

Parish Reports 2020

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* **PARISH OF ST PAUL, WOKINGHAM**
* WITH ST NICHOLAS, EMMBROOK
* PARISH REPORTS 2020

Introductory Note

The Annual Report prepared with the Financial Statements for the Charity Commission contains information on many aspects of parish life, including all the PCC sub-committees. Parishioners are encouraged to read it in order to get a fuller picture of the life and work of the Parish in 2020. It is supplemented by the following reports.

# **Clergy Reviews**

## **The Rector’s Review of 2020**

2020 turned out to be a year like no other as news of a new virus in China slowly developed into something which changed everyone’s lives. It was a year in which rules tightened and relaxed repeatedly which makes a single narrative of the year difficult- at times we were getting back to something like normal life, at others we were barely able to leave the house for anything. For some months around April we were forbidden from even going into the Church building at all, and while the congregation dealt with that incredibly well it became clear that many members of the local community were grieving because they could not come into the building as they regularly did for prayer and reflection.

2020 ended with the most difficult single decision I have ever had to make as a priest- whether to keep the Church open for Christmas services, as we were legally allowed to, or whether it was better to shut the doors and stop people from gathering together. We decided in the end that keeping people safe, stopping the spread of the virus and giving up something we could legally do for the greater good of the community was more Christ-like. It was an impossibly hard decision, especially since we had not been able to meet together for Holy Week and Easter, but even those who thought that we should keep meeting were understanding of the decision and supportive in a wonderful way.

**Some snapshots of 2020**

Presiding at the Eucharist on my Grandparent’s dining room table in The Rectory study/ Bertie coming into his own as a correspondent, writing daily emails for much of Eastertide to keep people informed and to gather volunteers and to keep people’s spirits up when we could not meet together/ a Church and Churchyard full of students from The Holt waiting to light candles after the murder of Mr James Furlong, a teacher at the school, in Forbury Gardens in June 2020 and that sense of the Church as a focal place and a safe space to grieve, and the tables full of candles/ talking on Zoom to Johannes in Vaxjo and hearing how the crisis was being dealt with there and praying for each other/ giving communion to people in Church for the first time in six months/ Zoom Morning Prayer, often with a dozen people attending/ funerals in a local cemetery when only a handful of people were allowed to gather/ leaving candles on the church step so that they could be lit by those wanting to pray, and finding someone I didn’t know kneeling on the step deeply praying/ Bishop Olivia reciting Come holy ghost while the organist played the tune at Cara’s ordination as deacon in Reading Minster in September 2020/ recording assemblies for local Schools each week in my study…

And what would you add to the list?

**New tools in our toolkit**

The year has been defined by a deep well of willingness among the congregation and community of St Paul’s and St Nick’s- of making the best of things, of working within what we are allowed to do, of counting the good things and our reasons for thanksgiving. Under Peter Wells’ guidance and leadership we went from nothing to being able to livestream a complex service from St Paul’s Church combining live worship with pre-recorded material and we never missed a Sunday. We led for Churches Together and the Borough Council on supporting the staff and residents of Nursing and Care Homes when people were not allowed to visit and when the death rate in Homes was high. We took chocolates and flowers to local GP Surgeries and Schools. We organised the local community to send cards and letters and gifts of food and drink and soap to the RBH as the second wave of coronavirus peaked and hospital staff came close to exhaustion. We offered the Parish Rooms to the Wokingham Foodbank shortly after Christmas 2020 and they stayed for months because it made it so much easier to deliver their food parcels. People rang each other every week, and checked in on neighours, and applauded for the NHS, and shopped for each other, an noticed each other, and stood together.

We did so much which was good together- inspired by our call to be the Church in the community as Jesus was and is in the world, we made a difference to the world around us by trying to be like Jesus- generous, attentive, caring and kind.

