

ST MARY'S CHURCH HADLOW

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING FOR THE YEAR 2020

To be held on

Sunday 25th April 2021, 11.30 a.m. in St Mary's Church

Documents enclosed for the meeting:

Agenda for APCM on Sunday 25th April 2021, p.3

Minutes of Previous APCM Meeting, held 25 October 2020, p.4

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ST MARY'S CHURCH, HADLOW ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Sunday 25th April 2021, 11.30 a.m. in
St Mary's Church, Hadlow

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 25th October 2020
3. Election of TWO (2) Churchwardens
(*Two churchwardens to be chosen in accordance with the Churchwardens' Measure 2001*)
4. Election of ONE (1) parochial representatives of the laity to the Deanery Synod
5. Election of up to TWO (2) parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council
6. PCC statement on the appointment of Sides Persons
7. Report on the Electoral Roll (a copy of the Roll is available for inspection)
8. Adoption of The Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC, the activities of the Parish generally and the Financial Statements of the PCC for the year ending 31st December 2020
9. The appointment of an Independent Examiner
10. The Churchwardens' Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church*
(*in accordance with Section 5 of the Care of Churches & Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1999*)
11. Report on the proceedings of the Paddock Wood Deanery Synod*
12. Reports of the activities of the sub-committees of the PCC*:
 - a. Education;
 - b. Fabric;
 - c. Finance;
 - d. Outreach and Fundraising;
 - e. World Mission
13. Reports on other areas of the life of the Parish*:
 - a. Bell Ringers; Church Cleaning; Friends Together; Kibakwe Link; Music; Newsletter Delivery; Parish Visiting; St. Mary's Flowers; St. Mary's Hospital Car Service; Servers; Who Let the Dads Out?
14. The Vicar's reflections

* Reports for items 2 and 10 to 13 follow in this APCM booklet. The 2020 Annual Report & Accounts (item 8) is available from the St.Mary's website at www.stmaryshadlow.org.uk.

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of St Mary's Church, Hadlow held 25 October 2020

Held in Church on Sunday 25th October 2020

In the Chair:

Barbara Smith (Churchwarden)

Minutes taken by:

Martin Massy (PCC Secretary)

1. Opening remarks

The vicar, the Rev. Paul White, and his family were self-isolating whilst awaiting the result of a test for Covid-19 on a member of the family. Barbara Smith was approved by the PCC to chair the meeting on his behalf. BS welcomed everybody present in church and those watching via Zoom.

2. Members present

Officers of the current PCC: Barbara Smith, churchwarden (BS, Chair), Michael Payne, churchwarden (MP) and Martin Massy, Secretary and Treasurer (MM).

Plus 37 members present in church and watching via Zoom.

Apologies were received from: Mags Skelton, Vera Godsall, Francis Griffiths, Eve Griffiths, Carol Wickham.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 14th April 2019

The minutes of the 2019 APCM held Sunday 14 April 2019 were approved.

4. Election of Churchwardens

Nominations had been received for Michael Payne and John Speed, who were duly declared elected.

5. Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council (PCC)

Six members of the PCC were retiring: Jack Good, Katerina Nixon, Rachel Packham, Mark Totty, Kirsty Finch, Jenny Hopkins. We thank them very much for their valuable contributions to the PCC and to the work of the Church in the local community. We are very grateful that three of those members retiring have agreed to stand for re-election.

Based on the Electoral Roll, the Church Representation Rules specify the PCC should have 12 elected representatives of the laity. Three members remain on the PCC – Nicola Canham, Julia Miles and Lisa Porritt – leaving nine vacancies.

The following nine people were nominated for election to the PCC: Melissa Crawshay-Williams, Kirsty Finch, Jenny Hopkins, Janice Massy, Martin Massy, Steve Newell, Lee Kirk, Richard Hopkinson and Katerina Nixon. A vote being unnecessary, all were declared elected.

6. Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Deanery Synod

The terms of our three representatives to the deanery synod came to an end this year. We thank Francis Griffiths, Kelly Parsons and Val Newell for their contributions to the PCC and for acting as links between the PCC and deanery synod. From 2020, St.Mary's should have two representatives to the deanery synod. Val Newell has kindly agreed to stand for re-election. There being no other

candidates, Val was duly declared elected. There remains a vacancy for a deanery synod representative.

7. Appointment of Sides Persons

BS thanked our current Sides Persons, who play such an important role in making people feel welcome when they come to church, and asked whether they would be willing to serve again. The current Sides Persons were re-appointed.

8. Report on the Electoral Roll (A copy of the Roll is available for inspection)

MM thanked David Lear, who continues to act as our Electoral Roll Officer. There was a net loss of eight from the Electoral Roll, making 135 in 2020 compared with 143 at the time of the APCM in 2019. Seven deceased, six moved away, and we are very pleased to welcome five new members. MM named the deceased as: Michael Chilton, Barbara Fermor, Enid Jones, Derek Oakley, Tony Robinson, Jeremy Sandys-Winsch and Freddie Shaw. All would be remembered with sorrow and gratitude for their contributions to church life.

