

## SWILLAND CHURCH report for Swilland and Witnessham Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017

During the year we have become a Companion Church with Ashbocking. Locally Ordained Minister, Catherine Beaumont, has special responsibility for both churches. We still operate independently but support each other by attending each other's services and at fundraising events

Before Christmas there was carol singing round both villages finishing jointly at the Moon and Mushroom pub. The money raised was split between Christian Aid and EACH. For the first time this year we tried out a new initiative in January; Nikki Gavin, the Licensee kindly agreed to allow the Church to host a Pub Church service at the Moon and Mushroom that was attended by parishioners, not just from Swilland and Ashbocking but from all over the Benefice. It was very successful and was followed by traditional Sunday lunch put on by Nikki. We thank her for allowing us this opportunity and for all the other events she hosts for us in the Pub.

A bi-monthly coffee morning was started during the year, hosted by various people, which enabled those who do not regularly come to church to get together with the church community.

A Ladies Group was started by Gina Wilden. This meets bi-monthly on a Monday evening in the Moon and Mushroom for supper and a speaker. This has been a great success.

The Men's Group also meets three monthly in the Moon and Mushroom on a Monday evening with a similar format. This is well supported.

The increase in the number and frequency of social events and the village interaction through clubs and initiatives like the Christmas draw, Christian Aid has meaningfully increased the

interaction between villagers and has raised the general feeling of well being within the Community.

Our Wordsworth and Maskell organ was reinstated after restoration last year. We are very grateful to those who contributed so generously towards the cost. We are also very grateful to Helen Jay who plays the organ for us once a month.

We held our usual Christmas Draw and lunch in December to raise money for our fabric fund which needs every penny we can raise for we are currently investigating the possibility of installing a small kitchen and toilet. We are acutely aware that there is no "official" public building within the village for indoor community events. Our hope is that we will obtain permission from the Diocese to remove the pews at the back of the church to make a clear space, with replacement portable seating, increasing the versatility of the building, such that village community events can be staged benefiting all both in secular and religious activity. This venture will be very costly and we will need to seek substantial grants to achieve our objective. We are told, assuming we are granted permission that the cost will be in the region of £80K. It is felt that these improved facilities will expand the use of the church for concerts and other events, but importantly including public meetings. There is no other venue in the village for such events.

Our churchyard has been very well looked after by Adrian Ward who does not charge us. Again we are most grateful. Still on this aspect we would ask all who walk through the Churchyard to respect the fact that it is consecrated holy ground and ask dog walkers to prevent their animals from fouling but if this inadvertently occurs they clear up afterwards. We have placed notices to this effect on the footpath through the Church yard.

Ann Kent

Swilland St Mary's PCC Treasurer.