

St Mary the Virgin Dalham

Annual Report to Parish Meeting 2024

Thank you for asking us to give a report and I am sorry that I cannot present it in person as I am on annual leave.

You will be pleased to hear that the church is in good heart with gently rising attendance and sense of community spirit. Especial thanks must go to Michael Garber and Charlie Philipps as Churchwardens but they are well supported by Nigel Ley as Treasurer and Organist, Angela, Sophie and Jonathan Aylott as Secretary. Richard King is our representative on Synod and buildings Officer: Lyndsay Gough organises many of our rotas. Others help clean and organise flowers. Sophie Whitcome replaced Charlie Philipps as Churchwarden in April 2024 and Charlie remains a church councillor. WE welcomed Felicity Blake from Dunstall Green as a new councillor.

We have benefitted from the Ministry of Revd's Adam Barclay and Jill Anderson during the year and occasional preaching by Mr Simon Gash. We look forward to the arrival of Rev Raul Akaia as our full time curate in June 2024. Although I was Inducted as Team Rector of the 14 parishes of Forest Heath in February, the main focus of my work remains the 5 villages of 'Kennett Valley', Moulton, Gazley Higham, Kentford and of course Dalham with whom we share much in Ministry and worship terms.

I believe that the church should seek to bless its community and be 'salt and light' We are always open to new ideas. I visit several people in the parish and am happy for further engagement.

Two church members take a significant part in running the Lunch club in with other villages in the Group of churches and although numbers could be better it forms an important feature in village life.

Refreshments are served after services on the 4th Sunday of the month.

The Christmas Carol Service was well supported with our group choir leading and the Easter vigil and Holy Communion is always appreciated. Sadly the suggestion of a Harvest Festival didn't prove of interest to anyone but the Harvest Supper was a success. The bells were rung for the Coronation.

The building remains in good condition, though maintenance and its expense are a constant challenge. General finances are struggling for the first time for some years as a result of inflation, but we are helped by the number of weddings and the income they provide.

It is pleasing to see the Altar frontals on permanent loan from Beck Row, being slowly restored for use. The church has advanced plans to replace the decaying Green frontal with a special commission.

The rewilding proposals for the churchyard have received support within the parish council and we are grateful for that.

It is good that the church remains open each day and we have many visitors due to the 'Three Churches Walk'. We have plans to provide Teas in church on some Sundays in the summer.

We are grateful for the use of the Gmail system run by the Village Hall committee as a way of keeping in touch with the wider community. If anyone would like to receive the weekly News Sheet I distribute, please let me know.

Thank you for your friendship and support across the year

Rev Canon Chris Childs Team Rector 4th May 2024