

ST BARNABAS CHURCH EMMER GREEN

**ANNUAL REPORT of the Parochial Church Council
(The Trustees Report)**

For the Period ended 31st December 2020

APCM Incumbent's Report 2020

It is hard to remember now that the beginning of 2020 started much like any other year for many of us. In that sense, in January and February the normal work of being a parish church continued. One notable highlight was an arranged number of visits for Year 7 Highdown School pupils to visit St. Barnabas Church and to engage in workshops about what it means to be a Christian, with: David Howell and Joy Abel (as Reading Street Pastors), Mark Brown (as a Christian Detached Youth Worker from Grace Church), and from me (as a vicar).

March changed our lives and our life as a church community due to the pandemic. Each of us had our own steep learning curves, not only with remaining safe and healthy, but also with digital technology. However, an online presence and communal routine were soon established – deliveries to Faith Foodbank and to the Weller Centre, Phone Buddies, Pastoral calls, or doorstep visits, and more. Willingly or not, our lives tuned in to a different rhythm, but the unusually sunny weather helped to ease the shock of the first lockdown to some degree.

It is a year where many of us have faced mortality and our own frailties, myself included. Before, during, and following from my absence I would like to acknowledge the work of:

- David Howell as Churchwarden and Parish Centre Manger
- Sandra Rice as outgoing churchwarden and Richard Cunningham as assistant churchwarden in their supporting roles
- Mark Burton as newly appointed Churchwarden, and to Mark and Debbie for sustaining much of the online presence of the church over the summer and autumn
- Roger Moore as PCC Secretary for his dedication in keeping the church in a number of communication loops
- Bob Abel as PCC Treasurer for his tireless attention to the financial difficulties that the pandemic continues to present us with
- Felicity Chapman for her musical direction and online expertise. And with her in relation to our website and Facebook, Chris Fitzsimmons and Elizabeth Targaryan-Tyler
- Jon Barclay for the many challenges that managing the church hall have presented him with
- Tony and Juliet Holland for maintaining our church grounds safely and responsibly

I know there are more, including the efforts and energies of Wendy Howell, John Volland, Debbie Burton, Douglas Rae and my own wife, Hayley, but sadly I cannot include everyone in this report. However, I would like to acknowledge my gratitude for the arrival of Rev Dr Leonard Onugha as our curate from October. His pivotal role in getting St. Barnabas Church reopened, for the way he has fitted in so quickly and so well, and for his passion to engage with the wider community of Emmer Green, we owe him a great deal of thanks.

On that final note, Leonard, along with David Howell and several others at St. Barnabas Church, responded immediately and with great compassion to the tragic news of the death of the Highdown School pupil, Oliver Stephens. Although technically this should go into the APCM report for next year I do not think I can end by not mentioning the key role the church played, assisted by the Reading Street Pastors, and volunteers from other churches, in assisting not only Olly's family, but the Emmer Green community through collective shock and grief. The vigil service presided over on 10th January by the Bishop of Reading, Rt Revd Olivia Graham, and attended by Matt Rodda MP, was a powerful reminder to me of what a parish church can be, even in unprecedented times.

We go into 2021 with these memories, along with others, to face the challenges and opportunities ahead. One of which will be the pastoral reorganisation of Caversham Park parish following the formal withdrawal of the Church of England from Caversham Park LEP, from the end of 2020. However, it is clear that like many other churches, we have attracted new participants through our online presence. This is welcome news, but also poses the challenge on how to take that relationship further. We do not know all the answers, the destination is not yet clear, but going forward practising courage, compassion, and contemplation, seems more poignant than ever.

Yours in Christ
Derek

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

St Barnabas Church is situated in Grove Road, Emmer Green, Reading. It is within the Reading Deanery, which is part of the Diocese of Oxford. The correspondence address of the PCC Secretary is 10 Barnard Close, Caversham, Reading RG4 6RZ. St Barnabas is registered with the Charity Commission as a charity – number 1164759.

