



## **Annual Report, Accounts, and Papers for the Annual Meetings**

**Sunday 9th May 2021, 10.40am**

Church Road, Earley, RG6 1EY

 EarleySaintPeters

[www.earleystpeters.org.uk](http://www.earleystpeters.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number 1128997

## **Introduction**

For the second year running we hold our Annual Meetings in the face of the pandemic and the ensuing restrictions, though the progress of vaccinations means we can hope to see a cautious return to more elements of normal life over the coming months. Covid-19 and the parish's response to it form the inevitable backdrop of all that follows in our Annual Reports. Of course, many elements of parish life (including, during the three 'lockdowns', the rhythms of prayer and worship in the building) came to an abrupt halt in 2020. There is an inevitable sadness and grief as we look back at the year and reflect on what we have experienced.

However, both in these Reports and between the lines of them, we can see 2020 was also a time where we worked together to respond to great and unexpected need. Over 150 households received a regular phone call during the first lockdown, and about twenty people continue to be contacted regularly. Our new weekly email update goes to almost 250 people. Almost every week since March 2020 we have shared services online, including recording weekly school assemblies in term-time. We joined other local churches and the Town Council to provide essential volunteer help with shopping, befriending, and medication collection to those most in need. Bible studies, children's groups, social events, Tots and Teddies, Choir and Song School rehearsals, and routine meetings have taken place with social distancing and / or online. Our church's profile in the wider community has been much increased by the range of online and in-person ways we have stayed connected and reached out beyond ourselves. There is a lot to be thankful for, and thank you to everyone who made it possible.

There is a financial challenge we need to continue to address. There was of course a substantial drop in income because of the closure of the Hall and several periods without public worship. But thank you to everyone who donates to our church's work, including those who joined the Parish Giving Scheme. We continue to encourage everyone to review our giving and to consider whether we might join this easy to administer and effective way of giving.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed so much to keeping our church family connected in these long, difficult days. We now turn to the year ahead, praying for God's guidance and our church's growth as we emerge from the pandemic; in particular, for God's wisdom about which elements of our church life we can recover at which stage, and what new things we may be being called to do together in his service.

**The Reverends Hannah & Philip Hobday, Parish Priests**

**20th April 2021**

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### **Appendix – Financial Statements**

The financial statements are available online at or by asking the Parish Office for a paper copy.

## Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading

### Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Sunday 9th May 2021, 10.40am

Earley St Peter's Church, Church Road, Earley RG6 1EY

#### A G E N D A

1. Appointment of Tellers
2. Annual Meeting of Parishioners on 18th October 2020
  - (a) Approval of Minutes page 5
  - (b) Matters Arising *not covered elsewhere in the Agenda*
3. Churchwardens' Report page 6
4. Election of TWO Churchwardens  
*Churchwardens are elected annually and may serve for up to six years. Candidates must be proposed and seconded by persons entitled to attend the Annual Meeting of Parishioners and forms are available from the Parish Administrator. Nomination forms must be submitted to the Parish Administrator before the Meeting.*
5. To note the date of the Archdeacon's Visitation [not yet fixed]
6. Any other Business
7. Date of Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2022 – Sunday 8th May 2022, 11.15am

*Note: those entitled to vote at this meeting must be either*

- (a) persons whose names are entered on the church electoral roll of the parish; or*
- (b) persons resident in the parish whose names are entered on a register of local government electors by reason of such residence.*

## Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading

### Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on Sunday 18th October 2020 in Church at 10:40 am

The meeting opened with prayers led by the Rev. Philip Hobday

Details of attendance and apologies for the absence were recorded in the register

Present: 51

Apologies: 5

#### 1. Appointment of Clerk to the Meeting and Tellers

Clive Tillin appointed clerk

Rev Phillip Hobday and Clive Tillin appointed Tellers

#### 2. Annual Meeting of Parishioners Minutes 7<sup>th</sup> April 2019

2a Minutes proposed by Catherine Rawcliffe, seconded Trotter Hatch

2b Matters arising - no matter arising from said minutes

#### 3. Church Wardens report

Report was tabled and accepted

#### 4. Election of two Churchwardens

Two candidates put their names forward

Anne Sheen proposed by Clive Nunn and seconded by Judith Bowler

Clive Nunn proposed by Anne Sheen and seconded Judith Bowler

5. Note the date of the **Archdeacon's Visitation** (where new churchwardens are sworn in their office) is to be Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 at Rev Philip Hobday to officiate due to Covid restrictions.