9. Adoption of The Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC, the activities of the Parish generally and the Financial Statements of the PCC for the year ending 31st December 2019

The Annual Report and Financial Statements for the calendar year 2019 were approved by the PCC on 16 March, and were available on the church website. MM thanked all those people whose contributions had made it happen. Particular thanks to Linda Yabsley for coordinating production of the APCM booklet and to David and Gabrielle Lear for their hard work in preparing the accounts.

MM summarised the accounts by saying that we had a small surplus for the year, mainly because of a substantial reduction in what we felt able to pay to the diocese and an exceptionally good year for fund-raising. We owe our thanks to the Outreach and Fund-Raising Committee for their hard work and ideas for fantastic events such as the Auction of Promises, Scarecrow Trail, Harvest of Talents as well as our usual Boot Fair.

2020 has of course turned out rather differently from what was expected. Income is lower, but savings on salaries (having no organist, and the parish administrator working reduced hours) and lower printing and energy costs have helped to keep our net income roughly in balance. Unfortunately, the savings included a smaller contribution as our parish offer, which covers only the cost of ministry and part of diocesan support costs. Our contribution to the diocese is meant to cover the cost of ministry, plus services provided by the diocese to parishes and its wider mission, which includes supporting ordinands and curates. The situation in 2021 could well be worse, depending on how the pandemic is resolved. As a result, we are likely to be able to offer even less to the diocese.

Despite the rather grim picture, MM reported that planned giving was holding up well, and thanked all those who were continuing to support St.Mary's financially.

MM also thanked the Finance team for their support throughout the year – Maurice Bush, Duncan Murray, Ian Thom, Barry Wheeler and John Speed – having a team to share the various activities makes the job as Treasurer so much easier. And we have been so fortunate in having help from Gabrielle and David Lear on all things accounting. Maurice has indicated that he wishes to step down as cashier, and MM thanked him for his service – even Maurice doesn't remember how long he has been doing this! – which has been quite exemplary. This means, however, that we will be looking for someone to replace him after things return to normal.

10. The appointment of an Independent Examiner

MM proposed that David Stephens be re-appointed as Independent Examiner. The motion was carried.

11. The Churchwardens' Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church

If we had been meeting here on 26 April, as was originally the intention, what Barbara and I had written in our report for 2019 would already have been out of date. Six months later and it is impossible to consider 2019 without putting it into the context of what has been happening so far this year. Indeed, ideas such as the promotion of a "Friends of Hadlow Parish Church" scheme and the creation of a downstairs refreshment area have been well and truly put on hold. The good news is that whilst Church Finances remain stretched, as we have already heard, the fabric of our beautiful Church currently remains substantially in good order.

This year has inevitably brought change for us all, not least to Nicky Harvey, and it would be remiss if we as Churchwardens were not to put on record at this time our thanks, on behalf of the Parish, for all that she did for us whilst at St. Mary's. To have to step up as Curate during a sabbatical was one thing; to have to then rewrite all our plans to lead us through the first three months of Covid was quite another.

But I am optimistic that this period of great uncertainty, and the inevitable change that it will bring, will be for the better for the community in Hadlow and the Church at St Mary's in particular. You only have to look at the wonderful attendance here today with 50 people at Lyanna's baptism and already we have seen the wonderful community spirit in such things as our own Church Foodbank. There again thanks must go to Sharon Vanns for all her hard work behind the scenes.

But greater than that I sense a real opportunity; an opportunity in which we can all be involved and that is the community spirit by which we meet here today and which, despite Covid, can be engendered throughout our wonderful village and surroundings.

Yes, it has been difficult and doubtless will continue to be so again. But if we all follow the guidelines, Vicar included, we will remain a safe community. And government rules, no matter how silly they seem, are there for a reason. No congregational singing in Church means no singing. Everyone signing in on every occasion they enter the Church means everyone. They are not rules for fun, even if they are an inconvenience, they are to make sure that everyone stays safe and John and I will be revisiting the key register to ensure every appropriate visit to Church can be tracked and traced. Communications at all levels is the most important thing, and just remember, the next time you sanitise your hands cleanliness is next to Godliness!

Returning to the subject of thanks, I should also mention Linda Wong for the wonderful altar frontal made and donated in memory of another wonderful lady, her late mother Florence. Thanks must also go to the bell tower team, who between them have not only redecorated, repaired and re-carpeted the ringing chamber but also financed it all from their own funds.

But there is one person above all others that I wish to thank on behalf of us all, and that is the person who suggested that I might wish to do this job! "You only have to be there a couple of Sundays a month", she told me; "everyone else knows what to do"! Well since then I have had the privilege of working alongside that lady, witnessing her consummate professionalism, not just in communicating with people but in dealing with situations. Her knowledge of all things health, safety and safeguarding compliance is outstanding, as is her wisdom in the way in which it is applied.

