

The Parish of St. Petroc's Church, South Brent, Devon

A Parish in the Dart and Avon Mission Community

*Address for correspondence:
The Vicarage, Hillside, South Brent TQ10 9AN*

Annual Report and Financial Statements

For St. Petroc's Parochial Church Council

For the year ended 31st December 2022

Team Vicar

Reverend Prebendary Professor Gina Radford

Bankers

NatWest, Paignton (B) Branch, 15 Victoria Street, Paignton TQ4 5DE

Independent Examiner

Mr Robert Barclay
Yonder Cross
South Brent
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Our website

www.stpetrocsandstmarys.org.uk

The Parochial Church Council is an Excepted Charity

The Parochial Church Council of St. Petroc's Church South Brent

Annual Report

For the Year Ended 31st December 2022

Aim and Purposes

St. Petroc's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church; pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also responsible for the well-being of the church finances and the upkeep and maintenance of the church and church room buildings. Both buildings are located in Wellington Square, South Brent TQ10 9AQ.

Current Situation

The parish is part of the Dart and Avon Mission Community in which the Rev Prebendary Professor Gina Radford is Team Vicar with special responsibility for South Brent and Rattery. She is currently covering the Team Rector vacancy across the Mission Community. She is officially on duty on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday each week, but does amend her timetable to fit in with weddings and funerals particularly. She lives in the Vicarage in South Brent.

The assistance of our lay reader through the year has been greatly appreciated by the Church community.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC remains committed to the community of South Brent, enabling as many people as possible to worship in the parish church, taking the message of the Gospel to the wider village, and supporting and serving the wider community. St Petroc's is a church for the whole parish, whether they are regular worshippers or not.

The PCC is committed to the vision that the church is not just the building but the people of God in this place.

The PCC has an overview of worship and is very supportive of the ministry team by supporting existing services and offering constructive feedback and practical help.

The worshipping community at St Petroc's works hard to enable all people of whatever background to discover, establish and grow their faith through worship, prayer and exploring our faith together. We seek to learn and grow in our knowledge and trust in Jesus.

The provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish and outreach work remain a priority. Our Pastoral Visiting Group supports members among the church community and beyond.

We seek to be the generous people of God, and to look beyond our own community to offer support. We donate to a number of charitable and other causes, and see this wider giving as an essential part of our life together.

In addition, the Churchwardens are members of South Brent Feoffees, which the Vicar chairs. This group supports both individuals and groups within the village, with a particular concern for those in greatest need.

Achievements and Performance

Worship and Prayer

The PCC is keen to offer a range of services that our community find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling.

This past year has not only seen the on-going effects of the Covid pandemic, but also a reduction in the number of personnel available because of the vacancy of the Team Rectorship and more recently the year's leave granted to our Team Curate.

We have continued our weekly services at St. Petroc's. Our main services follow the pattern of a Family Service on the 1st Sunday of each month, a Village Eucharist on the 2nd and 4th Sundays and Service of the Word on the 3rd Sunday. In months where there is a 5th Sunday, the service is variable. We also have one 8.00am service of Holy Communion from the Book of Common Prayer.

Attendance levels at our services have returned to near or the same as pre-pandemic levels. Whilst we have lost a few of our members through ill health and death, we have been pleased to welcome a number of new members, including some new young families.

The 9.30am services were transmitted live by Zoom (including phone-in) and also placed on the church website. Part way through the year we decided to stop live zooming, but to continue to film the service and place it on the website. This was because the demand for services live by Zoom had reduced considerably.

We have committed to continue to offer a virtual access to our worship for the foreseeable future in order that we can continue to offer worship to those who cannot physically join us.

In normal circumstances the whole congregation is invited to stay after the 9.30am service for a time of fellowship where refreshments are available in the adjacent church room. This is very well attended, and coffee and fellowship time can sometimes be as long as the service! Occasionally the Family Worship is followed with brunch.

Weekday Morning Prayer takes place twice-weekly and is regularly attended by up to 10 people, both in person and by Zoom.

A weekly Thought for the Week study group meets virtually to discuss matters arising from the Sunday sermon.

We have a number of active bible study and prayer groups, which meet on a regular basis and a celebration of World Day of Prayer takes place annually. In addition, Lent and Advent courses are held.

We have a large and flourishing band of bell ringers, who have regularly won awards. St. Petroc's church bells were rung whenever circumstances permitted, including the nation ring to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on February 6th 2022.

There is a small but growing branch of the Mothers Union.

Our Civic Service of Remembrance was held without restrictions this year with attendance returning to near normal.

In addition to our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate, mark and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. We see Life Events services as a very important part of our mission. At baptism we thank God for the gift of life, in marriage public vows are exchanged with God's blessing and through the funeral service family and friends express their grief and give thanks for the life that is now complete in this world and commend the person to God's keeping. We have celebrated 10 baptisms this year, with five weddings and 26 funerals, including crematorium services, being held during the year.

