

**Cambridge Judge Business School**

**REACH Ely Case Study Series**

Reimagining Churches as Community Assets  
for the Common Good

# ST PETER CARLTON



*Text, design, and photography*

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**REACH Ely (Reimagining Churches as  
Community Assets for the Common Good)**  
is a multi-partner research project that  
aims to help communities make fuller use  
of their churches.

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*The project is implemented by*

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and Historic England*

**[www.reachely.org](http://www.reachely.org)**

The challenges facing church communities and their buildings have been extensively studied in the light of declining church attendance in the United Kingdom over several decades. REACH Ely aims to address the less-well-understood opportunities for churches to engage and reconnect with the 97.7 per cent of the local communities in the Diocese of Ely who do not attend their parish churches.

With the absence of universal determinants of success and failure of churches in the community engagement context, the REACH Ely project will provide an understanding of the relationship between communities and wider use of church buildings as well as the contribution that churches make to the common good. The project will determine community values, needs and opportunities that can be used in the most effective way to ensure a win-win outcome for communities and sustainable future of church buildings.

The **case study series** is based on in-depth interviews and observations about church building use with informants from a subset of deaneries and parishes in the Diocese of Ely, supplemented with secondary information about the communities they represent. The purpose of the case study is to unearth various church experiences in renovating and envisioning their buildings as missional and social spaces, engaging with local and wider communities, addressing current challenges, and learning from their practice.

The **Glossary** is a separate document that accompanies the case study series. It is available as a download from the project's website [www.reachely.org](http://www.reachely.org)

*On the cover: Handmade model of St Peter holding Carlton church in his arm.*

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# ST PETER CARLTON

**Church Category:** Rural

**Deanery:** Fordham & Quy

**Address:** Church Road, Green Rd,

Newmarket CB8 9LA

**Raddesley Group website:** [www.raddesley.com](http://www.raddesley.com)



## Summary

**Buildings and Artefacts:** Raddesley Group of Parishes; Grade II\* listed building; Early English style origins; Double bell-cote with no tower; Repaired organ; No kitchen and facilities; Spacious churchyard; Church open 24 hours

**Congregation to Population Ratio:** 28 / 191

**Fundraising:** Grants and local charities; Safari Suppers; Quiz nights; Concerts

**Income Generation:** Parish giving via direct debit

**Communications:** Raddesley Group website and monthly newsletter; Direct email; Village website

**Community Engagement:** The Carlton Project; The Big Sleep; Parish Council meetings in the church; Church's contribution to village defibrillator; The Big Clean; Safari Suppers; Concerts; Messy Church; Public talks; Tea parties; Post-service refreshments; Integration to village activities; Community volunteers.

# ROOTS



## Profile

Standing close to the Cambridge-Suffolk border, Carlton (or Carlton cum Willingham) is a small rural village in South Cambridgeshire. The village is situated eight miles from Newmarket, its post town, and five miles south-east from the settlements of Six-mile Bottom and Dullingham. The nearest village is Brinkley. According to the 2001 census, Carlton had a resident population of 166 in some 66 households.

The village has no public amenities apart from the parish church of St Peter. Carlton is in the catchment area of Burrough Green Primary School and Linton Village College. The A11 road runs to the west of the village, connecting with the A14, and routes to the east and west.

## Building

Parish church dedicated to St. Peter is a small and ancient Grade II\* listed building located at the southern end of the village. The church is believed to have 12th century origins but dates largely from the 14th and 15th centuries.

The building, in the Early English style, is constructed from rubble and field stones repaired in limestone with a white-washed interior. The church is roofed with slate and tiles and is of a single tie-beam and kingpost construction. There is no tower but medieval bells are set in the double bell-cote. The nave with pews is small; and the c. 15th century chancel with no aisles or adornment save for a small Victorian half-timbered porch on the south wall. The chancel is large by comparison with the rest of the building with crenelated capitals

at the top of the responds and heads on either side of the arch. A medieval rood screen has been moved to the west end of the nave. There is an old priest's door in the south wall, which has been blocked up. The west wall of the nave was rebuilt c. 1885.