That lady is of course Barbara. Indeed, we would not be holding this APCM here today without Barbara for two reasons. Firstly, she has led the team to ensure that St Mary's is as Covid-secure now as it could possibly be and, secondly, rather than being able to simply step down quietly as she intended, she was asked to step up to the task of chairing this meeting at short notice due to Paul being unfortunately indisposed. God works in truly mysterious ways! But we all wish Paul and his family well and his son Henry a speedy recovery. Thanks must also go to Christopher for stepping in at the 10 o'clock service and I personally believe that Paul made precisely the correct decision not to attend.

I said to Barbara only last night: “what else could possibly go wrong”? She replied, “I’ve just been watching the yew trees swaying in the wind, let’s hope we don’t have a power cut”! It was only later when I turned on the news that I discovered that this weekend’s inclement weather was down to “Storm Barbara”; coincidence or what! Anyway, Martin wishes to also say a few words but please join with me in thanking Barbara and wishing her well with all her plans for the future.

Michael Payne

MM also thanked Barbara for her service as churchwarden over the last five and a half years and reflected how much he had enjoyed working with her as churchwarden for four of those years and the spirit of teamwork as well as her warmth and capability in the role. MM presented Barbara with a gift to show our appreciation. We will miss her, but wish her all the best as she moves to be closer to her daughter.

12. Other Reports

BS noted that reports on all other areas of church life were in the documents available from the church website.

13. The Vicar’s reflections

The vicar’s reflections are in two parts, the first written for the APCM originally planned for April, with an update in October for the actual APCM.

Vicar’s reflections for the April APCM

I want to begin this year’s reflection with heartfelt thanks to three fellow-ministers in Christ’s service: Firstly, a huge ‘thank you’ to Rev’d Andrew Axon for chairing this APCM as Area Dean, and for all he has done in that role and since he arrived in our Deanery. I shall say no more because he will be embarrassed to read it out but he has been a good support to me and to others. Thank you, Andrew.

I also want to say a huge ‘thank you’ to Rev’d Nicky Harvey, not only for looking after this wonderful church during my time away but for all she has done for this church and our community during her entire time with us. Thank you, Nicky, you are much appreciated not only by me, but by everyone in this room.

Finally, thanks are always due to Rev’d Christopher Miles, who has not only been a support to Nicky during my sabbatical but has been a constant source of support and wisdom for my whole time here. Thank you, Christopher.

I am writing this reflection at the end of February, on the last day before my sabbatical begins. If everything goes to plan then, by the time of St. Mary’s APCM at the end of April, I should just have returned from Tanzania and should be thinking about going to West Africa shortly. However, as I write, it seems that the world is shutting itself down to prevent the spread of coronavirus so it is just as feasible that we shall all be in quarantine! The archdeacon will have to advise on the legality of an APCM conducted by disinfected conference call. We lack some guidance from the past as I don’t think they had APCMs during the Black Death, for which I am sure they were grateful.

Looking back to church life in 2019 I make no apology for wanting to start, once again, from a place of thankfulness. It is very easy to get caught up in a spirit either of nostalgia or of competitiveness and to then spend all one’s energy comparing church life either with the past or with how we imagine other churches are faring. The danger with doing either is that we miss all the good things that are currently happening here. We do need to look to the future, and I will come to that in a moment, and we also need to value and build upon the past but unless we give thanks for the present we run the risk of missing the gift that God is giving to us right here and right now. Of course, we face both demographic and financial pressures that are increasingly common across the Church of England and, indeed, across many other churches, but we are also richly blessed at St

Mary's in so many ways, not least because we are the people who are called to be the Body of Christ in this place and at this time and if that is not a privilege and a blessing I don't know what is.

Last year I welcomed the growth and success of the Messy Church services, and that continues to be a place of real growth and joy in our church life. Each service seems to bring back not only the regulars but also new families. I was told by one mum that on the day of Messy Church, which started at 3.30 pm, her son had been pestering her from about 5.00 am that morning, asking when it would start. I apologise to her but how wonderful to hear a young person pestering to come to church! Messy Church has come from Nicky's energy, creativity and love of craft materials and we need to work together to ensure that Messy Church can continue when the inevitable happens and Nicky moves on.

The same applies also to our Café Plus meetings, which have been a blessing to a different age group. We can become obsessed by the idea that church growth means youth work but there is a great deal to be said about becoming more intentional about looking after our older people. So this, coupled with the Holiday at Home and the possible appointment of an Anna Chaplain could be a real focus of our future ministry as a church.

Although 2019 did not contain any ordinations for Nicky (unlike the previous 2 years) it was great to see two members of our congregation, Kelly and Francesca, be accepted for ordination training and begin their courses. It was also great to welcome Andrew Cameron here on placement and to work with the other students from St Augustine's here for their mission project.