6. **Any Other Business** - Nothing tabled

7. The date of the annual meeting of Parishioners is Sunday 9th May 2021, 11.15am in the Church Hall.

## Annual Meeting of Parishioners: Agenda Item 3

### 2020 Report from the Churchwardens

For reasons that are all too familiar to all of us, 2020 has been a very strange and challenging year. At the start of the year nobody could have foreseen what was to come; it would not be an exaggeration to say that the life of the church faced a greater challenge than at any time in its history. Even two world wars did not stop public worship, including communion, from taking place on a regular basis. Looking back over the year from a distance of nearly four months on, with strict control measures still largely in place, we feel humble and intensely grateful for the enormous efforts that have been made by so many people so that the life of the church could continue, to the benefit of as many people as possible, mindful of the need to mitigate the risks involved as far as reasonably possible.

Our gratitude is aimed at three specific groups. First, and most importantly, our vicars have made superhuman efforts to ensure that as many people as possible could feel connected to the church at all times, with a permanent high-profile online presence even during those times when communal worship was permitted (something that sadly came to an end all too soon as a second lockdown was implemented). New skills were rapidly acquired and considerable time, effort and imagination was expended in creating a strong online presence courtesy of Facebook and YouTube.

The second group who deserve our collective gratitude is the army of volunteers who made public worship possible during those times when this was permitted. It would be invidious to name each and every volunteer here, given that a list of names would undoubtedly but inadvertently remain incomplete, but special mention must be made of the long service provided by John Cull in respect of churchyard maintenance, something that he has been diligently and cheerfully managing for many years. John has decided that now is the right time for him to step back from that role and so we are now looking for someone to take on this task, which is largely one of contractor oversight. We would like to record our sincere thanks to John for his years of dedicated service.

In addition to the usual volunteer duties that are willingly undertaken by many individuals during more normal times, the pandemic created additional tasks in order for communal worship and private prayer to take place, including (but not limited to) thorough cleaning activities, guiding worshippers to the pews in order to maximise capacity while maintaining the necessary social distancing. During the first lockdown a number of people volunteered to be on a telephone rota to maintain contact with all parishioners on a regular basis. We were gratified that enough volunteers came forward to fulfil the additional roles, but a significant burden continues to fall on a relatively small number of people, so we are keen to find additional volunteers willing to join the various rotas. Training will of course be provided, and no tasks are in themselves particularly onerous, so please don't be shy!

Finally, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to all our parishioners for continuing to support the church financially during the pandemic. Despite the fact that the church had to remain closed to worshippers

for a substantial part of the year, our income held up well thanks to the generosity of everyone. The Parish Giving scheme, introduced at the beginning of the year, attracted many members as the year progressed, while others continued to fill their envelopes and hand them in whenever the opportunity arose. Still others sent in cheques, with the result that our regular income for the year, although lower than in previous years, was well above the level that might have been expected as a result of the exceptional circumstances. The parish finances were also boosted by a very generous legacy, but it would be a big mistake to rely on such windfalls. The Treasurer's report makes it clear that, despite prudent financial management, our outgoings continue to exceed our income by a significant amount, so we would appeal to all parishioners to review their regular giving with this in mind.

As your churchwardens, we carry a considerable responsibility for ensuring that the day-to-day running of the church and the maintenance of its properties is carried out safely and effectively. Arguably the most important aspect of this responsibility is that of the welfare of the congregation, and we trust that our efforts to provide support in this regard have been satisfactory. Amongst other things, during the pandemic we have been busy with the creation of risk assessments and various rotas concerned especially with activities made necessary by the pandemic. In this respect we have been supported by our pastoral team, for which we are immensely grateful, who have maintained regular contact with the most vulnerable members of the parish. Sadly, there are a few people who for various reasons were unable to attend services in person when these took place, and who do not have the ability to remain in touch with St Peter's via the Internet, and for whom the telephone have been the only means of staying in touch. It is our sincere hope that nobody has felt forgotten or isolated during the year; we are always available to provide a 'listening ear'.