**Overview and looking ahead**

As we moved into 2021 we were still in a tight lockdown- we could broadcast live services with a handful of people in the building with specific jobs. We were still leaning on each other and trying to serve those most in need in the community. And we were coming back over and over again to a sense that we need to be creative and thoughtful and prayerful about how we reopen and what we reopen and why we do things. It would be to miss a trick if we just go back to doing everything we did before March 2020 as if nothing has happened.

Something big has happened and we need to take that into account as we rebuild the life of the Church and its mission in the world. And that thing has done a lot to slow us down, to reflect and to throw us back onto our need of God, who is with us in everything, and calls us to serve as a direct and true response to the God we meet in worship. God calls us close and then he sends us out. How we balance those two forces—the draw towards the Trinity in the Eucharist and then the sending to find God in the world- is the challenge for 2021. God is more than up for the adventure. And we need to be so too, not fearful and hesitant but agile, responsive and prayerful, like (in a quote I love but cannot find any more) watchmen on the world’s frontier, listening for the first far drumbeats of Christ our God.

*Fr Richard Lamey*

**The Rev’d Cara Smart**

In July 2020 Cara Smart joined as a licensed lay worker, due to covid restrictions delaying her ordination. She had previously studied part-time at Ripon College Cuddesdon alongside being a children’s worker in her previous benefice. Cara and her family moved to Wokingham in August, and then she was ordained deacon in Reading Minster on 26th September. The ordination service itself was livestreamed as numbers were limited due to covid, and Cara was ordained by Bishop Olivia alongside 3 other deacons, before celebrating with take-away crepes from Wokingham’s Joy Café!

Following ordination, Cara has been involved across the parish as Sunday services restarted, stopped and restarted once more, funerals, baptisms, getting to know the local schools with pre-recorded assemblies and is enjoying finding her way around the parish and hearing everyone’s stories. She is due to be ordained Priest in June 2021.

*Cara Smart*

Parish Life

## **St Nicholas’ Pro-Wardens’ Report**

Well, what a year 2020 was! We could never have imagined it. Inevitably it had its sadnesses but it was also a year of pulling together and community supporting each other and having time to reflect on what is important and what isn’t.

Our last service at the Village Hall before the first lockdown was on 15th March. We had a few stops and starts during the year but during the time we couldn’t worship face to face we were blessed to have the streamed services. It was wonderful to come together as a parish to worship, firstly from Fr Richard’s study and then from St. Paul’s. Thank you to all the talented technical folk who made this possible.

What would we have done without our Bertie emails! Thank you to Fr. Richard, and of course Bertie, for keeping everyone in touch, giving us ideas of things we could do for ourselves and for NHS staff, Nursing Homes and others, pointing us to some wonderful resources on line, and for the encouragement we all needed. It has meant so much to so many.

Zoom was not in a lot of folk’s vocabularies before lockdown but it soon became a vital part of life for us. Zoom coffee after church, church meetings, mediation and Fellowship Groups to name but a few. A great way of staying in touch.

We sadly had to say goodbye to some of our loved ones and friends including dear Canon Ken. It was hard we couldn’t all say goodbye in person at funerals with the restricted numbers but we could join in on webcasts.

Our thanks to the Village Hall Committee for all they did to make our return to worship safe and secure and for being so accommodating.

Thank you to each and every one of you for looking out for each other, keeping in touch and caring for those ill and shielding. You have all been amazing. Thank you for being so patient and understanding when it came to booking services and following the many new rules we have had to get used to.

Our thanks to Fr. Richard and all our clergy for all they have done over this difficult time. We are truly blessed.

We go forward now listening to what God has to say, learning from this past year and knowing He is always with us.

