



## St. Nicholas Church, Wilden, Bedford

### Annual Report 2019/20

#### **Where and who we are:**

St. Nicholas Church is situated in the small village of Wilden, 6 miles north of Bedford. The church is in the Diocese of St. Albans and is included in the Benefice of Wilden, with Colmworth and Ravensden. The Reverend Timothy Charles Wilson was Licensed and welcomed on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019 as Priest in Charge for a period of two years. On 14<sup>th</sup> July Reverend Timothy was also licensed and welcomed to the Benefice of St Mary Keysoe with St Dunstan Bolnhurst.

The Wilden Parochial Church Council consists of: **Ex Officio member** - Reader Mrs. Geraldine Skinner  
**Churchwarden** Miss Dionne Collins **Elected Members:** Secretary: Mrs. Eunice Welbourn. Treasurer: Mrs. Susie Cooper. Mrs. Jane Harrison, Mr. Derek Hayhoe, Mrs. Susan Marsh and Mrs. Jane Snaith.  
**Social Committee:** The whole of the PCC were elected to this Committee. It is with great sadness that we record the death of Mrs. Eileen Meeks who was a long serving member of the PCC.

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is excepted by order from registering with the Charity Commission.

**Electoral Roll:** There are at present 36 members on role. The Welcome Pack is being brought up to date and will be in the Vestry to be given to any new residents in the Village.

**Church Appointed School Governors:** At the present time six local people (two appointed by the Diocese and four appointed by the P.C.C.) are Governors of our local Church school - Wilden VA Primary. One Governor is in process of being appointed and there is one further vacancy at the present time. Special services at Easter, Christmas and the end of the school year are held in church and attended by pupils, staff and parents. Church members and the public are also invited to join these services in Church.

The School Annual Report - "As reported last year, the Ofsted inspection in the autumn of 2018 provided the school with a major challenge going forward. To help address this challenge, the head teacher at Great Denham Primary, Denise Burgess was asked by the Borough to provide support for our head teacher, Vanessa Young, during that autumn term and early in the spring term. Unfortunately, Mrs Young was signed off sick at the end of January 2019 and the deputy head from Great Denham, Anna Spyropoulos, was appointed interim head in February for 3 days per week. Mrs Young returned from sick leave in mid-March but was signed off again in mid-May and she remained away until she resigned at the end of November 2019. We were very pleased to have Mrs Spyropoulos continue in her role until the end of the school year but congratulations to her in being appointed head at Ravensden Primary from September. We were fortunate to welcome Maria Hutchinson an experienced teacher and leader, as interim head in September for 3 days per week supported by Bedford Borough, and she will continue until the end of the school year by when, hopefully, we will have resolved the headship.

On the plus side, as reported last year, we had a settled teaching team which included Mr Starling, who came as a supply teacher in January 2019, and has stayed for a further year, teaching the years 5 and 6. Mrs Spyropoulos provided the gel to bring the staff together to develop as a team and work towards the goals set in the School Development Plan. Since her arrival in September, Mrs Hutchinson has driven forward the improvements that were needed particularly in the areas of teaching and learning and in the development of the curriculum. She has also encouraged the continued emergence of the Senior Leadership Team of Mrs Douglas and Mrs Byrne as a major asset to the school.

The autumn term saw the arrival of the SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspector. The school has always sought to ensure that Christian values are enshrined throughout all its activities. That term, Mrs Douglas, as RE lead, and Rev. Tim Wilson had worked hard with all the staff across the school to ensure that the school's vision and the religious curriculum were fully developed and in place. As a result, we were delighted to receive the grade of 'GOOD' for this inspection and congratulations to everyone involved.

In the classroom, the first year 6 pupils took their Key Stage 2 tests with good results in Reading and Maths but below average in Writing. At Key Stage 1, the girls performed above the national average but boys were below average across the board. Interventions are now in place to support these children. Early Years children performed well above average and phonics results in Year 1 also showed excellent progress. It should be noted that most year groups contain small numbers so that individuals count as a significant percentage in the results, and the school also has a higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs. Mrs Byrne as SEND specialist is working with all of these children.

The Governing Body has worked closely with both interim heads and has been welcomed into the school for learning walks and visits by all staff. The Rev. Tim settled quickly into his new role and has become a popular visitor to the school. Unfortunately, filling the two vacancies for Foundation Governors has proved unsuccessful in spite of a number of initiatives to recruit new blood and we have also recently lost our Local Authority governor. This places a heavier burden on the other governors in trying to keep abreast of all subject developments in the school.

