

THE CHARLTONS PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Report for the Annual Parish Meeting 16 May 2023

We have been without a priest for the last 16 months and so a brief summary of the current process of reorganisation of parishes might help - financial constraints being the main focus of the Diocese of Bath & Wells.

The Parishes of the Charltons and Kingsdon are currently in the Benefice of Somerton but this is likely to change in the next two or three years – the Church of England works slowly.

The Diocese has to reduce its number of stipendiary clergy and Ivelchester Deanery, of which we are a part, has to reduce from 7.5 to 5 priests. A new priest will eventually be appointed to Somerton but it is very likely that we, together with Kingsdon, will be joined with Ilchester, Limington and Podimore where there is a priest in post – Bruce Faulkner. (It makes the various numbers add up!)

Consultations are ongoing with the individual parishes and representations have been made as The Charltons has looked to Somerton for many years and change is not always welcome but in July we should know more.

In the meantime we have endeavoured to maintain services – including special ones to mark the death of HM Queen and the Coronation as well as weddings and funerals. We have support from several volunteers caring for the churchyards, running coffee mornings, winter warmer lunches, Open the Book in both the Charltons and Somerton, pastoral care and prayer groups as well dedicated bell ringers. However we have concern that the “pool” of volunteers gets smaller each year – a problem which is not uncommon locally and nationally I suspect – for the present we are grateful for all the support we receive from many within the parish as without them it is highly likely both churches would have to close.

And a brief reference to the church clocks – Kevin Moore is arranging to have the winding mechanism in Mackrell Church (still being wound weekly by climbing the tower) and Adam Church (the clock sticks at a few minutes to 3) put into working order. It is worth noting that when clocks were put on church towers most people did not have timepieces, hence their being on the highest buildings but the responsibility was on the local parish council – and could still be deemed so!

Liz Bale

16.05.23