

Part of the Benefice with Christ Church, Shaw

I had the opportunity to go up into the Bell tower just recently and it was a reminder to me of just how long St Michael's church has been part of this community. The spiral stone steps are challenging for anyone with feet of anything larger than "small" I would suggest and it is evident that health and safety regulations have moved on a long way from when the tower was built in the 1450s. Looking after historic buildings is a privilege and a challenge of course! Whilst church is a body of people coming together in faith as we worship it is also in our case a grade 2\* Listed building that needs looking after so that future generations are also able to gather together. We were fortunate a few years ago to have been left a legacy which means that we are now able to finance a complete re-decoration of the church. This means that since Easter Sunday the church building has been closed to visitors as we now have scaffolding in place to facilitate that work. All our Sunday morning services are therefore being held in Christ Church, Shaw although we are using the church hall for our mid-week services and Sunday evening prayer times.

Throughout 2016 we had the services of a children's and family worker giving us two days per week on a voluntary basis which enabled increased opportunities for meeting with children in the schools and using our church hall for a small youth group on a Sunday evening. Sadly, her time with us has now finished but it was great to see how that dedicated support could make such a difference. Holiday Club for primary aged children which was run in the summer holiday over four days in Shaw school was very popular and we shall be running one again this summer along similar lines.

As well as looking after our children and families we aim to support the older members of our community, the vulnerable and the lonely. We have a team of visitors (all with DBS) who are able to meet with people for a chat on a regular basis but we do need to know who these individuals are so please let us know of those who might appreciate a visit so that we can try and make suitable contact.

As always we continue to give thanks for the committed team of volunteers who cut the grass in our churchyard, decorate the church with amazing floral displays, and who keep the church clean. Many of them are regular members of the church community but others are simply Atworth people who are willing to help out. We are grateful to all of them.

Over the year we welcome many people through the door whether it be for a regular Sunday morning service, festival times such as Christmas and Easter, and for the key moments in life such as weddings, Baptisms and funerals. Both Churchfields and Stonar schools hold services in church throughout the year. Harvest supper and other social events are open to anyone as we enjoy one another's company. The church is generally open every day of the year and we are glad to provide a place of stillness for quiet reflection in what can often be a busy world. Everyone is welcome.

Shona Hoad (Vicar)