



# The Seeker

handleychurch.org.uk



#3 2021

The church magazine for *St Mary the Virgin, Sixpenny Handley* with *Gussage St Andrew* and *St Rumbold's, Pentridge*

## Who's who?

### Vicar

Revd Canon Richard Hancock  
The Vicarage  
Sixpenny Handley  
01725 552 182

### Churchwardens

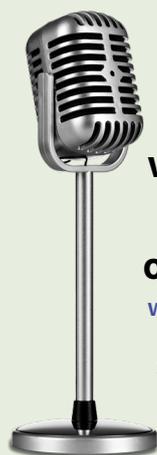
*St Mary's with  
Gussage St Andrew*

Sue Curtis 552 397

*St Rumbold's, Pentridge*

Mary Ferguson 552 222

Jane King 552 231



Check out the  
**VICAR'S WEEKLY  
VLOG  
ON WEDNESDAYS**

[www.facebook.com/  
St-Marys-Church-  
Sixpenny-Handley-  
558498850977107](http://www.facebook.com/St-Marys-Church-Sixpenny-Handley-558498850977107)

## Friends Scheme for St Mary's Handley and St Andrew's Gussage to launch this September

Our communities of Handley and Gussage St Andrew are blessed with many assets that make it such a wonderful place in which to live. Our two churches have been at the heart of village life for centenaries. They have been the places where we have marked key moments in our lives such as birth, marriage and death as well as community gatherings like Remembrance, Harvest and Christmas. They are also places of sanctuary and stillness in our often busy lives. Life would be much poorer without these beautiful buildings at the heart of our communities.

Our two churches costs over £40,000 per annum to run, of this around £14,000 is purely to maintain and repair our two buildings in order to preserve them for future generations. As generations before us have maintained these buildings for our benefit it is now beholden to us to ensure that they remain in good repair for our descendants. Alas there is no public money granted and as the Church of England has never funded the upkeep of Parish Churches all costs of maintenance and operation fall to the congregation and a few who give generously to keep such fine buildings in good condition. This group of people has dwindled over the years and it can now no longer manage the finical responsibility on its own.

I am appealing to all of you who live in our villages for your support in meeting the costs of the fabric of our churches, whether you wish to preserve it as a place of worship, use it for the occasional offices of Baptism, Marriage or Funerals or just enjoy it as a wonderful memorial to our history and a centrepiece in our community. I realize that these are difficult financial times for all of us and the parish church is no exception as we have a projected short fall of over £12,000 for the coming financial year.

The Friends Scheme is specifically designed for those who wish to support the fabric, buildings and heritage of our two churches. Monies raised from this scheme will only be used to maintain the buildings, no part of it will go towards the mission or religious aspects of the church, which is the responsibility of the worshipping congregation. However I hope we all see that we have a responsibility to maintain the heritage of our communities.

In September everyone will receive a letter and pamphlet about the Friends Scheme inviting them to make a small regular contribution to the maintenance and heritage of these buildings. These donations will also be able to be Gift Aided if you are a UK TAX payer which means the Government through HMRC will add an additional 20% to your donation.

I hope everyone will seriously consider becoming a Friend in order to secure the future of our two churches for generations to come.

Blessings, Canon Richard Hancock

### Annual Report on page 2

**“...by the end of 2022 the Handley Benefice as is will come to an end and a new benefice, or group, will be formed...”**

## ANNUAL PROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

### **Sixpenny Handley Benefice – St Mary the Virgin, Handley, with St Andrew's Gussage and St Rumbold's, Pentridge.** *Priest in Charge report for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020*

In years to come church reports for 2020 will probably be the ones poured over by historians as they try to understand the effect of the COVID pandemic on local life, similar to how historians of the past looked at records relating to the great plague of 1665.

Ironically the reports of 2020 will not contain as much information, as our churches have been out of action for most of the year and closed for several months, something that did not happen back in 1665. Thankfully our villages have been relatively untouched by the pandemic, save the changes to our daily lives and restrictions in church.

The key word for this report is adaptability. Over the past year all churches in the UK have had to be highly adaptable in order to continue to provide public worship and pastoral care. This has meant all of us learning new skills often very quickly.

