

St Andrew's Church, Soham



and St Laurence's Church Wicken



**Annual Report
For 2015**

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**THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH OF ST ANDREW'S SOHAM,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31ST 2015.**

St Andrew's Parochial Church Council is a charity exempt from registration with the Charity Commission. Its accounts are kept by the honorary treasurer, Mr Simon Wright and are checked by an independent examiner, Mr David Giles, the Town Council Finance Officer. A copy of the accounts is attached. The PCC banks with Barclays Bank plc and its solicitors are Thompson, Webb and Corfield.

The Parochial Parish is made up as follows:

(The Revd Tim Alban Jones to August 2015)

Mr Christopher Palmer	Churchwarden
Mrs Margaret Fisher	Churchwarden
Mr Simon Wright	Honorary Treasurer
Mr David Tickner	Honorary Secretary
Ms Ruth Dennigan	Licensed Lay Minister

Mrs Fiona Hefferon	Mr Peter Scott
Mr John Cole	Mrs Pamela Cole
Mrs Alison Evans	Mr Tony Brown
Mr Philip Logan	Mrs Linda Logan
Mr Mark Campbell	Mrs Jo Sturgeon (Deanery Synod Rep)
Mrs Delia Tickner (Deanery Synod Rep)	

The purpose of the PCC is defined by Canon law as "to cooperate with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical".

The Mission Statement of St Andrew's and St Lawrence's

We aim prayerfully to serve our communities – working together in practical ways, helping people to experience the love of God and grow as disciples of Jesus. We enjoy each others' company as we celebrate God's hope, life and the beauty of his creation.

The Vicar's Report

I am conscious that as I write this, the process for appointing a new vicar is only just getting under way – though the delay is in no way the fault of the Parish or Parish Reps. As a result of the very long gap between vicars a lot of work has fallen on many shoulders. I would like to say a big Thank you to Margaret Fisher – amongst others – who has borne an enormous burden during the vacancy. The task of finding clergy to take the services is a pretty rotten job and she has taken this on in addition to so many other administrative tasks. I hope that there will be an adequate expression of thanks offered by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting to her for all her hard work. I would like to add my thanks to those of everyone else.

If I had to reduce to a single thing all that I wanted to say it would be quite simple: it would be Thank you. The difficulty comes in trying not to miss out any of the many people whom I would want to say thank you because there are so numerous. There are the obvious ones, such as colleagues lay and ordained with whom I have been fortunate enough to work during my time here. I have had three curates for colleagues as well as various other clergy and it has been a joy to share my ministry with them. I have also had remarkably supportive Parochial Church Councils to work with. I know some clergy who dread the monthly PCC meeting because it can be fractious and difficult. I can truthfully say that I have never experienced anything like that during my time here and I offer a heart-felt thank you for that! Our PCC has been very fortunate with the Churchwardens and other officers. I am luckier than most clergy in that the same two Churchwardens who appointed me in 2000 are still serving. The members of the congregation have also been tremendously encouraging in sharing our common purpose here in trying “to keep the rumour of God alive.” I am immensely grateful for that. While there have been differences of opinion they have never been destructive or divisive. This is not always the case in other churches and I have been very fortunate in this respect here in Soham.

St Andrew's has never been 'my' church. I have always been conscious that vicars are here as something of birds of transit. Some stay a very long time (in the nineteenth and early twentieth century there were some who did just that) and others are rather more transitory. The list of the previous vicars of Soham shows a wide variety in the length of stay. I have been hugely privileged to have been able to stay for fifteen years, which is a year longer than the average. During that time we have seen some significant changes. Perhaps the most obvious one, if you step into the church, is the re-ordering, in which our fantastic new organ takes pride of place. During my time here I have been so blessed to have had such a wonderful organist. Vicars and organists often do not get on; I have been remarkably fortunate with the outstanding musicianship and support of Peter. The new facilities which were an integral part of the scheme also mean that it is now possible to use the building for so many more events than was previously feasible. I am so grateful for this even though it means more work for those who keep our building looking so good.

The biggest thank you, however, goes to the people of Soham who have been so generous in letting me into their homes and lives. It is an immense privilege to be able to come alongside people at important times in their lives, such as at the birth of a baby, or preparing for marriage or as they begin to adjust to life after the death of a loved one. I have lost count of the numbers of funerals, weddings and baptisms that I have conducted in my time here, but thank you to all of you who have allowed me into your lives at these precious times. I have been very touched by the number of people who have made such kind and generous comments about the small help that I may have been able to offer. Thank you all for your cards, kind words. Many people have been kind enough to say that people in Soham will miss me; I can absolutely assure you that I will most certainly miss the people of Soham more than I can say. It is a truly remarkable place and I have been enormously blessed to have been able to minister here. Thank you.

