

## St. Mary the Virgin, Church Road, Almondsbury BS32 4DT

### Annual Report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and the activities of the parish generally for the year to 31 December 2007

**Correspondence Address:** The Vicarage, 3 Sundays Hill, Almondsbury BS 32 4DS

#### Members:

The Revd Philip W Rowe (Chair) Michael Kirby (Lay Chair) Mrs Pam Van Rossum (from July 2007)  
Mrs Susan Bridgewater (until March 2007) John Chick Mrs Astrid Domingo-Molyneux  
Richard Ebdon Dan Evans Mrs Jenny Garrigan Mrs Susan Hewson Mrs Clare Jefferis (from  
September 2006) Denis Jones Mrs Luisa Keig (from 23 April 2006) Laurie Penny (Hon Treasurer)  
Miss Margaret Roberts (Secretary) Mrs Clare Rogers (until March 2007) Mrs Alison Rowe  
Robert Sharp Mrs Elizabeth Tierney (from July 2007) David Thomas Paul Van Rossum Damian Watts

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The Parish of St Mary's Almondsbury is part of the Benefice of Almondsbury and Olveston with Aust, of which the Reverend Philip W Rowe is Incumbent.

The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure. It is a charity that is excepted from registering with the Charity Commission. The appointment of PCC members is governed by & set out in the Church Representation Rules and is from those on the Electoral Roll of the Parish.

#### Objectives and Activities

The primary objective of all PCCs is the promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England and our **Mission Statement** is "to know God, to build up each other as Christians, and to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord to our neighbours".

This has been expressed in:-

#### 1. Worship -

We are grateful not only to Philip as Vicar but also to Canon John Poarch and our Lay Ministers for leading our services, and to the Director of Music and those in the Choir and in the Praise Group for their contributions. We are pleased that Mrs Jackie Jones was licenced as a Lay Minister in October. We also record our thanks to Denis Jones who will be leaving us after over 12 years ministry here at the end of April following a house move.

The Pattern of Services has continued in accordance with the revisions made in October 2006:-

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	8 a.m	10 a.m.	6.30 p.m
1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday	HC (CW)	All-Age Worship with Praise Group	HC (BCP) with choir
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday	HC (BCP)	HC (CW) with choir	Non-choral service/meeting
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	HC (BCP)	Morning Worship (CW) with choir	A variety of Worship services
4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	HC (CW)	All-Age HC with Praise Group	Choral ES (BCP)
5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday	HC (CW)	Choral MP (BCP)	A variety of Worship Services

Attendance on 'normal' Sundays in 2007 averaged just over 81 adults, a drop of 2 from 2006, reflecting lower attendance at 8 a.m. Holy Communion; adult attendance at 10 a.m. is slightly down, but has increased for the evening services. Total adults attending in the year increased from 5,672 to 5,777. An average of 12 children attended on 'normal' Sunday, including Breakfast Club.

There was a slight drop from 2006 in those attending worship both at Easter and at Christmas, but still equivalent to the 2005 attendances.

There were 16 Baptisms other than at normal services attended by 605 adults and 183 children, 15 Weddings and 26 Funerals

## 2. Children & Youth:

Breakfast Club is involved with All Age Worship on 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays, & meets separately at 10 a.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays, joining the congregation towards the end of the service. The following figures show attendances at Breakfast Club:-

	2007	2006
Average Number of children per session	17	16
Average Number of adults per session	11	10
Total number of sessions	19	19
Number of regular families	14	13

Oasis & Oasis Plus for pre-school & primary children meets monthly on Mondays and is an increasing group led by Jan Cooper & others. A pre-confirmation group for 11-14's also run by Jan Cooper has met monthly.

The Child Protection Policy was fully revised and accepted in the light of the Diocesan 'Safe and Sound' 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2006). Training sessions have been held.

The Frost & Miles Fund is an endowment for funding work with children and young people.

## 3. "Going for Growth"

The challenge our Bishop, Mike Hill, has issued to all churches in his Diocese is to "go for growth". This might seem an unrealistic expectation at a time when virtually all denominations in this country are experiencing a steady decline in attendance. But the Bishop has wisely reminded us that there are other areas for growth, ways in which we need to grow before we can hope to reverse numerical decline. We need to grow in *Commitment*, in *Partnership* and in *Influence*, as well as in *Numbers*. This brief report reflects on each of these areas.