I'm pleased to report that we all become highly adaptable over this past year. On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 when it was announced that all public worship was suspended and shortly after that (controversially) all churches were to be locked, our church moved online. This included a daily 10am broadcast on Facebook and Sunday worship live streamed from the vicarage. A whole new set of skills had to be learnt but the decision to use Facebook and social media also brought rewards. Within a few weeks we were having around 160 people per day tuning in live or watching the YouTube video. Rather than stifling the mission of the church, closing our churches had suddenly brought us into contact with a whole new group of people who would not normally attend church. Though these figures did not last throughout the year we still managed to engage with new people from our communities who have now established a permanent relationship with our churches. However this lays down a significant challenge as we move out of the pandemic as to how

we are to welcome this new section of our church family, once normal services begin again. If we simply return to what we have done before we will be in danger of losing these new people. All our PCC's will need to reflect on this carefully in the coming months.

Though social media has been a great outreach tool it has not been so helpful with regard to maintaining pastoral care. Telephone calls, ZOOM and Facebook can't make up for personal interaction and physical contact when people are in need. Sadly much pastoral visiting has had to be suspended though I have visited people regularly on Saturday morning on the doorstep to take them church notice sheets as they don't have email. These visits have been much appreciated but it is a reminder that not everyone has internet access. As we move from this pandemic it will be good to begin visiting again and our churches will need to arrange social gatherings in order to reconnect with people. I hope that Magnificafé will begin again in July, offering great hospitality at St Mary's and Bobbies amazing scrambled egg and bacon bagels!

St Mary's and St Rumbold's have been creative with worship despite the very restrictive regulations. Regular outdoor services have been held including Prayer Walks which have proved popular. Both churches held successful Harvest and Remembrance Day services outdoors. Carol singing events were held at both Pentridge on the green and at the Village TAP in Handley which brought in a new crowd of people who would not normally attend a carol service. I hope along with our traditional 9 Lessons and Carol service this year we can also have outdoor village carols. Hopefully we can continue to worship outside more in future and celebrate the beautiful countryside which surrounds us. Sadly St Andrew's has had to remain closed throughout this past year due to its size and location which meant worship with COVID restrictions was not practical. I hope worship will resume there in July.

Despite these positives all our churches have been impacted financially. Regular plate giving on Sunday has reduced drastically as our churches were closed and virtually all of our fundraising events had to be cancelled. Even my £1,700 sponsored live haircut has not made a dent in the deficit of income this past year. I'm very grateful to all of those who have continued to give by DD, Standing Orders and the new Parish Giving Scheme. Also those who have made one off donations. Without their support we would have not been able to meet the monthly bills. Pentridge made a huge effort and paid their £6,000+ Parish Share in full for 2020. Handley (who were already on a reduced share) could not realistically meet the full £17K as funds would be needed for maintenance work following the quinquennial inspection. I would like to thank our Treasurers, Richard and Peter, and the Handley finance team for their hard work and diligence over what has been a very challenging year. I hope our PCCs can continue to be creative with regard to fundraising in the coming year and I'm pleased to report that a Friends Scheme is due to be launched in September 2021 for St Mary's and St Andrew's, while Pentridge is exploring some fundraising events for later in the year. Handley has also recently set up a new Maintenance and Fabric team to specifically look at the challenges of running two historic buildings. This committee is dovetailed with the PCC and the Finance Team to develop and manage an effective program of works in the coming years.

The biggest piece of news to report is the new Deanery Plan which was approved by Deanery Synod in January. This will mean that by the end of 2022 [when my RFO role comes to an end] the Handley Benefice as is will come to an end and a new benefice or group will be formed consisting of Handley with Gussage St Andrew, Pentridge, Tollard Royal, Chettel and Franham. What the new benefice or group will be called still has to be decided. It's also unclear at present whether we will be an independent benefice or part of a new Team Ministry with Blandford and surrounding churches. This will help to ensure that a full-time priest is based at

## report 2020

Handley which will be important for the future development of the area. Handley is seen by the Diocese as a hub for this area so it's important that this future development is successful. However this new grouping brings challenges of its own particularly if the job is to be attractive to future clergy. This will involve rethinking how we operate.

Two key areas that need to be explored will be the administration in the new benefice and worship. Five independent PCCs will generate a huge amount of work for one incumbent potentially leading to 30+ PCC meetings a year along with other subcommittees which is not sustainable. We will need to look how this can be streamlined, whether through the amalgamation of PCCs or exploring different models used in other rural benefices. Churches remaining an island is no longer practical with the modern demands on them today such as safeguarding, health and safety, HR, and finance regulations. I hope whatever model we develop will enable churches to celebrate their distinctiveness in the areas they are situated while sharing the burden of administration together. This will then free me and future incumbents to focus on outreach and development rather than administration and legislation. This will require all of us to be open and flexible if it is to succeed.