With every good wish

Tim

Saint Andrew's Church, Soham and Saint Laurence's Church, Wicken.

A meeting to elect churchwardens for the above churches was held on 28th April, 2015, in St Andrew's Church.

The following were elected –

St Andrew's: Christopher Palmer and Margaret Fisher.

St Laurence's: Richard Bramley and Robert Fuller.

There followed the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

1. Apologies for absence.

2. The presentation of the report for 2014.

The report had been circulated before the meeting. Thanks were expressed to all contributors, and to the Lavers for compiling the report.

3. The presentation of the accounts for both churches for 2014.

St Andrew's. Simon Wright presented the accounts, which showed a situation similar to the previous year. He thanked Margaret Fisher for the day-to-day paying in of monies, and Lynne Webb and Daphne Laycock for the freewill giving envelopes and gift aid. Simon was thanked for his stewardship of the finances.

St Laurence's. Julie Rash presented the accounts. Some charitable giving will appear in the 2015 accounts. Julie was thanked for her hard work.

4. Appointment of independent examiners.

St Andrew's: David Giles, or, if appropriate, his successor.

St Laurence's: Jilly Rogers.

5. Wicken Mission Hall Report.

Jean Turner reported. It had been a busy year of fund-raising, helping to pay for various improvements and refurbishments. The hall had been hired out for several organisations and events. Jean thanked the sub-committee. The hall generated an income of £33853.40 and expenditure of £36567.24, with an end-of-year balance of £6526.59. Jean was thanked for her hard work.

The hall is being valued ahead of a prospective sale to the Parish Council, a sale which would carry certain restrictions. Thanks were passed to Helen Randall, who has been in constant communication with the Charity Commission.

6. Fabric, goods and ornaments of the church.

St Andrew's: Margaret Fisher referred to the item in the Report. It had been a quiet year. Some funds are available for a new church notice board.

St Laurence's: Richard Bramley reported on several maintenance issues, including the installation of a new heater, the damaged flagpole and leakage from the roof. Grants had been applied for, not all successfully.

7. Elections to PCCs

St Andrew's: Alison Evans was re-elected, and the rest re-elected en bloc.

St Laurence's: all re-elected en bloc.

8. Elections of sidesmen.

Sidesmen were re-elected en bloc for both churches.

9. Any other business of parish interest.

The Open Churches Trust encourages churches to install wi-fi in order to become a hub of the community. It was noted that English Heritage is against the idea.

A discussion is due to take place at St Laurence's on the issue of creating a single parish, rather than a single benefice.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.36 pm.

The newly-appointed PCCs met to transact the following business –

1. Appointment of Treasurers and Secretaries.

Simon Wright and Julie Rash were elected treasurers for their respective parishes, having been proposed by Judith Scott and seconded by Tony Brown.

It was proposed by Helen Randall and seconded by Richard Bramley that David Tickner be secretary for both PCCs – carried unanimously, Joy Martin was thanked for her work as PCC secretary for St Laurence's.

2. Minutes of PCC meeting held in March 2015.

These were not available.

3. Appointment of any sub-committees.

No changes were necessary.

4. Annual key-holders' review.

This was carried out according to the list circulated.

5. AOB.

Data protection letters have been sent out from Bishop Woodford House and need to be returned shortly.

St Laurence's – some policies need signing, and a Parish Safeguarding Officer is needed. Dorothy Clark will be approached. Thanks to Julie Rash for her work on these issues. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Parochial Church Council

Since the last APCM, there have been eight meetings of the PCC. Much time has been given over to issues regarding the interregnum and the process of appointing a new incumbent. An updated parish profile covering both parishes, service rotas and parish administration are among the issues discussed or dealt with by PCC members. The sale of the old vicarage and the purchase of the new one have been overseen by the diocese, but with input from the PCC. Mike Banyard, the Rural Dean, has attended meetings and we are grateful for his support and practical encouragement.

The usual issues regarding fabric and finance have been extensively discussed, with particular concern over the effect that the continuing vacancy is having on our ability to generate income.

The sale of Wicken Mission Hall has also been covered, with consultation with Wicken Parish Council leading to a potential sale.

A first communion policy, drawn up by Helen Randall, was adopted, in line with diocesan guidelines.

It was decided that the two PCCs should become one at the APCM. A bishop's order will formalise the merger. This move has been anticipated by the decision to have just one secretary.

David Tickner.

Electoral Roll 2015

The electoral roll **Soham St Andrew's** as at 29th April 2015 totalled 104

The electoral roll has been updated for 2016

One Addition: Lynne Turner

One Deletion Doris Cutchey

Total on the electoral roll for 2016 is 104

Lynne Webb Electoral Roll Officer

Wicken St Lawrence's total 20

The Treasurer's Report

The 2015 Parish Share of £44,491 was paid in full. All forms of giving through service collections, small ad hoc donations and envelope schemes, together with associated gift aid reclaimed, raised just over £39k this year. Fundraising activities, most notably the flower festival which raised circa £2k and sales of the Lodestar magazine which raised a net sum of just over £1k, combined to give a fundraising total for the year of a shade under £6.5k. In addition, £7.7k of charitable donations, mostly associated with funerals, passed through our books during 2015.