At present there is no water or drainage supplies on site. At least one service is generally held in the church every month which increases to two services between the seasons of Spring through until Autumn. These are normally evensongs and a monthly midweek Holy Communion service on the first Thursday morning of the month. Sadly, the usual small size of the congregation at the latter means that its difficult to justify the cost of heating the church for these services during the winter months. However, other services continue during that season, notably on Remembrance Sunday, Christmas Day and an evensong during February.

Fundraising has been undertaken to raise funds towards the organ repair (*See Fundraising*). There are problems with damp within the church and services are not regularly held during the winter months because of this and the cost of heating. The PCC is keen to add a food preparation area within the church as well as WC facilities in a separate building.

The well-kept churchyard, with horse chestnut trees around the north and east sides, is in good condition. A marquee has previously been erected in the churchyard to accommodate several large funerals, with the service relayed via speakers and screens. St Peter Carlton can accommodate 100 worshippers. The church remains open 24 hours a day.





*Top: View of St Peter's church with the bell turret. Middle: North side of the church building; South entrance to the church.  
Bottom: Carlton village surroundings.*



“We are aware that people do come into the church for reflection time or personal time. I’ve been in here and found people in the church just wanting to spend a quiet time, but you don’t ask them unless they want to tell you. Maybe it’s because of our rural environment that we’re able to do that. Certainly, a lot of urban churches would not be able to do that.”

**Stephen Roberts**  
Churchwarden

### **Artefacts**

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There is a monument to a notable local resident Sir Thomas Elliott, a scholar, diplomat and author, who died in 1546. Another monument in the chancel recalls a former vicar and his wife, whose seven children all died in infancy. The pulpit dates from the 17th century. The 15th century font is rather more unusual, with carvings of shields in the north and south faces of the octagonal bowl containing symbols of the Resurrection: pairs of hands and feet surrounding a small heart. A piece of medieval glass remains in the westernmost window of the south wall. As with many other churches, a number of artefacts were destroyed during the English Civil War.

A large gargoyle that was dug up by a farmer in a local field is on display in the churchyard.

At the end 2019, after being unusable for over 12 months, the organ was restored. It is an instrument of historic interest, built by G.M. Holdich c. 1860, and is now back into full working order.



*Clockwise: View of the chancel with the East window; View of the nave from the chancel; Sitting arrangement in the nave.*





1st row: View from the nave towards West window; Church roof and bell-cote. 2nd row: View of the East window from the churchyard. 3rd row: South wall with pews and entrance door; Pulpit with pews. 4th row: Fragment of stained glass; Wooden pews and church entrance.



# RUNNING

## Team

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The church is a member of the Raddesley Group of Parishes, which comprises six parishes, and shares a vicar across the benefice. The other five churches are at Brinkley, Burrough Green, Dullingham, Stetchworth, and Westley Waterless. St Peter Carlton is the smallest church in the benefice. The vicar who holds a 0.5 post for the benefice is supported by a voluntary parish administrator and the churchwardens and PCC's of each church.

Carlton PCC meets both in the church as well as in the homes of PCC members.

## Religious Services

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A communion service is held on the first Thursday of every month in the summer months. An Evensong service is held every other month, a number of which are choral. There are approximately 12 services organised in the church every year, which includes Remembrance. There are regular services at the other churches within the benefice. Refreshments are organised as afterservice social events, except on Remembrance Day. Tables are set up in the church, and coffee, biscuits, and water are brought into the church, as there are no facilities in the building.

In 2018, 130 people attended a lay-led service on Christmas Day. Twice a year, a choral evensong draws around 50 worshippers. A service is held during the afternoon on Remembrance Sunday, while other churches in the benefice hold theirs at 11 a.m. Worship services at Carlton church are often accompanied with music and singing (*See Communications*). A 'sing along' Carols and Mince Pies service was held in 2019 to celebrate the restoration of the organ.

