***The Diocese***

***Of***

***St Edmundsbury and Ipswich***

**Annual Report & Financial Statements**

**Of the**

**Parochial Church Council**

**Of St Andrew’s Church, Marlesford, Suffolk**

**For the year ended 31st December 2023**

**Prepared under the Receipts and Payments Accounting Basis**

**General information**

Church Address: St Andrew’s Church

Church Road

Marlesford

Suffolk IP13 0AT

Priest in charge

(from July 26th) The Reverend Ann Kember

14, St Peter’s Close

Charsfield

Woodbridge

IP13 7RG

01473 737280 / 07388117656

Bankers: Church of England Deposit Fund

St Alphage House

2 Fore Street

London EC2Y 5AQ

CAF Bank Ltd

King’s Hill

West Malling

Kent ME19 4TA

Examiner: Mrs Carol Parry

**Church Membership and service numbers**

Electoral Roll (Resident): 20

Non Resident 2

There were 20 Sunday parish services this year.

**NB This number excludes major festivals (Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas)**

Average adult attendance: 14

**NB this number excludes major festivals (above) and special services (Benefice Communion)**

Average fortnightly young persons’ attendance: 0

Average adult communicants: 13

Average monthly young person’s communicants: 0

Easter 21 plus 2 children

Remembrance Sunday 24 plus 2 children

Carol Service 42 plus 11 children

Christmas Eve Eucharist 33

42 Wednesday Compline services with average attendance 2- 3

**Aims and Objectives**

It was our objective to provide, as much as possible, a continuity of worship in our community during the Interregnum. The Revd Deirdre Parmenter, Revd John Hare, Revd Robin Alderson and Revd Deirdre West led a number of our services, for which we thank them.

The pattern of Benefice Eucharists on the first and fifth Sundays, rotating alphabetically round the parishes, continued. Marlesford had Evening Prayers on the second Sundays and Holy Communion on third, with one Morning Prayers in July.

**Membership of the Parochial Church Council**

We held our APCM for 2023 on April 15th in church.

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representative Rules.

**Priest in Charge:** The Revd Ann Kember (from July 26th)

**Churchwardens:** Lord Marlesford

Mrs Nancy Waterfall

**Deanery Synod**

**Representative:** Mrs Nancy Waterfall

**Elected Members:** Mrs Jackie Cousins (Secretary)

Mrs Carol Cooke (Treasurer)

Mrs Brenda Lavender

Mr Roger Waterfall

Mr Andy Cousins

Mr Andrew Quartermain

Mrs Nicola Stacey

**Standing**

**Committee:** Priest in Charge, two churchwardens, treasurer and secretary.

**Overall Review of the year**

* We thank all those who willingly read the Bible passages during our services throughout the year, and also those who cleaned and did the flowers.
* The annual accounts were ratified by email prior to the APCM.
* The PCC met in January, May and September
* We fulfilled our financial commitment to paying our entire Share for 2023; £9,00 was slightly above the sum we had pledged.
* Outreach in the community continued to be the focus of our parochial work.

**Our church year - Services and Mission**

Hand sanitisers are still provided.

* A small group continued to meet for compline on Wednesdays, moving from 5.00pm forward to 4pm at the end of the year with the darker evenings. Compline was said in its traditional form using our south aisle altar.
* Candlemas on 12th February was a candlelit service of meditation which ended with the congregation singing unaccompanied round the font. Those who attended found it very meaningful.
* During Holy week, we held a benefice Compline on 5th April.
* On May 6th, the bells were rung from 8.30-9.00am to mark King Charles III’s coronation. The ringers went on to ring at Campsea Ashe, Hacheston and Parham.
* June 20th saw a group of ringers from the Stowmarket area coming to ring our bells.
* Our Harvest service on September 24th celebrated the season and it was so good to see the church decorated with the fruit and flowers that typify it. Our collection went to FIND, the local food bank.
* On November 12th we held our Remembrance service. This year we moved the service to 10.45, bringing us in line with the rest of the nation. It was very poignant to hear Molly Hawkins aged 8 read part of the salutation. Our two perspex “here but not here” silhouettes continue to be a reminder of the six men Marlesford lost.
* On November 26th we had the baptisms of Phoebe and Faith Page, the fourth generation of their family to live in Marlesford.
* Carol Service, December 23rd – Mick Gowar, Ann’s husband, joined Andrew, our organist to provide the music for our carols. Mick is a guitarist, and the combination of the guitar and piano was lovely. Our service was very well attended, and it was lovely to have 11 children with us, who all took an active part in the service. Everyone enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine afterwards.
* On Christmas Eve we had Holy Communion with carols at 6.30pm, led by Revd Deirdre Parmenter. Again, the congregation was large, and numbers suggest that this time in the evening proves popular with our community.
* We are very grateful to our organist Andrew Quartermain.

**Training**

* Carol Cooke repeated the Elders’ Pastoral Care course, which lasted six weeks. She also completed Safeguarding Leadership on 27ty September and 4th October.
* Ann is encouraging those who have not completed their safeguarding training to do so.

