

# St Peter's Church Stoke Fleming



Photo by Barry Morris

*Revd Alison speaking at her Commissioning as Rural Dean by Bishop Nick.*

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



## A Word from the Rector

**Dear Friends,**

**On behalf of the Churchwarden and the Parochial Church Council of St Peter's, welcome to our Annual Parochial Church Meeting.**

**There are some good encouragements to share with you from the life of St Peter's.**

- Sunday worship brings a strong sense of the Lord's presence and real joy. (This is mentioned by visitors and regulars alike.)
- The continuing success of *Open the Book*, especially in the way it has led to the team being invited to lead the annual School Christingle in church and this year to lead the School Harvest as well.
- The Benefice Lent Course (*Finding a Voice*), led by Peter Barker, was really valuable for the rather few who came.
- The church does a lot (as the Annual Report bears witness). Non churchgoers are drawn into church for Remembrance and the Christmas Tree Festival in particular, and the presence of visitors is encouraging.
- But we also aim to be an outward facing church, giving generously and financially to various charities, but also generously in terms of time and energy to many different local groups, societies and charities.

### **And of course we also face some serious challenges:**

- Firstly, declining numbers, not because new faces aren't replacing those no longer with us, but more because insufficient are in church (or at the Lent Course, or whatever) every week. As your vicar I would really love to see you all at 5th Sunday United Benefice Services, wherever in the Benefice they are held. (These are always advertised well in advance.)
- Reaching children, youth people and young (under 50!) adults. Your thoughts and ideas, as always, gratefully and graciously received.

Please read our 2019 Annual Report - we are thrilled that so many in the village last year, commented on it and its scope.

Every blessing, and thank you for your interest and support,

*Rev'd Alison (pictured leading Regatta Songs of Praise).*

## The Parochial Church Council 2019

### **Rector**

\*Revd Alison Shaw

*\*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; Deanery Lay Chair)

\*Mrs. Rosemary Shiffner

### **Representative on the Diocesan Synod**

\*Mrs. Rosemary Minshall (Hon Treasurer)

### **Elected to the Parochial Church Council**

Dr. Hazel Browne

Miss Jenny Harris (Reader)

Mrs Hazel Smith (Safeguarding Officer)

Mrs Sarah Stevenson-Olds

Mrs. Heather Stramik

Mrs. Sue Walford (Assist. Treasurer)

## Finances

Our main income comes from the Planned Giving Scheme and Church collections together with the gift aid tax return; these all increased this year but we still relied on fund raising and donations in order to cover our full costs: (£17,246 to the Diocese towards clergy stipends, housing and pensions; utilities, insurance and other running costs; maintenance, including the repair to the toilet, and professional fees in preparation for other work; and the charitable giving detailed elsewhere.) We are most grateful to all



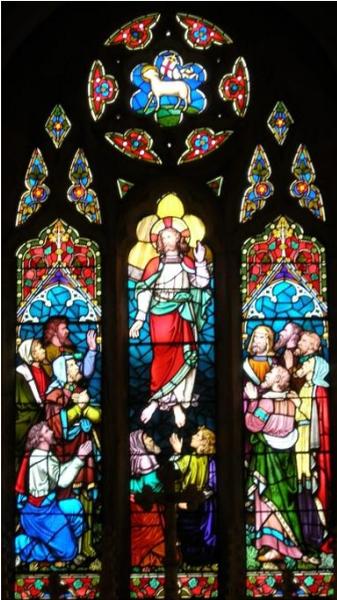
who give, to those who helped with the fundraising at Royal Avenue Gardens, to the Stoke Lodge Hotel who hosted our coffee morning and to Peter Beamish and the School ukulele band who entertained us there. Churchyard maintenance is a

significant expense and we are grateful for the help we received towards this from a very generous parishioner, the Loam Rangers and the Parish Council. As always, we thankfully acknowledge the invaluable support of the *Friends of St Peter's* in maintaining the fabric of our beautiful village church. Once again, I would like to thank Sue Walford for all her work reclaiming our Gift Aid tax so efficiently. The full accounts are published separately.

*Rosemary Minshall, Treasurer.*

## Building and Maintenance

2019 again proved to be a relatively quiet year as regards work to the church



building. The most expensive item carried out was the replacement in May of a pump motor in the Saniflo unit in the toilet, which cost a total of £741. Some minor carpentry work, carried out on a voluntary basis, also continued in the tower.