## Parish Share

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In 2019, parish share expenditure was £4,443, and is £4,600 in 2020.

### Fundraising

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**Grants and local charities.** Carlton PCC plays an active role in fundraising. Grants have been applied for to the Pilgrim Trust for the organ renovation (£3,000 of the £7,000 needed was awarded). Local charities are another potential source of fundraising, for example, the Charitable Trust provided for in the Local Government Act for funding from local industries (in this case, the nearby windfarm has up to £10,000 available for local causes).

**Fundraising events** such as Safari Suppers, quiz nights, The Big Sleep (*See Community & Events*), and concerts raise funds for the church. The 2020 Raddesley Group calendar raised funds for the continuing mission of the churches within the benefice.

**Church fabric.** The church additionally is attempting to undertake to act on approximately £21,000 of repair work to the fabric of the church building.

### Income Generation

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**Parish giving** produces income through direct debits (£4,584 in 2018). All of those who contribute by direct debit are churchgoers, but only about one third are regulars. The majority attend church at Christmas, Easter, and occasionally Evensong.

The damp problem, the cost of heating the space in the winter months, and lack of WC and kitchen facilities means that renting is not a viable option.



## Communications

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The church shares a **website** with the other churches in the Raddesley group.

**Direct email.** Stephen Roberts, a churchwarden and former police officer, is also the chair of the Parish Council. He holds a Carlton community email list which is regularly reviewed in order to abide by Data Protection law. A week before the date of a service, he sends out a group email to residents of the village reminding them of the date and time.

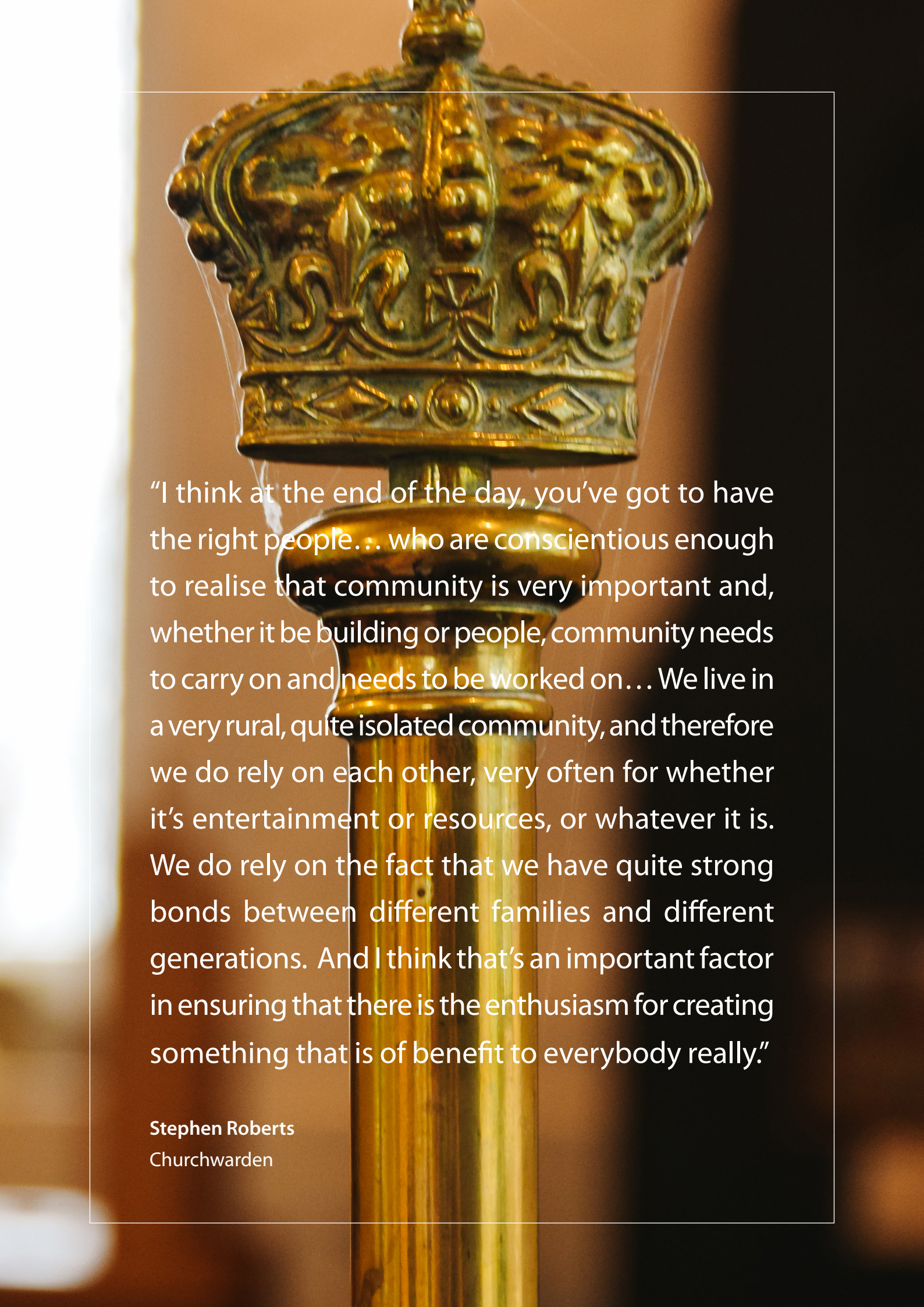
When St Peter Carlton holds a choral evensong, the churchwarden contacts potential choir members a few weeks beforehand and provides them with details of the music to be sung together with YouTube links for practice purposes. Some singers live within the benefice whilst others would normally attend neighbouring churches. Other than a brief run-through of items an hour before the service starts, there are no prior rehearsals, so singers are expected to individually learn the music beforehand. By reaching out to the musical skills of people living in the surrounding area, St Peter's is able to provide a service which is now very rarely done in smaller rural churches.

