

**St. Mary Magdalene Church, Westoning - Annual Report
of the Parochial Church Council for the Year Ended 31st December 2019**

Administration Information

St. Mary Magdalene Church is situated in Church Road, Westoning. It is part of the Diocese of St. Albans and in the Deanery of Amphill and Shefford, within the Church of England.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted for registration with the Charity Commission (CC). We will however be contacting the CC to confirm this.

PCC members who have served from 1st January 2019 until the date this report was approved were:

Vicar:	Reverend Nigel Washington	(Chairman)
Associate Minister	Reverend Linda Washington	
Readers:	Mr Jonathan Denman	
	Mr Stephen Farmer	

Churchwardens:	Mr Peter Little
	Mr Philip Steer

Representatives of the Amphill and Shefford Deanery:	Mrs Jane Steer	(Safeguarding Officer/Lead Recruiter)
	Mrs Eileen Scott	

Elected Members:	Mrs Joyce Corless		
	Mr David Dallman	from	29 th April 2019
	Mrs Rona Kitchiner-Clark	(Organist)	
	Mrs Linda Little	(Secretary)	
	Mr Paul Lovett		
	Mr Andrew Robertson	(Treasurer)	
	Mr Paul Scrivener	to	4 th November 2019
	Miss Sarah Sharp		
	Mrs Margaret Timothy		

Structure, Governance and Management

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England and operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The method of appointment to the PCC is set out in the Church Representation Rules.

The PCC operates through a number of committees, which meet when necessary and report back to the next full meeting of the PCC. The only Committee required by law is the Standing Committee, which has the power to transact the business of the PCC between meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC. The Standing Committee met once during 2019. The full PCC met six times during the year with an attendance of 79%.

Safeguarding

St Mary Magdalene Westoning takes its obligations with regard to safeguarding extremely seriously. The PCC confirms that it has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have due regard to the House of Bishops guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

During the last year we have attended training and have reviewed and created a new safeguarding policy statement based upon the Church of England House of Bishops recommendations which is on the church website.

We have reviewed and agreed an updated Parish Statement on Domestic Abuse and the PCC has reviewed and approved our safeguarding policy which continues to comply with the House of Bishops Policies and Practice Guidance.

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We have continued to carry out DBS checks where these are required and continue also to risk assess and update the risk assessments of the activities in which we are involved.

Achievements and Performances

Church Attendance

As at 31st December 2019, 87 parishioners were on the Church of England Electoral Roll, 41 are resident within the parish and 46 non-resident.

The average attendance at regular Sunday morning services was 46 adults and 4 children (This figure does not include festivals, baptisms and any services that are not 'normal' ones).

Monday Morning Prayer continued to take place with an average of 3 and Wednesday Worship had a typical attendance of 8 although more attended for Ash Wednesday. Festivals were also well attended. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day saw 384 people present at the various services offered. As in previous years, two Crib Services were held to accommodate the large numbers. A Carol Service was held for Macintyre, with 68 present.

The Lower School again visited church for services in place of school assembly at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. A service was also held for the Year 4 children leaving for middle school, when each child was presented with a Youth Bible.

Service with a Smile (SWAS), a service for children and their parents/carers, continued to be held on the third Sunday of each month, with an average attendance of 8 children and 16 adults. This year saw a coming together of SWAS and the main 11am service when Café church was offered on the third Sunday of both July and October at 10am. Informal Praise and Worship also continued on the 4th Sunday evening of each month when an average of 12 adults attended.

Outreach

Westoning Choir again enjoyed singing as part of the Quintet Choir and assisted Elstow Church by providing choir members for two weddings and Chalgrave church by singing at a funeral.

Little Stars mother and toddler group run by the church continued each Tuesday during term time, at Westoning Lower. The Open the Book team continued to go into the Lower School every Wednesday morning to take assembly when Bible stories were acted out, involving children in the acting where possible.

The Youth Group met once a month at the Village Hall during term time. Youth Group offers a good space for youngsters to relax and have fun and is looking at offering additional sessions in 2020.