*Liz and Fiona*

*The St. Nicholas’ Mission Prayer*

*Heavenly Father, strengthen us in our faith*

*that we may witness as a community to your love in the world;*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## **Woosehill Church Report**

The past year has been very strange for so many reasons, Covid-19 and all the restrictions meaning that all our regular groups, Wool Wam, Sing something Simple, Woosehill Watercolour and Tadpoles ceased but thanks to Emma Wells the Tadpoles had sessions on Zoom on some Wednesdays. Church business meetings, Bible Study, Together in Prayer, which became a weekly event, and morning coffee all moved to Zoom

When Covid -19 became the pandemic we all feared, all services were stopped and we, as a part of St Paul’s parish joined the services from the Rectory every Sunday morning on YouTube and members of Woosehill assisted with the readings and intercessions and the occasional notorious PMC message. Audio services were provided by the Methodist Church. Church members also enjoyed the daily

Bertie news: A regular email newsletter (woosehillchurchnews) was set up to keep everyone informed with messages & news about what was happening at Church and in the Parish & Methodist Circuit, including sending out the daily Bertie news.

Those living on their own were contacted regularly to check they had all they needed and to have a chat, some made scrubs for the NHS and some goody bags for care homes and the NHS were collected.

July saw us say a sad farewell to Patrick after his final full on service back in Woosehill church, because of the pandemic there were no usual Woosehill events to mark his, Helen and Jonathan departure to their new home in Bracknell. We did collect well over a £1000 as a parting gift.

We decided to reopen the Church for services in September; however as not everyone was able/willing to come to the services the decision was made to livestream them on YouTube. The money for 3 cameras and a mixing desk was quickly raised and with the technical assistance of Craig Brown we were quickly up and running in time for our new Minister, Soba.

September saw the arrival of Soba and Nava Sinnathamby as our new Methodist Minister. It wasn’t an easy transition for Soba as we were only allowed 30 people in church for his welcome service led by Rev. David Hinchcliffe Chair of Methodist SE Conference assisted by Bishop of Reading Olivia Graham. Unfortunately we were unable to celebrate his arrival in the usual Woosehill style.

November saw our much delayed AGM held on Zoom and as Lockdown 2 started we continued with services in Woosehill and they were livestreamed on YouTube.

Just before Christmas the Government moved much of South East England into Tier 4, it was agreed it was not appropriate to have the congregation present at Church, but we'd continue to livestream the services from the Church, with the minimum number of people present. The congregation did not return until 28th March 2021, Palm Sunday.

Most of our Christmas services were cancelled, including Carols outside Woosehill Church. However, the pre-recorded Nativity play acted out by members of Woosehill congregation was transmitted Christmas Eve and was much appreciated and very well received. A thank you to all those involved, especially Craig Brown for his directing, filming, and editing.

*Lynne Smith*

**The Parochial Church Council**

Following its postponement until October, there have been just four PCC meetings since the last APCM. All of these have been held on Zoom, and whilst it is a pity not to gather in one room, it has nevertheless been pleasant to enjoy a PCC meeting with the comfort of one’s own kettle.

In November, much of the discussion was dominated by the budget. Various pandemic-related changes over the past year had conspired to leave a deficit in funds. The PCC decided that it was important to maintain the Parish Share, covering shortfall with reserves from previous years’ surplus. All this further highlighted the need to increase giving, noting that 20% of the parishioners contribute 80% of the church’s income.

January, like its eponymous classical figure, was a meeting spent looking backward and forward. It was resolved that worship would continue online and not in public until a review on 14 March. The PCC reflected on the success of the collections and letters for the Royal Berkshire Hospital, and discussed plans for celebrating Candlemas from home, a Zoom Shrove Tuesday and remote arrangements for Ash Wednesday and Lent. The PCC, in smaller groups (utilising the wonders of modern technology for enabling such things) looked back at things we had learnt during the pandemic, and looked forward to how we may wish to emerge, informed by these lessons. Points which arose included lessons learnt about being less bound by where people can get to, Whilst this is often important, it has clearly been shown that such topological barriers can be worked around, which could alleviate isolation for many.