As reported last year, we finally took possession of the new playing field early in the year and had the official opening on sports day when we welcomed parents and friends from both Wilden and Ravensden. We also made a significant investment in the summer to extend the hard play area beyond the new building to give a much greater weatherproof play area available all year round.

Looking ahead, major challenges remain as we have a far lower number of pupils than our full capacity yet need to maintain the effectiveness of our teaching and learning. This in turn dramatically affects our ability to produce a balanced budget and imposes many spending constraints. We also need to recruit a new head teacher for the autumn who can continue the excellent progress that has been made by both the interim heads." Andy Parkin – Chair of Governors.

### **Aim and Purposes:**

Our primary object is the promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The PCC co-operate with our Priest in Charge, Rev. Timothy Wilson, Assistant Minister, Rev. David Miller and Reader, Mrs. Geraldine Skinner, in promoting the parish in the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Examples of this are the encouragement of all the community to attend all services, the social events planned and exhibitions which take place in the church.

### **Activities:**

There is a Benefice Choir, led by our organist Mrs. Eunice Welbourn, made up of twelve members from our three parishes and surrounding villages and choir practice takes place regularly on Mondays once a week at Wilden. The choir sing at some services, festival services, weddings and funerals and are preparing to sing at Keysoe for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

The Junior choir with children from all three parishes and surrounding area has a core membership of

fifteen but often exceed that number. They meet on Wednesdays at Wilden Church for practice and are led by Miss Dionne Collins. The children sing at Festival All Age services.

The church of St Nicholas was open for tea and friendship each Sunday afternoon during the summer months. On the occasion of the afternoon when we did Hymns with Memories this was well attended by people from all three villages. Church members play an active part in the organisation of the May Day celebrations which have taken place annually in the Village for over forty years. This event brings the whole community together for a fun day. The Social Committee raised £3,890.29 during the year by holding Quiz evenings, Teddy Bear parachute drop with teas, Harvest Supper and other events. Profit from these social gatherings are used towards the payment of our Parish Share as well as for building repairs and the day to day running of the Church. This sum included our share of profit from the May Day and Bike & Hike events.

### **2019 Church Fabric Report**

The 2019 Quinquennial Inspection Report has been received from the Architect. There is no very urgent work to be done but it is recommended that the West Window and Vestry window get attention when funds allow. The Architect also mentioned that drain surrounds are put in place to help with the damp problem. Investigations are being made to improve the paths in the churchyard and also the Nave lighting in the church.

We are still looking to make the best use of the Church by the creation of an open space adjacent to the font. This would make access to the toilet and kitchen easier and have an area for children's activities when required. Health and Safety is also a factor when hot drinks are being served.

### **2019 Finance Report:**

The accounts are prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis and printed in accordance with the example contained in the Charity Acts 2011 and PCC Book. All income for the church is paid into an account with Barclays Bank, High Street, Bedford. The Financial Statement is examined by Mrs. Carolyn Hare of 16, High Street, Wilden.

#### **Income for the church came from the following sources:**

- Planned giving with gift aid paid by standing orders.
- Collections in church.
- Donations
- Fees
- Tax Refunds
- Functions arranged by the PCC Social Committee and the Village.

The proceeds from these sources are held in the General Account under unrestricted funds. Funds for the upkeep of the churchyard are also held in this account as restricted funds. Income for this purpose was received from donations, graveyard faculties and interest on three endowment bequests.

Funds towards choir expenses are also held in this account as restricted funds with income for this purpose coming from requested performances at ceremonies. £2,000 is also held on the Savings Account from a bequest to the choir.

A grant of £200 was received from the Bishop of Bedford in 2017 to be used for Benefice initiatives is held as restricted funds on the same account. No payments have been made yet.

The amount requested for the Parish Share for 2019 was £13,391. A £2,000 grant was received making the amount due £11,391. £11,491 was paid covering the full amount plus £100 carried over to 2020. We had a shortfall of £1,450 in 2011, £3,459 in 2013, £951 in 2014, £3000 in 2015, £4,000 in 2017 and £5,000 in 2018. An overpayment of £860 was made in 2016, making a total deficit of £17,000.

Receipts were up by £4,000 in 2019 with expenses up by a similar amount, giving little surplus to save for future development. However, it is positive our full share allocation was paid in spite of this. We were also helped by a grant from Wilden Church Lands Trust with respect to the insurance.