Thanks

A hugely important part of the purpose of the APCM is to acknowledge all the areas of church life and those who contribute to them. Now I can't thank everyone personally in this reflection, but I would certainly refer you to the APCM report which demonstrates very clearly how much goes on here, and how many people play a vital part in keeping this church the vibrant community that it is. This event is a reminder that church is not something that is done to you, but it is only possible when it is something that is done together, with everyone using their different skills and callings. I think that St Paul has one or two things to say about that.

Whilst I can't thank everyone by name there are some people that I must thank personally, not only on my own behalf but on behalf of us all.

Firstly, everyone should know that this church and this parish simply could not function without all the hard work of Janice Massy, our parish administrator. Administration is actually one of the gifts of the holy spirit and I have no doubt that Janice has that gift! Unless you have seen behind the scenes of how the parish works you probably have no idea of how much there is to do but the rotas, newsletters, wedding, funeral and baptism bookings, dealing with the photocopier, trying to get any sense out of the vicar is a massive job. And, of course, Janice also does a huge amount organizing our Fundraising and Outreach events, which are so vital to our shared life. Thank you, Janice!

Of course also huge thanks to our Churchwardens Michael and Barbara. They have been hugely supportive and hardworking. Unless you have been a churchwarden it is hard to imagine just how much goes into the job but, a bit like being a vicar, it is a lot more than carrying sticks around on a Sunday. I really appreciate all that they do. Sadly Barbara is stepping down as Churchwarden with effect from today (having served her time in full, with no time off for good behavior) but I am pleased she is continuing to act as our parish safeguarding officer for the time being.

Huge thanks also to Martin Massy who has done a magnificent job as treasurer, PCC secretary and as convenor of the fabric committee. A number of very big jobs which are little seen by the congregation. Thank you, Martin!

On the subject of the gift of Administration, thank you also to Linda Yabsley who has acted as our PCC minute taker this year. Thank you, Linda.

Of course, we also need to thank the PCC and Deanery Synod members who give up evenings throughout the year to help guide the life of the church. Huge thanks to everyone who has served in that capacity and to those who have put themselves forward for the new PCC.

One of our chief characteristics in this church is the high standard of our music and our choir. I must therefore offer huge thanks to Antony Le Fleming for all he has done since joining us. Thanks too to Michael Pound, to Francis Griffiths, Sue Mason and to all the members of the choir, both senior and junior, for augmenting our worship so beautifully every week.

But, of course, there are so many others: those who run Coffee Pots and Tiny Tots, Who Let the Dad's Out, our Men's and Ladies Breakfasts, the sidesmen, the flower ladies, those who run children's work, the servers, the readers, the intercessors, the choir, those who do church watch, our hospital car service, our bell ringers, Anne Hughes for acting as verger, those who clean, those who sit on committees, those who do teas and coffee after church. Thank you all, everyone, give yourselves a round of applause.

Golden Green

As you know I am vicar not only of St Mary's Hadlow, but our parish also includes the Mission Church at Golden Green. I therefore need to say a few words about the ministry which is happening there.

The highlight of the church year in Golden Green is undoubtedly the Christmas Carol service. That service is always packed out, we have a keyboard player, a mini choir, mince pies, mulled wine and it is great fun. Christmas 2019 was no exception on that front; indeed it may have been more packed than ever, despite Hartlake Road being flooded again that evening.

Sadly, attendance at the other services we sought to lay on at Golden Green was very poor and the decision was taken last year to stop the monthly services. You may or may not recall but before my arrival here the decision had been taken by Clifford not to take monthly services, but I sought to re-boot it and have tried a number of different things there over the years. It seems that those who live in Golden Green who wish to go to church will travel out of the village to go to other churches, either here or Tonbridge or elsewhere and there does not seem to be a huge appetite for monthly church there. It was quite telling that when we stopped the services I wrote a piece for the Hamlet newsletter asking people for any suggestions they might have about how we could do things differently and there wasn't a single response.

We shall continue to celebrate Christmas and Easter in the mission hall, shall continue to put up posters and newsletters in the notice boards there and be available to all who need us but, for the time being, we are not worshipping there on a regular basis. Of course, we remain open to thinking again as circumstances change.

What comes next?

So, what next for St Mary's over the coming year?

As already flagged up we do face a number of challenges in the year ahead and, whilst celebrating our blessings, we need to face the future realistically.

At some point during the next 12 months Rev'd Nicky will be moving on, no doubt, to a parish of her own. That will be a challenge and a huge adaptation for us all and will doubtless cause a period of 'mourning' in the church. We need to be prepared for that.

We also face the challenge of a gradual decline in numbers as some of our older members are called home to glory and even some of our younger families find that their teenagers are pulling them in different directions on a Sunday morning.