**Commitment.** We cannot hope to see non-Christians committing themselves to follow Christ in the fellowship of his church unless church members show the same commitment. Our personal devotion to Christ as Saviour and Lord, and our growth in faith, hope and love, is basic to any "church growth" programme. Series of sermons have emphasized the value of a "rule of life", (regular prayer, Bible reading and Christian fellowship). We have also been encouraged to commit ourselves to the church (part of Christ's body on earth) in worship, in the use of our gifts, and in the service of our neighbours. It would be wrong to try assess progress in this area: we are on a journey, we shall never have arrived.

**Partnership.** God works in the world through many agencies, not solely through the church. We must look for opportunities to work with non-churchgoers in meeting local needs and improving local services. It is good to see the way in which the wider community is being drawn into the fund-raising efforts for our church roof repairs, and into the work of "Cafe Almondsbury". Then there is Lich Gate, as much a *village* as a *church* magazine. The "community review" is another way in which we demonstrate our desire to work with local people and to show that the church is "there for them". Perhaps helping to realise the hope for a village shop will be another way in which we can work together for the common good.

**Influence.** At the same time as we work in partnership with those who do not share our faith, we seek to be "salt and light" for Christ. Our aim is to grow as a "community of wholeness" *with Christ at the centre*. The more we recognise our calling to be a *servant church*, the more we shall be a sign of, and witness to, the Kingdom of God. We need to think through how to extend our influence as a church and as individual Christians in our community.

**Numbers.** Numbers aren't everything, but they are something! The good news is that work with young people, through the Breakfast Club, Oasis, Oasis Plus and Oasis Extra, is flourishing. But attendance at services continues slowly to decline. We need to ask ourselves - and those who have stopped attending, and those who come only once or twice a year - why this is. Presumably they do not find our services meeting their needs. We need to listen to them.

Denis Jones, (Chairman, Worship and Mission Committee).

#### **4 Education & Outreach**

An 'Alpha Course' – an introduction to Christianity -was again held in the Autumn, attended by about a dozen people, and it is intended to hold a further course in 2008. Home Groups, particularly in Lent are held regularly.

Close links are maintained with Almondsbury Primary School by weekly visits by the Vicar and through the Governors, of whom Susan Hewson is Chair. We welcomed the School to church on a number of occasions and plan an 'Easter Experience' in church in Holy Week for them.

Marriage Preparation Courses for Severnside were held in March and November.

The Pastoral Assistants have maintained contact with 30 people.

A 'Welcome Evening' (known as AVE –Almondsbury Village Enterprise) for new residents was held in November, led by Phil Kane, who has taken over from John Chick after 10 years.

'Café Almondsbury' opened in Church on 1st October and continues on Mondays between 9 and 12.

'Men's Breakfast' started in October and have continued monthly on second Saturdays, covering topics of general interest

Social activities also open to all have included BBQ & Boules, Harvest Supper, Mulled Wine & Mince Pies, Village Quiz Night with Fish & Chip supper; thanks are recorded to Jenny Garrigan as she steps down after 6 years leading the Social & Fellowship team.

St Mary's Walking Group has enjoyed monthly walks led by Dan Evans.

The Lich Gate Editor is Paul Pilbrow and we much appreciate his work and the work of the team of volunteers. For personal reasons Paul is retiring as Editor in May 2008, but the Council is pleased to accept the offer of Sue and Paul Beech as joint Editors. .

Our Website [www.almondsburychurch.org](http://www.almondsburychurch.org) attracted 1,880 'hits' in 2007, of which 1,155 were first time visitors. There were a further 104 new visitors in January 2008. The Weekly Sheet is now displayed, and there are many useful links.

*X-plare* on third Sunday evenings has addressed major social and spiritual issues with outside speakers, and have been well supported.

Responses to the 'Community Questionnaire' are being studied.

#### **5 Buildings the Church and Churchyard, the Church Rooms and 14 Church Road**

The main task on the Church Building is preparation for the major roof and high level work. The Council has appointed hdp Associates Ltd Building Surveyors to prepare the Specification, and we hope that this will be agreed shortly by the Diocesan Advisory Committee. We are grateful to the Roof Appeal Committee for their plans for fund raising: without adequate funds we cannot do the work! Temporary repairs to the asphalt gutters of the Nave Roof as advised by the Church Architect were carried out by Joseph Colman in August for £979 plus VAT and we are grateful to Almondsbury Charity for funding £979. St Mary's is one of 5 churches from the original Parish of Almondsbury in 1894 who share funds available for repair and maintenance from this source.