"I find that email to individuals is a more efficient mechanism for motivating people than relying on the church noticeboard or a village magazine... I send out lots of information by email, whether it be about a road closure, or whether it be a piece of lost property."

**Stephen Roberts**  
Churchwarden

In addition, the churchwarden occasionally receives emails from people doing research into their family history. By helping to put them in contact with local community members, he managed to connect distant family relatives.

A monthly **newsletter** *The Village Voice* is published by four parishes within the benefice and includes an article by the vicar and details of services. There is a **village website**, although this has not been updated recently.



“I think at the end of the day, you’ve got to have the right people... who are conscientious enough to realise that community is very important and, whether it be building or people, community needs to carry on and needs to be worked on... We live in a very rural, quite isolated community, and therefore we do rely on each other, very often for whether it’s entertainment or resources, or whatever it is. We do rely on the fact that we have quite strong bonds between different families and different generations. And I think that’s an important factor in ensuring that there is the enthusiasm for creating something that is of benefit to everybody really.”

**Stephen Roberts**  
Churchwarden



# REACH

## Community

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**The Carlton Project.** Due to the lack of kitchen and WC facilities in the church, St Peter's is planning a community space – a parish room – located within the churchyard and very close to the church. For this purpose, the Carlton Project has a committee of people (action group) made up of representatives from the PCC as well as from the parish council, and is very much a joint project. The committee was formed at the end of 2019 and have been active making plans. In March 2020, the committee is planning an informal meeting with the Carlton community to present the project and receive feedback.

**The Big Sleep** was a homelessness event for which a group of village residents raised money for homeless people by sleeping in the church overnight. In 2017, the event in Carlton raised just over £3,000. Six ladies undertook the initiative, five of whom live in the parish of Carlton, and the other was a friend living in a neighbouring village. Participants had their own individual online 'Just Giving' webpages to approach their family, friends and acquaintances asking for donations. Additionally, the Carlton churchwarden circulated the fundraising event via the community email group list. *'I attached links to the participants' individual 'Just Giving' webpages which had links on it to these individual pages. Some people of course then donated money to more than one person! Both participants and people donating money felt that it was a very worthwhile achievement,'* says Mr Roberts.