Finally, we face an increased financial challenge. As we all know in our personal lives the cost of living never seems to go down and that applies equally to the costs of running a church. We need to get more intentional about our personal giving, but also more creative about the way we seek to support the finances of the church from other sources.

So there are challenges ahead, but there are also opportunities. I think that the biggest growth opportunity for the church comes from learning how to be of service to those around us. We are surrounded by endless need, whether our eyes are open to it or not, and if we seek to serve that need in the name of Christ then that is the best possible witness to the effect that being Christians has had on our lives. To serve others out of love, to be open with them about why we do it and to help them to find ways into making a response of their own is, in my view, far more powerful than simply fiddling with our worship and hoping that people will come. We need to be such good Christians out there that people will be clamouring to know what goes on in here. Our steadily growing work with the foodbank is an example of this kind of service but I have no doubt that every single person here knows someone in need – serve them in the name of Christ.

Conclusion

This is a good place, filled with good people, and there is no doubt that God is at work in this community. We must treasure that and not take it or each other for granted.

God willing, I look forward to being back with you on Trinity Sunday and to journeying on with you into God's future.

St Mary's APCM 2020 – October – The Vicar's Reflection – The Covid Update

When I came to write the reflection for today I was reminded that one of my last tasks before my sabbatical was to write the reflection for the APCM due to take place in April. I could have ripped that up and started again because it feels so out of date now, but I decided to read it out in full, before giving this update, for two main reasons:

1. One of the purposes of the APCM is to reflect on church life from the previous year of 2019 and, of course, all of that still applies regardless of what happened in 2020 and it would not be correct to re-interpret last year through the distorted lens of this year; and
2. Looking at that snapshot of church life from this current perspective is a reminder of the vibrancy of church life in this place.

Such a reminder could have the effect of being depressing as it highlights all the things which have changed since the first lockdown in March and all that is currently lacking in our church community compared to what was there before. I totally understand that and, believe me, as your vicar I feel that in every fibre of my being. I have never been the 'high-maintenance' sort who wears their stresses publicly, but I would simply say that you should not underestimate the mental burden of being in public ministry at this time. When you have been somewhere for a good few years, when you do have a good Christian community operating in many ways and in many spheres, and you see that all stripped away and all pared back initially to nothing more than a Facebook broadcast because even the church is locked to us, then that is tough, very tough. Although there is some hope in that, as I shall come to in a moment.

But looking back to what church life was like before COVID-19 should also be a source of encouragement. It reminds us that we are capable of so much more and that when restrictions are lifted, and although we don't know when that will be we do know that this won't last forever, then we know that we can re-build our worshipping community.

So I want to encourage us that the good times can return, what we have now is not all that there can be.

But we should not underestimate the challenges which lie ahead in rebuilding our church community. I mentioned some of those challenges in the reflection I just read and there is no doubt that Covid has increased the financial pressures and put on hold many of our more social outreach activities. Although things have improved since the first lockdown, and the mere fact we are back in church at all is testament to that, it is also quite possible that in the weeks and months ahead there will be varying levels of restrictions until such time as a vaccine is available.

But I do have hope. I’ll tell you why. Firstly, being stripped back of all the extras which go with church life, the social functions, the coffee, the boot fairs, the concerts and going back to the basics of daily prayer and the sacraments without adornments is not the worst thing in the world. If we are to look for good in the situation then I find that in being taken back to the basics of the Christian life. The early church prayed together and shared communion before they put together a social calendar. Whilst only priests are required by canon law to celebrate the daily offices I would encourage you all to pray every day and there are no excuses these days for not being able to – there are apps and books and Facebook streams aplenty. Pray and engage with the scriptures each day and get back to the roots of who calls you to this place and why.

My hope and my prayer is that having been stripped back to the basics of our Christian life and worship that we have the people and the spirit amongst us to put some things back together. But, as we do that, I would also urge a spirit of discernment. The task of 2021 is not to re-create the church of 2019, or 1919 or 1819. The task that lies ahead of us is to discern what we can do with the resources we have, what we need to do given the community we inhabit and, most importantly, what God calls us to do in this place. But we do have a lot of resources here and I am looking at them right now. If we want Hadlow to have a spiritual heart, and if we want that to be St Mary’s then we are not to use Covid as an excuse to back off and let other people get on with it, because if everyone does that then I can show you a church building in Hawkhurst which is being converted into flats. Sisters and brothers in Christ. No matter how long you have been here and no matter what jobs you have done for the church before you are not the past of St Mary’s – you are its present and its future. We are all called to pray, to evangelise, to worship and to play our role in the life of the church, whatever that may be. Because everyone has a role in God’s economy.

Part of the function of the APCM is to gather and recognise the huge diversity of roles that are exercised here and I shan’t repeat all the thanks from my previous reflection.

But there are some updates. Anthony Le Fleming has subsequently retired as our director of music and he goes with all our blessings and thanks. We shall be holding a proper send off for him next month and I am looking forward to hearing him play again. I thank Francis and Michael for stepping into that breach and I hope that we can start to re-introduce more music into our worship, especially when singing is allowed once again.