**Community initiatives**

* The monthly cake stall in church continued by pre-order
* Our monthly Soup and Scone Lunch in the Community Centre met in January and February. As take-up was low, we decided to discontinue the initiative.
* We had three concerts in the Music@Marlesford series, on April 30th, July 29th and October 28th, organised through the generous offices of Andrew Quartermain our organist. For two of them he was joined by Dominic Moore, violin. The concerts are now an established part of our year and have a regular group of concert goers.
* The Churchyard nature count on June 3rd. Together with Susan Stone from Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Richard Cooper organized a count of the flora and fauna species in our churchyard. It proved to be a much richer environment than expected. A good turn out of 18, both adults and children joined in and afterwards enjoyed a Ploughman’s Lunch. The results were subsequently uploaded to the Caring for God’s Acre website.

**Maintaining our churchyard.**

* The PCC is grateful to Susan Wilson for organising the flower rota and thank the flower arrangers for their contribution.
* We thank Richard Cooper and Susan Wilson for their continuing churchyard maintenance overview, and continued the maintenance on the north side of the church which will increase biodiversity. The area to the left of the path where more modern graves are situated is kept mown.
* Jason Catling, Ray Howard and Richard continued to strim around the church to keep the area clear around it and we thank them for their work.

**Policies**

* Lesley Bensley is the Benefice Safeguarding Officer. The policy is on the noticeboard in the porch. PCC members have been requested to complete their training, as the basic training has been extended. The Diocesan Safeguarding Policy was reaffirmed at the APCM.

**Deanery Synod**

Nan Waterfall attended two meetings, one at Wickham Market in May and one, with Rev’d Ann at Winston in September. At the latter, Gary Peverley talked about the role of the Diocesan Secretary and also answered finance questions.

**Vacancy**

The vacancy lasted from April 30th 2022 – July 26th 2023, a period of 15 month, during which time the Benefice Elders did sterling work taking services. It was lovely to be able to welcome Ann on her appointment and we look forward to her ministry with us. Roger Waterfall had represented Marlesford on the interviewing panel on February 10th.

**Church fabric and maintenance**

* Ecclesiastical Insurance Company completed their inspection on 9th May, and the only point that it threw up was the ned for an electrical wiring check.
* 11th July Tim Ariss serviced the organ.
* July 27th Malcolm Walker tuned the piano.
* 16th August Doyles completed the electrical check and passed church as satisfactory.
* The fire extinguishers have been checked.
* On September 26th Nan Waterfall and Carol Cooke met with Nick Jacobs, our architect, to review the last Quinquennial, and to look at two specific concerns, neither of which, in his opinion, required action.

**Finance and Fundraising**

* Parish share – we were pleased that we were able to exceed the amount of our allocated share and contribute £9,000.
* The monthly cake sale raised £545.90.
* The ease with which the **Gift Aid** on the PGS regular giving is received makes the treasurer’s task more straightforward. We continued to receive Gift Aid via the PGS and area currently up to date with our claims.

Via the PGS we received £691.30 and via HMRC we received £438.52. The monthly cake sales raised £935.80 during the year. We are up to date with our claims.

* The Music @Marlesford concerts raised £735.00. We thank Andrew, and Dominic very much.
* After some persistence we received £908.00 from Fram Broadband for use of the church tower as a relay station.

**Financial report**

Appended separately (Carol to provide)

**A MESSAGE FROM REVEREND ANN KEMBER**

It seems hardly possible that Mick and I have been here for just over six months already! The time has flown past, but in a good way! We have felt very welcomed in all seven churches of our Benefice and it has been lovely getting to know you all.

I am particularly grateful for the hard work and dedication of our Elders and they all bring different gifts and skills to our ministry team.

We continue with our usual pattern of services which is only possible because of the hard work our Elders. As we go forward, it will be important to work together as a Benefice, and even more importantly, worship together. We will continue to worship together on the first Sunday of the month, and where there is a fifth Sunday. However, over the coming year I will be looking to build us up as a Benefice and find ways of bringing our churches together more often.

Advent Sunday was a very well attended Benefice service and many people remarked how much they enjoyed worshipping with a larger group of people. Being together as a Benefice can be a way of feeling uplifted and encouraged.

I have enjoyed our coffee mornings at the Station House in Campsea Ashe and it has been lovely to have people from across the Benefice attending and chatting together.

I enjoyed all our Christmas services, and it was good to meet many people from the local community who came into church at that time.

All seven of our PCCs met together in October and are meeting together again this month and we will continue to meet on a regular basis.

As small rural churches we all struggle with the same issues, falling attendance, falling income and buildings that often cost a great deal to keep up. We also sometimes struggle to find a place within our communities. However, I am not disheartened, because we have a core of people who are willing workers in God’s vineyard.

Recently, I came across this post on Facebook, and it is so relevant for us as a small rural Benefice:

*Let’s stop worrying about getting bigger. Let’s get better. We need to stop idealising the glory days of our church’s past. But let’s not make the equal mistake of obsessing over what people are looking for in a church today. What people need from church hasn’t changed. They need Jesus. In us.*

So, let’s discover what God has in mind for our Benefice right now as we are. Maybe if we let go of what we’re *not*called to be, we can start to see who we *are*called to be. I look forward to discovering this with you.

Every blessing

Ann