The PCC members who served during the calendar year 2020 were:

Incumbent	-	Revd Derek Chandler (Chairman)
Curate	-	Revd Leonard Onugha (from Sep 2020)
Wardens	-	David Howell
	-	Sandra Rice (until August 2020)
	-	Mark Burton (elected APCM October 2020)
Asst Warden	-	Richard Cunningham

Deanery Synod Representatives		Elected
	Mark Burton	2014 (re-elected Oct APCM)
	Roger Moore	2017 (re-elected Oct APCM)
Members		
	Susie Downer	2016
	Felicity Chapman	2015
	Wendy Howell	2015
	Bob Abel	2016

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Parish comes within the Benefice of St Barnabas and Caversham Park. Both are separate parishes with their own officers and PCCs. Caversham Park Church is a Local Ecumenical Partnership. Derek Chandler is also the C of E incumbent for Caversham Park Church.

PCCs are charities governed by two pieces of Church of England legislation: the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as amended and the Church Representation Rules. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All eligible Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC held 4 meetings during the year. It is supported by committees and working groups that carry out detailed work.

The running of the church is supported by volunteers covering all areas of activity – Annex A

Because of the pandemic much of normal business was in abeyance.

OBJECTIVES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting, in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

It has maintenance responsibilities for the church and the church hall.

COMPLIANCE

The PCC members (the Trustees) of St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green, Reading (Number 1164759) in agreeing this Annual Report noted that they were fully aware of the Charity Commission Guidance on Public Benefit and were of the opinion that the activities of St Barnabas Church met the Charity Commission requirements.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

There is no firm basis for in person attendance as the church was closed from March until the beginning of December.

David Howell

CHURCH MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

Overview of PCC year

Caversham Park Church LEP Review

At the beginning of the year, the PCC received an update on the LEP Review. The final report advised that “In order to enable more effective mission and ministry in Caversham Park, we recommend that the LEP close down in order to release the energy, wisdom, and resource of the current congregation”.

The pandemic delayed matters but at the end of the year the Church of England notified its intention to withdraw from the LEP which took effect on 31st December 2020.

“Care Hub” - New Pastoral Care Group

In February PCC members considered a paper on Pastoral Care. The new pastoral “Care Hub” had been a long time in gestation. Members include: Derek Chandler, Mark Burton, Joy Abel, Wendy Moore, Susie Downer, Hayley Chandler, David Howell and Pat Gray from Caversham Park Church. PCC approved the way ahead unanimously. Unfortunately, sickness absence and the pandemic have hindered its development.

25% Increase in Planned Giving Required

When explaining the 2020 budget to PCC members, the Treasurer emphasised the growing gap between planned income and expenditure (and specifically the increases in the Parish Share). The gap between pledged income and Parish Share had grown from £10k to £21k between 2017 and 2020. To restore the differential would, he suggested, require a 25% increase in planned giving.

Chalice Administrator

The PCC Secretary proposed that Mary Robinson be approved as a Chalice Administrator subject to normal checks. PCC approved unanimously

Authorization to Conduct Communion by Extension

Revd Derek Chandler submitted a proposal that three people, David Howell, Joy Abel, and Mark Burton, be recommended to the Bishop of Reading for authorisation to conduct Communion by Extension. The proposal was approved unanimously.

Opening St Barnabas for private prayer

Because of the “lockdown” the PCC did not meet again until August 4th when it held its first meeting by Zoom. One of its first actions was to consider the relevant risk assessments and pass a resolution allowing private prayer on Thursday mornings from 9am til 11am.

Closing St Barnabas for public worship

At the August PCC meeting a resolution was passed to keep the church closed because it was deemed infeasible with an incumbent on sick leave, and with the difficulties of the Covid 19 pandemic, to open for worship. Guidance on the form of the resolution had been provided by the Diocese.

Opening the Hall for new term in September

The PCC having considered the Risk Assessment produced for the Hall agreed it could be open for use from Monday 7th September.

Opening St Barnabas for Public Worship

In October the PCC passed the following resolution:

The parochial church council of St Barnabas Church Emmer Green, having received numerous requests from parishioners for the resumption of the celebration of Holy Communion in the Church; and also the parochial church council itself wanting the celebration of Holy Communion every Sunday to resume, as required by Canon B 14, but this not being able to happen owing to the Vicar being on long-term sick leave; resolved unanimously that a request in writing be sent to the Area Dean and Bishop of Reading for the provision of clergy to preside at celebrations of Holy Communion in the Parish Church every Sunday as a matter of urgency.

