

ST PETER & ST PAUL, PETTISTREE WITH LOUDHAM

Church and people

Pettistree Church is in the centre of the village and is a traditional simple building, part of which dates to the 1300s. It is well maintained, with the most recent significant works consisting of external stonework renovation and repairs carried out in late 2014. At the same time there was a redecoration of the Nave interior walls. This remains subject to some remedial work because of the application of inappropriate paint, which was applied in breach of the conditions of the faculty specification. A consistory court was held in September



2017 to determine the approach to restoration, at which the contractor, PCC and Churchwardens were exonerated from any culpability. Preparations are now underway for the restoration of the Nave decoration. The earliest remaining structures are small sections of mediaeval glass that were restored in 1991. There is a fine ring of six bells which were restored and rehung in 1986, which are in constant use, being rung for every service. The church is open but unmanned during daylight hours for all who wish to visit. The tower area is locked to prevent access to the bells and roof.



The churchyard is particularly well maintained. There was a reorganisation of the ground in the late 1940s so that it is still open for burials. Part of the churchyard is a conservation area and there are several plant species in the churchyard that are on the protected list. An avenue of native fruit trees was planted in May 2014, to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee of 2012, this was carried out as a joint activity between the church and the village community.

Some of the non-churchgoing parishioners regularly help with maintenance of the church buildings and land, and this is much appreciated by the congregation.

The Church Room, a separate small building located near the church within the grounds of the churchyard, is used for PCC meetings, parish council meetings and for some occasional church functions. This was restored in 1982 with electricity and heating, and in more recent years the addition of a water supply and an easily accessible WC for church use. Following some storm damage and identification of decayed roof timbers, the building underwent full roof repairs in late 2022.



There is a small car park situated next to the Church Room, providing a modest amount of off-road parking for the church. With many services, particularly in winter months, parking is of limited supply. The church therefore has an informal agreement with the owners of the nearby Greyhound Inn, allowing use of the pub car park for church services (when the pub is not open, which is usually the case for Sunday services). In return, as a cooperative arrangement with the Greyhound, the church car park is sometimes used by the Greyhound for staff parking. The Village Hall car park is also only a few minutes' walk from the church.



There is a long history of cooperation between the church and the civil parish, which is often evident during village events in aid of the church. The PCC has always been aware of the need to maintain strong links with those who do not regularly attend services and feel that it is vital to foster these links and to welcome any opportunity to engage with the village community. A number of events over recent years are becoming established, with the aim to maintain and grow these contacts, including a Harvest lunch and a summer's afternoon walk with tea and cake. Unfortunately, the

impacts of Covid & its aftermath reduced these activities, from which we are slowly rebuilding. Church attendance is higher at festivals but also at times of personal stress, which emphasises the need to maintain the familiar presence of Pettistree church for the community we serve.

The present congregation are well known to each other, and it is always easy to maintain good contact and to be aware of any unexpected absences. There are 56 names on the Electoral Roll and the average attendance at the regular Sunday service is 24 adults, with the regular weekly attendance numbers still recovering from the impacts of Covid. Any visitors or new members of the congregation are easily identified and are welcomed without any formal procedure for organising this. The congregation includes people from a wider catchment area, with many from Wickham Market and some other nearby villages, who prefer the type of service offered and enjoy the atmosphere at Pettistree. Many of the congregation attend weekly or monthly house groups coordinated through All Saints in Wickham Market.

The ringing band is one of the strengths of Pettistree and the PCC is very grateful for its presence within the congregation. During the week there is a regular bell ringers' practice, with the bells rung for every Sunday service and to mark national occasions.



There is a monthly Friday communion service which was particularly popular pre-Covid with an average attendance of 35-40 people. This service restarted in March 2023 and is led by the Curate, with plans to have occasional visiting speakers. There is now an average attendance of 12. The service is always followed by fellowship shared with coffee and cake or biscuits in the Church Room.

Finances and Giving

Financially the church benefits from the careful management by the previous generations; there are no large endowments, but income continues to match expenditure and we have not gone into debt. In the past income has often exceeded expenditure, but post-Covid effects and the recent inflationary pressures have started to introduce more budgetary constraints. There is a restrictive

fabric fund which paid for the Church Room repairs in 2023. The diocesan share has always been met in full, with monthly contributions being paid regularly and on time again this year. There is an annual tithe donation to a range of charities, both Christian mission based and secular. The PCC encourages regular giving, and the Gift Aid scheme is well supported, ensuring that the majority of giving is financially efficient.

Administration and Pastoral Activities

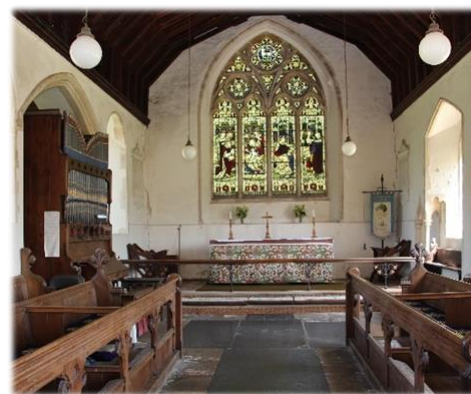
We are fortunate that we have a full PCC, with all essential roles filled, and two churchwardens. The PCC holds quarterly meetings, complemented with ad hoc meetings and Standing Committee meetings as required.

Pastorally, the parish with support from the Vicar and several retired clergy living in the benefice, tends to look after itself to a certain extent. As in many rural villages, the villagers prefer and would expect the vicar to visit in times of spiritual need instead of the laity. Practical help is different, and members of the church have always tried to assist with such activities as hospital transport or shopping.

Worship

St. Peter and St. Paul church has a warm and welcoming congregation. There is a general preference towards the more traditional service formats at present. The PCC feels that there is a need to maintain this balance and to ensure availability of these styles of service within the benefice. We use Hymns Old & New at all services. The church is fortunate to have the voluntary services of two organists from within the congregation, with the organ played at every service.

The monthly service pattern is as detailed on page 15 (statistical information).



There are additional occasional special services including a children's harvest service and Christingle service, both held in conjunction with the nursery based in the village. There is an Act of Remembrance service held by the war memorial in the churchyard on the 11th November at 11.00am. In recent years, originally prompted by Covid restrictions, we have held a number of outdoor short Harvest and Carol services, held in the churchyard grounds. These have proved popular and have attracted a wider attendance from the village community, family & friends.

There is some lay involvement in the regular services, often helping at communion services and



intercessory prayers are led by a lay member at some services each month.

PCC Policy is to welcome all those from the parish who wish to come to the Pettistree church for

baptism, marriage and funeral services. We are pleased to welcome non-resident family members of churchgoers also for these rites, when this is considered appropriate in discussion between the vicar and churchwardens. The vicar ensures that the deep commitment needed for baptism and marriage within the Church of England is fully understood.

We are keen to see a new incumbent of the open evangelical tradition who is prepared to continue to lead us in a similar style of services as we hold in our church of St. Peter & St. Paul. We welcome a woman as readily as a man. We also hope for someone who is enthusiastic to participate in wider village life and by doing so strengthen the links with the non-churchgoing people of Pettistree and Loudham.