St. Petroc's is blessed and very grateful to have the active ministry of our excellent Licensed Lay Minister (LLM), as well as from retired clergy and other members of the Mission Community Ministry Team.

In addition to our two highly talented organists, we have an excellent choir who together support us at our 9.30am services. We also have a band which plays at Family Worship and on other special occasions, and an enthusiastic group of young actors who bring bible and other stories to life for the congregation.

All are most welcome at our services. At present, there are 105 parishioners on the Electoral Roll, a decrease of 3 from last year.

Christmas

This Christmas saw us, together with St. Mary's Rattery, once again hold a wonderful Christmas service and nativity at Pennywell Farm. We were pleased to be joined by Brent Singers, who performed carols, a great addition. This was a very special event, and attracted many people who don't otherwise come to church. We were so well supported that we ended up doing two performances on the night!

Our usual Carol service was held on the Sunday before Christmas and our Christingle Service was held on Christmas Eve. 468 people attended our Christmas services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Deanery Synod

The PCC Secretary is also a member of the Deanery Synod, along with one other member of the congregation. This provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church.

The Church

We want our Church to be open to our community for private prayer. It is open from about 9.30am until the early evening every day.

The interior of the Church is cared for by a dedicated group of cleaning volunteers and the appearance of the Church is wonderfully enhanced by the work of our very active team of flower arrangers.

The main difficulty we have experienced with the church building this year has been further water ingress. Necessary repairs to some of the gutters and downpipes, concurrent with a structured maintenance regime, has gone a long way towards rectifying this problem. However, we remain concerned with the extent of water ingress following the work on the Church tower. This is being monitored.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care in the parish by the Vicar, LLM and members of the congregation is a very high priority. Home Communion take place monthly in the Willows and Windward residential homes and our LLM has been leading a monthly service for the two care homes, Home communions of housebound members of the congregation also take place regularly, together with other pastoral visiting. In addition, there is the regular visiting for funerals, baptisms and weddings.

The Pastoral Visiting Group coordinates work in this area.

Work with Children and Young People

We continue to have a number of energetic teams which work with children and young people in the parish.

People with under Fives

PUFFS has met every Monday morning in term time throughout 2022. The team has welcomed new helpers this year, who are valued members of the team.

This Autumn it was decided that we would start the morning with a prayer and finish the session sharing a prayer with the children and their carers. We give a present of the book 'We are going on a bear hunt' and a birthday card as near to a child's birthday as possible. When PUFFs happens close to the birthday we celebrate using 'Cuthbert' and an appropriate number of candles and sing Happy Birthday.

Our numbers have increased. We have several children under 12months and a few toddlers. Up to eleven children on some Monday mornings. We can be quite a crowd! One or two mums arrive very soon after 9am, welcoming an early cuppa! Everyone enjoys the music and singing, which we do towards the end of our time together. The decision whether or not to have a story depends on the ages of the children and the number attending. We gratefully received some more toys this year which are more age appropriate for our current attendees.

Sunday Morning Services

Young people are always welcomed at our Sunday morning services, with a Family Service on the 1st Sunday of every month. We seek to involve the children by taking part in the service, and have had some new younger children join us recently at these services, which has been a great encouragement. Facilities are provided for young children at the west end of the church and "Activity Bags" are provided for the under-5's and 5 – 10-year-olds which are current and follow biblical themes.

SPARX

SPARX is a development of Messy Church. It is held on the third Saturday of the month in the church room; runs from 5.00pm until 7.00pm and includes activities linked to a Christian, discussion and, importantly, food!

Although a number of our SPARX members have moved up to secondary school, we continue to engage with those at primary school and those in the earlier years of secondary school. This is an area where there could be potential to join forces with others within and beyond the Mission Community to help achieve a 'critical mass'.

Primary School

We have a state Primary School in the village, with which the Church has established links.

The school is welcomed to church for all the major festivals, and the Vicar takes assemblies in school. The church has a very positive relationship with the school.

The Bridge Project in South Brent (previously 'Youth Bus')

Ivybridge Youth for Christ (IYFC) currently undertakes this important work as part of their regular Christian outreach to young people. In Brent the events are held in term-time on Wednesday evenings with the aim of providing a safe place for the youngsters to chat with each other or with those adults present (a staff member and at least one volunteer) if they so wish, away from the pressures of school and sometimes family life as well. Typically, between ten and twenty young people attend each time, many of them quite regularly, resulting in some really meaningful conversations especially if they are in small groups or just one-to-one.

Safeguarding

There have been no safeguarding incidents brought to the attention of the safeguarding officer during 2022.

