



Annual Review 2014

Wheathampstead Parochial Church Council



St Helen's + St Peter's · Wheathampstead
living and working for the glory of God in Wheathampstead and beyond



Wheathampstead PCC is a Registered Charity

www.sth-stp.org

'Time flies when you're having fun!' So goes the saying, and in April 2015 it will be five years since I took the reins at St Helen's & St Peter's Churches. And goodness, what an incredible journey those five years have provided.

As a snapshot of that journey, 2014 was not an easy year for the church: we were refused planning permission for our Church Centre; we were in Exile in the school for three months and it has taken a while for the new pattern of Church services to settle in. Yet in these difficulties we can give thanks to God for his enduring goodness as we also reflect back on the progress made. 2014 was the year we opened branches of the Credit Union and Food-bank and distributed 180 bags of shopping to families in need over the summer holidays. We also marked the 100th Anniversary of the outbreak of war with the very moving display of poppies. But for all these aspects of outreach and mission I suspect 2014 will go down in local church history as the year we installed the new heating system!

As well as looking back at the journey so far, we need to keep an eye on where we are going in the future – ‘the big picture’ or ‘the long game.’ Over the past five years significant progress has been made in numerous areas of church life. The Annual Report and this Annual Review document detail some of this progress and also point to our future goals.

Our amazing God ‘was and is and is to come’: so let us give thanks for what has been, be aware of His loving provision in the present moment and look forward to all He will do in and through us in the years to come.

Richard Banham



Our Mission, Vision and Strategy

Mission

Living and working for the glory of God in Wheathampstead and beyond

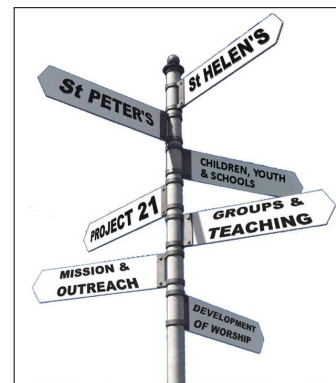
Vision

by 2016 St Helen's and St Peter's will be:

- Vibrant centres for Christian service
- A community growing in Christian Maturity
- Deepening our connection with God through worship

Strategic Priorities

- Strengthen our **mission and outreach** by providing practical and pastoral support
- **Develop our worship** to offer something for everyone
- Deepen faith through **small groups and teaching**
- Help our **children, young people and schools** to know, love and follow Jesus
- Make our accommodation suitable for the 21st Century (**Project 21 & Fabric**)



Where are we?

The first five years of our Mission Action Plan ends in September 2016. We have made good progress. In this review we look at some of our achievements, our new activities and our immediate goals.

We are also looking ahead at our challenges to complete the first plan and those for the following five years which involve:

- Seeking more people to join our teams to enable future growth
- Growing the number of us participating regularly in smaller study groups
- Growing our income and capital to support our plans for a curate, a youth intern and investment in modernisation of our accommodation
- More direct outreach to those in urgent need and the disadvantaged



'I love the Capers events. To see the church full of people enjoying food and drink as well as singing some great hymns and songs is great! What a terrific group of talented musicians we have.'

Choir



Baptism



Prayer tree



Worship Development

2014 Highlights

- Carols and Capers and Harvest Capers
- Café Church well-received
- Our new organist is settling in very well
- St Peter's Praise (2nd Sunday) working well
- New people feeling at home at 9.30 service
- Worshipping in school gave better visibility, let us use more audio-visual material and permitted more variety in our music
- Combining St Peter's Carol Services with Impact resulted in an exciting and innovative service for all ages

Some encouraging statistics:

- 13% increase in communicants at Easter
- More attending the Parish Praise (compared with other 9.30 services.)

'I'm getting to enjoy the new Parish Praise services. Often the theme is something I can talk to my friends about outside church.'