Whilst the weather in March failed to live up to vernal expectations, the subject matter of the March meeting was veritably budding with nascent hope and new beginnings. We began by discussing a move out of lockdown and unanimously agreed to return to in-person worship on Palm Sunday. The PCC also looked at the proposed new website, a link to which was circulated. The PCC agreed that this should be adopted, and its creators were heartily thanked.

May’s meeting addressed matters pertaining to safeguarding, the fire restoration work, a look over the log book worksheet and a review of the Wokingham mission audit. In the PCC’s roles as trustees of the Parish Rooms Trust, we were able to approve a grant giving financial assistance to five children at a local primary school, who were then able to participate in their Year 6 residential.

The PCC looks forward to a positive and productive year hereon in, and the possibility of new faces, as there are five vacancies.

*Pippa Sutton*

## **Parish Pioneer Report**

To say the very least, 2020 was both busy and frustrating when it came to the Parish’s work of Advancing the Kingdom. Coming straight out of a successful Advent and Christmas, in which more people than ever had been involved in the opportunities for mission presented by our services and events in Church, we got straight into planning a major missional initiative. This had been first suggested and agreed the previous autumn and was centred on a major event to coincide with the Big Draw arts event and our Harvest Weekend. This initiative has three phases: an initial preparatory phase of discernment and planning; delivery of the event itself and a follow-up phase to draw together outcomes of the event to build on the relationships established in the first two phases. Further projects were expected to “spin off”.

We were informed at the beginning of April that our application to the new Diocesan Development Fund for £1000 had been successful. Unfortunately, by this time, we were already in “lockdown” and it became increasingly clear that it would not be possible to hold an event over the Harvest Weekend of the type envisaged. A number of attempts were made to re-configure the event – chiefly, by scaling it back in in one way or another. However, ultimately, it was postponed until a future date. The planning process, as far as it went, will be very valuable in designing future events.

During lockdown, the Parish developed a more significant online presence and we spent considerable time in the second half of the year exploring how online resources could be used flexibly to support our Mission work. It has become clear that the time and effort required to develop our own online mission resources is considerable. So, as ideas developed towards the end of the year, we learned to ask, “what resources already exist that we can adapt and use?” A good example of this is the QR Code Christmas Trail from Scripture Union that we helped put in place over the latter part of Advent and was used over the Christmas Holiday. Where we were able to receive feedback on this, it was generally positive. This was also a good example of an activity that was still possible even in the face of last minute changes to social distancing and lockdown rules. We continue to seek similar resources to use as we come out of lockdown and, in particular, in any event that may be held, similar to that originally envisaged for Harvest 2020. For the time being, there is no requirement from the Diocesan Development Fund to report revised plans for the grant received, and certainly no requirement to return it.

The Parish has continued to support the USPG (<https://uspg.org.uk/> ), the Children’s Society (<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/> ) and Soulscape (<https://soulscape.org.uk/>) as its three nominated charities. Although 2020 was the final year of the current three-year cycle for funding, the Mustard Seeds recommended that we extend the cycle for at least one more year in the light of the financial struggles all charities faced during the pandemic. Through our contacts with the charities we know that all three have been working hard through the pandemic. Soulscape, who have been in schools whenever possible, in particular, springs to mind in this regard.

*Paul Armitage*

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## **Churchwardens’ Report on Fabric and Inventory 2020**

*Under Paragraph 5 (1)-(3) of Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991, the Churchwardens are required to deliver the Annual Fabric Report to the PCC, and on behalf of the PCC to the APCM (with any amendments made by the PCC), including an account of all actions taken or proposed during the previous year for the protection and maintenance of the fabric and all articles appertaining to the church.*

In early 2020 two quotations had been obtained to supply and fit the new steel roofs to the north and south aisles, but it was also necessary to appoint contractors to put up scaffolding and prepare the wood frame in addition to the main roofing contractor. Since that time discussions have taken place with a roofing contractor who would be willing to quote for the jobs and sub-contract the actual covering work using terne-coated steel.

