



ChalkeValley
Church

Clergy Report APCMs 2022

Church and Village Life

Looking back, 2021 feels like an 'in between year'. Some normality returned to church and village life but there were still restrictions and changes to routines and worship.

One joyful note, singing returned to the church in the summer of 2021. People in the congregations had been so patient with the restrictions and it was a delight to many that we could finally raise our (sometimes croaky) voices once again. Jenny is slightly biased, but Bishopstone seemed to have developed their voices and music during the pandemic and the liturgy has never before seemed so uplifting and joyful.

While some churches have stayed open since July of 2020, others closed again during the November 2020 lockdown, but all had reopened by the end of May 2021. We have kept to our scaled down rota, and it was only recently we stopped using the temporary 'COVID' orders of services and resumed using the one we'd had before the pandemic.



*Harvest Flowers at
Alvediston*

The clergy breathed a sigh of relief when we stopped our weekly online service in July of 2021, but we still recorded for special occasions. Our service to commemorate the life of HRH Prince Philip received 120 views, there was a service for harvest that had over 40 views (even though people also attended church) and 108 watched our Nine Lesson, Nine Carols from Nine Parishes.

Christmas Services 2021 were knocked off kilter by the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, but the congregations and villagers responded magnificently. Some services were held outdoors, other services continued with a congregation determined to sing beloved Christmas Carols, while wearing a mask, whether their glasses steamed up or not.

Many of our churches benefit from a regular service offered by a Lay Worship Leader and our thanks go to our LWLs who have continued to lead services throughout 2021. There have also been new services organised by our LWLs; Berwick St John had a weekly service in Advent with a life-sized Advent Calendar for the children to open week by week, Broad Chalke a lay led Christmas Service and the re-emergence of a monthly lay led service like Revive, called Refresh, will be held in Broad Chalke Village Hall. Coombe Bissett is hosting 4 "alternative" services in 2022 which will be lay led and aim to involve our local families. Britford held a Songs and Sausages service in September – good singing of favourite hymns followed by excellent sausage barbecue!

Village life also began to emerge from restrictions. The Coffee Morning at Coombe Bissett restarted, the Chalke Valley History Festival was held again, and pubs and sports facilities were busier than the previous year. Coombe Bissett's monthly Golden Lunch has resumed, much to the joy of those who attend and the famous Coombe Bissett and Homington tea parties have quietly continued with many enjoying excellent cakes and even better chat!

People still talk about the huge support they received from friends and neighbours during the grimmest days of lockdown and if 2021 was an 'in between year', let's hope 2022 will bring an ending to restrictions but a reinforcing of the good that has come out of the pandemic.

Weddings

Getting married is stressful enough but the couples who eventually married in 2021 had lived with the extra stress of the effect of restrictions on their service. Some couples, by the time they were married in 2021, were on the 4th date for their wedding. Finally, we got most of the 2020 bookings to the altar by October and 15 marriages took place within about 4 months.

Thank you to our organists, church wardens, flower arrangers, bell ringers and the myriad of other people who enable these services to happen.



*Masks off and into
the sunshine spring*

The huge and rather annoying change for the clergy was the introduction of the new Marriage Document. Out went our lovely old registers to be replaced by a piece of A4 paper that needed to be posted to the Registration Office. Inevitably there have been teething problems with this new system and, late in the summer of 2021, there were many phone calls to and from the Registration Services at Wiltshire Council.



Apparently, the whole system will eventually move online. Oh joy!

Baptisms and Confirmations

Coombe Bissett celebrated a happy occasion when 7 children were baptised and/or confirmed by Bishop Andrew, Bishop of Ramsbury, with the whole school taking part in the service.

Families also brought their children to be baptised with about 15 baptisms in the summer months. Again, some of these families had to delay the baptism service because of restrictions which meant the children were much older than usual and baptising a baby is one thing...baptising a lively toddler is another!

Pastoral Ministry



The funeral service for Clarissa, Lady Avon, took place at Alvediston on the 24th

Our pastoral ministry continues with LPAs (local parish assistants) working alongside the clergy to help and support people. There were about 40 end of life services, funerals, burial of ashes, memorial services, held in the local churches or at the crematorium.

Our thanks to our LPAs and Church Wardens who visit people, set up for baptisms and funerals and generally keep an eye out for those who may need care and support.

One key area of pastoral support is **Safeguarding**. All LPAs, LWLs, clergy and PCC members need to do a safeguarding course and DBS certificates need constant updating. This year, 2022, all the clergy will attend update their training about domestic abuse.

Your Safeguarding team in the benefice are the clergy, Rupert Van de Horst, Angela Bridges and Don Morgan. Emily Broomhead administers the input to the Diocesan Safeguarding Microsite.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All churches must ensure the safeguarding posters are visible in each church building and the information on them is up to date. Please familiarise yourself with the Parish Safeguarding Handbook <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/ParishSafeGuardingHandBookAugust2019Web.pdf> because we all need to keep our eyes and ears open and if there is a concern, report it. There is a system in place that will handle such reports appropriately.