Friday Fellowship, a club for the retired held weekly at the Village Hall, has an attendance of at least 20 most weeks. A varied programme of activities, speakers, crafts and outings was offered throughout the year.

A new after school club, TWiG (Tea with God) offering themed crafts and activities with a Bible story and a meal for all was formed, mainly targeting 0-9-year-old children who are accompanied by an adult. Some older children also attend, the older ones tending to offer support to the youngsters with craft work etc. At present TWiG is offered once a month at the Village Hall and sees a typical attendance of 20 children and 27 adults.

The Chequers continued to provide the venue for the ever popular bi-monthly Men's Breakfasts. A variety of speakers were heard throughout the year. Westcaf, a coffee and chat drop-in held at the Village Hall every Tuesday morning, still proves popular. Each week sees familiar faces, as well as new people come through the doors.

House Groups, 'Going Deeper' and Paul and Merle Bible Study Group all continued to meet throughout 2019. The Prayer Ministry Team flourish and November saw the start of a new venture, a healing prayer room open each Wednesday afternoon at the Coffee Lounge in Flitwick. It is run by volunteers from

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various churches in the area and offers a quiet and friendly space in which to meet people for prayer and chat.

Mission Action Plan – Our Vision for 2020

1. **To continue to build on what is already established** – to encourage the whole congregation to seek God for his 20/20 vision.
2. **To work as a church to bring the Gospel to every home in Westoning**
3. **To involve the wider congregation in underpinning our vision with corporate prayer.** 60 minutes with God once a month and morning prayer services on Monday and Wednesday.
4. **To maximise our new resource of a Family Outreach and Community Consultant.** Looking at ways of raising longer term funding.
5. **Scattering Seeds Week in July** – including
 - Family fun and Youth event
 - Café church service.
 - Special Service with an outside speaker
6. **+1 Campaign** – what would it look like if we all brought someone new to church or one of our activities or to a special occasion.

Renovation of the church – to include multi-purpose space at the back of the church and repair the chancel.

Deanery Synod 2019-20

Three meetings of the Synod were held.

July Meeting

The speaker, Archdeacon Dave Middlebrook, spoke about the different ways the voice of God is heard. He then explained his four priorities in his new role are People, Growth, Finance and Structure. He is aware that it is not good to just focus on finance and structure, but these priorities do help underpin people and growth. During a question and answer session he said he expected 2 posts in this deanery to go, but he hoped redundancies would not be necessary. It is possible more multi benefices will be created, but with no more than 5 churches. The lay chair advised that three benefices are becoming vacant, and the deanery is going to be consulting on growth and sustainability over the next year.

November Meeting

The main focus of the meeting was the consultation which is taking place looking at the re-ordering of the deanery and planning for growth and sustainability including financial sustainability. It is hoped that this process will allow each deanery to plan and restructure and provide this to the diocese rather than the plan just coming down from above. Feedback from the parishes is required by 31 March 2020.

Westoning was on the agenda to provide news from the parishes and a summary of what we have been doing was given.

March Meeting

The guest speaker was Grace Sentamu who has been vicar of St Luke's Legrave for the last 6 years. She spoke about Minority and Ethnic Diversity a topic Bishop Richard had asked her to bring to Diocesan Synod. As the human race we all have different ethnicities and different gifts to bring. The real challenge is unconscious bias and many examples were given. Grace Sentamu has been carrying out training throughout the diocese on this topic. At the end of the day God has created an amazing diverse world where we need to work together, and everyone has a part to play. Peace starts with each one of us.

She ended by talking about growing the church in Legrave. There are no short cuts with God, we need to get on our knees and fast and pray and then deal with people one person at a time.

The Lambert Conference is taking place this July 2020 and the Bishop of Guyana is spending a week in our deanery from 15 – 22 July.

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Review of the Year

Vicar's Review

How special is Westoning Church. Architecturally it is beautiful, loved by those who walk up its path; spiritually it resonates hope and forgiveness, within the services large and small, for young and old, and even out into the village, stretching beyond the gates in outreach activities where we practise what we preach. Oh, it is a blessed meeting place where all who seek Jesus can safely meet and hear of how essential is His goodness and love.