An application was also made to the Diocese Church Buildings Office in 2019 for approval to repair the window of the vestry and the small window behind the organ. It is hoped to start work on those windows early in 2020.

Although no major work was undertaken during 2019, it is becoming apparent that a number of items will need attention looking forward. In particular, the number of slates coming loose on the roof has steadily increased over the last few years and water ingress through the south and west walls of the tower has become even greater than before. Both these problems have been made worse by the exceptionally wet and stormy weather we have experienced this winter. These and other matters are mentioned in the Quinquennial Inspection carried out recently.

### Churchyard.

The churchyard continued to be cut regularly, on the south side by the contractor Chris Reeve, and on the north side voluntarily by Adrian Lloyd-Edwards. As in previous years we are extremely grateful to Adrian for carrying out this work.

### Organists

Mike Dodsworth has continued to play the organ free of charge on most first Sundays in each month, and we thank him for that.

Jon Oliverio played on the fourth Sundays up until the middle of the year, but sadly advised us that, because of increasing commitments in his own church,

he would have to give up playing for us on a regular basis. We are grateful to him for his playing over quite a number of years past. Carol Warboys played on the second and third Sundays of each month and took over for fourth Sundays after Jon Oliverio was no longer available.

Bob Barsby and Karen White have also played occasionally when the other organists were away. We thank them all for their contribution to our services.

### Bellringing

Our ringers all attend regularly and we have seldom missed ringing for Sunday services, as well as continuing to hold regular weekly practices. We are grateful to them for their efforts and commitment.

### Locking and Unlocking the Church

We are fortunate that we are in an area where the church may be left open during the day for anyone to visit, or to enter for a period of quiet contemplation, but for that to be possible it is necessary for someone to unlock the doors each morning and to lock up again each evening. Nick Teage and Peter Bailey carry out that important duty faithfully every day and we are grateful to them for that.

Finally, for anyone else not specifically mentioned who has contributed in any way to the running of the church, many thanks.

*John Dietz, Churchwarden.*

### United Benefice Lent Course



This year we followed Hilary Brand's Lent course '*Finding a Voice*', based on the film '*The King's Speech*' about Lionel Logue helping King George VI with his speech impediment. The course matched clips from

the film with a variety of scriptures and posed many thought provoking questions. Among other things we considered the nature of fear and the importance of encouragement. As always it was a pleasure to welcome friends from outside the Benefice, one of whom shared her experience of having herself been Logue's pupil.

*Peter Barker*

## St Peter's and Stoke Fleming Primary School



On June 6<sup>th</sup> a generous donation sponsored drama workshops run by *Oddments Theatre Company* for the older pupils in the School. In the afternoon the whole School enjoyed the captivating performance of *Pilgrim's Progress* which the company presented in *St Peter's*.

2019 was the 7<sup>th</sup> year of *Open the Book* dramatized Bible stories in the School Hall on almost every Monday morning of term time. In the summer Ruth Stewart joined the team (the 9<sup>th</sup> member) and we are grateful as always to Mike Browne for his help with props. The children are as enthusiastic as ever about *OtB*, and the regard in which the team is held by the School was apparent in the invitation we received to conduct the School's Harvest Festival in Church in October. We included a sketch about being grateful for our food as well as the *OtB* story of Joseph in Egypt managing the 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of potential famine. Joseph was able to forgive his brothers and feed them in their need; and the School contributed a large amount of food which was later taken to the Dartmouth Food Bank.



It has become quite a tradition for members of the team to lead the School's annual end of term Christingle Service in St Peter's. This year again we included our dramatization of the *Bible Society's* new Christmas Children's booklet, *With Love From GOD TO YOU*, and gave the



children copies as a present from the Church.



St Peter's was also the venue for the older children's traditional Carol Service for their Families. Sarah continued to serve on the Local Governing Body within *Education South West*.

*Adam and Eve are sent from the Garden of Eden: what will happen to 'Planet Earth' now?*

*Peter Barker*

## St Peter's and the Wider Church

At the ***Christians Together in Dartmouth and District*** AGM, Revd Alison was appointed chair and Rosemary Minshall continued as treasurer. The CTiDD Committee was involved in special events at Easter and on Sea Sunday for instance, but *Regatta Praise* stands out because we were blessed with glorious weather; visitors as well as a good crowd from across the churches gathered for the uplifting singing in front of the Bandstand in Dartmouth. St Peter's continued to contribute to the Dartmouth Food Bank, with a special effort during Advent.