The temporary appointment of Rev Leonard Onugha fulfilled this resolution. And with the commitment at the next PCC to produce the risk assessment and linked operational rules and guidance for sidesmen, church wardens and others, things were in place to re-start services on 6th December.

Roger Moore

Health and Safety

There have been no general health and safety issues/concerns during a year where the Covid 19 pandemic has dominated health and safety. The church’s approach to the pandemic and meeting governmental and CofE guidelines and regulations is highlighted in a number of sections of this report.

Notwithstanding the central concern of Covid 19, it is important any general health and safety issues are identified and notified to me for attention.

Douglas Rae

Safeguarding

The closing of the church for general worship due to COVID-19 has meant a shift in the focus for Safeguarding towards a more dispersed and separated church. However, the incumbent and PCC continue to have a duty of care to ensure the protection of the vulnerable within the church community. St Barnabas Church fully supports the key responsibilities for Parishes as set out in the Church of England House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy.

Triggered by the first lockdown, an informal "Buddy System" was set up by Hayley Chandler to try to maintain some form of contact within the congregation. This system, although not perfect, has been effective and been appreciated especially by church members who live alone or feel isolated.

A Safeguarding 'in person' training planned for Spring 2020 had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. Some courses have continued on line and a few members have completed these. Future safeguarding training sessions will be reviewed in 2021 as the pandemic allows.

I have continued as Safeguarding Officer with Debbie Burton as Safeguarding Administrator and Verifier for DBS checks. Our aim is to maintain St Barnabas as a safe and caring environment.

Joy Abel

Electoral Roll.

The present electoral roll, as of 31st December 2020, contains 121 names, of which 32 are recorded as not resident within the parish boundary. If you wish to be added to the roll, please ask me and I will explain what is required and can supply a form.

Richard Cunningham, Electoral Roll Officer

Planned giving.

I continue to record who-gave-what week-by-week for our giving schemes on which we can claim a tax refund under "Gift Aid" from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). These are: Standing orders, Weekly green envelopes in the offertory plate, the central Parish Giving Scheme (PGS), and Once-off envelopes.

Since my report in last year's annual APCM paperwork, I have made two claims to HMRC (excluding PGS) which have resulted in payments totalling £4,448.78; the last one was submitted for giving up to 31st October 2020. The HMRC "Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme" (GASDS) means we can claim Gift Aid on cash donations up to £30 where we have no signed declaration, and a claim for GASDS was included in these two claims.

The PGS scheme carries out a claim to HMRC monthly on our behalf and over the period 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020 reports that it has claimed £5,258.07 from HMRC.

At present there are about 21 who contribute by standing orders, and about 33 who give by PGS. Those who pay by once-off envelopes tend to be once-off visitors, perhaps attending a baptism or funeral. Cash in the offertory plate results in a GASDS claim.

Over the March to December period when there was no Sunday Morning worship in the Church the green envelopes used by some to put cash into the offertory plate could not happen. Since worship began again two of the givers have made contributions which cover some of the period missed, but we used to get about 6 a week and 15 packs of envelopes were distributed covering

the period March 2020 to February 2021. It remains to be seen if the weekly envelopes will remain in use, or if we ask those givers to consider other methods of contribution.

In the Finance report you will see that we still face an uncomfortable future with an impact on rental revenues due to lockdown, and reduction in numbers of givers. As a result we need to increase our revenues, and we hope to persuade many of our regular givers to increase their monthly gift amounts.

Another way to increase our income is for those who pay income tax but who give outside any of the methods I have mentioned in my first paragraph, to join one of these schemes. Please approach me, and I will provide details of the scheme; you will certainly be asked to sign a declaration to say that you wish that income tax you have paid on your gift is be reclaimed.

Finally, my thanks to all those who continue to support St Barnabas Church through the gift of money. Your help is so important in all that we do.

