

ARMATHWAITE, CHRIST AND ST MARY

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

1. BACKGROUND

The vision of Armathwaite Church is to be a welcoming and inclusive family sharing God's love with all. Building on the commitment of the people of God in the parish; living the Gospel by word and deed; and growing in fellowship.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Christ and St Mary's Armathwaite is in the Diocese of Carlisle within the Church of England. The correspondence address is: 8 Mill Brow, Armathwaite, Carlisle. CA4 9PJ

PCC members who have served from 11 March 2021 until the date of this report were approved as follows:

Rector: Vacancy until 1 February 2021 then
Revd Mark Houston

Associate Priest Canon Brian Dawson

Church Wardens Ken Bonsor
Jenny Roscoe

Deanery Synod Members
Felicity Ecroyd
Charles Ecroyd (Vice Chair)

Elected Members Susan Bonsor (Treasurer and
temporary secretary)
Sian Banks
Jonathan Rhodes
June Robley

Non elected member Vacant (Secretary)

The PCC met seven times during the year.

3. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

4. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Armathwaite PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Revd. Mark Houston, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

5. CHURCH ATTENDANCE

In accordance with legislation the Church Electoral Roll has 32 parishioners. The average attendance for Sunday services is 13. The pattern of two Sunday services per month continue, with the first of the month being Holy Communion celebrated by Revd Mark Houston and the third Sunday being a lay led Morning Prayer service. Tuesday Morning Prayer continues on Zoom attracting an average congregation of about 9.

6. ANNUAL REVIEW

During the year there were 2 baptisms and 0 marriages in church, and 1 interment of ashes.

Most appropriately the Epiphany season saw us welcome Revd. Mark Houston into our midst as Priest-in-Charge of the Inglewood Group. It was a great pity that the continuing pandemic restrictions meant that his Licensing could not be held in person but a large number of church members across the Group were able to welcome him via Zoom. He has very quickly established himself in his post and there can be few residents throughout the villages who do not now recognise him as "The Vicar"!

The year continued with all services continuing remotely on Zoom. These were not only vital while the church remained closed, but equally importantly, brought the entire benefice together in combined worship. We are grateful to those who arranged them.

Throughout the continuing pandemic, the PCC has followed the progress of scientific analysis and data scrupulously, monitoring developments constantly, but it was not until the first week of May that it was thought safe to resume worship in church, provided suitable precautionary measures were taken. From this point there have been two Sunday services a month – on the first (Holy Communion) and third (lay led Morning Prayer), and Tuesday's Morning Prayer has continued on Zoom.

This has been a difficult time for all, especially schools and medical services, so to show our appreciation to the staff of Armathwaite School, posies of flowers were given to every member of staff for Mothering Sunday. Similarly for Easter, bags of homemade hot cross buns were taken to all the staff of Court Thorn Surgery.

In August we were able to include some lay participation in the service, but caution for the safety of the congregation was still a priority. Large indoor gatherings were not possible and so the Harvest Supper could not go ahead. Instead, bags containing items for afternoon tea were delivered to all who had attended the last Harvest Supper.

The carol service was another casualty of the pandemic, but this year we were able to sing carols, with Mark leading on his guitar, in the Dukes Head car park. This was well attended by ninety people, both adults and children, and was much enjoyed by all. Before Christmas, goodie bags were delivered both to the staff of Armathwaite School and Court Thorn Surgery, to thank them for their work. They too, were much appreciated.

Our thanks to Sian, our organist, for leading the choral part of our worship and to all those who regularly clean the church and provide flowers. All these contribute much to enhance and beautify our worship.

7. FINANCIAL REVIEW

The Parish Offering has once again been paid in full. Planned giving fell once again and was down another £400. There was a shortfall overall of £2168. However, there was extraordinary expenditure of £966 for the repainting of the bell cote and ironwork, the gutters and fall pipes and both

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the wooden and metal gates. We unfortunately didn't receive the usual support from the Parish Council of £300 towards the upkeep of the churchyard due to an administrative error. Taking these two items into account reduces the deficit theoretically to £902 so it may not be as gloomy as the figures first show. Hopefully, the PCC will receive the payment of £300, due from last year, from Hesket Parish Council towards the upkeep of the churchyard in the very near future.

