

The Parish Church of Ss. Michael and All Angels, Occold

Annual Report 2008

Background

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission. The PCC is responsible for co-operating with the incumbent, the Revd. Andrew Mitcham, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish of Occold the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical; it also has responsibility for the maintenance of the parish church and churchyard.

Membership

Members of the P.C.C. are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. During the year the following served as members of the PCC.

Incumbent	Fr Andrew Mitcham SSC	<i>Chairman</i>
Reader	Mrs. Alma Noble	
Churchwardens [Elected at the Meeting of Parishioners held in April 2008 to serve for one year]	Mr. Stephen Hubner Mrs. Gill Richardson	<i>Vice Chairman and Hon. Treasurer</i> <i>Hon. Secretary</i>
Deanery Synod Representative [Elected at the APCM held in April 2008 to serve for 3 years]	Mrs. Cynthia Capey	
P.C.C. Members [Elected at the APCM held in April 2008 to serve for one year]	Mrs. Jan Bragginton Mr. David Capey Mrs. Joan Cartwright Mr. Peter Coates Mr. Nick Cox Mrs. Elly Rivett	<i>Electoral Roll Officer</i> <i>Minutes Secretary</i>

The Standing Committee

This is the only committee required by law, and it is the only one in regular existence. It has the power to transact the business of the P.C.C. between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. It consists of the incumbent and wardens.

Church attendance

In 2008 the average Sunday attendance was 9. The number of communicants at Easter was 18, from a total congregation of 22 and there were 14 communicants at Christmas, from a total congregation of 18. There were 3 funerals in church and a further 4 parish funerals took place at local crematoria. No Baptisms were celebrated and no marriages were solemnized during the year. A number of special services were held (the numbers attending are given in brackets): Harvest Festival (35), Benefice Healing Service (12), Remembrance Sunday Service (39) and Christmas Eve Carol Service (166). In addition Benefice Services took place on Palm Sunday in Eye, on Rogation Sunday in Bedingfield and on Advent Sunday in Eye, when Bishop Nigel was the Principal Celebrant and preacher.

The Hartismere Group Ministry

In January the Revds. Robert and Christine Axford left the North Hartismere Benefice to take up new posts in the Diocese of Gloucester. In light of an impending review of diocesan structures, the Bishop appointed the Revd. Fiona Newton, the Rural Dean of Hoxne, as Acting Rural Dean. This year's Deanery Lent Course focused on the Church's healing ministry and culminated in a Healing Service in Eye Church on Low Sunday. On 2nd September the Revd. Michael Thompson was inducted as the Rector of North Hartismere. The Deanery Confirmation this year took place at All Saint's Wetheringsett on 23rd November. During the year additional work was undertaken on the Deanery Plan. Presentations on the admission of baptised children to Holy Communion before Confirmation were given in each benefice, and so far it has received widespread approval. The Clergy Chapter are currently working on a Group Ministry Marriage Preparation Course.

The Parish Ministry Team

On Rogation Sunday Fr Malcolm Griffin announced that he and Margaret were to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. The parish owes Fr Malcolm a great deal for his ministry over the past seven years, particularly during the last interregnum. During the year Angie Baldwin was recommended for training as a Reader, and a local Ministerial Training Group was set up to support Angie during the 3 years of her studies. Alma Noble continues to exercise a much valued ministry in the parish and benefice.

Review of the Year

The P.C.C. met on 5 occasions in 2008 on 14th February, 16th April (after the A.P.C.M.), 11th June, 18th September and 19th November. The Council received regular reports from the vicar, churchwardens, treasurer, and the deanery synod representative. Among other issues, the following items were discussed:

The restoration of the church building: Financial pledges from members of the congregation and a generous grant from English Heritage enabled the vestry roof to be renewed, along with other repairs and a redecoration of the interior of the vestry. In preparation for urgent repairs to the tower, the removal and pollarding of trees in the churchyard and work on the drains were undertaken. Work was also done to level the floor in the nave. A further application to English Heritage for the restoration to the tower was submitted in June; this was successful, and it is hoped that work will begin shortly.

The pattern of services: Following the departure of Fr. Malcolm and the retirement of Fr. Daniel from active ministry, it became necessary to review the pattern of usual Sunday services; they are now as follows: 1st Sunday 9.30am Morning Prayer, 2nd Sunday 9.30am Eucharist, 3rd Sunday 6.30pm Evensong, 4th Sunday 9.30am Eucharist.

The Church of England Marriage Measure 2008: This allows for greater flexibility regarding the residence qualification for couples to be married in the parish church.

The safeguarding of vulnerable adults in church: A paper and model policy on safeguarding was discussed and Stephen Hubner was appointed our “responsible person” in this regard.

The conservation of the brass memorial: Following the repairs to the nave floor this was found to be loose - professional advice has been sought relating to its re-fixing and conservation.

Fundraising: On 17th May a Plant Sale was held in church. In June a successful and enjoyable benefice safari supper was staged with David and Cynthia Capey generously hosting the “main course.” Thank you to all involved in these two events.

S. Michael's Flower Guild

Last May S. Michael's Flower Guild was founded under the chairmanship of Elly Rivett. The purpose of the Guild is social and to provide support for the church through fundraising and social activities. The Guild met monthly during the second half of the year and recently had an outing to the Abbey Gardens at Bury St Edmunds. At the time of writing the Guild has around 30 members, many of whom regularly arrange flowers in church.

A Festival of Angels

Following the success of “Diverse Suffolk” in 2007, this year the parish held an autumn “Festival of Angels” to encourage greater engagement between church and community. Under the direction of Elly and Gill, and with some theological input from Cynthia, an initially reticent Flower Guild rose to the challenge in great style. Thank you to all involved and to Tom Rivett for filming the event, thus preserving it for posterity!

Occold School

Fr Andrew continues to make monthly visits to Occold School to lead assemblies and pupils from the school helped decorate the church at Harvest. Children from the village also contributed to the Festival of Angels, with art work depicting what they imagined their guardian angel to look like.

Nora Stone R.I.P.

On 28th April 2008 a Memorial Service was held in celebration of the life of Nora Stone. Nora was a faithful member of our congregation and for many years she served on the PCC. Nora had also been a trustee of Occold Charities and was a founder member of O.R.A.C. She had been an active member of the Redlingfield and Occold Women's Institute for 31 years. Her contribution to the life of the church and community was considerable. May she rest in peace, and rise in glory.

Concluding Remarks

The publishing of the Annual Report gives me an opportunity to thank all those who contribute to the life and worship of the Church in the parish and benefice. Particular thanks should be extended to Stephen and Gill for all the hard work they undertake on our behalf. Once again we are indebted to Rob Richardson for his work behind the scenes throughout the year, and in particular in preparation for the carol service, including arranging for the church to be floodlit. We also thank those who maintain the churchyard, play the organ and clean the church and arrange flowers. In giving thanks for people's generosity and commitment, and for blessings received in the past year, we pray that God will continue to strengthen and guide us in the months and years ahead.

On behalf of the P.C.C.
The Reverend Andrew Mitcham, Chairman

April 2009.