Richard Cunningham, Planned giving officer

WORSHIP AND MINISTRY

Choir and Music

Sadly the choir has been unable to sing together since the start of the first lockdown. However, we've continued to meet up virtually to keep in touch and provide feedback for online services. In addition, Bob Abel, Susie Downer, and Wendy Howell have recorded many hymns throughout the year to provide a virtual choir for online services. I know that the congregation have enjoyed being able to sing along with their familiar voices and am very grateful for their dedication.

This year, we took the decision to record our service of lessons and carols entirely in advance so that people could join in with the carols from the safety of their homes. I was delighted that so many of the choir were able to overcome the technological hurdles and take part in the carols, and that Joanna Onugha joined us. We were also blessed with wonderful readers and by Derek setting the scene perfectly with the welcome and bidding prayer.

We await the challenges of 2021 with interest and look forward to continuing to lead music at St Barnabas."

Felicity Chapman

Children's Church

Due to the COVID-19 crisis which started in March Children's Church was only running at the start of the year as and when Children were in Church.

Children's Church is for any child over 3, and have children attending up to the age of about 11. Earlier last year a new family with baby and young child started attending St. Barnabas and Children's Church.

Attendance at Children's Church reflects the pattern of family's attendance at church which for some families may be monthly or more or less regularly.

Thank you to our small but enthusiastic group of volunteers who lead sessions.

Again due to the COVID-19 crisis we were unable to have our usual Nativity Service. However Mark was able to produce a video which mirrored our usual Nativity with knitted figures. If you missed it and want to take a look it can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR5dhKWgVRk>.

From January to March we also continued to run a monthly family table tennis session (January to March) on the first Sunday of the month from 14:30p.m. to 16:00p.m. This was enjoyed by a small number of families from the community of Emmer Green rather than people attached to St. Barnabas Church.

Debbie Burton

Prayer Chain

I am grateful to those who continue to covenant to pray and honour God's name.

We have prayed for:

- Those in distress because of illness, bereavement, life-changing events
- Those who have died
- Encouragement and guidance for individuals and events

With thankful hearts we have remembered in our prayers 88 individuals, situations or events.

We give thanks for the freedom and opportunity to raise our concerns with God, something that the pandemic cannot overcome.

Susie Downer

Puppet Ministry

Due to Derek's absence and our schools socially distancing themselves because of the pandemic, the opportunities to employ the puppets didn't arise, therefore they have been furloughed during 2020.

David Howell

3rd Space

The inspiration and much of the detail for the 2020, 3rd Space programme, came from Yvonne Morris's book "Side by side with God" (Yvonne currently serves as Children's Adviser for the Diocese of Oxford, helping, supporting, training and advising churches and their workers on their ministry with children and families).

This was the first time a full programme had been prepared in advance. The theme was based on the book of Ecclesiastes "There is a time for Everything" and exploring those with the parents and children. Unfortunately, the programme didn't get past March due to the pandemic and the closing of the Parish Centre.

David Howell

Alpha

A good sized group committed themselves to attending nine sessions, from October to December, 2019. No one dropped out and the majority wanted to continue after Christmas to participate in a further seven sessions. No one dropped out of the second group either and we were joined by a member who had not been able to attend the first session.

For the first session the format was either John or Sandra were responsible for general introductions and timekeeping (we began at 7pm and finished by 9pm); welcome and chat over a cooked meal; whole group watching Alpha DVD together; then group divided into two set groups for discussion, using Alpha booklets provided to each participant. Sandra and Richard led one group, with John and Eileen leading the other. Derek and Hayley provided supportive roles for the sessions, and food was generously prepared & served by congregational members of both Caversham Park Church & St Barnabas Church.

The format and leadership was similar for the second set of sessions, which began early in January, 2020 but instead of meals, cake and hot drinks were provided. The feedback from individuals was very positive. I believe that everyone was helped and encouraged to go forward on their faith journey. Friendships were developed and people knew that they could share openly and in confidence. The church facilities were much appreciated but it was a mistake to go into the church sanctuary for one of the sessions as it was too impersonal and a very different and cold environment. We have continued to pray for all those involved and trust that the Lord is continuing to bless them. It was a very positive and worthwhile use of time and resource. We thank God that everything was completed before the first lockdown.

