

Report of Alpheton and Shimplingthorne Parochial Church Council to the Annual Meeting of Alpheton Parish Council on 22nd May 2018

Alpheton and Shimplingthorne Parochial Church Council, what a mouthful, so let's call it A & S PCC for short. Church PCCs have been around for over 100 years, but they should not be confused with the other PCCs (Police and Crime Commissioners), which have been around for a much shorter period.

Who are we? Following our recent annual meeting, the newly re-elected team of nine are ably led by our Rector, Rev'd Matthew Lawson, who also looks after the two Churches in Long Melford, Holy Trinity and St Catherine's. Full details are on the church website, which can be found at www.alphetonandshimplingchurches.org.uk It is kept fully up to date for us by Sue Fahie-Wilson. Do have a look at the website some time. It has been highly praised by many.

What do we do? Put simply, anything relating to Church in Alpheton and Shimpling is down to us. We have two beautiful grade one listed buildings to maintain, heat, light and insure. The insurance alone costs several thousand pounds each year to cover the replacement value of several million pounds. The roof work on Alpheton Church cost several tens of thousands of pounds, only half of which was met by grants. The recent essential tree work on the approach drive to Shimpling Church cost several thousand pounds and we expect more of this kind of work to be needed soon. Our Churchyards need regular work to keep them looking good and we are so grateful to those volunteers who toil away unseen for the benefit of everyone who enjoys the peace and beauty of these special places.

What else do we do? Our Rector, Matthew, and Assistant Priest, Henry, lead weekly services in our two Churches usually at 9.00 am on the 1st and 3rd Sundays at Alpheton and on the 2nd and 4th Sundays at Shimpling. When the 5th Sunday comes around we join our friends at Long Melford for a shared Benefice service. Our Benefice is called Chadbrook after the waterway which runs close to all four Churches. In addition, our Churches are always ready for Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, when needed and there are several special services each year such as Harvest and Carols.

How is this paid for? Contrary to widespread belief, the National Church no longer pays for local clergy. We pay over ten thousand pounds each year to the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocese to cover the cost of the Rector's time spent in Alpheton and Shimpling as well as meeting numerous other expenses. Much of this cost is met by the same few volunteers, who give so generously of their time as well as their money. You may have noticed that there are quite a few Church events each year in our villages. A few examples from 2017 are a Coffee Morning, Spring and Christmas Markets, Film Night and Quiz Night, Open Gardens and Willow Course, Harvest Supper and Nativity Play. As well as being great community events these also are an essential way of raising funds.

Why do we do this? Because we believe it is important to continue the mission of our predecessors over the centuries by spreading the Gospel, which means Good News, in our villages. Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ died on the Cross for every one of us and God's unconditional love for us all still endures today, whether we recognise it or not. This is why early on Sunday mornings we are to be found working away, come rain or shine, cold or hot, in one or other of our Churches preparing for a public service at 9.00 am at which absolutely everyone is welcome.

What can you do to help? Firstly, please talk to us. Tell us what you like about what we do and do not be afraid to tell us what you do not like about what we do. Did you think the Bacon Butty service in Shimpling Village Hall was a good idea, even if you were not able to come along? Were the Saturday morning breakfast meetings at The Bush worthwhile as an opportunity for Matthew to meet with people in the villages in a different environment? What should we do to encourage you to think about coming along to one of our services? Would you be able to clean or provide flowers occasionally for our services? Would you be able to lend a hand when we have tidying up days or at one of our village events?

The Fete We really hope you all have Saturday 21st July in your diaries. After four years, we are back on the Cricket Ground of Chadacre Estate for The Alpheton and Shimpling Church Fete. Please do come and join us for a wonderful event in such a beautiful setting if you possibly can. If you would like a stall or to join the team of helpers please let Liz know.

How can you contact us? The two village Churches are your Churches and the PCC is your PCC. Full contact details are on the website and in the magazines. We really do look forward to hearing from you soon.