The overall picture in terms of income and expenditure is not a positive one with approximately £75k in income versus circa £81k in expenditure. This loss could have been further exacerbated had the church not transferred in £5k from reserves in order to ease cash flow during the year and received just under £2.1k from Soham United Charities. Therefore, we as a congregation need to continue to search for new ways to bridge this annually recurring deficit, as it is currently being funded from reserves each year.

Children In Church 2105 – 2016

St Andrew's church continues to welcome the children who come to church on a Sunday morning. There might be anywhere between approximately 5 and 15 children on an average Sunday.

We feel it is important not to imply that worship is only for adults by separating the children too much from the rest of the congregation. So we try to provide a variety of ways to meet the needs of the younger people in church, bearing in mind the importance for their developing spirituality of children feeling comfortable and that they belong to our worshipping community.

- On two Sundays in the month (when there is a Eucharist) there is a session in the meeting room for those children over about 4 (who want to join in). These are usually based around the Gospel reading for the day including both storytelling and a craft activity, but we also like to respond to the children's own ideas and concerns. The children are invited to share their learning with the rest of the congregation at the end of the service. We try to have two adults working together to lead these sessions.
- On other Sundays there is an activity and materials available for the children on a table at the east end of the north aisle. Again this activity will have been prepared to tie in with the Gospel theme and often referred to directly during the service. Usually there is one adult who will sit with the children during the service, whose role is to make connections between the activity and what is going on in the service. The same activity can also be handed out to children sitting with their adult(s) elsewhere in the congregation.

It feels as if this pattern of supporting the children during worship has helped the children feel more comfortable being in the service than a year or so ago when the statement 'We are in the service today' would invariably result in a big groan.

- We still have plenty of toys and books available in the North transept for younger children to play with at any time during the service. Support for this is more difficult to organise, but parents are welcome to join the child or sit near enough to both take part in the service and be able to respond if their child needs them.
- Some older children take turns alongside adults as servers and acolytes. This is another way of emphasising that everyone is equally valuable in the Body of Christ.
- We continue to be open to the idea of sharing the Eucharistic bread and wine with children who are part of our regular worshipping community (and over about 7 years old) We have been less good at organising preparation for children who themselves express this desire, especially during the interregnum, but recognise this needs serious attention.

It is delightful to have these young people in our midst. Over the years we see babies becoming active toddlers, inquisitive pre-schoolers developing minds of their own and independent thinkers who contribute so much to the life of our church.

Bridget Buchan

Little Fishes

We started off 2015 with very low numbers (sometimes only 1!) however as the weather got warmer our numbers increased and one week we had 16 children. We now regularly have 6-7 children with their parents/grandparents. We have changed our time to 1300-1430 as this fits a bit better with nap times and school pick ups.

We aim to have a craft at every session to go with the bible story, songs and prayer but at the moment most of the children are under 2 years old so we decide during the session what is appropriate for the children and the grand/parents. We have also been lucky enough to have families who are new to Soham and who are learning English and we have been able to welcome them in to our community.

It has become a really important group for a lot of the adults who come as well as a time the children enjoy and become comfortable in church.

Sharon Wright

Messy Church

Messy Church numbers continue to be mixed, so we always aim to have 6 activities with varying degrees of difficulty so that everyone is hopefully catered for. The 'Messy Church Planning Team' usually meet the about 10 days before the session in order to discuss ideas, assign tasks and give us time to buy resources.

Over the year the average age has probably dropped but we have a spread from all three primary schools coming, mainly Reception, and years 1-3. This means each activity really

does need a leader as the children need support to take part. We have help from some of the Youth Group, as well as volunteers from the congregations in Soham and Wicken.

Since Tim departed, Delia has kindly been leading our worship before the children break for their shared meal. Special thanks to all the ladies on the rota who ensure our children are well fed!

Since Jan 2016 we have been working with Soham Methodist Church and Caroline Neech and Rev. Colin Watkins now attend out planning meetings as well. We now alternate locations by month - one month 2nd Sunday at Berrycroft, next month 2nd Tuesday at St Andrew's. We hope by alternating between week day and weekends, those that work can take part more.

Sharon Wright

St. Andrew's Church AGM Report Youth Group

Youth 4 Life usually has regular weekly meetings taking place in church on a Friday evening from 7 – 8:30 pm. Young people attending are aged 11+ with the vast majority being in Yr 8 (12-13 years). We currently have a regular attendance of 8 young people, supported by 2 young leaders and 1 adult helper. There is a good mix of both male and female members. We tend to offer a varied programme with dynamic activities, games and discussions, but also engage in community events.