Throughout the national church, safeguarding continued to be a high-profile topic, and we are most grateful to Jenny Carr for her diligence in ensuring that we were fully compliant with the necessary regulations, not just during the year but for several years previously. Sue Manser has kindly agreed to take on the important role of Safeguarding Officer in Jenny's place, for which we are most grateful. Many of us have undergone specialist training in matters of safeguarding; those of us in leadership positions have undertaken relevant additional training. As a result of this we feel better able to recognise the signs of abuse of any kind, and understand how best to deal with such. We pray that we will never be put to the test in this regard.

As the year drew to a close we were relieved to be able to open our church for services at Christmas, even though these were of necessity strictly managed in terms of attendance and very different in content from what we would normally enjoy at this time of the year. Nevertheless, as the year finally drew to a close, we looked forward to a further year of considerable uncertainty and continuing challenges. However, we remain optimistic – confident, even – that your churchwardens' report next year will be reporting on a much more positive twelve months.

*Clive Nunn and Ann Sheen*

# Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading

## Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 9th May 2021

immediately following the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Earley St Peter's Church, Church Road, Earley RG6 1EY

### A G E N D A

1. Appointment of Tellers
  
2. Annual Parochial Church Meeting on Sunday 18th October 2020
  - (a) Approval of Minutes page 10
  - (b) Matters Arising *not covered elsewhere in the Agenda*
  
3. Statutory Reports & Accounts\*

*To receive and discuss the following reports:*

  - (a) Safeguarding Report page
  - (b) Report on the Electoral Roll 12
  - (c) Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and Activities of the Parish 13
  - (d) Annual Fabric Report 19
  - (e) Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod 22
  
4. Annual Financial Statements & Accounts\* *see Appendix*

*The Annual Parochial Church Meeting is invited to:*

  - (a) adopt the Annual Financial Statements & Accounts
  - (b) approve the appointment of an Independent Financial Examiner
  
5. Elections & Appointments\*
  - (a) PCC Members

*To elect FOUR lay representatives to the Parochial Church Council (until APCM 2024)*
  - (b) Sidespersons

*To approve the appointment of sidespersons – a list will be available at the Meeting*



6. Matters of Parochial or General Church Interest\*

*Anyone entitled to attend the meeting may ask any question about parochial church matters, or discuss matters of parochial or general church interest.*

7. Date of next Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2022 – Sunday 8th May 2022, immediately following the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

8. Date of first Meeting of the new Parochial Church Council – S, 7.30pm, by video-conference

9. Closing Prayer

*Note: to vote at this meeting, lay persons must be on the electoral roll*

*Items marked \* are statutory business regulated by Part 9 of the Church Representation Rules 2020*

**Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading**  
**Minutes of the Annual Meeting Parochial Church Meeting**  
**held on Sunday 18th October 2020 in Church at 10.45am**

Present: 51

Apologies: 5

**1. Appointment of Tellers & Clerk**

Rev Phillip Hobday and Clive Tillin were appointed as tellers, Clive Tillin appointed as Clerk

**2. Annual Parochial Meeting on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

- a. The minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2019, having been circulated were approved as a correct record and signed by Rev. Philip Hobday, these were proposed by Jenny Carr and seconded by Tim Smith.
- b. Matters arising – none

**3. STAUTORY REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

- a. Safeguarding Report – A report was tabled and accepted. A vote of thanks was giving to Jenny Carr for 10 years' service. She is to retire this year. Sue Manser has agreed to take on the role.
- b. Report on the Electoral role – A report was tabled and accepted
- c. Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and Activities of the Parish – Report was tabled and accepted, proposed by Maggie Nunn, seconded by Sue Manser
- d. Annual Fabric Report – A report was tabled and accepted
- e. Report of the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod – A report was tabled and accepted. A vote of thanks was giving to Elaine Watts for her years of service on the Deanery and is standing down this year.

**4. Annual Financial Statement and Accounts**

- a. Annual Financial Statement and accounts, the accounts were circulated and adopted, proposed by Mary Brooke, seconded by Trotter Hatch.
- b. Approve the appointment of the Independent Financial Examiner - Vernon Gosling Friday Ltd, proposed by Mary Brooke seconded by Trotter Hatch. A vote of thanks was giving to Helen Price and Ann Munday for their hard work throughout the year.

