

Ashton Keynes Parish Profile August 2013

Holy Cross Church – alive and well in a village

Ashton Keynes is a popular, attractive and thriving village community. It is home to about 1400 villagers. With a diverse congregation and strong links to the school and wider community, Holy Cross Church lies at the heart of the life of this vibrant village.

To achieve this standing, the church, its congregation and its leaders embarked on a journey of change over recent years with two main priorities:

1. For Holy Cross Church to be alive in the village
2. To grow the faith of all in the village

These priorities have guided many of the decisions taken as well as programmes and projects which have been implemented over the last few years. These new initiatives have resulted in positive energy and momentum developing around Holy Cross in the Ashton Keynes community.



The former NSM curate, now Assistant Minister of the Upper Thames Group has been a driving force in reinvigorating the church in the village over the last few years. Stronger links have been forged with the local CofE school through **Open the Book** assemblies, through encouraging involvement from the school children at Holy Cross services, Easter and Pentecost experiences and through class and other visits to the church and regular end of term services. Further, the Head Teacher is highly supportive and very keen for the church to continue its active role in the school. The school, through the church is developing a link with a school in Uganda.

In 2011, Holy Cross launched **Messy Church** – held every 3rd Sunday of the month at 4pm in the School hall – to great success. With a Bible story, song, arts and crafts, a short worship session followed by a communal supper for all, Messy Church attracts many families and helpers of all ages and has grown to become Holy Cross' largest congregation of the month, usually around 50 adults and children. It is also financially self sustaining.



While Messy Church has been a focus on developing the faith of younger villagers, the older members of the church remain active as well. The Holy Cross congregation take part in group based activities in Cricklade, such as Lent Groups, a home group for seniors and Alpha courses which are held when there is sufficient interest. Over several years, many members of the congregation have enjoyed weekends away at Lee Abbey which have brought the congregation closer together.

Our need to connect with the village has led to new initiatives such as Beer and Carols in the pub, Jubilee Service and Beacon on the tower to celebrate the Queen's diamond jubilee. Our Big Services (Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest, Christingle, Christmas) are very well attended by villagers often with participation by the school and the village choir. Our recent Festival of Crosses drew many in from the village. The village has a sense that there is a need to share what we have with others locally (eg Swindon Foodbank) and globally (projects are supported in Kenya & Uganda)



Holy Cross has seen the composition of the PCC change over this time, with a more diverse age range in the members and better representing all facets of our congregation. Among the PCC sub committees there is an Event and Outreach committee that is at the heart of many village events. There is also a **leadership team** in place to explore wider spiritual possibilities for the church and village, as well as to support the clergy in setting and implementing future priorities.



There is a variety of worship to appeal to a wide cross section of people.

There are two LLMs and two LLM emeriti who live in the village.

There is a team of laity who set up and welcome those who come and provide tea and coffee after services.

The Church building is situated on the edge of the village, with a footpath from the High Road along the Thames. Early Christian worship on the church site dates back to Saxon times and Holy Cross Church itself was founded in the 12th century. The church has been enlarged, altered and renovated over the last 900 years, ultimately evolving now to the only Grade 1 listed building in Ashton Keynes. The church is the hub of village history and for centuries has played its role in community worship, baptisms, weddings and funerals. Today, Holy Cross plays host not only to 'rites of passage', for example in 2012 there were 11 baptisms, 18 funerals and six weddings, but also to events such as village choir concerts, Jubilee celebrations, singing workshops and organ recitals. In recent years, community fundraising has taken place to refurbish its six bells, to install an indoor toilet and to create an off road car park.



In 2012, a sub-committee of the PCC was launched called **Friends of Holy Cross**. The Friends of Holy Cross aim to maintain, preserve and improve the church building and its surroundings for the benefit of the community by raising money through annual donations and through fundraising events. This community project is targeted at all villagers, whether part of the Holy Cross congregation or not, and is there to help ensure that Holy Cross Church is enjoyed by future generations and the building retains its central place in village life.

Although we have made significant progress towards our two guiding priorities, we realise there is still much work to be done to grow the Christian presence in the village and the congregation of Holy Cross and would welcome the support and added enthusiasm of the new vicar.

Ashton Keynes Village – a friendly, active place to live

The village of Ashton Keynes is an active village; the population is catered for in a variety of clubs and activities. In addition to tennis, cricket, badminton and football, there is Golden Years, the WI, Mothers and Toddlers, an Art Group, Book Groups, Wine tasting Groups, Short Mat Bowls and monthly Village Cinema nights in the Village Hall showing recent films. There are also junior cricket and football teams which are very popular and well supported by the village. The village is twinned with Grandchamps de Fontaine near Nantes, France and there are frequent visits between the two locations.

The village has strong musical talent and there is a village choir as well as a range of singing and musical groups. Every three years, the village stages a music festival in which many villagers take part. The next festival is expected to take place in 2014.

In terms of location, the village is set in an attractive conservation area at the head of the infant Thames, has repeatedly won 'Best Kept Village of the Year' and was the Southwest regional winner of the Calor Gas 'Village of the Year' in 2009. Ashton Keynes is just off the A419 and provides easy access to the M5 north and the M4 Corridor. Villagers of working age commute to work in the surrounding towns and cities, including London as there are also good train links direct into the Capital.

The village benefits from several amenities including;

- an excellent Church of England Primary School with c180 children mainly from Ashton Keynes and The Leigh but attracts children from surrounding villages too. It has a very positive Christian ethos and was rated as outstanding in the recent SIAS inspection. The school website is www.akps.org.uk.
- a pre-school meeting daily in the Village Hall for 3 to 5 year olds
- a monthly magazine organised and edited by church members and distributed to most households in the village.
- a village shop, which is an annexe to the Village Hall and located on the High Road. For the last two years it has been a Community shop and run by committee. It provides a good range of groceries and licensed drinks.
- a Post Office and newsagent in Fore Street.
- a range of small businesses including those on a small industrial estate operating on the edge of the village as well as the White Hart pub, Ellison's garage & coach hire, Kirkland nursery, IT support, a variety of tradesmen and hairdressers.
- the village has an active 'home link' scheme to provide local support.
- a good sized village hall located in the centre of the village which also houses the doctor's surgery.
- a large playing field in the centre of the village used regularly by the village youth football teams. This playing field also has two areas of play equipment.
- a large pavilion and playing field known as the 'Bradstone' located on the edge of the village is used by the Senior football team and Senior and Junior Cricket teams. The Bradstone plays host to the annual village Bonfire Night organised by the Friends of Ashton Keynes School
- 3 hard tennis courts belonging to the Village Tennis Club.
- is on a rural bus route to Swindon and Cirencester and has a weekly visit from the Wiltshire Library bus.
- a website – www.ashtonkeynes.org.uk