We are currently waiting for a further inspection of the Walter Chapel roof to take place to determine the cause of damp penetration in this area.

As a result of the closure of the church for public worship between March and July as a safety precaution after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Standing Committee and the PCC concentrated on addressing the Covid safety requirements and the urgent need to purchase, instal and operate the technical equipment necessary to enable live streaming of services to take place. To make an internet connection to the church, a shallow trench was dug across the churchyard in July, running from the Parish Rooms to the church and a cable was installed, linking to a new router in the vestry. A faculty was obtained to authorise this. The cost of the digging of the trench was £750.

The approval of the PCC was obtained in July to the purchase and installation of the following equipment at a cost of £2518.87:

|  |
| --- |
| PTZOptics X30-NDI Broadcast Camera |
| Netgear 5 port Gigabit Ethernet PoE Switch |
| ESDDI Heavy Duty Video Tripod VT-60 |
| 20m Cat-6 shielded Ethernet cable from Vestry to body of church |

For services, the camera is positioned on a tripod in front of the front pew, which gives a good view of the lectern, pulpit and the area around the nave altar. It is also able to zoom in to show an image of a single person standing behind the high altar. The camera has a Tamron telephoto lens which provides a high-quality video image.

**Organ**

Repairs to the organ were carried out in March 2020 to instal new keys, as these had become loose and worn, making the instrument difficult to play. During the course of the work it became necessary to replace some of the trackers, an essential part of the organ mechanism, which had become extremely brittle. The total cost of the works was £2810 plus VAT.

**Quinquennial Inspection 2018 - works still to be carried out**

This report provides the opportunity to review the recommendations of the Quinquennial Inspection Report received in December 2018.

Our surveyor Richard Oxley’s recommendations were classified from A (utmost urgency) to D (to be kept under surveillance). The following is a summary of his main recommendations. There were several items requiring attention in the next 18 months (B), but which still await attention.

* Stonework of pinnacles should be closely examined for possible repair (B/C)
* Repairs to the stone tower parapet are required (B/C)
* Repairs to the gutter behind the tower parapet are required (B)
* A close examination of all tiled roof slopes is needed, including a drop in the ridge to the E end of the nave and the S slope immediately below (C+)
* Works to roofs to North and South aisles and vestry, (B) (*See above*)
* Repairs are needed to the concealed gutter between the tower and the north slope of the nave that is lined in lead (C)
* The abutment detailing is poor and/or deteriorating: this should be addressed with any recovering of the roofs (B/C+)
* Extensive overhaul (including replacement) of the cast iron rainwater goods is needed (B)
* The plastic gutter to the east of the vestry has twisted and this is resulting in water spillage. This has caused damp and insect attack internally. Replacement is needed (A) *(This was attended to)*
* Address backlog of repairs to stonework and pointing and implement a programme of repair/consolidation to the external walls (C)
* Closer examination and repair of crosses on East and North gables (B) and gable copings (B) is recommended.
* Inspection and repairs to weathered copings on North and South aisles (B/C) *(North aisle coping is being dealt with following frost damage)*
* Deterioration of stonework to reveals of North door to be kept under review (C)
* Staining of interior walls in three areas due to water penetration: re-plastering needed after exterior works are carried out to North and South aisle roofs (C)
* Eradicate wood-boring insect attack to timber panelling below the vestry piscina (B)
* Worn treads to tower spiral staircase are a potential trip hazard (C)
* Damage to stone jamb of vestry door, making it difficult to lock/unlock the door (B)
* Repair a section of plaster which has fallen from the ceiling in the vestry (B)
* Repair isolated areas of internal plasterwork with lime-based plaster (B)
* Repair lychgate roof (B) and stonework (C) *(Lychgate roof repaired)*
* Repair damage to North boundary dwarf wall (C)
* Brick East boundary wall leaning to the neighbour
* Repair of tarmac path (a public right of way) between church and lychgate, which will deteriorate further. Maintenance needs to be carried out so that the PCC can be seen to be taking all reasonable measures to actively maintain the path. *(This was attended to).*

