

## St Peter's Church Stoke Fleming



Photo by Barry Morris

*Farewell to Revd Alison*

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

## The Parochial Church Council 20212

### Rector

\*Revd Alison Shaw (until August)

*\*Ex officio*

### Churchwarden

\*Mr. John Dietz (Health & Safety Officer, Fabric Goods & Ornaments Officer)

### Representatives on the Deanery Synod

\*Mr. Peter Barker (Reader, Vice Chair and Hon Secretary)

\*Mrs. Rosemary Minshall

### Elected to the Parochial Church Council

Mr Mike Dodsworth (Hon Treasurer)

Miss Jenny Harris (Reader)

Mrs. Heather Stramik

Mrs. Sue Walford



### Revd Alison Shaw

We said a fond farewell to our Rector at a well-attended United Benefice Service on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Could it really be only six years since Revd Alison came to Stoke Fleming? Her winning smile, her sincerity, her sparkle, her ability to put people at their ease, the genuine concern with which she listens – such qualities unsurprisingly won her many friends in a comparatively short space of

time. You don't need to meet Alison for very long to know that you are going to like her. And so it proved: lots of Stoke Fleming folk, people in the church, on the periphery of the church and people right outside the church – so many of us, were blessed to come to know Alison as a friend. She was always so generous and hospitable: those drop-in pancake parties, for instance; PCC meetings in the warmth and comfort of her dining room, and always with coffee and biscuits provided. Alison always wanted to be involved in the community and was not afraid of 'getting her hands dirty', with a paint brush for instance or polish and a duster. And then there was the faithful and delightful Don, taking her regularly out and about in the village and introducing her to all those other residents being exercised by their dogs. Don has been enjoying quite a few 'holidays' with Jenny and so is very much still around the village.



As Rector of Stoke Fleming (as well as her other three churches) Alison was a warm and loving priest and pastor. We appreciated her clear and thoughtful preaching, and her peaceful joy in worship. She delighted in baptisms and the families were delighted by her. Both wedding parties and mourners have appreciated her empathetic ministry. She supported the *Open the Book* team and founded *Little Stars*, which owes so much to her out-going but gentle personality and will be one of her enduring legacies. Alison also willingly took on the role of Rural Dean, devoting considerable time and energy and thought to issues and individuals elsewhere in the Deanery. And she forged a strong bond with other local clergy, which resulted in several shared events on Blackpool Sands.

It was not an easy six years for Alison. She had the misfortune to suffer two falls resulting in broken bones and seriously curtailed mobility as she recovered. Both her parents suffered ill health and then passed away. All this she bore with great fortitude, and found comfort and peace in her faith and in time spent with God 'on retreat'. And then there was Covid: Alison was always concerned to protect the most vulnerable and to try and give people a sense of togetherness despite the cruel requirements of social distancing. For weeks she emailed out a daily 'hymn and a prayer' that we could all share, she assembled and distributed 'Lent Bags' and 'Advent Bags' to all on the church electoral roll; for some at least of us, her face became a welcome and reassuring sight on 'zoom'; above all she kept on praying for us.

It was a moving farewell as we thanked Alison for all she had done for us and wished her every joy and fulfilment in 'retirement'; the service was followed by a communal lunch in church. In her sermon Alison commended generosity and said how much she had enjoyed her time here. She will certainly be hugely missed. She has moved back to Cornwall to live close to her much loved grandsons, Freddie and Stanley, and the rest of the family. But her sense of adventure will also keep her travelling (as I write, she has just voyaged to Australia) and she is due to lead a pilgrimage to Patmos in the summer. Thank you for everything, Alison.

*Peter Barker*



## Support during the Vacancy

We are very grateful to Archdeacon Douglas for his help during the ongoing vacancy. We have also welcomed a retired priest to lead Holy Communion for us once a month. We offer our grateful thanks to Revd Diana Crook and Revd Simon Franklin in particular, and also to Revd Mark Kichenside and Revd John Corrie, for their support and encouragement, their inspiring services and their willingness to take an occasional wedding or funeral across the Benefice.

## Financial Report

**Introduction.** At the end of my first complete year as Church Treasurer, I'd like to thank Sue, Heather and Rosemary for their backup when I'm not around for "Sunday duties"; also John for his essential help in keeping our Excel spreadsheet in fully working order.