**5. Election and Appointments**

- a. Deanery Synod Elections (*until APCM 2023*) Sheila Jordan
- b. PCC Members (*Until APCM 2023*) Tim Smith, Mary Brooke, Catherine Rawcliffe & Clive Tillin. Mary Ellaby and Judith Tiplady are stepping down a vote of thanks was given  
All above appointments were appointed *nem:com*
- c. Sidesperson – the list of Sidesperson were approved and accepted

6. **Matters of Parochial or General Church Interest**

It was reported that Diana Lea is to stand as PCC Secretary following this year's AGM, as Clive Tillin is standing down – A vote of thanks was given to Clive.

7. **Date of next Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2021** – Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021, immediately following the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

8. **Date of first Meeting of the new Parochial Church Council - TBA**

9. **Closing Prayer – Rev Phillip Hobday**

**Meeting closed at 11:10am**

**Parish Safeguarding Officer: Jenny Carr**

During this year of Covid-19 restrictions, when many groups have not been able to meet in person, it has been important to maintain our Safeguarding actions as strongly as ever. The Clergy, Wardens, the Safeguarding Officer, and the PCC have worked hard, meeting or conferring by Zoom and by phone. Decisions affecting Safeguarding have been confirmed by the PCC at their Zoom meetings. Risk assessments and protocols have been put in place to ensure that when groups that include children and or vulnerable adults are able to meet in person, it is done as safely as possible and is compliant with changing Covid regulations. We have also agreed protocols to make Zoom meetings for young people as safe as we can, making sure that group leaders, parents and young people have a strong awareness of safeguarding when meeting online. We are working hard to be compliant with requirements as they evolve. The goal is always to ensure, as far as we possibly can, the safety and wellbeing of all members our church community and to make sure that reporting channels and procedures are clear and transparent, should anything cause concern. In all this, we adhere firmly to the advice, model policies and guidelines issued by the Diocese and The Church of England.

The training of volunteers and PCC members has continued to take place online. Although there have been few new recruits because of the pandemic, DBS initial checks and renewals have continued to take place for all who need them. The Safeguarding Policy has had its annual review by the PCC. The Safeguarding policy is clearly displayed in the Church Hall and on our website. We commend to you the handbook "Promoting a Safer Church", a copy of which is available to anyone who wishes to see it. The "Promoting a Safer Church" policy statement is available on the Church of England website.

There have been two significant changes this year. The Parish Administrator, Mary Frank, in consultation with the Safeguarding Officer, now maintains the DBS register and the Training register. We are grateful for her efficient and sensitive oversight of these. It is very important to have accuracy and continuity in these areas. The Parish Administrator is also able to process DBS applications. Last autumn Jenny Carr stood down as Safeguarding Officer after 10 years in the role and the PCC confirmed Sue Manser as the new Safeguarding Officer. A handover meeting by Zoom was held on 24th November 2021 with Sue, Mary and Jenny. After this, Jenny handed over all hard copies of documents and the keys to the Safeguarding filing cabinet in person to Mary. The Diocese has been informed of this change. Sue has undertaken the necessary training for this role. Jenny would like to thank the Clergy, Wardens and the PCC for their unfailing support during her years in the role.

Safeguarding has remained as a standing item on the PCC agenda throughout the year. There have been no incidents of concern reported to the Safeguarding Officer this year.

APCM Agenda Item 3(b)  
Report on the Electoral Roll

**Electoral Roll Officer: Mary Parkinson**

The Electoral Roll has now been revised and anyone else wishing to be added to the Roll will need to submit a form after the Annual Meetings. There are 193 names on the Roll, 1 fewer than the last Annual Meeting.

APCM Agenda Item 3(c)  
Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council

**Parish of Earley St Peter, Reading  
Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council 2020**

**Background**

The Parish of Earley St Peter is a Church of England parish within the Diocese of Oxford. It is part of the Reading Deanery within the Archdeaconry of Berkshire, which is overseen on a day-to-day basis by the Bishop of Reading (The Right Reverend Olivia Graham).

The Parochial Church Council (Council) is in charity law the church's trustee body (Registered Charity No.: 1128997). Its membership, powers, and operation is regulated by the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 and the Church Representation Rules 2020. Its principal function is to co-operate with the clergy 'in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical' (s.2(a) of the Measure).

The Council also has trustee responsibilities for (i) St Peter's Church Halls, Church Road, Earley RG6 1EY and (ii) 33 Clevedon Drive, Earley RG6 5XF. The Vicar and Churchwardens are trustees for (i) the site of Earley St Peter's CE Aided Primary School, Earley RG6 1EY and (ii) 77 St Peter's Road, Reading RG6 1PD.