John Volland, Sandra Rice, Derek Chandler

PARISH CENTRE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Parish Centre Manager

Prior to the pandemic the Parish Centre was growing as a centre for both the old and young. We saw three new events at the beginning of the year all aimed at the young (Highdown Year 7, Youth drop-in and Mini Maestro's). All of which stopped early in the year due to lockdown and didn't re-start.

In accordance with Government guidelines the Parish Centre hasn't provided catering since prior to the first lockdown and continuing to the end of 2020 and beyond.

I see very little point in detailing all the users, or income for 2020 as they have no real meaning due to the closure.

David Howell

Busy Bees

Busy Bees used to meet in the Parish Centre on Mondays 2.00 to 3.00pm during Term Time. Once the COVID-19 crisis started we started to produce Busy Bees online.

Busy Bees caters for parents and their pre-school children meeting together for Christian songs, Bible stories, craft activities and sharing experiences of being a parent of a young child / children.

Mark leads the singing with his guitar. A favourite of all the families is 'The Wise Man Build His House Upon a Rock' (when everyone is encouraged to 'splat' by diving to the ground).

Derek Chandler, Mark Burton, Shirley Corti and Wendy Moore tell the stories. The story is followed by a Craft activity.

Marianne Long prepared the craft activities when we met in person with the help of Jane Warren.

In March Marianne decided that it was time for her to stop Busy Bees and Jane agreed to continue to sort out the craft activities. However she is now unable to do this.

Shirley and Rene provided the refreshments when we met in person which were enjoyed by the children and their parents. Having a cup of tea made for them is a particular pleasure for parents who are busy looking after their young children.

When we moved on-line Roger Moore and Hayley Chandler joined us to demonstrate some of the Craft activities, and I also joined in with telling the stories and the craft activities. These sessions can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbm62yXXjpNiWENInA1-18g>.

Debbie Burton

Fundraising

Well, no one was more disappointed than me that the 3 fundraising events planned for 2020 had to be cancelled.

So sad, as the charities we would have supported have also been affected by the pandemic. It was also a disappointment, but understandable in the circumstances, that we were not able to support the list of annual charities as usual, due to the financial constraints the pandemic has put on the church.

It was however good that the Food Bank could start up again once we were open for private prayer.

An ad hoc sale and some recycling that I was able to do, provided some small income for the church.

Ever hopeful, I have booked the following dates for later this year. Handyman sale 1st May, Garden Party 17th July and Christmas Fair 4th December.

Wendy Howell

Charities

In 2019 we raised £7,977 through fund raising activities, collections and from general funds, and distributed this to 15 charities. None of this activity has been possible in 2020 and only £220, from a donation and a collection at a funeral service, has been sent to four charities. Normal charity fund raising will be resumed in 2021 if conditions allow.

Bob Abel

Men's Breakfast

Though several attempts were made to have our regular monthly get together the rule of 6 made it very difficult and eventually placed on hold until such time as the restrictions allow.

David Howell

Ladies who Lunch

These outings were curtailed due to the pandemic. It was hoped to hold a one-off Christmas lunch jointly with the Tuesday Craft Group but later restrictions made it more difficult to organise so it was cancelled.

Wendy Howell

Tuesday Craft Group

Due to government exceptions, the craft group was able to carry on for a short while due to the fact that it is essentially now a support group. Many ladies are single or widowed therefore in need of just a bit of company. Strict guidelines were followed in terms of numbers, mask wearing and social distancing etc. Sadly, once we were in tier 4, it became more difficult and therefore had to stop.

I would like to thank the ladies for adhering to the rules in order to allow for us to meet. Be assured that once things begin to look better, we will resume.

Wendy Howell

COMMUNICATION

Keeping in touch during 2020 because of the pandemic has been more important than normal. Without the ability to meet socially even small things can make a difference. I would like to thank Elizabeth Tyler for her dedication in posting a daily prayer to our web page each day. It has meant a lot.

We have been advertising the services and events using Facebook and our website. Felicity Chapman has maintained this endeavour with diligence and we owe her a great deal of thanks. Without Chris Fitzsimmons' technical help we would not have been able to keep the website running smoothly. Many thanks Chris.