*Presentation in January  
on behalf of the 2021  
Christmas Tree Festival to  
Dartmouth Caring.*

**Church Income & Expenditure.** Average congregation size is still lower than in pre-Covid times but The Parish Giving Scheme has again helped to minimise the effect on income and I'm pleased to report two new joiners for next year. However, expenditure has exceeded income again this year though by a much smaller amount around £2,600 compared with last year's £11,500. Again, this has been covered from our reserve a/c's.

The variable nature of our expenditure, much of it being one-off, means it is hard at any point in time to compare the year-on-year situation. However, the reserve a/c's cannot be used for ever to fund an annual deficit, especially as we plan to spend a significant amount on the Tower next year to remedy severe water ingress and hope to start work on an updated kitchen and disabled toilet in the church itself subject to Diocesan approval. These two projects, without new external funding, will deplete our reserve a/c's beyond a point of safety. Finding suitable donors will be key to the success of this project.

As at the end of 2022, the balance in the CBF Deposit Fund (an investment account) of about £17,500 remains unchanged from last year. We also have an Ordinary Account with NatWest whose balance is about £4,000 and a Tower Account with NatWest whose balance is about £9,000. A small amount (about £2500) from a historical legacy is managed on our behalf by the Diocesan Board of Finance.

*Mike Dodsworth*

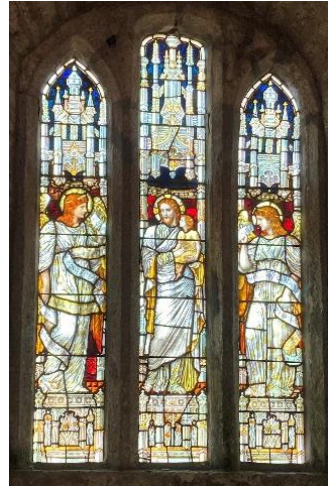
## Churchwarden's Report

### Church Building and Maintenance

In January and February Creekside Boatyard fitted a new flagpole on the tower to replace the old wooden pole. The old pole was heavy and its fixings had deteriorated, causing it to put too great a strain on the stone parapet during high winds. It was also difficult to manage if it had to be lowered and re-erected for any reason. The new pole was paid for by the Friends of St. Peters.

In July scaffolding was erected in the Nave to enable the replacement of all the downlighter fittings high up under the roof. The eight existing 150-watt lights were replaced with 50-watt LED fittings which use less power and, we hope, will have a longer lifespan. The scaffolding was provided by HiRect Scaffolding of Paignton and the electrical work was carried out by Paul Daniels. Also in July, the tower clock had its annual service by the Cumbria Clock Company.

In November Totnes Fire Protection and Signs Ltd. checked all the fire extinguishers. Three extinguishers were serviced and two replaced.



### Churchyard

The grass in the churchyard has been cut regularly throughout the year, on the south side by contractor Christopher Reeve and on the north side by Ian Forsythe.

### Organists

We have a band of regular organists, Mike Dodsworth, Carol Warboys, Janet Dietz and Karen White, who between them play for all our services. We are grateful to Mike for playing on the first Sunday of every month for no charge.

### Bellringing

We continue to ring the bells almost every Sunday and for other special services, thanks to our faithful team of ringers. We also hold regular weekly practices which are occasionally attended by visitors from other parishes.

## Unlocking and Locking the Church

Jenny Harris has undertaken the unlocking of the church every morning, and Peter and Anne Bailey have continued to lock it again in the evenings.

Finally, to anyone who does anything for the church, be it great or small, but who I may have forgotten to mention, please accept my apologies and my sincere thanks.

*John Dietz, Churchwarden.*

## Safeguarding

Rosemary Minshall took on the job of Safeguarding Officer after Revd. Alison retired. There were a few hiccups in the handover which are now resolved. Work is ongoing in updating the regulatory requirements which are considerable, however there have not been any safeguarding issues.

## St Peter's Charitable Giving

In 2022 we continued to make a monthly contribution to CMS partners Grace and Festo Kanungha. The collections on Christian Aid Sunday, Sea Sunday, and Remembrance Sunday were donated to *Christian Aid*, *Mission to Seafarers* and *Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen*, and the Royal British Legion. In addition to the usual donations to *Stoke Fleming Village Magazine* and *Devon Historic Churches Trust*, we also gave to *Bible Society* (supporting the development of *Open the Book* amongst their other activities), *Open Doors* (supporting persecuted Christians), and *Mary's Meals* (organizing free meals for children in poor countries in their schools, meals cooked by local volunteers with local produce as far as possible).