**Church as community building.** Carlton PCC is active in fundraising and organising social events. There is overlap between the members of the PCC and the Parish Council, which meets on a quarterly basis in the church. Hence, the community think of the church as a community building and not simply a religious one. This encourages a feeling of part-ownership of the building, which is the sole communal space within the village.

**Village Defibrillator.** The Parish Council appealed for funds for a village defibrillator and St Peter's church made a substantial contribution towards the local community's efforts to acquire a defibrillator. The device was installed in a village red telephone box. The training session for the device and CPR was held in the church and was very well attended. In February 2018, the defibrillator was used by a family resident in Carlton.



## Events

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**The Big Clean** is an annual event that involves a deep clean of the building and its artefacts. The churchyard is also tidied, and external maintenance, such as cleaning gutters, is undertaken. There are usually 15 or 16 volunteers. At least half of these are not regular churchgoers.

**Safari Suppers.** These events, where a four-course meal is held in different houses within the village, raise funds for the church.

**Choral evensongs and concerts.** Full choral evensong is arranged twice a year and is very well attended. A large number of singers (30 people) from the local area perform in the church. Other concerts and talks are arranged throughout the year. A choir group Accorde from Cambridge visited St Peter's to give two concerts.

**Messy Church.** There are very few children living in the village, but several attend the Messy Church organised by the benefice, held at different times throughout the year, for fun, food, crafts, games, songs and worship. These do not take place in Carlton but in village halls in nearby villages.

**Public talks.** St Peter Carlton provides a platform for its community to give public talks in the church. For example, two village residents gave presentations on their trips to Zambia to reflect on their separate voluntary services and explain what they had been doing, and the effect that these projects had on the local population.

**Tea parties** in the churchyard are organised for the whole community to celebrate special events such as Queen's 90th birthday and the marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

*Below: Carlton resident doing a presentation to other residents about her experiences in Tanzania whilst working with Voluntary Services Overseas; Outdoor party to celebrate the royal wedding.*



## Engagement

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**Focus on young people.** On the national Beacon of Light event to commemorate the end of the First World War, lighting the beacon was organised after the evening remembrance service, followed with a supper in the churchyard. St Peter's church specifically engaged with the younger people within the community who participated in this event: they carried the poppy wreath to the war memorial, then read out the names of the men named on it. Others then read poems in keeping with the occasion.

**Integration to village activities.** St Peter Carlton is well integrated into village activities, given the overlap between churchgoers, the parish council, and the lack of any other public meeting space.

**Community volunteers.** The activities and upkeep of the church are supported by local community volunteers. Being a small community, most people are known to everyone else. This is reinforced by women's groups within the village. A group of up to 20 ladies, including non-regular churchgoers, meet monthly as a Book Club, and planning for the activities within the parish takes place there. Village events are also planned during dog walking. The church and churchyard are the focal points of where this activity takes place. Additionally, during a recent three-year interregnum, the parish was run entirely by the churchwardens and the PCC. Notably, the annual clean-up and social events are organised by volunteers, not all of whom are churchgoers.

**Responsibility towards community.** The church is aware of its community thinking in its organisation of community-oriented events and in supporting the purchase of vital assets, such as the village defibrillator. The churchwarden runs the mailing list, which acts as a central hub for community information, not simply relating to church matters.

*Below: Big Sleep (Photos by Carlton church); Village defibrillator installed in the red telephone box (Photo by Timur Alexandrov).*







*Clockwise from top-left: Christmas day nativity story with children and adults; One of the two weddings taken place in the church in 2019; Outdoor party to celebrate the royal wedding; Wedding ceremony in the church; Big clean working party of over a dozen people (some are not regular churchgoers) participating in tidying up the churchyard and cleaning inside the church (September 2019) (Photos by Carlton church).*



# REFLECTIONS

## Challenges

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### Church building condition

The church has no damp course and the consequent dampness in the floor and walls, together with the cost of heating, makes use of the church difficult during the winter months. In addition, the damp conditions mean that food items cannot be left in the church on Health & Safety grounds. Renting out the space is currently unviable because of these issues.