At **Woodleigh Deanery's** joyful Celebration Service, held this year at Holy Trinity Salcombe, more than 10 people were confirmed by Bishop Nick and we were reminded that '*if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation*'. On July 7<sup>th</sup>, courtesy of the Newman Family, St Peter's hosted another Deanery



Beach Picnic and Service on Blackpool Sands. There were games and a few children braved the water; a good crowd from across the Deanery enjoyed tea and cakes and engaged enthusiastically in worship, singing

songs such as *Will you anchor hold in the storms of life* and *How great thou art*. Many thanks to all who baked: there were plenty of cakes to share with other beach goers too.

Following the appointment of Revd Jackie Taylor as Dean of Women in Ministry, Revd Alison was commissioned as Rural Dean at a wonderfully happy service in St Peter's on October 16<sup>th</sup>. She received congratulations and best wishes from all as she took on this extra responsibility.



Synod members, and others who are always welcome for the Deanery Synod talks, heard Ruth Fretton on *Prison Ministry* including her experience of visiting HMP Dartmoor, Stephen Hancock who gave us a fascinating and revealing account of his role as *Diocesan Secretary*, and our very own Alison Shaw speaking for *Friends of the Holy Land* and giving us new insight into the distressing situation of the Palestinians today.



It is always a pleasure to welcome visitors to our services. One such on August 11<sup>th</sup> was Revd Gabi Heuß, pastor of Lutheran churches in Lenzkirch and Schluchsee. She emailed after her return to Germany saying that, in her sermon on the need for love and for listening to God, she had told her congregation of her visit to Stoke Fleming and the encouragement given by her warm welcome at St Peter's. They prayed for us, and we prayed for them.

### St Peter's Charitable Giving



We aim to give roughly 10% of our income to 'good causes'. We give a monthly contribution to Grace and Festo Kanungha, CMS partners working in education in rural Tanzania. In addition to the collections on Christian Aid Sunday, Sea Sunday, Harvest Festival, Remembrance and Christingle going to the usual recipients, we again made a donation to *Devon Historic Churches Trust*, *Salvation Army*, *Bible Society* (supporting the development of *Open the Book*), *Open Doors* (supporting persecuted Christians), *Scripture Union* (specifically supporting Street children in Peru), *Youth Genesis* (working with young people in Torbay and Dartmouth), *Medicins sans Frontiers* and Stoke Fleming Village Magazine. There was also the big donation from the Christmas Tree Festival to *Cued Speech*.

### Remembrance

Remembrance Sunday is always important in Stoke Fleming. This year's well attended Service on Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, was led by Jenny Harris. As in previous years senior pupils at the School had planted Remembrance Crosses beside the path to the Church door. These are always widely appreciated and this message in particular caught Revd Alison's eye: "Like this pen you'll never wash away in our heads."



## Friends of St. Peter's

At the AGM on 4<sup>th</sup> May it was agreed that the primary aim of the *Friends* in 2019 would be to continue to raise funds for the repair and maintenance of the stained glass windows.



In March we held a very entertaining *Race Meeting*, enlivened by the scurrilous comments made by 'Guest Star John McCrick' about each horse's name and breeding. Stoke Lodge provided an excellent meal, and everyone laughed a lot and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

In December we showed a *Singalong* version of the film 'Grease' – huge fun but more complicated and costly to put on than we had thought. Luckily far more people turned up on the night than expected, and thanks to including a very generous donation from Becky's Christmas Raffle at the Post Office we turned a healthy profit. Even more to the point, it was another very entertaining night, with sweet corn and hot dogs, lots of different ages singing away together, nostalgia for some .... . Jenny Farmer, dressed as schoolgirl Sandy, won the best-dressed prize. The *Friends'* tree at the *Christmas Tree Festival* followed the theme with the title 'Grease' – with all the decorations harking back to the 1950s.



Jenny (Sandy) & Simon.

In 2019 the *Friends* agreed to pay for the 'stitching' of a crack in the tower parapet and the removal and making good of the flagpole, and also the replacement of the vestry window and repair to the organ window and two other windows. The work is still outstanding but the funds reserved. St. Peter's Quinquennial Report is due in 2020; it seems that work on part of the roof may be identified as another area for *Friends'* support.