In February 2021 a small amount of stonework fell from the North Aisle parapet coping, caused by the winter temperatures causing the moisture in the stonework to freeze. The surveyor was called in and inspected the parapet. He is currently preparing a report setting out the repairs that need to be done. Tenders for this work will be invited from stonemasons. It is clear that further inspection and repair to the external stonework of the building are needed and we are asking the surveyor to consider what other items from the Quinquennial Inspection list could feasibly be combined with the works to the parapet coping.

*David Ruddock and Peter Wells, Churchwardens*

*May 2021*

The Churchyard

This year work in the churchyard has been significantly affected by the COVID19 pandemic and the lockdowns which have dominated much of the time since the last APCM in October 2020.

Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company have been coming since the first lockdown but because of the restrictions they have been limited to 6 attendees all of whom have to make their own way to the payback location. Whilst this has been happening the St Paul’s volunteers have been observing social distancing and we have stopped all refreshments so that we reduce the level of contact between everyone to a minimum. The payback services have now been transferred back to the probation service but we hope our relationship will carry on as before.

Andrew Roberts, a local retired engineer, has joined the St Paul’s volunteers and he has managed to repair the Kubota Tractor mower which was donated some years ago. It does need a new battery but otherwise is in good repair. Since we are trying to discourage the growth of the grass we are being careful to collect the mown grass in an effort to prevent it providing nutrition for increased growth. Consequently, as the tractor mower is unable to collect the grass (and it is really too wide to manoeuvre between the graves), we are now considering selling it.

We have decided to stop using bonfires to get rid of the churchyard waste. As a result, we have recently attempted to transport the material to the dump with willing volunteers. However, access to the dump has been limited throughout lockdown so we are considering acquiring a chipper to chip the tree waste and are investigating how to achieve this. In the interim, we have borrowed a tracked chipper from Parish Tree Surgery. The woodchip is used in compost and on the pathways round the churchyard.

The trees we planted as part of the Tree Succession Project are growing nicely. There are plans to have a second round of trees in the near future – exactly how many, and where they are to be planted, is still under discussion. We have had a donation of hedging plants and saplings from the Woodland Trust which have been planted along the boundaries to provide an alternative habitat for wildlife in the churchyard. Again we are grateful to Andrew Roberts and his son, who ordered and planted the majority of the saplings. It is good to see the way the hedges around the churchyard are developing along with the Tree Succession Project trees.

The Yew trees in the churchyard are being trimmed slowly to return them to the more upright columns as they were originally intended as Irish Yew (*taxus baccata fastigiata*). The idea is to reduce the spread of the trees slowly and eventually trim the tops to a flat top. This is being done over a longer period so as not to stress the trees too much. This work will continue over the next year or so.

We are still looking out for Ash Die Back, or Chalara (*hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), but so far it seems to have missed the churchyard trees. If our Ash trees are affected we will need to remove them. It is this threat that we are addressing with the planting of new trees which will take over when the inevitable happens (over 95% of the Ash trees in the UK, *fraxinus excelsior*, are expected to succumb to the disease eventually).

Two new composting sites have been created under the Cedar tree - alongside the railway fence - and in the far eastern end of the churchyard. The compost and leaf mould heaps are continually being managed and provide good quality compost and leaf mould. We will let you know when it is ready and you are welcome to come with bags to help yourself.

There has been a major “vegetation management” project on the railway, with significant reduction in the trees and vegetation along the cutting. There is a plan to replace some of the vegetation with smaller trees and shrubs just the other side of the railway fence and we will keep you updated as and when we hear of progress.

