

Church Warden's Report

Use of the church by the village

We continue to encourage people into the church every day, whether of faith or not.

We are developing the children's and nature area into a self contained part of the church. We have started the process by repurposing some unused pew shelves. We will continue with some carpeting. During church services, children do now feel able to use the area, with the toys, games and books easily accessible for them.

We have also cleared out and rationalised many of the cupboards to make a more welcoming, less cluttered space. Chris Featherstone continues to make shelving and more organised areas for us.

We now have a comfortable and welcoming sofa, kindly donated by the Davies, for those who come to sit in the church during the day. We also have a beautiful cabinet for organ music, kindly donated by the Leadbetters.

We continue to play background music. We have introduced a Pebble Prayer area for those who want to remember people or focus on their thoughts. We now encourage villagers to add to the flowers in the church whenever they like, outside the remit of the monthly altar flower rota. In June 2022, many of the church flower rota ladies (as well as Heather our Vicar) took part in an eco-flower arranging course.

Lesley Bloomfield continues with the banner project, to bring lightness and colourful fabrics into the church.

We continue in our quest to make the church a welcoming and calm space for reflection by all.

The fabric and workings of the church and churchyard

The Quinquennial Review took place in March 2023. We await the architect's report.

We are lucky to have the residents of the Old Rectory taking an interest in the church and churchyard and we are working with them to replace the old fencing around the edge of the churchyard. A churchyard management plan will incorporate a way of working with all of the church's neighbours.

We had a funeral which required a burial. It meant we had to focus on where we have space. Which threw up some inconsistencies in our church burial records. The church warden is in touch with the Registrar about that. And, when Summer leads to warmer weather, we will be in touch with the grave digger to draw up a map of where we have space for burials and interment of ashes.

The church alarm was serviced in August 2022.

On 11th November 2022, 2 replacement headstones and 1 new plaque were placed in the churchyard for the Mayes family, arranged for by Joyce Sparks before she and David left the village.

In December 2022, the Perkins headstone was placed in position, having deteriorated over time and then finally succumbed to breaking off. Work was carried out by R J Farnsworth of Glapthorn.

Services

We held two Taize services – in February and April 2023. Both were well received and we shall continue to develop them in order to offer a different method of worship in addition to the more traditional Communion services.

On 16th October, a special Harvest Service was held.

On 12th November, a Remembrance Day service was held. Led by Jeremy Crouch. A wreath was laid by Peter Crisp on behalf of villagers. A display of letters and possessions of Arthur Mayes, killed in WW1, was laid out in the church by Chris Featherstone for villagers to see.

Christmas services were well attended. We hosted a Christingle service. As well as a Carol Concert – with the Sudborough Choir led by Jeremy Crouch. On Christmas Day, we were able to hold a service for the village thanks to Jackie Makepeace and Prue Folliott Vaughan.

Royal events led to a number of services, at which the village showed its support for matters national. As a PCC, we worked closely with the Village Hall Committee, and the Parish Council, to ensure the village could come together, with all three organisations playing a role and working well in collaboration.

1. In June 2022, the church was decorated for Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Service. Followed by a village BBQ. Villagers were able to ring the Tower Bell too and enter their name into the church records.
2. On 8th September 2022, the church was left open all night after the announcement of the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Many visited and spent some time there. On 9th September the bells were rung, muffled. And a quarter peal was rung on 14th September. On 12th September, a Service of Remembrance was held in the church.
3. On 6th May 2023, a Coronation Service was held for King Charles III. This was led by Jeremy Crouch. It was very well attended. A village street party took place afterwards, with the chance to watch the Coronation Concert via the big screen in the Village Hall. The new managers of the Vane Arms (not yet opened) allowed villagers to park in the pub car park so that the street was clear of vehicles.

Although not strictly speaking 'services', a village Volunteer Day took place on March 25th 2023. The Church, Village Hall, and the Parish Council led a number of events which demonstrated how existing volunteers support the life of the village, and also encouraged potential volunteers to come along and Have A Go. This culminated in a Thank You Supper

for current volunteers – hosted by the Village Hall who provided the wine and the church who provided the fish and chip supper.

We continue to share, with the Village Hall, crockery, cutlery, tables, chairs, candles – whatever either organisation requires from the other. Our aim is to work together with the Parish Council, the Village Hall Committee and, when it opens, the Vane Arms public house for the benefit of the village.

Formalities

A number of policies still need to be updated: Churchyard Management; and Health and Safety, to include mental health, being the key ones.

Donna Winch, Corby Lay Deanery Chair, visited on 15th September 2022.

Future of the church

We continue, as a PCC, to review methods by which we can encourage those with a faith to express that in the church as well as in our community. We also continue to try to make our church building a welcoming place to be for those of any faith, and none.

Sara Dixon

Church Warden

May 2023