'Taizé services help me to be quiet and to worship in a different way. The music really helps me focus on God'

Kids Worship



Carols & Capers



Introduce new patterns of worship

- Introduced Kids' Worship, Parish Praise and occasional Taizé services
- Moved St Peter's Praise to 2nd Sunday
- Began a review to renew our 9.30 order of service
- Led a Café Service with the Groups and Teaching Group
- Introduced new welcomers, musicians and refreshments at Kids' Worship

Encouragement of lay leadership for worship

With our team becoming established and increasing in confidence we will

- Provide a variety of evening services at St Peter's
- Encourage more to share the leading of Parish Praise

Developing our music, we have/will:

- Recruited a new organist and new members in choir
- Identified the need to refurbish our organ & purchase a digital piano
- Conducted survey of favourite hymns and songs for our worship
- Involve more local musicians in our worship
- Schedule more frequent Taizé services
- Develop a music group for more contemporary worship songs
- Implement plans to purchase a new hymn book

Remembrance Day windmill poppies



'Thank you so much for Sacred Earth – I loved getting my hands mucky and praying (using) the flower in the water.'

'I know that Christmas is on its way when we come to the Christingle service, but that it's actually arrived when we come to the fabulous Crib Service!'

Children, Schools and Youth Work

Strategic Aims

Children's Work – provide a wide range of opportunities for children to encounter, love and worship Jesus and grow in their Christian faith

Schools' Work – nurture and grow the relationships with the schools in our village, supporting them pastorally and helping the children to learn about the love of God

Youth Work – nurture the Christian faith of our young people, from childhood towards an adult commitment

2014 Highlights

- Over 450 children participated in 'Sacred Earth'—the Schools Experience exploring Christian care for the environment
- 18 children went on Residential Weekends, helping them deepen their relationship with Jesus
- Explored creative prayer thoroughly in the St Helen's School 'Lord's Prayer Week', with all the school engaging in hands-on prayer activities
- Experienced 'awe & wonder' moments at our candle-lit Christingle Service and costume-filled Crib Services


Sacred Earth 2014



Junior Church




- Served the littlest members of our community with songs, stories and smiles at The Ark & Tot's Time
- Saw our young people emerge as fantastic Young Leaders, willing to use their gifts and skills enthusiastically to serve God
- Witnessed our children and leaders strongly involved in the launch of Harpenden X:site (for 7–11 year olds)





The Story Lady
1st and 3rd Monday of the month
(term-time only)
9–9:30am

Bring your pre-schoolers for an informal story time in the Lady Chapel, St Helen's Church. Mums, take this opportunity to have a relaxing coffee in the chancel!



Want to spend **quality time** with your tot?
Make **NEW FRIENDS?**



Tot's Time

Baby & Toddler Group
At St Helen's Church

The Ark

Wednesdays (Term Time)
9.30 – 11.00am

Free play Song time
Craft Refreshments



Contact: Tanya 01582 371137 / 01947 003902
tanya@theark.co.uk suggested donation: £1/session

Junior Church fun on Sundays



Prayer Week



Future Aims

- Build our team of committed volunteers serving our children and young people with improved opportunities and activities
- Improve the Crèche area for our youngest members and their families
- Recruit a Young Intern to help lead the older Junior Church group and mentor Impact
- Create memorable, engaging Junior Church sessions for all age groups
- Run an Inspiring Families course, supporting the parents in our village

'Impact is great because it enables us to explore our faith in a fun environment with our friends.'

'Your gifts of food have stopped me going into debt this summer'

'Thank you for your discretion in giving us these parcels. They have made a real difference to our lives'

'One lady had the children line up at the door and hand me a plaque they had made saying Thank You for their hampers – and all I had done was deliver the parcels!'

Quote from supermarket delivery man: 'Your church buys all this and then gives it away? That's special!'

Christmas bags



Wartime tea party



Mission & Outreach

2014 Highlights

- 180 shopping bags of food to families to help when without free meals
- 11 Christmas Goody bags delivered to families
- Smiles, coffee and cake for about 60 each week in Coffee in the Chancel
- Wartime Tea Party sing-along with the Wheathampstead Community Choir
- 3 carloads of Harvest food to Open Door, St Albans homeless charity
- Knitvity Trail in local shops raised profile of Christmas story
- 8 tins of Celebrations chocolates, 200 gingerbread angels and 150 hot cross buns given through the churches Goodies Give-aways
- Charity Coffee in Chancel morning raised £200 for the Church Urban Fund with a Pover-Tea party
- All children given an activity book 'Love Life, Live Advent'
- Credit Union established; receiving donations and requests



welcoming



coffee after service



'The church is not only warm from the heaters but from the welcome we get as well'

