

St. John the Baptist, Tiffield - Report to the Parish Council 2019

In the last year we have appointed a new Rector to our benefice, Rev'd Canon Káren Jongman. She is a part-time minister who covers the churches in Tiffield, Gayton, Cold Higham and Pattishall so there have been some changes to our regular service pattern meaning we only have 2 regular monthly Sunday services instead of the previous 3.

In Tiffield we have a small group of regular worshippers supplemented by others who come for special services or to read the lesson in our services. The average age of our "regulars" is trending upwards, which is common in many small rural churches.

Rev'd Káren has been giving attention to building relationships with the 3 village schools in the benefice and leads regular collective worship in each of them. The school in Tiffield makes use of the church for special services and events. We don't see many young faces in church on Sundays, though!

We open the church between 10 and 5 on Saturday and Sunday and hope that people will come and view the interior of this ancient building and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere regardless of whether they have a faith.

After the December carol service the church was broken into requiring repairs to a leaded light window. Nothing was stolen and the damage was distressing but has now been professionally repaired.

By using some specific donations and church funds we have successfully upgraded the toilet in the Church / Reading room to make it usable by disabled people. In combination with the previously upgraded kitchen we hope that these changes will encourage local organisations to use this facility.

We very much appreciate the support we get from the local community, for the annual Open Gardens event, Chef's Challenge aka Safari Supper, and the welcome sponsorship we have received for the church floodlighting which allows this wonderful building to be enjoyed even during the hours of darkness. This fundraising support means that generally we manage to cover our annual operating costs but not the cost of major repairs.

The 5-yearly inspection of the church building showed the need for substantial repair works. Even if we focus only on the most pressing issues our task in the coming year is to find a way of funding repairs to the roofing and gutters. The gates and paths from the street to the church are also in poor condition. We will be seeking grant support for the essential works (estimated in the range £70k - £100k) but we expect we will also have to make a substantial contribution, possibly beyond the church's financial reserves.

We see ourselves as custodians of the long church heritage we have inherited but recognise our significant challenge to retain this historic place of worship in our village. We would be interested to hear from anybody in the village who has ideas about how we can make the church more attractive to new (or returning) worshippers.