

## Church report for Parish Council AGM

This year has seen the final handover of Skeffling Church and work has begun on the restoration. Under the terms and conditions of the handover it may eventually be possible to use the church for occasional services, so this was an unexpected bonus. All Saints now remains responsible only for the open graveyard, and acts as a key holder for the building.

Over many years we have enjoyed close contact and working practices with the Methodist Church, which meant that we have had regular Methodist services in our building. However due to financial constraints and cutting the number of ministers in the South Holderness Circuit, they have had to withdraw this ministry and do not support any Methodist activity in the village. The full time Methodist minister in Withernsea has now retired and has not been replaced.

The disruption of the pandemic continues to affect us, but we have to move forward under different conditions and circumstances.

South Holderness currently has only two paid members of clergy as this is all South Holderness is able to pay the Diocese of York for. ( It costs the diocese more than £200,000 a year to put four clergy into South Holderness. Some of this money is used for pensions and housing as well as salary) This does have an impact on funerals, weddings and services. We are now allocated one communion service, with a priest present, every six weeks on a rota and this applies right across the South Holderness Deanery.

The main expenditure of a local church such as All Saints revolves around the cost of insurance and the cost of support for salaried clergy. The maintenance of a listed building is always a headache, but funds can sometimes be accessed towards this. There has been discussion with the archdeacon of the East Riding, the diocesan buildings officer, Keith Halliday, the churchwardens and the clergy, about re-ordering the church building to make for a more flexible space.

It is now two years since we started our FareShare operation. This was because we were facing closure and could not meet costs. It has been successful in producing an operating surplus covering some of the insurance costs, and has kept us open for worship, funerals and weddings.

We also believe it is a worthwhile enterprise, providing a valuable economical weekly shopping experience for those with limited means or transport. By accessing food that would otherwise be wasted, it is also a statement of our principles as a Christian organisation that we use resources responsibly.

We are always open to offers of help and volunteering to sustain this operation. In this way, members are able to get a break and we can cover illness in the long term. The use of volunteers and the availability of training opportunities can provide a work reference for those looking for work.

At FareShare on Fridays we also provide free hospitality at lunchtime for anyone in the parish, or local vicinity, who wishes to avail themselves of this. Some people make a donation towards costs. As a Christian organisation it is important for us to be inclusive in this respect and this is funded largely through our own membership and members from other churches. We can also operate as a food bank if required, but usually only do this in short term emergencies. This part of the service is confidential. The reason we invite everyone to use FareShare, on the principle of preventing waste, is so that people are not identified as needing help or experiencing poverty because everyone is eligible to use it. This is not understood by many people in our community.

We are also supported financially through wedding and funeral fees, that go straight to York for the ministry, and by the fact that people have been very generous with funeral collections; this helps us to pay costs. The harvest auction also contributes towards a substantial amount of our running costs.

In the last twelve months we have caught up with weddings previously postponed due to the pandemic. Sadly, we have also experienced a high number of funerals. But the importance of maintaining a building large enough, and suitable enough, to accommodate large numbers of villagers wishing to support families in grief, and pay their respects to the deceased, cannot be underestimated.

As a church in the South Holderness Deanery we have always been at the forefront of activity that is family orientated. Some of this activity- such as the breakfast service and the Open the Book provision for collective worship in the school, has been badly affected by the pandemic. We are beginning to pick up the threads and move forward. This year has seen the beginnings of a discussion group which began last May to answer questions from the Diocese of York. This group encourages people to explore confirmation, among other things.

Last September Reverend Philip West ( a retired "house for duty" priest ) put out a request for a church to host "Christmas Live" which he had previously done outdoors in Sheffield. (In Sheffield "Christmas Live" has been running for twenty five years) Easington and Ottringham, out of twenty three churches, were the only ones to offer to host this. Ottringham were happy for us to try it out, on this occasion, for the first time. We were really pleased at the response from animal owners, the Friends of the school, the Duke of Edinburgh and youth club volunteers, and also from people with professional production skills. Following this event we hosted refreshments in the church. This was a highly successful community enterprise, with free access for all, in the season of good will, and we were extremely proud to be part of something starting in this area that will probably set the scene for future productions.

Many churches in rural areas are in serious decline with ageing congregations. This leads to closure as much as lack of finance. Easington now has several active younger members. This is due to a combination of people moving into the village and the provision of worship/ learning opportunities that are more suited to a younger age group. We will be able to move forward into the next year with a healthier demographic, and now look forward to building on firmer foundations.