#### **Savings Account held on Deposit with Central Board of Finance:**

No additional funds were transferred to this account in 2019, only interest was added. We had no surplus in the PCC account to transfer across this year.

#### **Building Fund on deposit with Central Board of Finance:**

This account is for major works. A donation from a funeral request was transferred in to cover a future interior development project. However, no payments out were made as no building work was scheduled for 2019.

#### **Charity Giving:**

Several charitable donations were made this financial year, a total of £739.95. This covered money raised for Christian Aid, a local charity hospice and a donation to the Bishop's Harvest Appeal.

To support St. Nicholas Church several people rode for the Sponsored Bike and Hike organised by the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust and raised £448.06. Half this money goes to the Trust and half to St. Nicholas Church.

Boxes were given out for the Children's Society and in 2019 £323.84 was raised from this source.

#### **Churchwarden Account:**

£935. was paid throughout the year to the Benefice Churchwarden's account to pay towards Minister's expenses. A refund of £630 was also received to ensure alignment between the 3 churches. £405.91 was also paid to the Retired Clergy fund following the licensing of Rev. Timothy Wilson into the Benefice.

#### **Churchyard:**

No expenses were incurred during 2019, thanks to the kind efforts of our volunteer team of grass cutters led by Mr. & Mrs. Hamnett. Mr. Hamnett and his team have maintained the churchyard to a high standard and the PCC are very grateful for all the hard work that all involved have put in over the last year in maintaining the churchyard.

Appreciated donations from parishioners and legacy investment incomes help provide an income towards the churchyard maintenance. Any balance from 2019 is held as restricted funds for Churchyard maintenance.

#### **Interregnum:**

The Church was briefly in Interregnum from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 to 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019 and £525 was paid out in this time to cover visiting Rector expense, oven cleaning at the Rectory and Rectory hedge cutting.

A new **Mission Action Plan** is being developed and the PCC held a meeting with Rev Paul Davies who gave us many helpful tips.

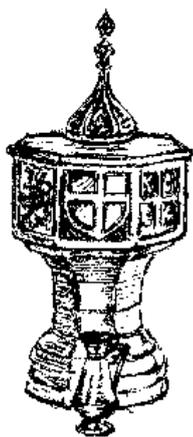
The Rev. David Miller led the Benefice in a Bible Course which was attended by 7 people from Wilden. This was followed by a course of study on the first part of Romans. These courses provided insight and understanding into the Bible and were enjoyed by all who attended.

A free Church Newsletter is produced monthly, with input from all five parishes, and is delivered by hand to households within the Benefice. It gives dates, times and readings for that month's services, reports of local news and interest and information about forthcoming events.

### **Reserves Policy:**

In such a small village it is difficult to have a "Reserve". Therefore if a large sum is needed for a repair to the Church or new facility, an appeal is made to the Village. For example when a kitchen facility and a toilet for the disabled were deemed necessary, a concerted effort by the whole village was made and this work was achieved.

The PCC has met four times during this period (May, July, October and February). The major risks to which the PCC is exposed have been reviewed and systems designed to manage those risks have been established.



### **Achievements and Performance:**

0 weddings, 4 funerals/burials, 3 crematorium/cemetery (and 4 monuments), 2 baptisms and 1 Wedding Blessing took place in 2019/20. During the course of the year the PCC was keen to offer a range of services that our community can find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. For example, evening prayer provides a quiet, intimate and reflective environment for worship while opportunities are provided for people to engage in more outgoing worship such as our Praise service for children and their families at 10.30. From January 2020 we started a 3pm Praise service for children and their families on the second Sunday in the month and this is proving popular.

### **Deanery Synod:**

Two members of the PCC sit on the Deanery Synod and report back to the joint PCC meeting. This provides an important link between the parishes and the wider structures of the church. The Annual Report has been produced by Derek Hayhoe (Deanery Synod Representative) and is attached to this document.

### **Safeguarding:**

A separate report from Doug McWilliam will be made at the Annual Meeting.

### **GDPR:**

A separate report from Lorraine Knight will be made at the Annual Meeting.

### **Volunteers:**

We would like to thank all volunteers who work hard to make our church a centre for the community, for example by delivering our monthly newsletter, pamphlets for forthcoming events and helping with church cleaning, flowers, catering etc. We must also include the volunteers who keep our churchyard so tidy. We would also like to thank the Churchwarden for her tireless efforts on our behalf.

**This Report was approved by Wilden Parochial Church Council at their meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020.**

**Mrs. E.D. Welbourn  
Hon Secretary.**