery are now linked with a school in Mityana (Ashford Hill School is linked with Kabawambo). There were regular visits by teachers, secondary school pupils from Testbourne school and others to Mityana.

Rev Lucy

This report was adopted by the PCC at its meeting on 16 March 2015.

Signed:

*Lucy Thirto*

(Chair)