

The Church of St. Peter & St. Paul, Black Notley

Introduction

St. Peter & St. Paul is the parish church of Black Notley, Essex. It is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford within the Church of England. The church is built of flint and pebble rubble and has stood on this site since the first half of the twelfth century but has been extensively renovated over the years, not least following damage during World War Two. Situated to the south of the town of Braintree, the church occupies a site in Church Road near Black Notley Hall, on the northeast edge of the village and is surrounded by quiet and peaceful farmland. The distinguished naturalist John Ray was born in Black Notley in 1628 and is considered to be the father of the natural sciences. He wrote many books and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. The Ray Society has repaired his memorial, near the church porch, and a copy of the Latin inscription together with the English translation is in the church.

The Parochial Church Council

St. Peter & St. Paul's PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent to promote in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the church building, meeting room and churchyard situated in Church Road, Black Notley. The PCC meets monthly but operates through a number of committees that meet between full meetings.

The Standing Committee: This is the only committee required by law. It has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council.

The Finance Committee: Oversees the general financial dimension of the work of St. Peter & St. Paul's by monitoring income and expenditure, budgeting and coordinating the annual review of the Christian Stewardship of money through planned giving and ensuring as far as possible the effective and moral investment of capital.

The Fabric Committee: Attends to matters relating to the stewardship of plant, such as the church buildings and fabric, the churchyard, etc.

The Magazine: Is produced by two joint Editors. Their responsibility is to oversee editing, production and distribution.

The Social Committee: Oversees the Summer Fete and other Fund Raising events.

The Liturgical Committee: Was formed in May 2001 and continues to evaluate and advise the PCC on matters of Worship.



Black Notley church from the south side

The PCC continues to follow the Five Marks of Mission as recommended by the Bishop of Chelmsford:

To Proclaim the good news of the Kingdom;

To Teach, baptise and nurture new believers;

To Respond to human need by loving service;

To Seek to transform unjust structures of society;

To Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Membership & Worship

At the 31st December 2007 there were 70 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll of whom 33 are not resident within the Parish. The congregation comes from a wider area attracting those who appreciate the format of the services and the welcoming atmosphere.

The main service begins at 10.30am each Sunday. This enables the best use of the new meeting room and allows the children of the Sunday Club to participate by joining the congregation during the service.



The interior of the church of St. Peter & St. Paul



Children enjoying the Service of Christingle

On the first Sunday of each month there is a family service, on other Sundays a Sung Mass. Holy Communion at 8.00am also takes place, but this has had to be restricted to the first Sunday of each month during the interregnum. All the major festivals of the Church's year are celebrated.

We deliver leaflets to the whole parish, including Great Notley, before Christmas and Easter with details of services at these festivals which are always very well attended.

In 2007 there were 34 baptisms carried out in Black Notley Church, 11 marriages and 8 funerals. In addition the Rector conducted a number of services at cemeteries and crematoriums. The average combined Sunday attendance at 8.00am and 10.30am is between 45 and 55 increasing to between 60 and 70 at the Family Eucharist and on special days like the Harvest Festival and Mothering Sunday. There are usually between 6 and 12 under sixteen years of age at these services. At Easter there were approximately 130 worshippers in Church of which at least 100 took Communion. Similar figures were recorded at Christmas during the Midnight Mass and Family Eucharist on Christmas morning.

During the interregnum in 2008 attendance has generally kept up well although there has been a slight fall at the Family Service despite a number of entertaining visiting priests. This no doubt reflects the need for continuity in leadership and shows the importance of this aspect of ministry.

The choir enhances worship at a number of important services during the year as well as the 10.30am Sunday Mass. New members are always welcomed.

The involvement, where possible, of the children from the Sunday Club is very encouraging and they continue to enhance our worship. A junior choir has recently been formed and it is hoped that members will take part in services soon.



Members of the choir



The choir and sanctuary decorated ready for the flower festival

Steps were taken in 2007 to increase attendance at some of the less popular services during Lent and Easter. New services at Easter include the Veneration of the Stations of the Cross, a service of Tenebrae and on Good Friday a walk of witness. The success of these initiatives has been encouraging.

Church Life

The Churchwardens acknowledge the debt owed to those members of the congregation who volunteer to help with the many tasks that need to be carried out if the Church is to function efficiently. Our church relies on so many people who carry out these duties without being noticed and often without being thanked except in generalisations. We are so fortunate to have groups and

individuals who give generously of their talents in so many ways that help to make our church buildings, its surroundings and its various services function and work so well. There are a number of organisations that enhance the worship and fellowship within the church.

Women's Fellowship

The Fellowship meets once a month in the Meeting Room. It has a full programme of speakers and outings. Members make valuable contributions to the running of the church and fund-raising activities.