The drains around the church and parish rooms car park still need repairing. This work was planned a year or more ago but the project was halted by the pandemic. We would be pleased to hear recommendations of suitable contractors ([churchyard@spauls.org.uk](mailto:churchyard@spauls.org.uk)), since this is something which we need to revisit as soon as the pandemic (and money) allows.

Finally we have received a grant and purchased a new shed to store all our equipment. Thanks to payback a base was laid on the 15th May and the shed was delivered and erected on the 25th May. You will not miss it if you walk through the churchyard from the parish rooms car park.

If you are pleased with the way the churchyard looks and would like to help to maintain it to its current standard, please come and join us. We need people to mow the grass, manage the compost, maintain and document the graves, mend our machines and more. If this is you, please join us any time from 9.00-3.30 on alternate Saturdays or email [churchyard@spauls.org.uk](mailto:churchyard@spauls.org.uk) for more information

*Andy Clark  
Churchyard Manager*

## **Changes in the Electoral Roll**

The total number of names on the Electoral Roll at 6 June 2021 was 216 as against 220 on 27 September 2020. There were 3 additions during the period: Melanie Jordaan, Jo Cullinane, Helen Hastings. There were seven deletions during the period: John Foster, Justin Elliot, Susan De Laroque, Alice Irvine and Tracey Hughes who have moved and Tony Shortell and Pam Beckett who have died.

*Teri Austen,* *Electoral Roll Officer*

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## **Stewardship Report**​

2020 was an exceptional year and the disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative influence on church finances. However, St Paul’s and St Nick’s parishioners have really stepped up and continued to strongly support the Church allowing it to continue it’s work. Many have switched to either donating via standing order, or by regular online donations or by text. We would like to thank all who have supported and continue to support St Paul’s and St Nick’s.

As mentioned, we have introduced a new way to donate to the church using text and this has allowed a number of parishioners and guests to donate to the Church more easily.

We would like to remind everyone that we are able to claim Gift Aid on all donations from UK tax payers which increases the value of donations by 25%. In order for us to do this we do require a completed Gift aid declaration form. Please contact me if you are able to complete a new declaration form or, if you have an existing declaration in place and your circumstances have changed. Please let us know and we can assist you with updating your details.

We are continuing to reclaim additional income from HMRC, generated via donations where tax has been paid, as well as the visitor, ‘one-off’ white Gift Aid envelopes and the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS). We depend on each donor informing us whether they can or cannot Gift Aid all of their donations, in order that we can maximize the tax reclaim.

*Stuart Fairhead*

*Stewardship Secretary*

# **The Wider View**

## **Deanery Synod Report**

## 17th March 2020

This meeting was due to take place on Tuesday, 17 March 2020 at St John the Baptist Parish Church, Waterloo Road, Crowthorne. Due to the Coronavirus outbreak, this meeting was cancelled.

**21st July 2020**

This was the first (ever?) Deanery Synod to be conducted over Zoom. After a statement of purpose by our own Fr. Richard Lamey, to explain that the meeting was to be a time of listening to God and listening to each other, looking at what we have experienced and discovered in the last weeks, how we are seeing the Church and its role differently, and what God is calling us to become through the experience of this pandemic, the synod discussed the questions:

* What does a post-coronavirus Deanery look like?
* What does a post-coronavirus Church look like?

A talk was given by the Archdeacon, after which members were divided into groups to discuss the points raised by the Archdeacon, and to report back on the experience of individual churches during lockdown. The Archdeacon summed up with thanks to all for thinking of new possibilities and for plotting ways through the new landscape.

**29th September 2020**

The September meeting was, again, held over Zoom, with Fr. Richard in the Chair. He began by posing two questions regarding the Covid19 pandemic and its effect on parish life.

* What have you learned about your community for good or ill?
* Who has been lost to view by the Church, and how can this be addressed?