As well as Facebook and the website, church members were kept informed of developments through a series of letters sent by email items including:

- The good news that as from Thursday, 13th August, the church would be open for personal prayer from 9am til 11am and the request for church members to volunteer to act as stewards.
- The decision in August that it was not feasible at that time to open the church for worship, but the hope that it could be opened sometime in the autumn when Derek returned from sick leave.
- The decision to hold an Annual General Meeting (APCM) on 22nd September by Zoom, the request for church members to consider joining the PCC and the subsequent request by Bishop Olivia to delay the APCM until October in order that Graeme Fancourt, the Area Dean, could attend the meeting.
- Many invitations to: meetings, the APCM, live stream services and Zoom services including the first Zoom service on Sunday, 15th November, taken by the Rev Leonard Onugha, on loan to St Barnabas to help support Derek in his return to work from sick leave.

- The good news that the church was to open for worship on 6th December whilst at the same time continuing to broadcast via the internet for those unable, because of illness or infirmity, or unwilling, because of their concerns about the pandemic risks.
- Guidance on the safety precautions when entering, leaving and sitting in church including: the use of hand gel at the entrance; the need to wear a mask; the importance of social distancing at all times; that singing was not allowed; that those with signs of infection should not attend; that they needed to register with their contact details and finally should follow the directions of sidesmen
- Details of the “Peace Light of Bethlehem” initiative, that was inaugurated in 1986. The Scouting focal point for the Peace Light locally, Margaret Ellison, let St Barnabas know that the live stream from the Peace Light Ceremony in Salzburg would make it possible for many more people around the world to join in celebrating the small flame of hope and peace from Bethlehem.
- Details of Christmas services and events

BUILDING MANAGEMENT

Building Maintenance

The fabric of all three buildings remain strong with no new issues since the last report. Towards the end of the year, we consolidated our three gas and electricity suppliers into two. All our gas is now with CNG for the supply of gas and Electricity is with BGLite. The major maintenance costs were attributed to the Parish Centre sewage pumps and boiler. Thanks to the Treasurer a breakdown of the major maintenance cost are below.

04/01/2020:	£ 85.00	A R Keep: Checking electrical issues associated with boiler in Parish Centre and in relation to faulty sewage pump
08/01/2020	£ 306.00	Direct Pumps and Tanks Ltd: Call out to tripped pump
15/01/2020	£1,029.00	Direct Pumps and Tanks Ltd: Supply and installation of new sewage pump and float switch
19/01/2020	£ 250.80	Advanced Maintenance UK Ltd: Replacement of washer in Parish Centre boiler and supply and fitting the flow and return connections beneath the boiler to cure leaks
23/01/2020	£ 150.00	Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance: Energy audit carried out in 2019
03/03/2020	£ 4.49	V&I Hardware: Battery for sound system
21/03/2020	£ 140.79	Chubb Fire & Security Ltd: Checking/servicing of Fire Extinguishers
21/03/2020	£ 100.00	Luke Turner-Davies: Mower servicing and petrol
26/07/2020	£ 32.68	Chubb Fire & Security Ltd: Supply of fire blanket
20/09/2020	£ 180.00	Stewart Fothergill: Service of Organ Blower
07/12/2020	£ 150.60	Spectrum Security & Fire Ltd: Preventative maintenance of fire alarm system (1 visit, Oct 2020 – Oct 2021)
17/12/2020	£ 114.86	Selecta DNA: External forensic metal marking kit
20/12/2020	£ 160.00	Bernard Whitmill: Tuning organ
23/12/2020	£ 160.00	Bernard Whitmill: Organ repair

Church Hall

01/02/2020	£ 110.00	A R Keep: Test of fault in lights and reconnection of joint box
------------	----------	---

10/11/2020	£ 102.24	with maintenance free connections Max Plumbing & Heating Ltd: Replacement of Gents basin tap, renewal of pipework and installation of isolation point
17/12/2020	£ 65.00	A R Keep: Check of connections on lights which were not working and reconnection of cables

David Howell

CHURCH HALL

2020 was a dismal year. Our usual Community Groups hired the Hall as normal in January and February, and the Hall is normally very popular. But due to Coronavirus, I had to email all of our Hall users on March 22nd to shut St Barnabas Hall as Government instructions. The Hall used to be a well used for family childrens parties, but these stopped too. We had only ten parties before shut down, when in previous years we had housed over 60. Essentially the Hall was then unused until September.

