

Clergy Report for Annual Parochial Church Meeting
St. Botolph, Saxilby
by Revd Jane Foster-Smith

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1.3-6

I was licensed as Priest-in-Charge on Monday 4th July 2023, and received a wonderfully kind and generous welcome. I've enjoyed meeting congregation members and the wider community, discerning how best to develop our ministry and mission here in a way that encourages sustainability and growth, both in number (especially focusing on the younger generations) and in faith, hope and love. In other words, reflecting on the quote from Paul's letter to the Philippians, above, we have been working out together how we move forward as partner in the gospel. The PCCs across the Saxilby group are experimenting with a new pattern of governance that is collaborative and sustainable. We meet quarterly, first as the three PCCs doing business together, then in separate parish PCC groups. This will help us to learn from each other and support one another's churches, and particularly helps St. Botolph's to fulfil its calling as a Type 2 church.

Unfortunately, the death of my eldest son in November meant that I missed the fruits of the planning for advent and Christmas, but I am grateful for everyone who stood in for me during my compassionate leave, and especially to Revd Joan Vickers, Revd Mark Briscoe and our two Church Wardens, Shirley and David, who have been a huge support. I am being sustained through this difficult period by a wave of prayer and understanding. When I will begin my role in Gainsborough is still to be decided.

Partnering I the gospel with you at St. Botolph's has been a joy. We are a vibrant church full of people with incredible gifts. My goal since arriving has been to celebrate those gifts, and to provide support and training to equip and empower everyone seeking to live out their unique vocation. We have four candidates on the deanery 'to love and serve the Lord' course which began in March 2024. My focus in the coming year will be to develop lay ministry teams that can provide further support and training, following safer recruitment policies, so that we provide the best worship, service to the community and pastoral care possible.

We are building a good relationship with the new Headteacher at Saxilby Primary School. Working alongside our committed Foundation Governor, Jonathan Wainwright, we will explore what it means to be school and church together, partnering in the gospel to bless the whole community. It's been a delight to become part of the Messy Church team and to get to know the Messy Church congregation. From this congregation we had five confirmation candidates and, after running classes from September 2023, we had the joy of seeing four of them confirmed by Bishop David in March 2024. It was a joy to bring these two congregations together at Palm Sunday and the Good Friday Walk of Witness.

We have continued to minister in the local community through baptisms, weddings and funerals, but I personally will do my very first baptism at St. Botolph's on Sunday 12th May

2024. Revd Joan has done the bulk of the funeral ministry as I take a short break to deal with my own grief, and we have been blessed by her continued ministry among us and the ministry of our retired clergy, Revd. George Parrot, Revd. Ian Stockton and Ven. Geoffrey Arrand who provide cover for some Thursday and Sunday services. I am indebted to these partner in the gospel among us.

We are a well-resourced church. It's a delight to see the church hall in full use, serving the local community. A special thanks to Shirley Davenport who manages this. It's also a delight to receive the Foss Focus every month, with a special thanks to editor, David Turner. We are also a generous church, raising money for different charities each month through our Wednesday coffee mornings. Our generosity has also been seen in the hours of volunteering that have been at the heart of our church life, enabling moments of joyful connection with the local community to take place, from the Big Breakfast, book sales and Christmas fayre, to the special services such as Remembrance, torchlight parade, Mothering Sunday, Walk of Witness, to name but a few.

I am aware that there are so many people to thank for making our church life joyful and fulfilling. Behind the scenes there is a lot of hard work. We cannot thank enough our Church Wardens and deputy Church Wardens, our PCC treasurer, Colin Knowles and secretary, Karen Baty, our PCC, our lay ministers, servers, bellringers, organist, choir, cleaners and readers, flower arrangers, vergers and sidespeople, refreshments teams, helpers with maintenance and churchyard tidy-uppers... We also mustn't forget our Prayer Warriors regularly praying for those in need.

I look forward to continuing in partnership in the gospel together for many years to come, confident that he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion.

Revd Jane Foster-Smith

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