.  **CHURCHWARDEN’S ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023**

The chief issue this year has been the fact that we have been in Vacancy without a Vicar. It strikes me as extraordinary that The Church of England is the only institution that takes over a year to decide the appointment of the Parish CEO. Imagine a school without a head! We have been in limbo for nearly a year.

I recently asked a fully involved Parishioner whether he ever read The Churchwardens Report. He replied that he did not ! This therefore will be short and to the point intending to give a general overview of the year. More detail, if required, can be found in the many and various minutes of our committees.

1. **Role of Churchwardens and the PCC**

Churchwardens and the PCC have been greatly assisted in this year of Vacancy by The Rev Dr Susie Collingridge, our Associate Vicar (and Area Dean). They have been helped considerably by a talented army of individuals, unlikely to be equalled elsewhere. Together they have overseen the Parish, its administration, (with much willing and efficient assistance from Anne Grove our Benefice Administrator), grounds and buildings and all aspects of worship. The vacancy has added pressure for the Chief Churchwarden Bubbles Silk in particular, who has found herself effectively in a full-time job.

**2.The Ministry Team**

With our much-loved Vicar John Owen retiring in April, the team has been ably led by The Rev Dr. Susie Collingridge, our Associate Vicar (and Area Dean). She has been very well-supported by Sue Jones (Ordinand) and The Rev Joanna Farrell (PtO Priest) respected and well-known to this parish. The Venerable Adrian Harbidge has stood in on numerous occasions, entertaining us with his sermons where he combines anecdotes with message and always offers a tricky quiz question as well. Lindsay Clegg (Lay Pastoral Assistant), Anne Grove (Benefice Administrator) and Amanda Greenlee work tirelessly for the benefit of us all, together of course with Churchwardens.

**3. Church Electoral Roll**

2022: 105   2023: 134

Whilst numbers have risen as we climbed out of lockdown, the Electoral Roll gives only a limited picture of the Parish since not all churchgoers are on the roll. Members of the Parish elect the Churchwardens whether they are on the Electoral Roll or not. At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting only those on the Electoral Roll do, however, elect the Parish Church Council for the following year

**4. Meetings of the PCC**

Members are currently: Susie Collingridge, Geoffrey Dale, Hew Granlund (Treasurer), Amanda Greenlee (Secretary), Caroline Hilton (PtO), Sue Jones (Lay Reader & Ordinand), Anthony Littlejohn (Chair of the Investment Committee), Christopher Reed, David Storey, David Erskine-Hill, Judy Thompson, Fran Box, Richard Welch, Caroline Robinson, Helen Muir-Davies (Chair of Fabric and Finance Committee), Bubbles Silk and Jonathan Selby.

The PCC has met regularly as have the sub-committees such as Fabric and Finance, Investment and Social Committees. Detailed minutes are available elsewhere but the meetings have focussed on Finance, Safeguarding (as we have moved out of Covid restrictions) and maintenance of the church fabric. The Ministry Team and Churchwardens have met regularly and reports from committees have covered FOSU in Ghana (IDWAL), The Deanery Synod and PACT (Petersfield Area Churches Together) and this year we have additionally joined PACT Eco group looking at ways to improve our footprint such as Solar Panels. Much discussed in the past, WIFI has now been installed.

The PCC works hard to maintain the role of the church in community as follows :

1. To worship God and serve the Community

2. Members are part of the network seeking to play a full role as active Christians

3. Provision of regular, thoughtful worship

4. Inclusive of all and judgmental of none

**5. Fabric**

The general fabric of the church is in good order. A roof leak was stemmed but more extensive roof work is now planned, costing well over £50,000, with that figure yet to be finalised. The plans for improvement of kitchen and toilet facilities have not been promoted or come to fruition but remain the subject of discussion and area of intended development. The recently refurbished organ is working well and we are treated to splendid organ voluntaries from Gerald each week. We are starting to explore Ecological approaches to matters such as church heating and solar panels.

Keeping the churchyard tidy is a considerable task, estimated by Ted Bones to be a minimum of 7 hours work to mow the whole area. Jonathan has led a small team of Magan Singodia and Nick Pocock in maintaining this but it has recently been decided to return to a rota system. Two mowers have been fully cleaned and serviced. Bedales Outdoor Work Department once again helped out considerably by clearing the rougher areas with their large mower and trimming back trees which have been difficult to access.

**7. Worship**

As we have returned to near normality post-Covid (we still dip wafers at communion rather than drink direct from the Chalice). In addition to regular worship we have held the following services:-

A notable farewell to John and Jane Owen (his sermon has been recorded should anyone wish to have a copy)

Mothering Sunday

A Flower Festival

A service to mark the passing of Queen Elizabeth

Harvest Festival

A Festival of Light on October 31st (organised by Naomi Anson}

Remembrance Sunday (bugler supplied by Bedales)

Advent and Christmas Carol Services (including services for Bedales, Dunhurst and Steep School)

Ash Wednesday

A special mention for our lively monthly TenAM service for the young led by the laity with help from Sue Jones which is attracting many of the families in the area and is well attended.

We have also seen the return of Thursday Evening Quiet Time, a weekly service for silent reflection.

**8. Finance**

Thanks to the expert financial acumen of our Fabric and Finance and Investment Committees, our finances seem to be in good shape. Collections have returned post-Covid and the parish giving scheme is expanding. FOSC raises considerable and invaluable funds and we thank them particularly for the newly installed WiFi and the new and improved spotlights. The net result is that we have returned to pre-Covid levels of finance giving cause for cautious optimism. Details can be found in the Minutes.

**9. Pastoral Care**

Pastoral Care remains important. Our church is a warm and welcoming place. Coffee helps us to draw together and cultivate friendship. Visits can be arranged and social events are well-supported. It was particularly pleasing to see the return of the autumn Barn Dance, uniting young and old on the dance floor, enjoying delicious food and welcoming visitors from outside the church as well as regular churchgoers. These events take a considerable effort to organise but pay rich dividends. A monthly Music Morning was arranged by Liz Singodia and Shakira Akabusi for pre-schoolers and their parents and ran through the autumn but sadly the attendance was small and it was decided not to continue with this at the present but to concentrate on other activities. We also stay in touch with those who have moved away. Jenny Sandys is regularly in our prayers. The History Society organised by Fran Box and The Welcome Club are two examples of gatherings which all help to make the Church an important centre for the community.

**10. Deanery**

Amanda Greenlee does sterling work here (and elsewhere) as our representative on the Petersfield Deanery Synod, keeping us well informed on developments and discussions taking place. This may be a suitable section to include our welcome to the new Bishop of Portsmouth (Jonathan Frost) who visited the parish within days of his inauguration and seems a sympathetic, warm and intelligent leader.

**11. Thanks**

Perhaps the most important section of this report. On behalf of The PCC, Bubbles and I would like to thank the following:-

Our congregation for their friendship, warmth and involvement, our Sacristan, Gill Wicksteed, our Intercessionists, our mowers and strimmers, our Newsletter organisers, our preachers and priests, our sidesmen and sideswomen, our Chalice servers, our flower-arrangers, our bell-ringers and musicians, our Organist, Gerald, and our Choir, our cleaners, polishers and vestment launderers, our coffee-makers, cake-bakers and washers-up, and, holding us all together in this year of Vacancy, our talented Associate Vicar, Susie Collingridge.