After consulting Government guidance in September, I produced a risk assessment and instructions to users for “Covid secure” use of the Hall which was agreed with them and implemented. A Keep fit class, a Zumba class, two dance classes, Rainbows and Brownies then used the Hall with lots of cleaning and hand washing, until Lockdown was ordered on Nov 5th. Thank you to the Groups who did use the Hall. Some groups were not viable due to the new distancing rules that required 2 to 3 metres separation of people.

So as a result of lockdowns, rental income was £6413 in 2020 compared to a total in 2019 of £21211. Income to the Hall supports our Church by a considerable amount, but in 2020 that support had to be cut by £5000. Shut downs in 2021 are likely to cut rental income again. We pray for an end to this pandemic by means of vaccines, and that social life, and life in our Church & Hall, can return to normal.

Small items of maintenance were carried out, but wear and tear on the varnished Hall floor was reduced. We avoided doing an expensive coat of varnish on the floor as a result. Cleaning costs were cut when the Hall was unused.

Thank you to our regular users, we hope to see you back soon. Thanks to Shirley Choules who keeps the Hall clean when it was in action. Thanks to the people in the congregation who help with maintenance – Bob Abel in particular for accounts & billing, and others for painting, bins, electrical checking and so on.

Jon Barclay, Hall Manager Hall phone 07580 029910

WIDER CHURCH REPORT 2020 – READING DEANERY SYNOD & OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

Introduction

It seems superfluous to say that this was an unprecedented year, which has had an enormous impact on church life, both local and wider.

Meeting During a Pandemic

At the beginning of the year we had in-person meetings, but when the gravity of the Covid-19 Pandemic became apparent, the Diocese was in 2 minds whether to hold the March meeting in-

person, but decided to go ahead. After that we moved to remote meetings. However, this still meant we carried out business, but everyone had to get used to using Zoom.

One interesting observation is that holding remote meetings is far greener as people are not driving to meetings.

Climate Emergency

There can be a tendency for the threat to our lives from Climate Change to recede from our attention owing to the severity of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Bishop Olivia reminded us that the impact of Climate Change is likely to be considerably more severe than the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Reading Deanery Synod had passed a motion declaring a climate emergency and urging action by the Diocese and the whole Church. Separately, Witney and Bracknell deanery synods both passed similar motions and it was felt that the 3 deanery synods ought to propose a joint motion. So the February Deanery Synod Meeting was taken up with agreeing the new motion, and the March Diocesan Synod meeting supported the proposal:

“That this Synod, affirming the fifth mark of mission (“to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth”), concerned by the scientific evidence that climate change is proceeding at a rapid rate and by the impact of climate events:

a) urges the Oxford Diocesan Synod and the General Synod of the Church of England to declare a Climate Emergency;

b) urges the Diocese of Oxford, the General Synod and all Anglican leaders to speak out about climate change and its impacts;

c) urges the Diocese of Oxford, the General Synod and the National Investment Bodies of the Church of England to work to achieve year-on-year reductions consonant with a target of reaching 70% cuts by 2030 and net zero by 2035, or as soon thereafter as is possible;

d) urges the National Investment Bodies of the Church of England and the Church Commissioners to prioritise investment in renewable energy, and that appropriate committees prioritise creation care in their administrative processes;

e) urges Anglican leaders to further develop pre- and post-ordination and lay training to deepen understanding in how care for the earth is part of our Christian faith and a missional imperative;

f) urges Anglican leaders and all Christians to seek to support the poorest in the world who are suffering the most from the impacts of climate change, in the awareness that our nation has been among those who have benefited most from the emissions that has caused the crisis;

g) commends all Christians to consider their individual responsibilities and how they may change and engage in actions that care for creation;

h) commits to pray earnestly and regularly about the climate crisis: for all peoples to value God’s earth and its creatures and for urgent action by individuals, communities and nations to act to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.”

The challenge for us is: how do we at St Barnabas respond to this challenge?