'I love Coffee in the Chancel because I can go there and find someone to talk to if I am feeling lonely'

Future Aims

- Respond to new needs for practical and pastoral support in our village
- Develop support for the elderly and lonely within the village
- Explore support and welcome for families seeking baptism and establish possible Pathways to Faith
- Maintain and when appropriate, extend the current initiatives we have
- Develop one project which builds our relationship with disadvantaged youths and older people

Completed Goals

- Received good feedback for welcomers now in place at church door
- Sponsored termly, well attended welcome suppers for those new to church
- Supported families through summer holidays with bags of food through our practical pastoral project
- Explored the concept of Pathways to Faith with PCC
- Are now running Pastoral Focus group as a communication network responding to need with practical support and prayer

High Leigh Conference Centre



Ely Cathedral



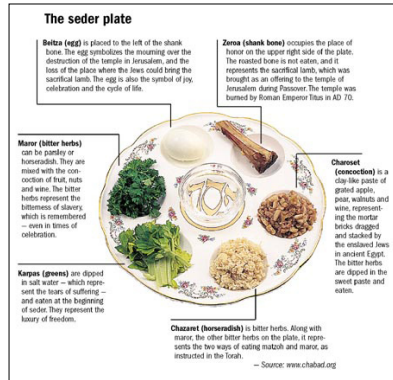
Groups & Teaching

2014 Highlights

- Parish Retreat to High Leigh conference centre
- Trial of Café Church style of service
- Parish Walk
- Seder Meal
- Alpha course
- Home group, Christian book group and WordLive Bible study group continue to thrive and grow
- Trip to Ely Cathedral

'Just like the first two, the third cathedral trip from Wheathampstead was a great day out!'

The Seder plate.



Parish Walk



teaching at High Leigh



Create social opportunities

- The social dimension of cathedral visits, 'Capers' events, walks, meals and small groups continues to be important, and well supported
- Café Church was successful, but did not attract a significant congregation outside the core, older group

Create opportunities to grow in faith

- Our recently-established small groups continue to be successful, but the idea of meeting in small groups outside Sunday services has yet to achieve widespread support within our congregation

Future aims and activities

- Continue to support small groups with materials
- Sponsor leadership training
- Cathedral trip to Bury St Edmunds
- Quiet Day for 2015
- Weekend retreat for 2016
- Autumn sermon series on difficult questions
- Fresh nurture course for new Christians
- Recruit new members to the Groups & Teaching team

Heating System



South Transept



Heating Gift Day



North Aisle



Project 21 & Fabric

2014 Highlights

- Successfully installed Heating System; church now much warmer
- Conducted effective fund raising for heating system: from the total project cost of £105K (incl VAT) only £34K was drawn from parish reserves
- Planning for redecoration and repairs to north aisle and Lamer Chapel
- Carpeted South Transept (Lady Chapel) for mid week activities and Crèche
- Working to solve our storage problems by installing a large shed on the boundary between the Rectory and churchyard.
- Negotiated further with English Heritage about Church Centre plans

'We were very disappointed to have our planning application for the church centre rejected after so much hard work. Since then we have been working quietly to develop an alternative approach.'

Kitchen water heater



'In Coffee in the Chancel we are extremely grateful for the support you give us and the way you always respond so positively to our ideas, however mad they may seem!'

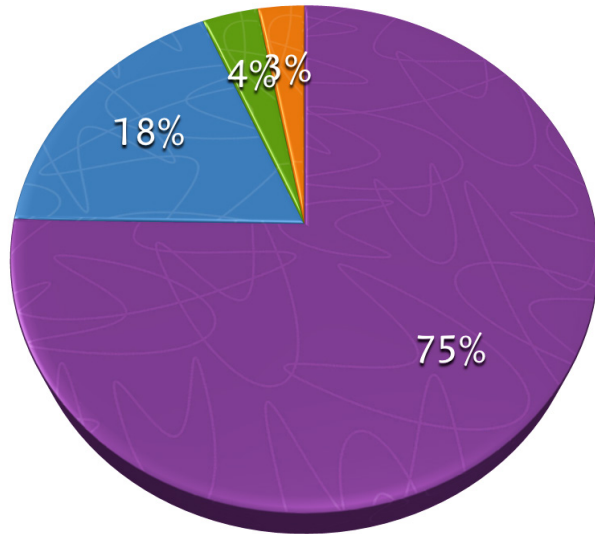
Completed goals

- Completed and scheduled a number of small-scale works
- Installed glass doors on the outside and inside of the south porch
- Completed re-hinging of the main door
- Installed heating system; now fully operational