However, there is a downward trend in giving but this may be due to the reduced numbers attending due to Coronavirus. The usual pattern of worship has also reduced from three services a month to two which also has a negative effect on giving. The PCC is, however, very appreciative of the generous giving of many of the congregation and parishioners, especially those who responded so generously to our appeal for financial help when the shortfall was envisaged in the summer months.

The PCC is, however, committed to supporting the increase in Parish Offer to the Diocese as a way of trying to sustain ministry in the benefice. Without the financial support from the parishes the Diocese would be unable to fund parish ministry.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic there were no fund-raising events during the year.

As always, the PCC is extremely grateful to all givers for their continued generosity and support in these exceptionally challenging times.

8. GROUP MATTERS

Since our last round of APCM meetings in 2021 I submit this report as an account of events and life across our churches over the past year.

Each church has settled upon a sustainable cycle of Sunday worship. I, as priest offer every church one service of Holy Communion and this is supplemented by at least one lay service per month in most churches. Canons Keith and Brian preside at Plumpton and Hutton, which I know is hugely appreciated. We have all navigated the last year of Covid restrictions but, since Easter Sunday 2021 there has been at least one service in a church building every week. I would invite people who would like a weekly opportunity of worship to seek out where services are both within & outside the benefice on the days when your parish does not meet. Zoom services have continued throughout the year, usually on a 5th Sunday. These have been well attended by people from across the benefice. Being aware that not all of us use the Internet my aim moving forward is to have a church service somewhere in the benefice on those days. We have had many funerals, weddings, wedding blessings, baptisms over the year and in February we were able to welcome Bishop Peter Ramsden to Plumpton to preside at a Confirmation service.

Some of our mid week activities and fund raising ideas have re-started. People meet for morning prayer in Skelton every Thursday and there is an online service of morning prayer every Tuesday. The Mothers Union almost had a visit from the vicar last year but foul weather caused a cancellation. Thankfully there is already a date in the diary to allow me space to share my story with them. If anyone would like to know more about the Mothers Union please do get in touch. Coffee mornings, soup lunches, concerts and other events have been resumed and there are events being planned for the coming months. Please pray that other areas of outreach, especially in the line of childrens work is able to resume shortly too. To many, the threat of Covid is still a concern so we must be considerate towards each other and remain trusting that God will lead us in the direction he has mapped for us.

I regularly attend and take collective worship in our church schools. I have spent time with the other local schools although, sadly not as much as I would have liked. But, I have only been in post for just over a year and these relationships can take time to develop.

In the autumn a team from the benefice offered hospitality to a group of pilgrims who were walking across the country to be a presence at the COP 21 Climate Change conference in Glasgow. We offered enough food that they didn't need to eat for a good few days. Might I offer my thanks to Alma and all you wonderful folk who prepared meals, served it to the hungry hordes and stayed around to clean up in Low Hesket village hall.

The Joint Church Council has met twice since my licensing and there have been meetings of the Deanery Synod alongside PCC meetings, APCMs and School Governor meetings. It is important that we all have input on life in our wide community but I am also aware of my limitations (time & headspace). Your help is hugely appreciated in the variety of tasks that are required to keep a parish church afloat. Thankfully we have been protected from any safeguarding incidents but can I please insist that, if you hold a parish office, you ensure that you are up to date with the required training. Help can be made available to any for whom this is problematic.

9. THE FUTURE

Moving forward, we, as a group of seven churches, have challenges to face in keeping each parish functional and sustainable. In many ways we all need the support of each other so please do keep each other in your prayers. Since January 2022, and the appointment of a leader for the Blencathra Mission Community, we now have a wider level of support. Revd. Martin Walker and I trained at the same theological college and by being brought together by God in this place at this time we both feel an excitement about how the church will move forward.

*The Revd Mark Houston
Priest-in-Charge*

Ingleswood Group of Churches with Plumpton Wall

March 2022