This Annual Report and the attachments have been approved by the PCC to fulfil the reporting requirements of Rule M5(1) of the Church Representation Rules 2020.

**Membership**

PCC membership is regulated by Rule M15 of the Church Representation Rules and in 2020 was:

*Ex-officio*

(a) *All Clergy licensed to the benefice (Rule M15(1)(a))*

The Revd P P Hobday (Chairman)

The Revd H E Hobday

The Revd P H Price (until 5th May 2021)

- (b) *TWO Churchwardens elected by the Annual Meeting of Parishioners for one year (Rule M15(1)(e))*  
Professor Ann Sheen (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr Clive Nunn

*Elected members*

- (c) *FOUR representatives on the Deanery Synod, elected for three years (Rule M15(1)(i))*  
Mrs Sheila Jordan (until APCM 2023)

- (d) *TWELVE lay members elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting for a period of three years, with one-third standing down every year (Rule M15(1)(j))*

2018-2021

Mrs Judith Bowler  
Mrs Jennifer Carr  
Mrs Sue Manser  
Mrs Rosie Rogers  
Mr John Weston

2019-2022

Mrs Sara Ballard  
Mrs Sheila Jordan  
Mrs Helen Price  
Mrs Anne Richardson

2020-2023

Mrs Mary Brooke  
Mrs Catherine Rawcliffe  
Mr Timothy Smith  
Mr Clive Tillin

*Co-opted members*

- (e) *Not more than FIVE members co-opted by the Council for one year (Rule M15(1)(k))*  
Dr Elaine Watts (Lay Minister)

*Attending*

- (f) *The following persons are invited to attend all PCC Meetings (Rule M24(4)):*  
Mrs Diana Lea (PCC Secretary); Dr Mary Frank (Parish Administrator).

## **Appointments**

### *Trustees of The Keys Academy Trust*

The Revd H E Hobday, a Council Member, serves as a Trustee of The Keys Academy Trust (which covers Earley St Peter's CE Aided Primary School) (until 14th June 2021).

*Local Governing Body of Earley St Peter's CE Aided Primary School:* Nine Foundation Governors are nominated by the Trustees of the Keys Academy Trust to the Local Governing Body, in consultation with the Diocesan Board of Education and the PCC. The Governing Body and PCC believe one of these places should be available for the Incumbent. The Foundation Governors in 2020 were:

*until 30th June 2020*

Mr Andrew Barlow

Mrs Beverley Williams

*until 18th March 2021*

Mrs Jane Peters

*until 30th June 2021*

Mrs Nicola Taylor

Mr Robert Pierce

The Reverend H E Hobday

*until 30th June 2023*

Mrs Clare Ferris (Chair of Governors)

*until 11th February 2025*

Mr Timothy Briffitt

*Representative to Churches Together in Earley and East Reading (CTEER):* Dr Elaine Watts.

*Deanery Synod:* All licensed clergy serve *ex-officio* on the Deanery Synod. The Revd H E Hobday serves as Assistant Secretary of the Deanery Synod (and so sits on the Deanery Standing Committee and the Deanery Mission & Pastoral Committee); The Revd Dr P P Hobday (as a representative of larger churches) sits on the Parish Share Committee.

## **Meetings & Notable Business**

The Council held five meetings in 2020 to discharge its statutory responsibilities. Four of these were by video-conference because of the Covid-19 restrictions. The pandemic and the parish's response to it were of course the dominant theme of the year, along with more normal business of overseeing church buildings, finances, worship, mission, and pastoral care.

The Annual Meetings took place in person on 18th October 2020 and Professor Ann Sheen and Mr Clive Nunn were re-elected as Churchwardens.

Council decided to make grants in support of two charities, REinspired (working locally to deliver RE in schools) and CMS (towards Anna Sims, the missionary support by the parish in Peru); funds were also raised for a range of other charities.

As the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements show, loss of income from regular collections, hall bookings, and weddings/funerals – as well as the cancellation of all fundraising events – was a major challenge in the year. Thanks to the sterling work of the Parish Office team, we have made the Hall available to groups and activities permitted by UK Government regulations. Moreover, the successful roll-out of the Parish Giving Scheme in early 2020 was vital because – before the pandemic – a substantial number of regular donors had joined this automated scheme which streamlines local administration / costs and promotes regular giving.