Plans for 2015 and beyond

- Replace the floor and adjust the pews by south door (approvals obtained, orders placed and work to commence after wedding 'season')
- Complete the installation of Handrails for the South Porch
- Continue the quest for improved accommodation and seeking agreement of interested parties (e.g. Local Planning Authority, The Parish Council and English Heritage)
- Priorities: better toilet and kitchen facilities, improving the access for cars on the north side improvements to the sound system and some visual aids for our services
- Develop further plans for fundraising for these and other needs of our ministry

Where our money came from



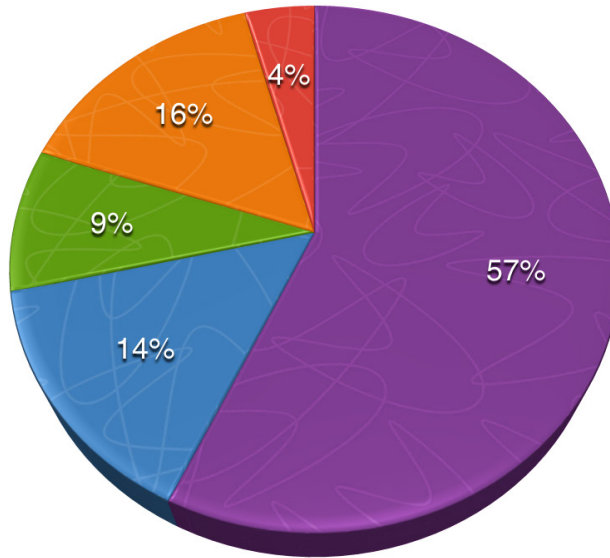
- Planned giving
- Donations & fees
- Rental income
- Trading income

Income (2014)

Planned giving	£128K
Donations & fees	£31K
Rental income	£6K
Trading income	£5K
total	£170K

'This year our income exceeded our regular outgoings by £13K but there was a further £37K incurred on maintaining and modernising our church'

How we use our income



- Clergy & central Diocesan costs & mission support
- Donations to charity
- Mission & Ministry
- Church running costs
- Administration

Outgoings (2014)

Clergy & central Diocesan costs & mission support	£89K
Donations to charity	£23K
Mission & Ministry	£14K
Church running costs	£24K
Administration	£7K
total	£157K

Both pie charts exclude income and costs for major projects.

Flower Arrangers



Deanery Synod



Women's Fellowship now meeting in St Helen's



Our Wider Ministry

Our vision groups lead the development of our mission and are supported by the many teams, groups and partners with which we work, including:

Finance & Admin team
Wheathampstead Deanery Synod
Wheathampstead Churches Together
transport rota
St Helen's School
Choir & musicians
magazine distributors
sidespeople
the Wheathampstead Friends
Bell ringers
Junior Church leaders
our Women's Fellowship group
flower arrangers
cleaners all whose contribution makes our ministry possible
Bible-readers
churchyard working parties
sound system operators
intercessors
church locking up
Pastoral care visitors
coffee-makers

Our Wider Ministry



The Last word...

We give thanks to God for all his goodness over the past year – some of which you've read about in this Annual Review. In response, please take a moment to pray our Vision Prayer as we continue to build the Kingdom of God here in Wheathampstead.

Finally, from all the ministers, the Church Wardens and PCC, an enormous *THANK YOU* to everyone involved in our churches. It is your time and talents that God has used to develop our ministry. We are very grateful.

✠ Our Vision Prayer

Father of all,
Guide and bless us as we seek to grow your kingdom
in our community and in the wider world.
May we grow closer to you through our worship
and through our journeying together.
Make our buildings places
where all are welcomed and feel at home.
Holy Spirit, enable us to show your loving presence to all
through our generous living.
We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.