The Diocesan safeguarding office keeps our safeguarding officer updated with changes in requirements, and the Mission Community safeguarding personnel met three times during 2022 and are in email contact as and when they wish.

Mission and Evangelism

We hold a monthly Family Service, which has proved very effective for enabling people who may not be used to church an opportunity to experience a more informal and accessible service. The children help take the service, doing dramas, reading, doing the prayers and playing in the band.

We reintroduced our Good Friday village walk. A cross is carried to the top of Brent Hill, where the Vicar leads a short service. It was a wonderful occasion with well over 100 people and various well-behaved dogs making the pilgrimage. We are very grateful to the landowner who kindly allows us to access the hill.

We have developed a very accessible and attractive website thanks to the expertise of David Brett, a member of the church. It has superseded our use of 'A Church near you' which we found was not the best fit for our needs. It is aimed not only at our regular members, but also at anyone who may be looking in interest. We have pages with prayer resources, worship resources, young people's resources, as well as information about our activities and services. The Vicar writes a weekly "Dear Friends" letter with a homily on the Sunday's readings, together with prayers, notices and a diary for the week ahead. This is emailed to everyone in our email group, and is available on the website and the Church notice board for the general public to read. A small number of hard copies is produced for those with no internet access.

Facebook posts for weekly services and associated events are posted every week and reach between 200 and 700 people.

A Christmas card was sent to every house in the parish with the times of the Christmas services. Our Parish Magazine (The South Brent Messenger) has been relaunched quarterly and is distributed to almost every household in the parish and Rattery, without charge.

St. Petroc's Lending Library of Christian-based books continues to be used by a small number of readers. Books especially relevant to the time of year in the Church's calendar are placed on the top shelf with a selected few showing the front cover in full to help attract attention. The agreed extension to the library has been achieved through two stand-alone bookcases placed behind the choir stalls in the Catherine Chapel.

Ecumenical Relationships

We have been very successful in establishing close relationships with the other churches in the parish in recent years. Combined services are held at the annual Covenant Service at the Methodist Church in early January and on Remembrance Sunday at the Parish Church. There is a combined Service of Light at the Roman Catholic Church on the first Thursday in December. Anglicans take an active part in this service. Personal relationships with members of the other churches are very strong. The World Day of Prayer takes place each year, the venue rotating around the three churches.

Churchyards

St. Petroc's has three churchyards in its care: the historic graveyard around the church building; the 1910 Cemetery in Station Approach, which takes its name from the year it was opened; and the adjoining Millennium Cemetery, opened in the year 2000. St. Petroc's churchyard contains three Grade II listed mediaeval tomb chests, and the stone wall facing the car park and roadway is also listed, as is the small lych gate and the base of the mediaeval stone cross outside the main lych gate.

The grass cutting and maintenance regime has returned to normal following the Covid pandemic. We record our thanks to our contractors for their work.

The lower third of St. Petroc's Churchyard is earmarked as a wildflower meadow, and as an improved wildlife habitat for birds, butterflies, insects and bees. The grass here is allowed to grow long in the Spring and Summer and mown in the Autumn.

Our gardener continues to sweep the paths, cut back bushes etc. and carry out other necessary maintenance tasks. Tree work is carried out by our tree surgeon, subject to consents where needed from the DAC and Dartmoor National Park Authority.

St. Petroc's Churchyard and the 1910 Cemetery are both closed to new burials and interments, unless these take place in family plots. The Millennium Cemetery is open for burials, or interment of ashes, for any resident of South Brent, regardless of their faith. We see the cemetery as very much an amenity for the whole parish and we are grateful to the Parish Council, who make a contribution of 50 per cent towards the cost of grass cutting in the 1910 and Millennium Cemeteries.

Priorities for future work, as funds allow, are the restoration work on the lych gates to both the 1910 Cemetery and St. Petroc's Churchyard, relaying the brick setts at the main lych gates at St. Petroc's to deal with the problem of standing water, and attending to leaning and dangerous headstones. Other priorities include attention to the hedge bank at the bottom of the Millennium Cemetery and a rolling programme of repointing of the main churchyard walls.

There has been a problem with leaking pipework associated with the extension from the Village Hall to the Millennium Cemetery, resulting in an excessive water bill for the Village Hall. This situation, along with any potential liability, is being monitored very closely and steps have been taken to cap the pipe to prevent any further leakage. Visitors to the Millennium Cemetery have been advised that there will no longer be a water supply in the cemetery.

We keep watch on unauthorised items placed on graves and continue to remove these, hopefully in a sensitive way. All three churchyards remain areas for quiet contemplation and also as havens for wildlife.

The churchyard and 1910 cemeteries are now officially signed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to indicate the presence of such graves.

Financial Review

Following the "pandemic years" we were cautiously optimistic as we headed into 2022, and an appropriately cautious budget for the year was accepted.