How cherished is Westoning Church. Those who are the body of Christ in this village are proud of their church and long for others to share in the good news. We actively love those with whom we worship and those nearby. It is what we are called to do. When we stop and think, oh how blessed are we.

The last year has seen consolidation, perhaps in readiness for the most amazing burgeoning. We have Godly people of experience in place and there is a vibrancy especially in the family and children's work and in the projects planned for God's glory. Now could be the time for a delightful flowering in the ministry of this Church.

Churchwardens' Review

We started the year with the official hand over from Pam Ward to James Ford, who is to be our new Architect and Professional Advisor. Pam had advised the PCC for 22 years. We are truly grateful for her care, consideration & valuable advice. We look forward to working with James.

Routine maintenance has been regularly carried out and we are grateful to Richard Copperwheat for carrying out the testing of our portable electrical appliances (PAT). The fire extinguishers were in good order and Woolgar Electrics carried out the five-yearly test of our electric heating system, with some minor repairs. A new Burco Boiler was purchased.

We were extremely grateful for a donation towards the cost of repairing the path to the toilet. The walkover material was replaced, like for like. This work was completed by Bella Buds Landscaping. The PCC looked into putting down a tarmac replacement. Unfortunately, building regulations made it impossible and costs would have been much greater.

The Greensand County Landscape Partnership approached the PCC with a view to providing a grant towards creating a conservation area within the churchyard. Their advice as to what we could do to clear the North side of ivy, open it up and extend our existing conservation area, was most useful. Unfortunately, the costs were much greater than expected and a ten-year commitment was required. The PCC decided to decline their offer.

Judith Evans from the Diocesan Living Churchyards Scheme and Elizabeth Dobbie from The Wildlife Trust came to view what had been achieved in 2019 and remarked on our success with this venture. With some limited clearing it has resulted in more wild bee orchids appearing and the wildflowers have attracted an abundance of butterflies, bubble bees and many other pollenating insects. Efforts to continue to clear the North side of the church continued throughout 2019 and are ongoing.

The movement in the Chancel floor and the cracks in the walls continued to cause concern. Edward Morton, Structural Engineer from the Morton Partnership, inspected the church and produced a report. There had been considerable movement in the floor and monitoring equipment was placed over the cracks to monitor any further movement. Monitors showed a significant movement in the south chancel wall, opening up a gap of one centimetre. The general consensus is that it is not dangerous. We await our Quinquennial Report to assess the situation and to plan repairs.

With the severe cold experienced this year, it proved difficult to get the church warm for services. Thought has been given to clearing the pews at the back of the church and the North aisle and installing underfloor heating, keeping the heating on a low setting, to warm up the stone floor and retain the

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warmth. It would also give a better opportunity to be more flexible in the use of the church for wider activities. Moveable seating would replace the pews with pews only remaining in the front section of the nave. Alongside any such project, solar panels would be considered on the nave roof. This was suggested by the DAC. Other churches have already made such improvements and further visits are planned to see what can be achieved and at what cost.

In God's Acre the 'Mound' was removed to provide more burial spaces. The laurel hedge was cut back and ground growth cleared, with all excess soil and rubbish removed. It is thought it will provide an additional 8 grave spaces. As the Parish Council have yet to provide a new burial site, we are fortunate that some recent burials have been in double plots, with others being cremation and burial of ashes. The heather boundary hedge around the ashes area was cut back and has flowered most spectacularly since. Bella Buds Landscaping carried out this work. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission have erected an official sign acknowledging the presence of war graves.

We are grateful to Barry Hill for repairing and painting the gates to God's Acre. The gates were also rehung so that they now open properly.

St Albans Diocese, under the Mission and Pastoral Measures Act 2001, are looking into their plan for sustainability and growth. Discussion has taken place between the Diocese and various parishes and the idea of adding Harlington to our existing benefice of Westoning with Tingrith is currently being considered. There is a strong possibility that some churches within the diocese may close, with others becoming Chapels of Ease or Festival Churches.

The PCC thank our volunteers who regularly arrange flowers and clean the church throughout the year. They do such a splendid job and their commitment is very much appreciated.