We participated in the church's Flower Festival and contributed to the young people's corner by making graffiti boards, which still provide a colourful background to the café style prayer corner in church.

In the summer, the group went to Rave in the Nave at the Cathedral, which was well attended and appreciated by everyone.

Towards the end of the year we saw a performance of Viva's "A Christmas Carol" in church, which was enjoyed by all. We started this year with a trip to the KD Theatre Productions' pantomime of Snow White, which was a huge success. We joined forces with the Soham Friends Project, an inclusive youth group here in Soham, as some Y4L members also belong to this project.

Over the course of the year, Y4L organised and led two All-age Services in church, and also conducted a survey which was very helpful in establishing the congregation's opinions on our church services.

Claudia Stein-Carr
Youth Minister

Mother's Union

After the long and faithful service of Judith Scott and me being well and truly prompted by God I became Branch Leader 2015. I have a wonderful group of Ladies who help me with the organisation of the group we're called PALS this stands for Prayer & Programme Action & Activities Leisure & Laughter Spirituality & Service this we feel covers the essence and ethos Of MU. We launched our year with a 'Traditional Afternoon Tea' in Church which was just lovely. This year we've been involved in the Flower Festival, Fete and had 'Coffee Cake and Chat' with Tim thanking him for his support for MU. Also running refreshments and a stall at the Christmas Market.

Our evening meetings started with Lynne Turner leading us with an evening entitled ' Be Still and Know that I Am God it was such a wonderful evening and gave us all a time to share our own lives with each other on a Spiritual level.

Through the winter months we moved to Millbrook House which has been a real blessing. We joined MU's Global campaign entitled 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence which was very successful, we also collected toiletries for the Cambridge Woman's Refuge we were overwhelmed by people's generosity.

We hosted an MU Advent Service which was very special. We also provide lunch for the Community Lunch which is held every two months. We also became part of a very exciting project call the Bread Basket Breakfast.

I am thrilled to say we have new members joining who will be enrolled on Mother's Day very appropriate I think you'll agree. The future is looking very exciting for us and with Gods continued guidance we have a lot to look forward to.

Anyone wanting to find out more about MU please call me on 01638 721 274

Love and Blessings Jan Frost Branch Leader.

Bread Basket Breakfast

This all came about through a group of woman having the same vision, that being, having an opportunity to bring together Community and Church in such a way that would be comfortable for everyone and where we could build relationships with each other. What better way than eating together so the 'Bread Basket Breakfast' was born. We meet once a month on the third Saturday of the month in Church at 10am until 12. We serve anything that will go in a toaster. Tea and Coffee are served in individual teapots and cafetieres and brought to the table along with orders of toast, crumpets, muffins etc. The atmosphere is welcoming relaxed and friendly and is such a good opportunity to bring the family out too for a very reasonably priced Breakfast at £1-50 per person.

Come and join us a very warm welcome awaits you from Jan, Lynne, Fiona, Meadow, Claudia and Bridget.

Children's Society

Boxes are handed out at Mother's Day and returned at Christingle (in theory!).
In practice it is a bit less formal but the 2015 collection came to a magnificent £445.15
Many thanks!
Dawn Laver

Christian Aid

Lent Lunches	£161.00
St Andrew's school	£ 75.00
Passover meal	£ 79.50
Churches tog service	£222.51
St Andrew's Co/As	£338.09
Methodist Co/As	£189.49
Donation	£120.00
b/f in bank	£ 00.46

Making a total of £1186.05 Slightly less than last year. Well done though.
More collectors are always needed so please give it a thought.

Howard Laver

Fabric and Ornament Report St Andrew's Soham 2015

The church was "spring cleaned" and the gutters cleared late spring.
The boiler had a new valve handle fitted.
Slipped lead on the meeting room roof was restored to prevent further leaks into the room.
Some windows were replaced in the Bell Tower.
Work was completed to install antennae on the tower roof to align the CCTV connection with Ely Cathedral.
To make the organ more secure and for safety a gate has been installed on the stairs leading to the organ.

Churchwardens St Andrew's

Free Will Offering Scheme

Twenty-one sets of envelopes are being used at present, 4 less than last year.

The sum of £4332.07 was banked for the fifty-two week period ending 25th October 2015.

The average weekly income was therefore £83.30

In the interim period 1st November 2015 to 28th February 2016 totalling seventeen weeks

The sum of £1449.77 has been banked.

The average weekly income in the interim period is £85.28.

Lynne Webb

Tombola 2015

I ran a tombola at the fete last year and raised £114.00 for Church Funds.

Lynne Webb