From a financial perspective, 2022 turned out much better than expected. When compared with the original budget, the shortfall of £4,500 in receipts from planned giving was offset by increased income from a combination of gift aid claims, wedding & funeral fees and other activities. The result being that our total income for the year was exactly on Plan. However, it is felt that we cannot rely on these activities alone to bolster the income stream, and bearing in mind the shortfall of some £4,500 of planned income, a Stewardship Campaign is being organised to take place in the spring of 2023.

Our expenditure in all areas during the year was strictly monitored and controlled, with particular emphasis on energy costs, together with some maintenance items being deferred.

Our efforts in controlling gas costs have borne fruit, resulting in a 30% reduction when compared with 2021. We do, however, face a challenge in 2023 as our contracted unit cost has risen by a factor of 2.62

An excellent year's income from the Church Room, which when coupled with constraints on expenditure, resulted in a reduction in expected nett cost of some £1,350. This may not be repeated in 2023, as the repainting of the church room windows is scheduled.

Receipts from HMRC for our Gift Aid claims were much better than originally planned, as we caught up with matters post-Covid. This resulted in a larger than normal claim which was submitted in November. Again, this was a "one-off catch up" and will not be repeated.

Income from our other activities exceeding expectations, principally (but not exclusively) from the Fete, the Harvest Supper and the hiring of the Church building for concerts.

As a consequence, we were able to discontinue the strategy adopted during 2020 and 2021 regarding the redesignation of burial and memorial fees and gas heating costs, although this has resulted in a modest deficit for the year.

We have once again been able to pay our Common Fund requirement in full, as we have for at least the past ten years.

The generous response to the appeal meant that we were able to send £1,700 to the Disaster Emergency Appeal for Ukraine, and we have also, via the Youth Support Fund, sent a further £1,000 in support of the Youth Bus.

Looking to the future, we hope to dramatically reduce gas usage, and trials are currently being undertaken to evaluate the impact on the Church building and fabric as we experiment with differing temperature levels and timings of our heating systems.

Budgets and forecasts for income and expenditure for 2023 have been prepared and reviewed by the PCC, together with available reserves and, despite the challenges which lie ahead, the PCC is reassured about the financial stability of St. Petrocs. It is hoped that the forthcoming Stewardship Campaign will be successful.

Reserves Policy

It is PCC policy to ensure that sufficient funds are available prior to the commencement of any particular project. We have been fortunate in the past to have benefited from the generous support of parishioners and villagers.

Volunteers

The members of the PCC would like to sincerely thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make our church the lively and vibrant community it is.

Structure Governance and Management

The Parochial Church Council manages the activities of St. Petroc's. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules.

At St. Petroc's the membership of the PCC currently consists of our Vicar, two churchwardens, Deanery Synod representative and others elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the Church. All members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll. The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the Church, including deciding on how the funds are to be spent.

The full PCC met 7 times during the year with an average level of attendance of 95%.

Given its wide responsibilities the PCC has a number of sub-committees, each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life. In addition to the Standing Committee, comprising the Team Vicar, Churchwardens and Treasurer, there are committees for Fabric, Churchyard, Church Room and Media (Zoom, Messenger & Facebook), together with a Pastoral Committee and a Social Committee. All are responsible to the PCC and report back to it with the results of their deliberations as necessary.

St. Petroc's has a Health & Safety Officer and a Safeguarding Officer, who each report to a nominated member of the PCC. The Safeguarding Policy is reviewed annually. The Health & Safety Officer conducts annual risk and fire risk assessments and the recommendations are reviewed and implemented by the Fabric Committee.

Administrative Information

St. Petroc's Church is situated in Wellington Square, South Brent, Devon TQ10 9AQ. It is a member of the Dart and Avon Mission Community within the Deanery of Totnes in the Diocese of Exeter within the Church of England.

The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956 and the Church Representation Rules 2022) and a charity exempt from registration with the Charity Commission.

PCC members who have served from 1 January 2022 until the date this report was approved are:

Chair:

Reverend Prebendary Professor Gina Radford

Churchwardens:

Mr. Rob Brighthouse

Mr. Greg Wall

Elected members:

Mr. Geoff Addy - Hon. Treasurer

Mr. David Brett – until 27th April 2022

Mrs. Christina Cross - w.e.f. 27th April 2022

Mrs. Shirley Eatwell – Wedding & Funeral Administrator

Mr. Andrew Ferguson

Mrs. Sue Gaskin - until 27th April 2022

Mrs. Susan Jozsa - Hon. Secretary

Mrs. Emma McCulloch

Mrs. Sarah Smith

Mrs. Elaine Willis

Approved by the PCC on 29th March 2023 and signed on their behalf by

Reverend Prebendary Professor Gina Radford (PCC Chair)

Mr. Greg Wall (Vice Chair)

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