Rev’d Nicky Harvey has now been installed as the Vicar of Marden and I hugely delighted with that successful conclusion to her curacy, we are all hugely thankful for the ministry she exercised amongst us and we continue to bless her and pray for her new ministry there.

Barbara Smith has now stepped down as churchwarden and we all owe her a huge debt of gratitude for her hard work as both churchwarden and child protection officer. Barbara is moving to Midhurst in Sussex very shortly and she goes with all our thanks and blessings. Of particular note in the last six or seven months has been Barbara’s knowledge and expertise in matters relating to Health & Safety and the completion of risk assessments. Thank you.

Finally thank you to John Speed who has agreed to step up as church warden, which is no small step at this time. Obviously I have known John since I arrived, and many of you have known him a lot longer, and I am grateful that he has taken on this role – thank you John.

That’s quite enough from me for the moment – we have another APCM in April next year and I must stop talking before then. God bless, Paul

The meeting closed with The Grace

Signature

Date:

REPORTS FOR THE YEAR 2020

Agenda Item 10: Churchwardens' Report for the year 2020

2020 was like none other within living memory for the life of St Mary's Church. January and February were spent by the Churchwardens preparing for Paul's forthcoming sabbatical and the stepping up into his role for its duration by the Curate, Rev'd. Nicky Harvey.

In the event, the plans made, such as for visiting Clergy, had to be rewritten as Covid-19 brought total lockdown in March. Paul's sabbatical went ahead with his time out from the Parish but, unfortunately, he too was confined to home and was not able to fulfil his ambition of foreign travel to further his mission.

As in-person services were not allowed, Nicky brought technology to her aid and, using Facebook, streamed the worship of St Mary's to the community from her home chapel. The return to in-person worship led to the challenge of a comprehensive risk assessment undertaken by Barbara Smith. This led to obvious considerations such as hand sanitizer and the reduction of the number of chairs in the nave by over fifty percent with the occasional vestry becoming a store for these and soft furnishings. Other less obvious consequences meant roles had to adapt, or in some cases, continue to be on hold. Hence our thanks go to those on cleaning rotas, including brasses, and the flower arranging team. However, other rotas, too, necessary for the smooth running of worship have also been disrupted including the servers.

Moreover, the role of the sides people has had to adapt from the continuity of regular Church worship at the start of the year and through the subsequent stages of lockdown and restricted in person worship; a cycle that repeated itself several times. Hence whilst they have kindly remained on call, with exception of those trained in the covid-secure way that Church has had to be conducted when it has been possible to reopen, the normal meeting and greeting and other functions they perform have remained dormant for most of the year. Accordingly, there is no separate Sidespersons' Report for 2020 but we wish to thank them all for remaining on call throughout the year. They included: Gill Speed, Bet Brett, Claire Walter, Jenny Hopkins, Sylvia and Maurice Bush, Annie Young, Kirsty Finch, Carol Bramham, Penny Brandling-Harris, Mags Skelton, Carole Waters, Pam O'Sullivan, John Pierce, Jenny Nye, Heather Wills, Lee Kirk, and Anne Hughes.

Lockdown meant that the April APCM was postponed resulting in both a longer term of service as Churchwarden for Barbara Smith than she had intended, together with a delay to her moving plans. The positive in all this was Hadlow continued to benefit from her wisdom and quiet efficient organizational skills for a while longer! In the event the APCM was delayed until October, when Barbara stepped down but not before one final duty that she had to undertake due to circumstances, namely chairing the meeting itself. The thanks of the whole congregation and community of St Mary's was expressed to both her and Nicky Harvey on that occasion but should nonetheless be repeated here. Barbara was succeeded in her role as Churchwarden for the rest of the year by another very capable individual, John Speed.

Upon his return to the Parish, Reverend Paul streamed weekly worship live, initially like Nicky, from his home Chapel and ultimately from St Mary's Church by Zoom. We are all extremely fortunate for this, and one of a minority of Churches across the Diocese to have in this way been able to maintain regular worship throughout the year. Hence as Churchwardens we wish to place on record our thanks to Paul for his leadership in this, as well as in many other matters, throughout the year.

We should also record our thanks to the many other individuals who by their contributions have made our task as Churchwardens much less onerous than it would otherwise have been. It shows the Church at its best when it can reach out to the community of Hadlow and nowhere has this been more important this year than in the support that it has been able to show to those in need of our foodbank. In this respect thanks must go to all who have supported it and special mention must also be made of the part played by Sharon Vanns by her links with the needs of the village.

The Churchwardens' report must cover the fabric, goods, and ornaments of the Church. As in previous years, our priority in terms of the fabric has been to ensure the maintenance of our magnificent Alfred Monk organ. Mention should be made at this point of our gratitude as Churchwardens to Antony Le Fleming, who continued to benefit St Mary's with his musical genius until his retirement during 2020.