*Rosemary Shiffner, Chairman*

## Mothers' Union

The year began with our AGM and Holy Communion. Jenny Harris enchanted us with a flower demonstration. We enjoyed talks from *Dartmouth Caring*, MU in Tanzania and Melanesia, *Mercy Ships*, and our Exeter President, Nickie, on '*Listen, Observe, Act – in step with God*'. We also celebrated *Lady and Mary Sumner Days*. Sadly some members have moved away. R. M.

## St. Peter's Visiting Group

Members of the visiting group continued supporting a number of elderly people within the parish and we now have two people at the *Guinness Flats* in Totnes whom we see once a week. Sally Green and Heather Stramik took Holy Communion once a month to *Beacon House* and Sally also did this in *Hyne Town House* where we also have former parishioners.

The monthly Senior Citizens' lunch is still taking place in Stoke Lodge Hotel but our numbers dropped because of increasing health issues. We thank Stoke Lodge very much for looking after us. It was lovely that in February the Mothers' Union joined us.

We continued to send out bereavement cards for two years, baptismal ones and small gifts for five years, and wedding anniversary ones a year after the weddings we had in church.

*Rosemary Minshall*

## Tavistock Family Camp



By kind invitation, Revd Alison and Peter Barker spent a week in August camping over at Southwood with families from churches in the Tavistock area, and a number of other St Peter's members came to supper. It was particularly encouraging to witness the involvement of many children of all ages and the way in which all the generations supported each other. On the Sunday all the campers joined the United Benefice for a wonderfully vibrant and informal Communion Service in Strete Church.



*Photos on this page: Revd Alison Shaw*

## Christmas Tree Festival



Another glittering and glorious Festival, with 27 village trees! Each tree has its own theme, plus there is a Prayer tree near the lectern which starts the Festival pretty bare apart

from lights, and ends three days later covered in coloured Christmas-tree card shapes (quite a lot of cutting out needed beforehand!) each containing a prayer written by visitors to the Festival. They are not removed until after Christmas when they are taken down, placed on the altar and blessed.



Our Charity Tree this year, for *Cued Speech*, was covered with lots of cut-out hands (the 'oddity' was one large foot!). *Cued Speech* is a method of teaching deaf babies and their families to indicate sounds as well as symbols as they learn to communicate; Kathy Kenny, from *Cued Speech*, gave an excellent overview of how the system works in her brief address at the short 'Cheerful Carols' Service which ended the Festival.

After seven years of a very happy partnership leading the Festival with Shirley Ruddlesden, Rokie Shiffner is now somewhat sadly stepping back. The best thing to report about this is that Caroline Martin is to take Rokie's place, and we all three are absolutely delighted about it!

*Rokie Shiffner*

## St Peter's Church Family

John 13.35 : *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples – if you have love for one another.*

During the past year, if one thing stands out about our church community above all else, it is the fact that the St Peter's Church family actively demonstrates the above verse. My beloved husband died early in the year, and in the ensuing weeks of isolating grief and pain, and loss, I was helped by so many invitations – for coffee, for meals, for visits just 'to chat', being loaned really helpful books, many telephone calls just to check I was 'OK'; all of these were Christ's love in action, and for me, light in the darkness.

But the year – and life – went on. I joined the *Open the Book* team, taking Bible stories into the local primary school, sharing the stories of God's love and provision for mankind. And, if at times we have a wry grin at our antics, the zest and enthusiasm on the children's part is ample reward. Perhaps the most important part is the brief prayer time we have in advance – for prayer is the essential foundation for all service. Christ's love – in action.

Then there was the beach picnic at Blackpool Sands on a beautiful summer afternoon, when we shared cakes, and goodies, and time with other beach users, before a reaffirming service led by Peter. Again, Christ's love – in action. And looking out over Start Bay, I thought, 'Yes, this is how it all began – Jesus, his followers, beside a sea.

Then who can forget that Sunday morning when Jon Oliverio played for us, his last (for now) time? His God-given talent to lift soul and spirit and send them soaring through his music: again proof of Christ's love – in action.

Finally, the Christmas Tree Festival, involving so many people, with so much hard work behind the scenes. How on earth do they manage to come up with such ingenious, fresh ideas year after year? It is always such a special time of beauty, warmth and laughter – St Peter's church family again showing Christ's love – in action.

So whatever 2020 holds for the church at St Peter's, I know without a doubt that the hallmark will be that of the hymn:

*Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you*  
– showing that we serve a living, loving, empowering Lord.

*Ruth Stewart*