Providing regular worship across five churches with one priest will also be challenging but not impossible. A trial rota for all five churches has been drawn up with the Archdeacon and will begin in July 2021. The rota ensures a regular pattern of worship in all five churches respecting the worshipping tradition of those churches. However priority is being given to those churches developing new forms of worship to appeal to a wider group, particularly young families. If our churches are to survive we need to grow our congregations and be relevant to the local communities we serve. In order for this new worship pattern to succeed it will be reliant on Lay Worship leaders to assist with Matins, Evensong and informal family worship. I'm pleased to report that several people across all five churches have come forward to help and I will be providing some training in

due course. The rota also has flexibility to allow all five churches to develop new services which might act as outreach, be it a Songs of Praise, rural celebrations such as St Hubert's Day or special services such as Taizé and Iona. This rota will be reviewed regularly to help us iron out any problems in the hope that by December 2022 a successful pattern of worship has been developed across all five churches led by both lay and ordained people.

Finally I would like to thank our wardens Sue, Mary and Jane for their hard work and support in what has been a particularly challenging year. Our PCC secretaries Margaret and Peter have had the hard task keeping up with constantly changing Diocesan and National regulations. Thank you to our PCCs for the work and support they give and to all the people who clean and decorate our churches, in particular Stella Symes who has headed up the flower team at St Mary's for many years providing beautiful displays on many occasions. Thank you to Jean Elliot (who is also verger at Handley) for taking over from Stella. Also many thanks for those who maintain the churchyards at both Pentridge and Handley. This outdoor space has been so important for people's wellbeing over the past year. Though Gussage St Andrew has not had any services this year, it's organist Anne McCall, moved to Salisbury so I would like to thank her for her many years of service to St Andrew's.

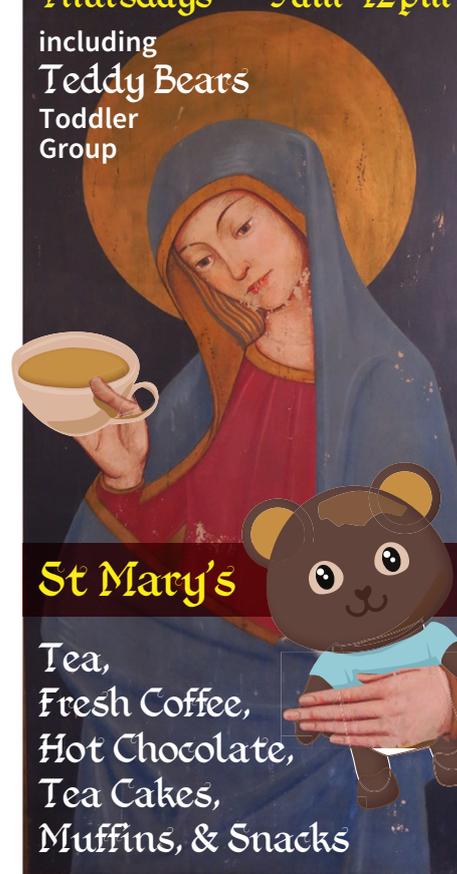
My final thanks goes to The Revd Paul Skinner who has dutifully served our churches over many years particularly during the last interregnum. When I arrived I found his welcome, support and local wisdom invaluable. Paul has been trying to move to Christchurch for some time to be nearer family but COVID has made this difficult. Thankfully his plans came to fruition just after Easter and we all wish Paul well in his new home. Both PCCs have contributed towards a gift of thanks for Paul which I will be taking to him as soon as it's possible to visit people in their homes.

**Blessings**  
**Canon Richard Hancock**  
**Priest in Charge**

## Magnifi-café OPEN

Thursdays 9am-12pm

including  
**Teddy Bears**  
**Toddler**  
**Group**



**St Mary's**

Tea,  
 Fresh Coffee,  
 Hot Chocolate,  
 Tea Cakes,  
 Muffins, & Snacks

## Church Services for June

We are regularly reviewing what is possible and safe with regard to public worship. It is hoped that with the effect of the lockdown and the roll out of the COVID vaccine that it will be possible to have public worship in June and July. The time table below is based on public worship being safe in June. However things can change unexpectedly and if it is not safe to hold public worship services will continue online at 10am on Sundays. However both St Mary's Handley and St Rumbold's Pentridge remain open for private prayer and reflection.

### All at 10 am

#### 1st Sunday

Matins, St Rumbold's

#### 2nd Sunday

Holy Communion, St Mary's

#### 3rd Sunday

Holy Communion, St Rumbold's

#### 4th Sunday

Morning Worship, St Mary's  
 [Outdoor Service]