A Statement of Public Benefit needs to be considered.

### **Safeguarding**

The Council takes seriously its duty of care to the vulnerable and its legal responsibilities in church and charity law. It annually reviews the Safeguarding Policy and procedures in line with national and diocesan guidance. The Parish Safeguarding Officer, if not a Council member, has a standing invitation to present oral or written material at any Council or Standing Committee meeting and has access to the clergy and churchwardens at all times. The Parish Safeguarding Officer also has the right to attend team meetings about pastoral care and youth / children's work. Safeguarding is a standing item on all Council agendas. There are regular scheduled meetings between the parish priests and the Safeguarding Officer (sometimes with the churchwardens) to oversee the implementation of safeguarding practice in the parish.

The Parish Administrator now also has assisting in the administration of training / disclosure procedures in her job description, and has worked hard to develop IT and filing systems to improve efficiency. We continue to regularly review those who need to undertake DBS checks and, following changes in Charity Commission guidance, all Council members now have current DBS checks. We continued to arrange training for members of the congregation who undertake voluntary work with children and young people and / or vulnerable adults as well as for Council members.

In these ways the Council has complied with the duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. The parish's response to the national Past Cases Review indicated there were no matters to report, historic or current, which we are aware of, and a draft Safeguarding Action Plan will be revised and brought back to Council in 2021 with a particular emphasis on the safer recruitment protocols for volunteers. The Council is exceptionally grateful to our outgoing Safeguarding Officer, Jenny Carr, for exceptional service over many years, and to Sue Manser taking on this role.



## **Committees**

### *(a) Standing Committee*

The Standing Committee is established under Rule M31 and ‘transact[s] the PCC’s business between meetings of the PCC.’ The Standing Committee met roughly every other month in 2020 to review upcoming Council business, plan Council agendas, and deal with any urgent or delegated business. Because of the difficulties in gathering the whole Council, many urgent questions about the parish’s Covid-19 response were dealt with by Standing Committee.

### *Membership*

*Ex-officio:* The Revd Dr P P Hobday (Chairman); Professor Ann Sheen (Churchwarden, PCC Vice-Chairman); Mr Clive Nunn (Churchwarden).

*At least TWO PCC members elected by the PCC to serve for one year:* Mrs H M Price (PCC Treasurer); Mr Clive Tillin (PCC Secretary) (until APCM 2020); The Revd H E Hobday.

Mrs Diana Lea (PCC Secretary) (from APCM 2020) and Dr Mary Frank (Parish Administrator) attend all meetings.

### *(b) Other Committees*

Under Rule M32, the Council may appoint Committees. These may include persons who are not PCC Members, and the minister is entitled to be an ex-officio member. No such Committees are currently appointed.

## **Review and Preview**

Early 2020 saw some major successes – the roll-out of the Parish Giving Scheme; the start of our new monthly ‘Xplore@4’ service aimed at fringe families; and implementing a new Church Suite system for managing contact details in an accessible but GDPR-compliant. This meant we started the first lockdown with much better communications systems in place, which was vital in staying in touch with people, and has also improved the efficiency of planning volunteer rotas and monitoring safeguarding training and clearances.

Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic and the national restrictions has meant radical changes to the way we work. We have offered pre-recorded digital worship almost every week, as well as Tots and Teddies and a primary school assembly weekly during term-time. As confidence in technology has increased we began regular morning prayer twice a week, and Sunday evening worship, as well as Children’s Church on Sunday mornings during lockdown. ‘Church@4’, a new family-focussed service, takes place on Sunday afternoons either on Zoom or in the church building. Bible studies and coffee mornings, as well as Lent study groups, also moved to Zoom.

To stay in contact, over 150 households received a weekly phone call from a small dedicated team for the twelve weeks of the initial national lockdown. This has evolved so that around twenty parishioners with particular needs are contacted regularly. A weekly update with news and information was

started in March, being sent to around twenty households by post and two hundred by email. A new YouTube channel was started which rapidly reached 100 subscribers, and our Facebook page is now followed by over 340 people (up from 220 in March 2020). We also set up a Facebook group for those in our church family with children and/or young people at home, which has enabled us to keep in touch with these families through regular posts as well as other forms of communication, including home delivered packs for Advent.