In addition, we have an obligation to undertake regular maintenance to systems including our fire and lightning protection; electrical systems and lighting, heating as well as general maintenance repairs. In this regard we are grateful to Martin Massy, convenor of the Fabric Committee, for making many of the arrangements.

Other areas regarding Church fabric to report include the south chancel window, which was repaired following an unfortunate incidence of vandalism early in the year. The unfortunate need for security has prompted a review of all Church keys and we would ask that anyone holding any key for legitimate reasons make sure that this is known to us. The bell ringing team must also be thanked, not only for redecorating the ringing chamber itself, complete with new carpet and other repairs, but also financing this work and undertaking it all themselves.

The need to stream services live led to the replacement of the router. As it is likely that even once the pandemic is over services will continue to be made available across the internet, a spotlight has been thrown upon the necessity for permanent upgrade to the recording system and facilities. Despite straitened financial times this is likely to become a priority for the year ahead. The advantages to this would include greater outreach for services from St Mary's to those unable to join in Church perhaps due to distance or infirmity as well as possibly being able to offer recordings of future joyous occasions including weddings and baptisms.

Michael Payne & John Speed

February 2021

Agenda Item 11: Deanery Synod Report

St. Mary's is part of the Paddock Wood Deanery and last year we were represented on Deanery Synod by Francis Griffiths, Kelly Parsons and Val Newell together with Rev Paul. Since the APCM Francis and Kelly have stepped down. Due to covid 19 there were only two meetings; the first was in person and the second by Zoom.

In the February meeting we had a presentation on "Called to Grow" which is an initiative involving parishes making a plan for growth to address the decline in church attendance with its spiritual and financial consequences. This means looking at what is good in our church life and at what new ventures the community would respond to with the aim of growing our congregation.

In the November meeting we updated each other as to how different parishes were conducting services and other church activities through lockdown and covid restrictions. It was encouraging to see that online ministries seem to be reaching a much wider audience than traditional church services.

Because of a shortfall in Diocesan finances it is likely that there will be a reduction in numbers of stipendiary clergy in future. This may mean parishes working together and sharing clergy, with possibly more lay ministry.

After an enforced break in our "normal" church activities and looking forward to being able to meet to worship again, we have the opportunity to consider how we can best serve the local community and fulfil our mission commitment.

Val Newell

February 2021

Agenda Item 12: PCC Committee Reports

Education Committee Report 2020

This has been a very difficult year, when it has been impossible for any groups to meet in person. All Messy Church plans had to be cancelled. However, we were able to distribute activity bags at Harvest and Christmas, which many families enjoyed. There are plans afoot for a children's hunt for symbols of the Passion around the village during Holy Week. Kelly will be leading a Zoom Lent course based on 'The Nail' by Stephen Cottrell. Nothing can replace the learning and growth that takes place in face to face meetings. We pray for the time when we can be together again.

Cathy Brill

Fabric Committee report

The Fabric Committee did not meet in 2020. The 2018 Quinquennial report raised various minor issues, some of which have been completed and others which we are addressing. Routine maintenance was carried out on the fabric (roof and guttering), the organ and humidifier, and fire extinguishers were serviced by a specialist company. We also secured a faculty on behalf of Hadlow Parish Council for the installation of temporary fencing round the May Memorial in the southwest corner of the churchyard, which had become unsafe.

The Fabric Committee comprises Anne Hughes, Duncan Murray, Martin Massy (Convenor), Maurice Wong, Michael Payne, Richard Hopkinson, Stephanie Ingham, Steve Newell.

Martin Massy, Convenor

Treasurer's Report

A report on the financial situation forms part of the 2020 annual report and accounts. I am very grateful to have the help and support of the finance team, comprising Maurice Bush, Duncan Murray, John Speed, Ian Thom and Barry Wheeler, and also of David and Gabrielle Lear who help enormously with payroll, accounting advice and preparation of the accounts. Maurice, Ian and Barry stepped down from their cashier/banking roles towards the end of the year, and I/we thank them for their loyal and dependable service. As things return to normal I/we would be grateful for offers of help with counting cash and banking. John does an invaluable job claiming Gift Aid, which contributed over £12,000 in 2020 (16% of our unrestricted income).

The envelope scheme has continued into 2021, but the envelopes cost over £90 per year, so we aim to phase them out (although the yellow Gift Aid envelopes will still be available). Several people switched in 2020 to a regular Standing Order (thank you!), which helps us with counting and banking (no need!), planning, and claiming Gift Aid. Gift Aid is an important source of income; if you have not yet completed a Gift Aid form for St. Mary's and would like to please contact John Speed or Martin Massy.

Thank you to all our donors; without you it would be very difficult to fulfil our aim of "promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical" as well as we would like (see objectives of the PCC in the annual report). Thank you again.

