

The Parish of Forton, Saint John the Evangelist

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL AND THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PARISH IN 2016

1. Aim and Purposes

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of Forton has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent, Mother Carrie Thompson, in promoting in the Parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Parish Church building.

2. Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to ensuring that Saint John's is the Church at the heart of our community, where everyone is welcome.

As a charity with the aim of advancing religion, the PCC aims to provide identifiable benefits to the community by providing facilities and opportunities for public worship, pastoral care and spiritual growth to all those living within the Parish boundaries and any others who wish to benefit from what is offered. The PCC is aware of its responsibilities under the Charities Act and has due regard to the Charity Commission public benefit guidance.

We seek to serve the people of Forton, of all faiths and none, through worship, prayer and teaching; Occasional Offices; building up the fellowship and corporate life of the Church; collaboration with educational establishments and other statutory and voluntary agencies; and community engagement.

3. Achievements and Performance:

Worship and Prayer

The PCC is keen to ensure that S. John's offers a range of services during the week and throughout the year to enable Parishioners to worship, learn and grow in discipleship. In 2016, the average weekly attendance was 28.0, a decrease of 38.5 from 2015. This sharp decline is in part explained by the fact that in 2016, unusually, there were no Baptisms during the October count; however, the estimated usual Sunday attendance has fallen from 45 in 2015 to just 29 in 2016. It is clear that if Forton is to remain viable as a Parish Church in the future, the whole Church community must urgently address both the attendance patterns of current members and the opportunities to grow the Church and attract new worshippers.

The Easter attendance was 42, representing another sharp decline from 119 in 2015. By contrast, the Christmas attendance increased from 129 in 2015 to 189 in 2016, and the number of those who attended a special service during Advent (e.g. Christingle, Crib Service) was 881 (an increase of 338 from 2015).

In April, the Parish was pleased to welcome Fr Tim Watson as a Pioneer Minister for the Leesland area, licensed jointly to Forton and Alverstoke Parishes. His licensing service on 17th April took the form of a pilgrimage through the Leesland area (including areas of both parishes), and was attended by several worshippers from St John's, several of whom took an active role in the service. The appointment of a Pioneer Minister has resulted in a closer collaborative relationship between the two Parishes, which it is hoped will be strengthened and deepened in the years to come.

The PCC continues to value its role in developing discipleship and vocations, and in July a number of worshippers travelled to London to attend the First Mass of Fr David Vyvyan, who was on placement with us as an ordinand.

In October, the Incumbent and two members of the PCC attended the Diocesan LYCIG training conference, which was designed to enable parishes to work more intentionally for church growth. Special services throughout the year included Animal Blessing, the Love and Light memorial service, Christingle and Onesie Sunday. The Parish hosted the Deanery for the Feast of Corpus Christi. In 2016, there were 36 Baptisms, 6 Weddings and 16 Funerals. Occasional Offices testify to the important place of the Church in the life of the wider community, and could be a good starting point for thinking about further community engagement and church growth in the coming years.

Music

Jonathan Bardolph continued to serve as Director of Music, and shared organist duties with Pat Wallis. Members of the congregation participated in the Deanery choir and regional RSCM events, and four young people from the congregation attended the Morland Choristers' Camp in the summer.

Social and Fundraising Events

The PCC decided not to participate in Ride and Stride in 2016, and not to hold a Christmas fair, as it was felt that in both cases, the time and effort involved in organising them outweighed the social and fundraising benefits. If the Parish is to run social and/or fundraising events in the future, volunteers will be needed to organise and promote them.

Charitable donations were made to Nuevas Esperanzas and Safe Haven for Donkeys in the Holy Land. Food and other essential items were collected as part of our Harvest celebrations and in the Forton Food Exchange trolley, and donated to Gosport ARC and to local people in need.

Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll currently stands at 49 members, of whom 24 are resident in the Parish. There was one new addition to the Roll, and two removals (both non-resident and ceased to be a habitual worshipper).

Deanery Synod

Three members of the PCC sit on the Deanery Synod (two elected lay representatives and the Incumbent). Issues discussed at Synod during 2016 included finance, Deanery worship, mission and collaborative working. Two members of the PCC sit on the Deanery Mission & Pastoral Committee (one elected lay representative and the Incumbent).

Ecumenical Relationships

The Church is a member of Churches Together in Gosport.

Church Building

(Churchwardens' Report upon the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church)

Routine maintenance, cleaning and repairs were carried out throughout 2016. Annual safety inspections and checks were carried out as required.

Julian Vallis was appointed as the new inspecting architect for the Church, and subsequently carried out the Quinquennial Inspection, as well as advising the Vicar and Wardens on many other aspects of maintenance and improvement of the building.

