



St Stephen's Sparsholt with
Lainston
Rector's Report on 2016

“During 2016, we were directed by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of St Mark to ‘*Go throughout the whole world and preach the Gospel to all people.*’ That we have been doing as a benefice, and I am at once humbled and overjoyed to have witnessed evidence of your faithful work bearing fruit in all manner of ways and in every parish.”

Words of Reverend Jax Machin

Thanks from
Jax

My thanks go to the Churchwardens of each parish, to the Sides-men and women, and to all the teams of people who assist them in keeping our churches clean, brim-full of magnificent floral arrangements, visitors welcomed, altars laid, cloths washed, lessons read, bells rung, organs played, anthems sung, graves dug, churchyards maintained, records kept, prayers offered ... Christ worshipped and glorified!

bMAP – The benefice Mission Action Plan

Two of the bMAP initiatives in which Sparsholt are involved:

- Caroline Horrill is chairing a review of Children's ministry across the Benefice which reveals we are doing some amazing work
- Charlotte Nash is spearheading M28 (think Matthew's Gospel Chapter 28!), a group dedicated to reviewing worship patterns and liturgy.

Financial stuff

Our Treasurers deserve special merit for their expertise in navigating us through yet another financial year fraught with escalating Common Mission Fund charges before even a light switch or heater is budgeted for. Through God's grace, we have made it through this far, but as a benefice we need to be thinking deeply about our sacrificial giving if we want these beautiful churches and the sacramental and pastoral services they offer to continue for future generations.

The Ministry Team

- Jax Machin
- Charlotte Nash
- Alan Disher
- Bruce Kington
- Andrew Kent
- Di Payne
- Norman de la Mouette
- Brian & Liz Pickett

Ordained clergy, retired and visiting clergy,
licensed lay ministers and soon to come lay
worship leaders!

What we have done in 2016, and still do!

- Funerals, baptisms and weddings
- Sparsholt school assemblies and school services in Church
- Service of Peace and Wholeness
- Midweek Holy Communion
- Visits to Arqiva, and Westholme & Flowerdown Nursing Homes
- Regular Sunday services
- Messy Church, Sunday Schools and Café Church
- Parish visiting; taking Holy Communion to those at home
- Pet services and the Trinity service with BBQ

More of what
we have done
in 2016, and
still do!

- Invitational services such as celebrations of Marriage and Baptism
- Christian Aid services
- All Souls and All Saints services
- Patronal Festivals where we honour the lives of the saints to whom our churches are dedicated (St.Stephen's is always the Sunday after Christmas)
- Harvest Festivals and Suppers
- Lent talks, Maundy Thursday vigil, Half nights of prayer
- during Advent 2016, Sparsholt took the risk of offering spiritual adventures behind real Advent Doors throughout the village to the delight of all who attended.

The Church Fete

Jax said “During the summer, each parish took my breath away by offering yet more spectacular Summer Fetes, oftentimes in weather which had me in tears of agony for you all after the many months of painstaking preparation. Yet you were not daunted! Your energetic enthusiasm on the day helped me to see, yet again, the face of Christ shining from you all. I am deeply humbled, not least of which because you seemed to have turned adversity into triumph with flourishing financial results. Bless you all!”

Charity at home in
Sparsholt and beyond

Donations have been made via the Church to:

- RBL Poppy Fund
- Karis Kids
- Winchester Churches Nightshelter
- Missionary Training Service
- Sparsholt School
- Sparsholt Village Playground
- Ham Green Conservation
- Christian Aid & The Children's Society

And for the provision of Advent calendars to
all Sparsholt School pupils

Thank you to you all whose generosity makes
these donations possible

And finally, signs of growth!

- Slowly but surely, we are beginning to see new worshippers returning to our churches because they feel they identify with the welcoming worshipping community they have met. They have come home!
- There is evidence of a rise in attendance at our traditional services.
- Pubs and village shops have been closing, but not village churches.
- People still value the presence of the parish church and the sacramental and pastoral work of its worshipping community even though they do not worship weekly.

The final word from Jax

May we drink from the living water Christ offers us, sharing it with all who seek Him, and may the year ahead bring abundant blessings upon you all.

Yours in Christ,

Jax