

## Annual Report of Mulbarton Parochial Church Council on 2023

### Membership:

Rector (ex-officio), Adrian Miller

Churchwarden (ex officio) Tim Hayward (1 Vacancy)

Lay Representatives (with start date of 3 year terms):

Olusegun Ajayi (2021)

Trevor Hutley (2022)

Sue Mellows (2022) Treasurer

Heather Wells (2022)

Mollie Herron (co-opted July 2023)

David Melling (co-opted February 2024)

Hon. Minutes Secretary: Derrick Hill (retired January 2024)

The primary function of the PCC is to co-operate with the Rector in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church – pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Despite having one churchwarden vacancy and a few lay representative vacancies, the PCC has endeavoured to fulfil this role through 9 meetings across the year and significant activity and communication between formal meetings. Our principal activities are summarised below under 6 headings:

### Church Services

From April 2023, we started a new gathering on the evening of the fourth Sunday of each month called “Together” seeking to help worshippers seek relationship with each other and with God. This is the Sunday when there is Morning Worship at Hanover Gardens and rather than have three Mulbarton Services that day, we agreed that the 10.00am service at Mulbarton Church should be cancelled on fourth Sundays apart from on special occasions.

We sought to promote the monthly All Age services on the first Sunday of each month, with a view to offering more ongoing connection points with younger families in the village, especially baptism families. What we found was that often first Sunday services were dominated by baptism occasions, which were important welcoming points for those seeking to invite God into their family lives – yet could be in conflict with the aim of providing ongoing patterns of spiritual encouragement and worship. At the same time, Bev Theobald was exploring a calling to start “Wild Church”, and wondering how that would fit into the existing worship patterns.

We decided to encourage baptisms to happen as special occasions at the now vacant 10am 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday slot, in order to leave the All Age first Sunday slots freer for ongoing creative interactive engagement. We also felt right to work towards introducing Wild Church every other first Sunday in 2024 (the first one happened in May) – so that there was variety and new exciting things for families to join in with. This also keyed into Holiday Clubs that happened in summer and winter 2023, with more planned for 2024.

The 8am BCP communion service congregation has dwindled due to failing health, deaths, and other factors, and was down to just one couple coming regularly by the end of 2023. A similar trend was noticed in Flordon for their monthly 8:30am BCP spoken communion service. We decided as a benefice to pause those two services for a trial period in 2024, and launch a monthly mid-week 10:30am traditional BCP communion service, with hymns, at Flordon Church, starting from Maundy Thursday 2024.

### Safeguarding

Safeguarding, especially of children and vulnerable adults, is a vital statutory responsibility. All PCC members have recently updated their training, with some more to do. We welcomed David Melling on board the safeguarding team, in role as Benefice Safeguarding Administrator; and we are grateful to Lynne Lambert for her continued work as Parish Safeguarding Officer.

See separate report from David and Lynne for more details of our safeguarding activities through 2023 and ongoing priorities into 2024.

### Supporting Villagers

We continued to partner with Norfolk Community Foundation and other community groups, to help households in hardship. Grants from NCF were augmented from the Rector's Fund and local donors enabling multiple grants to be given to local needy households.

We continued to offer human resource, coffee machines, and expertise from Church members for the "Warm Space" / "Community Hub" initiative run by Mulbarton Village Hall Charity in the Social Club. This has been well received and used by the village.

The Church has also continued as a collection point for the Norwich Foodbank, and the donations kept in the church porch are also accessible for local needy families. This continued to be well used and much appreciated.

We continued to have presence at the "Mind, Body and Spirit Fairs" in Mulbarton Village Hall which have attracted people seeking help for a variety of concerns. Church representatives were able to attend and speak with visitors and we worked towards having our first stall at the fair in March 2024.

We contacted all the volunteers who had helped out with the volunteer support scheme, established during covid lockdown times, in order to gauge the best way forward. Thanks to Jacqui Roper for undertaking that work. In the end, we decided to furlough the volunteer scheme for the time being.

We continued to enjoy good contact with the local school, with visits to and from the church, and in the provision of Bibles for school joiners and leavers.

### Church Finances

Concerning finance, we worked closely with the Treasurer who kept on top of record keeping and facilitating PCC decisions, and kept PCC fully informed as things progressed through the year. This enabled us to do good financial planning, and to spend on our agreed priorities. One of our top priorities is to pay the clergy component of parish share, before attending to

other pressing expenditure items locally. The wider diocesan component is still very important to us to pay, but we have continued to prioritise certain other things over that – e.g. admin assistant, churchyard maintenance, insurance, health and safety related issues with buildings and churchyard, etc. We seek grants where appropriate.

Some happy financial news is that 2023 was the first time that Harvest House made a net profit, and it was quite substantial. The upstairs rooms being used has helped tremendously with that.

We produced a finance information leaflet, which was delivered to every home in Mulbarton, highlighting the way the church is now regularly unable to meet the full parish share request, by quite some margin. Ultimately, this will mean less clergy time devoted to the parish.

### Property Stewardship

See the churchwarden's report on fabric for full details of all that the PCC undertook through 2023 to keep the fabric of our ancient church building in good order, and to keep the churchyard well maintained and accessible. Highlights included work on the churchyard path and the Coronation "Big Help Out" day in Spring 2023, when so many volunteers from the local community came to help work in the churchyard, especially much needed re-painting of our ancient white picket fence. We also actioned the major issues from the Electrical Report and actioned all the recommendations from the tree survey report, which has been a major improvement to the churchyard.

### Eco Church, Fairtrade and Care of Clergy

New things for 2023 found the PCC adopting a fully Fairtrade policy, so that all supplies in Harvest House are Fairtrade, from cleaning to coffee to toilet rolls. We also began work towards an Eco Church award, aiming at Silver level, which has involved changes to churchyard management and the choices we make regarding how church and Harvest House are run. We have also actively promoted the values of EcoChurch and Fairtrade in church services, online and in printed materials.

In addition, the PCC has reviewed the Clergy Covenant recommendations and worked towards adopting a policy that reflects the genuine care for clergy and families which the PCC feels.

### [Electoral Roll Report 2023](#)

The updated Roll is up in the church porch. There were no additions and 2 removals (rest in peace Olive King and Richard Morris). New total is 61. Thanks due to Teresa Burrell for ten years as Roll Officer. She retires this year, leaving a vacancy.

### [Deanery Synod Report 2023](#)

No meeting of Humberley deanery synod or chapter were held in 2023. The deanery was disbanded by a Bishop's Order.