### Lack of facilities

The church has no WC, water supply, or food preparation area, meaning that all refreshments have to be prepared offsite and brought into the church on each occasion, as well as the china on which to serve them. Again, this means that renting the building out to groups or individuals is not possible.

### Community attachment to church fixtures

The church is mindful of those who feel passionate about the pews but consideration is also being given regarding the additional space and opportunities, removal of them might create.

### Lack of space

Allied to the above point, there is very little room for people to move around during social events and drinks and food have to be relayed to people sitting in the pews.

### Lack of a public building in the village

Social events which cannot be housed in the church have to be held in people's houses (Safari Suppers) or in village halls in other locations.

### Few children in the community

As the number of children living in the village is small, the church does not hold specific children's activities. Activities such as Messy Church, soon to be FROGS (Friends of God) are run on a benefice basis in the larger villages and a monthly All Age Service is held in one of them.

### Asset management

Funds raised for improvements to the building have had to be diverted to the restoration of the organ, as this is required for services and worship.

### Grant applications

The PCC have had to be quite persistent in representing the church as a community asset in order to obtain grants.



“The fact that there is a community, a good community spirit inside the village, which I would consider to be good Christian principles... So whether or not people are active church-goers, you’re trying to promote an image of what is good in society and what society benefits from, in a small, isolated community like this. So you’re talking about the events and getting together and celebrating national events like royal weddings that people actually feel they want to come and participate in... The answer is to get people involved in the church by other means, by utilising the resources that it has here.”

**Stephen Roberts**  
Churchwarden



## Lessons Learned

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### **To be open church**

The church is an inclusive church, open 24 hours a day, allowing people to visit for periods of prayer and quiet reflection

### **To promote enthusiasm for attendance and worship**

By offering a well-sung service, using the newly restored historic organ, in a welcoming, intimate venue like Carlton Church, lifts people's spirits and promotes enthusiasm for worship.

### **To facilitate a 'user friendly' church**

To install food serving and WC facilities, the building initially requires maintenance to its structure as identified in the last quinquennial report. This will require the PCC to apply for local grant aid. Following on from this, a larger grant aid application would need to be made to enable the site to have WC, water, and food preparation facilities.

### **To foster community involvement**

St Peter Carlton puts on community events that are very well attended, such as the presentation by one of the PCC members about the research she had carried out into the lives of the soldiers listed on the village WWI memorial, most of whom were farm workers in the village.

### **To integrate the church and the community by communicating pro-actively**

The use of a village mailing list ensures that everyone is aware of what is going on in both the church and the community and this also encourages attendance at church events. Interpersonal contacts within the small community also help with communication about church events. Volunteers who are not regular churchgoers are happy to support the church both financially and with volunteer labour. This fosters a feeling of ownership of the building as part of village life. Contributions made by the church towards, for example, a defibrillator, create the sense of a two-way relationship.

### **To adapt the church building for more flexible and a wider use**

The PCC is keenly aware that work is needed to adapt the building for wider community use and is raising funds to allow this. The church is flexible with marquees to be erected in the churchyard and modern technology to be used to relay services when large numbers of visitors are expected at funerals, for example.

### **To be considerate to traditional members of the congregation**

The church is treading very carefully when it comes to introducing change that might upset the more traditional members of the congregation.

### **To foster collaboration links with other churches**

Having the vicar working with other churches in the benefice, collaboration between the churches is more easily achieved.







“Our medium-term aim is to make the building more ‘user friendly’ as a community space such as the introduction of food serving and WC facilities. This is supported by a large number of the population within the community irrespective of whether they are regular churchgoers. Many seem to exhibit ‘ownership’ of the building and wish it to be used for more community-based activities.”

**Stephen Roberts**  
Churchwarden

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