Sunday Club

This club meets on the third Sunday each month with the children joining the Family Service on the first Sunday. Children from school age, or pre-school with a Carer, attend. Activities include art, craft, drama, gardening and outings that are all related to the church's year. Club members often contribute to the content of services. At present there are approximately a dozen members.



Members of the Sunday Club decorate the Easter Garden

Bell Ringers



We have a devoted team of 8 ringers for our tower of 5 bells.

The team, which is affiliated to the Essex Association of Change Ringers, ring the bells before most 10.30am Sunday services, at most weddings and some funerals.

Preparing to ring the bells before Sunday Mass

The Meeting Room

About ten years ago the Parochial Church Council foresaw that, when the current Rector of Black Notley retired, the diocesan authorities would look to dispose of the large, rambling, Georgian Rectory. The Rector and his wife had graciously opened their home to the parish which used the building as a meeting room and a venue for fund raising events. The grounds in particular were used as the site for the annual summer fete, a traditional event



with stalls, maypole dancing and entertainment by children from local schools and dance clubs. The cheese and wine party at the beginning of December marked the beginning of the Christmas season for many in the parish. This was followed by carol singing around the original part of the village. The need for an alternative venue in the future was apparent.

The meeting room was completed approximately five years ago and has been a boon to the parish and also to other Christian organisations in the area. We are rather proud of our meeting room and the difference it has made to parish life. It has enabled us to integrate the children into our worship so that we are able to have all age services. The feeling of fellowship has been enhanced through the serving of refreshments after services and also concerts for fund raising. It is now difficult to remember what life was like before it was built.

Parishioners enjoy a parish lunch in the Meeting Room after the Patronal Festival



Financial Policy

The Parochial Church Council recognises the good fortune of St. Peter & St. Paul, Black Notley, in respect of its financial situation. We give thanks to God for all his good mercies.

Thanks to a generous and substantial legacy, from a former parishioner, the PCC has been able to maintain the church in an excellent state of repair given the age of the building. This good fortune was instrumental in the building of the meeting room which has become an integral part of parish life and also a boon to other church organisations in the area. It is not used for private functions.

The Parochial Church Council is aware of its responsibility and is committed to maintaining the capital sum invested for the benefit of future generations, not only of Black Notley, but also the wider community, both here and abroad.

The income from this legacy, which is invested, also enables us to meet our contribution to the Family Purse and support additional charitable giving. It is our intention that the capital sum invested should not be dissipated on unnecessary expenditure. We aim to live within the constraints of our budget.

The Parochial Church Council understands the necessity of maximising income from all available means.

To this end the Treasurer, Churchwardens and Secretary promote the use of Gift Aid. In recent years this has seen a significant increase in the amount of tax reclaimed through this scheme. However, there is always room for improvement and encouragement is given to all parishioners to review their giving on an annual basis, with a reminder that we are only returning to God some of the gifts that He has given to us. In addition there are a number of fund raising events throughout the year but the congregation is warned that income from these events should not be relied on to meet expenditure.

The Parochial Church Council aims to maintain our giving at 10% of our disposable income in line with the 5 Marks of Mission.

We support a number of charities through the year, notably Christian Aid, two hospices and USPG. We currently exceed our aim of giving 10% of disposable income by way of mission payments.

The Parochial Church Council aims to meet its contribution to the Family purse in full and where possible exceed the total with ex-gratia payments.

We regularly achieve this aim.

A set of accounts for 2007 is available at the back of this profile under appendix 'A'. A full set of accounts can be provided on request.

Our Vision

Our previous priest, Fr. Lex Morrison was with us for nearly a quarter of a century. Although an Australian he embodied all that was best from the tradition of the archetypal country vicar. A true Pastor he was the shepherd of his flock right up until his death. Because of his ministry many were drawn to the Church. However, the PCC recognises that the time is now right to move forward and expand our ministry to children, building on the foundations that have been laid since the opening of the Church Meeting Room. We believe that this new and exciting venture offers the opportunity to do this. To achieve this while maintaining the traditions that made it possible is, of course, the challenge which faces many parishes.

Rector, Priest, Vicar, Pastor, Minister, Parson, whatever term you like to use we hope that the description you will come to recognise is "Friend". Ask fifty different parishioners for their idea of the ideal parish priest and no doubt you will receive fifty different descriptions. We believe that our priest should be able to treat the Sacraments of the church with the awe and reverence that they deserve. We believe that our priest should be able to lead us in humble and contrite prayer, teaching us devotion to God and the beauty of service to others. As it says in our order of service:

Our Lord Jesus Christ said "the greatest of the commandments is this. To love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength and with all your mind. The second is this, to love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

This is our vision.