Schools

The pandemic has been tough on many professions but one workplace that is often overlooked is schools. What a year it has been for them. As restrictions and virus levels ebbed and flowed, they have all grown their skills at online learning, they have managed 'bubbles' as year groups stayed in separated classrooms and separate parts of the playground and, particularly with Omicron, have had to manage levels of sickness and staff absences that have never been experienced before. It is astonishing how they have coped.

Having stopped our weekly online church services, one thing that has continued is online Collective Worship (assemblies) for both Broad Chalke and Coombe Bissett because of the rate of infections in the school.

Recording them doesn't always go according to plan [click here to see outtakes](#)

However, online Collective Worship has kept the contact between the school and the clergy, and it is delightful that the children still recognise us and shout and wave when they see us in the village. 'Hello Reverend Catherine,' said one young boy in the Hub, 'I saw you on the telly!' Whereas Oak Class in Coombe Bissett School are still trying to understand how Canon Jenny appears on their screen in their classroom whilst in church or at home!

Broad Chalke School have appointed a new Head Teacher, Heather Luft, after the retirement of Mandi Brockway.

Clergy Team

Anna Claar left us in the summer, and we are now in the process of recruiting a new Team Vicar. The potential timetable for the appointment process is:

- Advertisements: 22nd and 29th of April
- Closing date: 1st June
- Shortlisting: 8th June (evening)
- Interviews and orientation: 27th and 28th June



Anna Claar's leaving service.

If we appoint in June there is a possibility of someone starting in September.

Assistant Curate's report

During the course of this past year my ministry focus has changed from the West end of the benefice to the East end, to cover the interregnum caused by the departure of the team vicar. Whilst I have been very sorry to leave the communities and people in the west end churches, especially Bowerchalke; I am grateful for the welcome and support I have received by the communities in the East. The variety of services, the attendance of children and families, and the requirements of different communities, have all proved to be valuable and enjoyable experiences.

Some recent highlights remain with me: The outdoor carol service at Odstock, bringing together large numbers of people in a simple service, reminded us of the first Christmas. The cattle shed Nativity organised by Nim was an astounding success, with over a 100 people many dressed for their role, took part in a re-enactment of the first Christmas in a cattle shed in Nunton Dairy. Other highlights have been the fire service at Fifield Bavant on Christmas eve, and my first service at Britford Parish Church on Christmas morning. There is a wide variety in our worship- something to be celebrated- and covid has caused us to rethink and strip back some services, perhaps making them even more meaningful.

As usual there have been a series of sadder occasions with funerals and burial of ashes, although these services are also opportunities to share the gospel and for pastoral care to be centred on individuals.

I have been very pleased to restart collective worship sessions at Longford school and have been in almost every week since September. The opportunity to speak about Christianity is great and the children respond and sing well. I am grateful to the Open the Book team who included me in their visits.

Looking to the future the appointment process for the new team vicar is well underway, and I pray that the appointment will be made this summer. Whoever is appointed will be stepping into warm and welcoming communities that are seeking to share their love of Jesus Christ.

Governance and Trustee Regulations

More regulations. Actually, mercifully, there has been little change in the trustee legislation for churches. The exception is always for safeguarding and these policies must be reviewed and agreed every year.

Lent 2022

A staggeringly generous response to our Lent project in 2021 means over £10,000 was raised in the Chalke Valley for chairs and tables for the school we support in Cueibet, South Sudan. Thank you, everyone.



The Lent project for 2022, as agreed by Team Council, will raise funds for the Salisbury Women's Refuge.

Looking Ahead

If 2022 is a time when we can look ahead, what can we do for church and village life? What are our needs, hopes and dreams?

Finance: it has been a rough couple of years financially and it is wonderful that we have paid our parish share so far. The challenge now is to encourage people to give as best they can but also get more people to give. Asking for money is always so hard but there are sensitive and helpful ways proposed for doing so.

Services: We hope to reintroduce the chalice by Easter of 2022 and we have an idea of how to do this as safely as possible. Planning has included long discussions about alcohol content at Clergy Team Meeting and our curate knows a surprisingly large amount about the properties of ethanol!

An outside Christmas carol services is a new idea for some villages but has been very popular and Easter Fire services went down very well. What other services have there been that have been appreciated and worth doing again?

Other Events

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will offer opportunities for villages to celebrate and, we pray, our fetes and 'fests' will begin again this summer. It is simply wonderful that the church is being involved with these events by going to them rather than expecting people to come to church!

Conclusion

We do what we do in churches for God, for our communities, and for our own faith journey. However, we clergy are conscious we cannot do this ministry without you, our faithful companions. Thank you for your strength and your support.

Catherine, Jenny, Roger and Emily
February 2022