Group Leaders reported back:

**Negatives**:

* Great attempts had been made to keep in touch with children and young families, but re-opening of church had not yet brought them back.
* Some people reported church members feeling remote and disorientated by lack of face-to-face meeting.
* Lack of pastoral care and normal care and support for the bereaved was a problem.
* Wargrave and Crowthorne have found that young families are not coming back, but more people attend online in their own time.

**Positives**:

* Some people reported that church members had enjoyed being able to watch services at times of their own choice,
* Churches and individuals had come together and united to lead prayers across denominations.
* Churches were finding different ways of reaching those who do not wish to leave home.
* St Sebastian’s have been online for some time with remarkable success with music, prayers and talks. Their young people are involved in the services.

**Conclusions**:

* Finding opportunities to connect and stay connected was worth trying to follow up.
* Elderly people with no technology were likely to have fallen through the net.
* Adaptability was the key. Churches have adapted and need to continue to do so in the future. Elaborate plans won’t work, but short-term spontaneous actions will help.

The Area Dean reminded members that this would be the last meeting of the current Synod and that several current officers and Standing Committee members were standing down. The current officers, Judith Scott, (past lay chair) who has served on the Committee for 20 years, John Smith current lay chair and acting Treasurer, Pauline Humphreys lay member and Bridget Crossley Secretary, who has also served for 20 years, were all retiring. Hence, it would be necessary to re-constitute the Standing Committee with a pressing need is for a Lay Joint Chair, a Treasurer, a Secretary and two other lay members. Fr Richard asked members to give serious thought to new candidates for election.

**17th March 2020**

This meeting was again held over Zoom, chaired by Fr. Richard. The main item on the agenda was the ‘Conversation on Wellbeing and Hope’ led by Bishop Olivia, the Bishop of Reading.

Bishop Olivia gave an inspiring address followed by a time of discussion in small groups based on three questions:

* Do I feel supported and affirmed in my current role?
* How well are we working together as the people of God?
* What do we need to be focussing on post Covid?

It was noted that our current Deanery Plan expires in May 2021 and, given how much the world has changed over the last year, we will have to rethink the content of the plan for a new environment.

Some of the Standing Committee vacancies were noted to have been filled:

* Catherine Vaughan (Vicar of Owlsmoor) was appointed to be the Secretary
* Lynne Paine, (treasurer at Woosehill) was appointed to the position of Treasurer
* David Horrocks (Barkham) and Anna Pearce (Crowthrone) also volunteered to join Standing Committee.

It was, however, noted that we still have no Lay Chair.

In the Finance Report 2020, Deanery funds were reported to be as: General Fund, £14,115; QI Fund, £ 1,781; Share rebate fund, £35,680. So £51,576 in the bank at the end of 2020.

The parish share outcome for the Deanery in 2020 was that 88.4% of our total allocation was paid making us the only Deanery in Berkshire that paid less than 90%.

It was decided that the Deanery Levy, which goes into the General Fund and used to support Clergy Sabbaticals, it us used for small overheads such as the website, for specific pieces of work, major events, running costs, should at £35 per Synod rep.

It was decided that the collection of the Quinquennial Inspection Levy be stopped from 2021 and that there would be a full refund of QI levies that have been paid since their last QI, leaving each Parish responsible for funding their Inspection directly themselves.15th June 2020

The next meeting is due to be held on 15th June 2021.

*John Sutton*

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## **A Last Beatitude ...**

And blessed are the ones we overlook;

The faithful servers on the coffee rota,

The ones who hold no candle, bell or book

But keep the books and tally up the quota,

The gentle souls who come to ‘do the flowers’,

The quiet ones who organise the fete,

Church sitters who give up their weekday hours,

Doorkeepers who may open heaven’s gate.

God knows the depths that often go unspoken

Amongst the shy, the quiet, and the kind,

Or the slow healing of a heart long broken,

Placing each flower so for a year’s mind.

Invisible on earth, without a voice,

In heaven their angels glory and rejoice.

by Malcom Guite

