

St. Mary the Virgin Parish Church Review of 2011.

2011 began with the knowledge that at the end of January, after seven years in the benefice, Revd. Sue Cruse would be leaving to take on the role as Vicar at Gosfield and Greenstead Green. Many people from our congregation joined with others for a bring and share dinner that packed the Community Centre hall in Ingatestone to demonstrate our appreciation and good wishes. In June we were delighted to be joined by Revd. Jes Salt as benefice curate.

As a small church we are reliant on a group of very dedicated people to cover many parts of our church life together. Janet Collins and Judy Parmenter continued in the roles as Church Wardens. Martin Taylor, Treasurer for St. Edmund and St. Mary Parish Church volunteered to also be treasurer of St. Mary the Virgin. The members of our P.C.C. met six times during the year. The same people also cover many of the other tasks within the church. Particular thanks are due to Sheila Evill and Barbara Huxtable for acting as vergers at weddings and funerals. This year we hosted seven weddings and nine funerals. Barbara Hallows continued to assist at baptisms, where there was the highest number for many years, thirteen. It is a very significant part of our ministry that we continue to be open to these occasional offices.

We maintained our regular pattern of services throughout the year. The P.C.C. decided in November that the third Sunday service should revert to Matins. This meant that three of our four services at 11.15 were from the Book of Common Prayer. Thanks to Penny and David MacAdams and Barbara Hallows we continued with the 8 a.m. B.C.P.

Communion services, alternating with Ingatestone Church. Helpfully Judy Parmenter produced a set of guides aimed at helping those unfamiliar with B.C.P. services. The Family service on the fourth Sunday of the month continued to attract a rather different congregation. Statistically we have an average congregation per Sunday of twenty adults and two children. Thanks are due to all those who read and assist at the services.

Particular mention should be made of Derek Bevan, in his roles as Music Director, Choir Master and Reader. Derek chooses all our music for us, practises and leads our small choir, arranges the organists and produces our weekly pew-sheet. He also leads and preaches regularly for us at the Matins service on the first Sunday of the month. He is also available to help wedding couples in their choices of music. Derek's many talents particularly come together for the Nine Lessons and Carols service, always one of our best attended each year. Thanks are also due to John More-Bridger, who played the organ at the majority of our services, to Richard Overill who played at the Family services and the Crib service and for Claire Renowden who played at some of the funeral services.

Special services were held on a number of occasions. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Christingle, the Junior School Easter service, Harvest for the Hungry and Remembrance Sunday. The latter was again well attended, with a good number of Explorer Scouts and their families. The Crib service on Christmas Eve, with a congregation of 100, was the highest it has ever been. We also supported Operation Christmas Child.

There were a couple of special cleaning days during the year. Merry Maids regularly clean the building, which continues to be upgraded thanks to the generosity of a number of people.

We continue to play our full part in the wider life of the benefice. Janet and Judy contributed to the Churches Together Lent booklet. A number of our regular members attended the Lent Course. We hosted a Unity week service. As part of our celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James' Bible we hosted a very successful evening of readings from the B.C.P. We became so enthusiastic that we continued for over four hours. Sarah MacKay, a regular at our family service took on the role of representing the church on the Governing Body of Ingatestone and Fryerning C. of E. Junior School, where I continue as Chair of Governors.

The work of our fundraising committee, under the leadership of Fay Cherry continues to both provide significant funds for the church and interesting events. The Father's Day BBQ and the Harvest Supper were memorable. The Christmas Bazaar was also a very happy occasion.

During the year it has been encouraging to see the church continue to be valued by our local community in Fryerning and those who come from Ingatestone and further afield to worship regularly with us. May we look to build on our heritage as we encourage our community to see the church building as a valuable part of the community and the church family as welcoming.