After donating £400 at the end of 2021 towards *Compassion's* project to fund clean water schemes for three of their *Child Development Centres* in Eastern Uganda, we were delighted in the autumn to receive detailed feed-back about the success of the project and the difference it had made to delighted residents. The PCC decided to hold back some of our 2022 giving for another such project in the future.

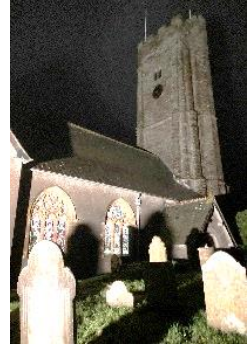
*Peter Barker*

## Friends of St Peter's



The new flag pole, funded by FoSP in memory of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and installed in January, carried the Union flag at half-mast in September during the official mourning for Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Earlier FoSP had supported Stoke Fleming's celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by sponsoring (jointly with Phil Elliott) a

new floodlight to illuminate the Church and Tower. This was switched on again on the evening of the Church Carol Service.



The FoSP Committee enjoyed a joint getting-to-know-you meeting with the PCC generously hosted by Tim and Jenny Hailstone. In April David Curry, the Diocesan expert on churchyards, conducted members of FoSP and the PCC around St Peter's churchyard making a host of inspirational suggestions for its future management. His report was then the basis for the FoSP outline Churchyard Plan which was then approved by the PCC. FoSP was instrumental in setting up the *Stoke Fleming Living Churchyard Team*, co-ordinated by Jenny Hailstone. Some of the team are pictured planting hundreds of dwarf daffodil bulbs paid for by FoSP (with extra ones kindly given by *Gardentime*). A lot more work on the Churchyard is planned for 2023.

The Friends' AGM was held in Church in May, and in July members of FoSP and the PCC met the Church Architect, Julie Boulton, to discuss the project to create an accessible toilet (complete with baby changing space) using more of the present kitchen, together with a new servery in the back corner of the church. A further meeting in November discussed the various options which Julie had produced and resulted in a firm idea about what should be done.



The Church remains extremely grateful for the support of the *Friends*, the committee, members and all involved.



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*Peter Barker*

## Little Stars



The drop-in group, started by Revd Alison for Mums with Babies or Toddlers continued to flourish. *Little Stars* meet on term time Monday mornings, 9-10.30am, at the back of church. Alison received a thank you gift at her leaving service (presented by Amanda and a rather sleepy *Little Star*). This year the group's tree at the Christmas Tree Festival featured angels with the faces of the *Little Stars*:

well done the Mums! One of them writes:

*I know I'm not alone in feeling very lucky that we have the wonderful 'Little Stars' group in Stoke Fleming; it really is a special thing to have on my doorstep. It started up not long after I had moved into the village and quickly became a lifeline for me and my toddler. There is something very refreshing about just simply sitting in the back of the church together chatting with a group of friends over hot drinks whilst the little ones play amongst themselves. Peter, Heather and Sue are so welcoming and kind to us and all of the children light up when they see them; it's a lovely thing to see. I always come out of the church gates feeling a spring in my step and ready to face the week ahead!*

Emily Bridge



## Stoke Fleming School in Church

On Wednesday 14th December Stoke Fleming Primary School Year 1-3 children performed *Jack in the Beanstalk* in St Peter's. The church was amazingly transformed with 'bean' plants all along the pillars and up the gallery. The children sang and acted with great enthusiasm and the hugely impressive performance was enjoyed by a large audience.



Next day the older children were in church with their parents, siblings and grandparents for their very enjoyable Carol Concert. On the Friday morning the whole school came to St Peter's for their Christingle Service led by the *Open the Book* team who presented the Christmas drama *Just Hoping* and gave the children copies of the Bible Society booklet *Amazing Days*.



## **Anna Chaplaincy**



In March Rosemary was inducted as an Anna Chaplain in Exeter along with two others from Woodleigh Deanery and all three of them spoke about the Anna Chaplaincy work with elderly people at the Woodleigh Deanery Meeting in November. Anna Chaplaincy is an interdenominational chaplaincy started

by the Bible Reading Fellowship which aims to care for elderly people with faith or no faith in the latter stages of their lives either in their care homes, the community or in their homes in any way in which it may be needed. It was intended that Rosemary would look after bereaved who might need help within the Coast and County Benefice. It has made a very slow start and needs the prayers of all in our Benefice in the hopes that it will prove to be a service of love that is needed to all in our villages.