The lead on the roof of the Vicar's Vestry and of the Toilet Block was stolen on or about the 13<sup>th</sup> October, and temporary cover was installed pending decision as to how to repair this damage. The cost of repair will be met by our insurers. Repairs in Sarnafil were completed at the end of February 2008.

Two new bell ropes have been purchased; it is to be noted that major work to the Bells will be needed within 14 years, when they will require to be 'quarter-turned'.

Internally, a Baby Changing Unit and new water heaters for handwashing have been installed in the Toilets.

In accordance with the Archdeacon's Licence dated 1 September 2007, 2 pews from the North Aisle have been stored off site to facilitate Café Almondsbury. This Licence continues until November 2008.

The Archdeacon's Inspection to verify the Terrier & Inventory and other records due in 2007 was carried out in January 2008.

Health & Safety Policy is under regular review and there have been no reported accidents; a Fire Risk Assessment of the Bell Chamber has been done and no action is needed. Provision of toilets suitable for disabled people remains unresolved, but under review.

A Faculty for a new Noticeboard and sign has been obtained, and a donor is covering the costs

Work has been done on a failing section of the southern Churchyard wall. Lettering on the grave of HR Stephens has been refurbished in accordance with the terms of the bequest for that purpose.

Churchyard Grasscutting is carried out by John Bennett on contract terms, but volunteer work on the Churchyard and part of the Church Rooms gardens on a monthly basis is much appreciated.

The Churchyard Fund is an amalgam of various charities established for funding work on the Churchyard and certain graves.

The Church Rooms are in good order, and are used regularly for Breakfast Club, Oasis Extra, printing of Lich Gate and meetings. Income from outside lettings has increased.

14 Church Road has been let throughout 2007. The exterior windows have recently been painted and a leaking gutter repaired. A section a wall has been rebuilt.

Michael Kirby and Pam Van Rossum Churchwardens

### **Financial Review**

The Parish Share target for 2007 was unchanged from 2006 at £61,392. Unlike 2006, PCC decided it was just able to meet this challenging figure in full. A number of factors have contributed to this result, notably a welcome increase in voluntary giving, coupled with increased revenues from use of the Church, advertising in Lich Gate and through the Old School House being fully let. We now pay Church insurance premiums monthly, rather than annually, thanks to a Diocesan initiative and this has significantly aided cash-flow as well.

The unrestricted bank balances carried forward into 2008 totalled £11,663. Current liabilities were £8,140, leaving a net position just adequate for immediate needs.

The capital within the Frost & Miles Endowment Fund is represented by 5,987 CBF Fixed Interest Securities Fund Income Shares holding a year-end value of £9,489. The available income within the restricted revenue fund brought forward is £2,649.

The capital within the Churchyard Endowment Fund is now represented by 6,076 CBF Fixed Interest Securities Fund Income Shares with a year-end value of £9,496. Some of the capital in this Fund was

used towards the refurbishment of 14 Church Road in 2003. That capital has now been fully reinstated by the progressive acquisition of additional CBF shares. Available income within the restricted revenue fund brought forward is £4,057.

Following refurbishment of 14 Church Road, PCC resolved that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of each year's gross rental income should be invested to replace the capital used at the time. There are no further obligations towards the Endowment Funds and available monies are now being placed in a General Reserves Fund, with an initial deposit of £2,693 being made in 2007. The target for this Fund will be £20,000 if the previously held reserves are to be replaced in full.

The Vicar and Churchwardens are the Trustees of H R Stephens Benefaction for Almondsbury Church and grant income of £1,414.75 has been received from this source.

L D Penny      Hon Treasurer

### **Thanks**

The PCC employs Mark Weaver as Organist and Choirmaster and Susan Bridgewater as Personal Assistant to the Vicar (on a shared basis with Olveston).

All other routine activities are undertaken by volunteers, and the Council places on record its appreciation of these volunteers who give their time and skills to the church and community.

The Council thanks all who share in work of the Council and particularly records its warm appreciation of the ministry of Philip and Alison Rowe with us all.

### **Adoption**

This Report was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008 for presentation to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

Michael Kirby  
Lay Chairman of the Council