Mutual Support

Oxford Diocese is relatively affluent compared with most of England. The Diocese already contributes some funding to the Church of England which supports other dioceses. However, if Christians have a mission to support the poor, there is real concern that we are not doing enough, and a desire to find ways to do more.

At that same Diocesan Synod meeting there were presentations from representatives of Sheffield and Newcastle Dioceses for members to consider some of the struggles other dioceses were facing and to reflect on and compare to our own situation. There will be an opportunity to make decisions on what to do at a future Diocesan Synod meeting.

Financial Impact of Covid-19

The lockdowns and various restrictions have had significant effects on churches' finances. This has impacted upon ability of churches to pay their Parish Share. Much time in meetings has been taken up by considering the implications and how these can be addressed.

Most of the Parish Share pays clergy stipends, so it is important that the Diocese has sufficient funding to pay clergy stipends throughout the year, and despite a shortfall of nearly 6%, did so in 2020.

Oxford Diocese agreed not to increase Deanery Shares for 2021 despite an increase in costs. Reading Deanery agreed not to increase 2021 Parish Shares (though churches on a Recovery Plan will see an increase).

Reading Deanery managed to pay 100% of its 2020 Deanery Share . It does not appear likely that Reading will be able to pay 100% of its 2021 Deanery Share. This is worrying.

REinspired

Reinspired sessions took place at the beginning of the year. Lockdown stopped these. With all the issues that schools had to cope with, it was reassuring that some schools were keen to continue to invite Reinspired to support their RE teaching. With the restrictions most schools could not invite volunteers in person – and most of the volunteers are above shielding age. Then only the managers were able to lead some sessions in some schools. Later some volunteers were invited to make short videos of answers to questions, so the children could have a virtual input from volunteers that they recognised.

CTC Holiday Club

Owing to Covid-19 the CTC Holiday Club did not take place in 2020. It may not be able to take place in 2021 as preparation needs to start in the Spring. Let us pray that most of the population is vaccinated against Covid-19 for it to be possible to take place this year.

Mark Burton

Annex A - VOLUNTEERS AND ACTIVITIES

This statement describes how many of the activities involved in running and sustaining the Church are organized and who as an individual or as a team has responsibility for the various activities. New volunteers and members are always welcome.

Worship and Ministry		Building	
Intercessions	Sandra Rice now Susie Downer	Verger	vacant
Servers	Elaine Bloomfield	Centre Manager	David Howell
Sacristan	Vacant	Gardens	Tony & Juliet Holland
Sidespeople	Richard Cunningham	Maintenance team	vacant
Sound system	Douglas Rae	Hall Manager	Jon Barclay
Altar linen	Susie Downer	Display Boards	Richard Cunningham
Lesson Reading	Joy Abel		
Flowers	Wendy Howell		
Alpha			
Children's church: Debbie Burton, Mark Burton, Bene Theibault, Sandra Rice & Hazel Wright		Choir and Music Group Felicity Chapman and Team	
Bible study notes			
Chalice			
Fellowship Groups			
Monday evening	Rosemary Weekes		
Thursday (day)	Ruth Thomas		
Tuesday (even)			
Wed Bible Study			
Thursday Fellowship	Shirley Corti		
Study & Discussion	Mark Burton		
Living with Loss	Gillian Wilson		
Activities			
H&S	Douglas Rae		
Safeguarding	Joy Abel		
Centre Drop-Ins	Wendy & David Howell		
2 nd Friday Tea	Gillian Wilson & Team		
Last Friday Lunch	Juliet Holland		
Summer Gardens			
Busy Bees	Derek Chandler, Shirley Corti, Marianne Long, Wendy Moore, Mark Burton, Debbie Burton, Rene Hood and Roger Moore16		
Fund Raising	Wendy Howell and Team		
Catering Team	Shirley Corti		
Coffee Rota	Wendy Howell		

Annex B – CHARITIES

RESTRICTED FUND RAISING			
Receipts		Payments	
Unspent charity funds from 2019	£15	CIR Drop in Centre	£55
Donation	£150	Faith Christian Group	£55
		The Weller Centre	£55
Funeral Donations	£55	Mind	£55