## **Open the Book**

In March both children and staff gave the OtB team a tremendously warm welcome back after the Covid restrictions. Revd Alison and Mike Warner joined David, Ruth, Rosemary, Heather and Peter on the team and OtB was a source of joy for us all. The weekly whole school assemblies (on Tuesday mornings) were clearly a special time for many of the children who all listened with keen attention to our dramatized Bible stories. They were so keen to volunteer to participate, and to respond to Mr Hensby's questions afterwards. In June we presented Year 6 pupils with copies (given by *Wordwise* in Kingsbridge) of the Scripture Union guide to moving to secondary school, *It's Your Move*.



## **Visiting Team**

St. Peter's visiting team runs on a very ad hoc basis in that there are no set meetings but a lot of work is achieved by a number of people who visit, take shopping and for medical appointments and also chat on the telephone. These people share conversations with each other and add extra help when possible.



## Easter

St George's flag was flying from the new flagpole. Jenny Harris had created a beautiful Easter Garden on one of the windowsills. We welcomed a good number of visitors at the Easter Morning Service. The Family Easter Treasure Hunt at Blackpool in the afternoon was much enjoyed and 75 eggs were awarded.



## Coffee Morning

A Coffee Morning in aid of St Peter's was held at the Stoke Lodge Hotel on Thursday, November 3rd. Many thanks to all who contributed cakes etc, to the Hotel staff and to the Stoke Fleming School Ukulele Band who provided delightful entertainment under the direction of Mr Peter Beamish.



## Armistice Day

The Annual Two Minutes' Silence and short service of Remembrance took place at the War Memorial in St Peter's Churchyard at 11am on November 11th. A score or so of adults were joined by the senior pupils of Stoke Fleming School who planted crosses in the banks beside the path leading to the Church.



## Remembrance Sunday

This year the well-attended Remembrance Service was led by the Archdeacon of Totnes, Ven. Douglas Dettmer. The names of the fallen were read as usual by Mr Mike Jordan. At the end of the Service wreaths were laid at the War Memorial.



*Photos by Peter Barker and Barry Morris*

## Christmas Tree Festival



It was wonderful to be back to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this amazing community event without all the checks and sanitising we had to carry out in 2021. It's very hard to describe what a wonderful event this is and what a privilege it is to organise this on behalf of St. Peter's Church and the wider community – we love it! We especially love the way everyone works together to stage this event from the cleaning team, the lifters and shifters, the people that cover the boards with paper, all the groups that sponsor a tree, the refreshment team and everyone that helps in any way. When we are recruiting helpers, many of which are not Church goers, we very rarely get a 'no'.

Jenny Harris deserves a very special mention for the wonderful floral arrangement at the altar and the arrangements in the porch, which all help towards the very special atmosphere created. Special thanks too to Mike for playing the organ during the Festival as well as at the closing service.

There was indeed much to celebrate this year. Festival number 15 – who would have thought in 2006 when Gill and Peter first started that we would have been able to keep it going so long? Our loyal sponsors, helpers and visitors have played a huge part in making that happen. We are often stopped in Dartmouth in November and December by people asking when the Festival will be taking place, so although other festivals have sprung up ours remains a firm favourite with our visitors. We were somewhat amazed this year to see a record number of 773 visitors by the end of the Festival – what a treat!

We were also delighted to ask The Children's Hospice South West to be our chosen charity this year. They were the very first charity right back at the beginning, so a return visit was probably well overdue. Their tree certainly made an impact as, despite the economic pressures facing everyone, we were able to donate £1,200.00 to the Hospice at the end of the Festival whilst also retaining a similar amount for St. Peter's Church – a really good result.

We look forward to staging the event again in December 2023 when the dates will be 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December. Don't forget, this is a community event so we can't do it without your help. Whatever you do, we really appreciate your help and support.

*Shirley and Caroline.*



### **2022 and Beyond**

As well as the seasonal specials (such as the Candlelit Carol Service) and the special services to mark the Platinum Jubilee in June and Queen Elizabeth's death in September, regular worship took place faithfully Sunday by Sunday in our lovely Parish Church, with many services led by our Readers Jenny and Peter. Many thanks to those who prepared the Church, welcomed everyone and offered refreshments, read from the

Bible and led the prayers. Being 'the body of Christ' in this place means being part of a team as we aspire to Bishop Robert's aims of 'Growing in faith, making new disciples and serving the people of Devon with joy.' Whatever may lie ahead in 2023, let us borrow Paul's words (Ephesians 3.13-17) and pray that we may not lose heart, but that God our Father may strengthen us in our inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith as we are being rooted and grounded in love.