It was discovered that lamps to fit the large lights in the Nave are no longer being made. This, together with the problems of changing them at height, suggests that it may be time to consider changing the light fittings, and a lighting engineer visited the church with a view to drawing up some proposals.

Thanks are due to all those who have helped with the continuing upkeep of the Church building, especially to Andy Jeffery and Aaron Giles.

4. Financial Review

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £18,964 of which £17,175 was unrestricted voluntary donations, and a further £1,789 was from Gift Aid.

The letting of the old and new halls provided a gross income of £5,615. £898 was raised through fundraising activities. The PCC received £2,923 in Church fees from Occasional Offices. £980 of unrestricted income was received from interest on investments (no income from investments was received as restricted funds). The difference in total unrestricted income between 2016 (£18,964) and 2015 (£33,851) owes to the receipt of a generous legacy in 2015.

£27,611 was spent from unrestricted funds to provide the Christian ministry from S. John's Church, including the contribution to the Diocesan Parish Share, which was paid in full.

The net result for the year was an excess of payments over receipts of £8,647 on unrestricted funds. Adding bank and deposit balances brought forward at the beginning of the year, the balances carried forward at 31st December on unrestricted funds totalled £66,350.

Although the receipt of generous legacies in 2014 and 2015 has resulted in an end-of-year balance which appears healthy, it must be noted that regular giving is still well below the level which would make the Parish financially sustainable. In 2016, there was a slight increase in giving on the plate (£42) plus sundry donations of £730, but planned giving fell by £497 from 2015. Income from fundraising activities also fell by £183. The Parish spent over £8,500 more than it received in 2016, and with additional building maintenance costs expected in 2017, it is clear that parish reserves will be seriously depleted, if not exhausted, in the next five years.

The PCC attempted to address this issue in 2016 by engaging the support of the Diocesan Mission and Stewardship Advisors, but unfortunately this work foundered owing to the resignation of the Mission Advisor. Efforts have been made to increase our ad-hoc hall rentals, but the income from these is negligible compared with the necessary expense of keeping the Church running. It is clear that traditional fundraising activities (e.g. fairs) are no longer appropriate and effective ways of raising money, and if this parish is to survive, let alone flourish, Church members must prayerfully consider their financial contribution to the Church. The PCC is grateful to all those who donate money, both regular Church members and those who attend Occasional Offices and other special services, and recognises that in the current economic climate it may be hard for Church members to increase their giving. However, without a renewed commitment to stewardship, with each Church member giving as generously and sacrificially as possible, this Parish simply will not be viable in the future. If Church members are committed to St John's, we each must do more to contribute to the mission and stewardship of our Parish Church.

5. Reserves Policy

It is the policy of the PCC to maintain unrestricted funds, which are the free reserves of the PCC, at a level which equates to not less than six months' unrestricted expenditure. This provides sufficient funds to cover parish management and administration as well as the activities directly relating to the work of the Church. It is our policy to invest surplus funds with the CBF Church of England Deposit Fund. We confirm that unrestricted funds were maintained at this level throughout 2016.

6. Structure, Governance and Management

The Parochial Church Council is a body corporate established by the Church of England, and a charity currently excepted by order from registration with the Charity Commission.

The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure (1956). The appointment of PCC members is governed by and set out in the Church Representation Rules (2006).

In Forton, membership of the PCC comprises the Incumbent, the Churchwardens and elected representatives of the laity. Elected parochial representatives of the laity to the Deanery Synod sit on the PCC ex-officio.

The PCC met six times in 2016. All meetings were well attended. Minutes are displayed on the Church noticeboard in the hall, and may also be viewed by request to the PCC Secretary.

7. Administrative Information

Saint John's Church is situated on Forton Road, Gosport, Hampshire, PO12 4TQ.

It is part of the Diocese of Portsmouth within in the Church of England.

The correspondence address is:

The Vicarage, 10 Spring Garden Lane, Gosport, Hampshire, PO12 1HY.

The Church website is www.fortonchurch.org

PCC members who served at any point during 2016 were:

Mother Carrie Thompson (Chair); Donna Adamson and Paul Whitton (Churchwardens);

Shelagh Perch (Vice Chair / Deanery Synod Rep); Glenna Towler (Secretary /Deanery Synod Rep);

John Green (Treasurer);

Jonathan Bardolph; Nikki Cameron; Chris Gration; George Jackson; Irene Matthews;

Jane Thomas; Bev Whitton



The Revd. Mother Carrie Thompson (Incumbent) March 2017