To care for those in particular need, with other churches in the area we founded the Earley Help Hub, which initially acted as a 'clearing house' to match volunteers with those who needed shopping or medication delivered. Now in partnership with the Town Council the Hub has expanded to provide free school meals during holidays and is looking to develop co-operation between different churches on issues like mental health and debt counselling.

The Revd P H Price, Assistant Curate, began to minister at St Catherine's Tilehurst; this was initially a short-term placement which then became a permanent transfer. Because of the lockdown, the parish's thanks had to be communicated privately. Pam Basinger stood down after many years as Fees Treasurer; we are grateful to her for her hard work, and to Ann Munday who succeeds her. The Council thanked Clive Tillin for his stalwart service as its Secretary and welcomed Diana Lea to the role. We welcomed Miles Welborn, training for ordination at Ripon College Cuddesdon, on placement from September 2020 and he rapidly became an established presence both in person and online.

Major challenges for 2021 will include recovery of income from hall use and giving; spreading the load of parish work across a wider range of volunteers; seeking sustainable patterns of online and onsite gatherings; and looking to put our growing work with children and young people on a more sustainable footing.

The Council thanks all those who give so generously of their time, money, and prayer to sustaining and growing the work of the parish, particularly during this most unexpected and difficult of years.

**Signature**

Approved by the Council by email correspondence in April 2021.

Signed .....

The Revd Dr P P Hobday (Chairman)

Date .....

## APCM Agenda Item 3(d)

### Report on the Fabric, Goods, and Ornaments of the Church

During the year routine maintenance and servicing has been carried out as normal wherever this is required. Miraculously, following an annual service, our ageing boilers once again proved to be safe and dependable. They are most certainly on borrowed time now, being over 30 years old.

Following the Quinquennial Inspection that was carried out in September 2019, problems with the rainwater goods have been rectified and work to repair stonemasonry and carry out essential repointing was begun. This work is planned to be completed early in 2021. We have been fortunate in being able to engage reliable and experienced contractors to undertake these tasks to the required standards at competitive rates. All work carried out was within the agreed maintenance budget for the year.

A special thank you is owed to John Cull, who as ever did sterling work in overseeing and assisting with the maintenance of the churchyard. After many years of service in this capacity John has decided to step back, and his replacement is now being sought. We are grateful to John and to all those who have helped him in this important task, whether as paid contractors or as volunteers. The churchyard is a public space and although it attracts relatively few visitors, especially at the back of the church, it is important that it is maintained in a presentable and safe condition. Big improvements in both respects have been made in recent years.

Turning to the church hall, during the year the PCC approved funds for a major refurbishment of the hall kitchen. Plans for this work were progressed with the expectation that the work would be carried out early in 2021. Some teething problems with the modified heating system were noted and were not fully resolved at the close of the year, but by and large, recent investments in improvements to the building, including new windows and doors, were paying dividends.

The vexed question of the future of the scout hut was put on a back-burner as a result of the pandemic but this remains an issue that will need to be adequately dealt with before much longer.

It is pleasing to report that no costly maintenance on our two domestic properties – 33 Clevedon Drive and 77 St. Peter's Road – proved to be necessary during the year.

Finally, in order to satisfy current legal requirements, in June asbestos surveys were carried out on the church, church hall and scout hut. Just two 'very low risk' instances of asbestos-containing material (ACM) were identified in the church and one instance of 'low risk' ACM was identified in the hall. No ACM was identified in the scout hut. 'Low-risk' ACMs are defined as those that are in good condition with adequate surface treatment, and which can be safely left in place.

The Church Inventory has been maintained with the help of Bob Ballard and Clive Tillin. By the time of the meeting it will have been checked and a copy will be available at the meeting.

APCM Agenda Item 3(e)

Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod

### **Reading Deanery Synod Report**

A new Deanery Synod was elected in 2020. The two clergy are *ex officio* members of the Deanery Synod. Sheila Jordan was elected as a Deanery Synod Representative. Almost all meetings were cancelled, though some took place by video-conferencing.

During the 2017-20 Synod, Hannah served as Assistant Secretary to the Synod as an *ex officio* member of the Standing Committee and Mission & Pastoral Committee. Philip was an elected member of the Parish Share Committee. The parish thanks Dr Elaine Watts who served for many years as a Synod Representative and did not seek re-election.