Martin Massy, Hon. Treasurer

Outreach & Fundraising Committee

In January 2020 the Outreach & Fundraising Committee had a packed programme of events planned for the forthcoming year., but Covid-19 put paid to most of that. By the time the first lockdown came into force in March, only two events had taken place: a concert by the East Peckham Silver Band and a quiz evening – both in February.

Our usual big events such as the Boot Fair and Christmas Tree Festival were cancelled as were concerts, monthly Saturday Coffee mornings, Café Plus, a Harvest celebration, men's and ladies' breakfasts, and a planned event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

And with the cancellation of events came the inevitable drop in fundraising income.

As the year progressed and the lifting of all restrictions looked to be more remote than ever, the team decided to turn to live-streamed outreach activities. These were designed not to raise funds but to provide a morale boost and a chance for online social interaction. Our first toe in the water was a Zoom Bingo evening in October. Its success led to planning for further events such as a quiz and Scattergories in the new year. In November, Vanessa Bird gave the first of her Zoom talks.

The biggest event of the year was the hugely successful Hadlow Advent Windows. Twenty-four houses and businesses in the village took part with inventive and creative window displays, giving Hadlow families and residents a reason to venture out on chilly December evenings.

Finally, a big thank you to the team for their ideas, participation and support during this difficult time: Kirsty, Sharon, Melissa, Lisa, Katherine, Bet and the Church Wardens. And, of course, thank you to the members of St Mary's who loyally support our efforts.

Janice Massy

Outreach & Fundraising Committee Convenor

World Mission Committee Report for 2020

With the restrictions caused by the Covid19 pandemic, the WMC has not met in the past year. We would normally have run several Saturday Coffee mornings and, hopefully, raised some money for the charities we support as a Church in other ways. None of this has been possible.

As a Church we would like to continue to support the work of The Children's Society, The Delhi Brotherhood, Link to Hope (Shoe boxes), Mission Aviation Fellowship, The Paddock Wood Food Bank (through St. Mary's Church Hadlow), our link with Kibakwe and other needs from time to time. We are grateful for the leadership of Barbara Smith as our Convenor until her move away from Hadlow last autumn. A new Convenor of the WMC – who is usually a member of the PCC – is now needed if the Committee is to continue its role of raising money and the profile of the charities we support.

Julia Miles

Agenda Item 13: Reports from other areas of the Parish

Hadlow Bell Ringers

The last time that Hadlow Bell Ringers rang normally for Sunday morning services was 14th March 2020 – just before lockdown.

Bell ringing recommenced in a limited way from 6 September when the church reopened for socially distanced worship. Only four bells could be rung at a time in order to maintain adequate social distancing in the ringing chamber. The same ringing format applied to the few weddings that took place in the year.

Wednesday practice evenings were suspended with the first lockdown in March and as yet (a year later when writing this report) have still not resumed.

The lockdown did not, however, prevent the ringers from redecorating the ringing chamber – socially distanced at all times, of course – and laying a new carpet. It now looks cleaner, lighter and brighter and all are keen to return and start ringing on all eight bells once again.

Janice Massy

Church Cleaning

For all of us this has been a strange and challenging year and for much of the time there has not been the normal amount of cleaning to be done. We still have a rota and clean whenever necessary when it is our turn. We have of course lost Barbara Smith as she has moved away, but before she left she spoke to Val Newell who kindly agreed to take her place and team up with Kirsty. They still clean the first week of the month making sure everywhere is as it should be. Many thanks to Val and to all the cleaners. When (?) we are able to come back into church for services I may be on the look-out for more helpers! If you think you could help but need to know more of what is actually involved please get in touch with me – Ann Jenner 369817 – or see me one Sunday morning after church.

Ann Jenner

Friends Together

The Friends Together Bereavement Support Network is aimed at supporting those who are bereaved through the difficult days, weeks, months and even years following their loss.

Charity number 1153410

Founded & sponsored by Abbey Funeral Services Office: 01732 360328

Email: lingsay@friendstogetherbs.org Website: www.friendstogetherbs.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Friends Together Bereavement Support Network

Twitter: @friendstogbs

We have been, and are currently, meeting virtually via a 'conference call' service, every second Monday in the month during this pandemic. Please contact the office or website for details of the conference call number and venue /times later for in person meetings for the Hadlow group.

Hadlow-Kibakwe Parish Link

The Hadlow-Kibakwe Link has been much affected in 2020 by the restrictions that have been put in place to control the Covid -19 pandemic. At the beginning of 2020, plans for a visit to Kibakwe in May were well advanced. Then came the first lockdown in March and a prohibition on travel causing all plans and most fund-raising events to be postponed. The pandemic related restrictions remained in place for the remainder of 2020 and into 2021. Additionally, the Link representative in Kibakwe was posted to another role away from Kibakwe. This has disrupted Link communications between Hadlow and Kibakwe and news from Kibakwe has been difficult to obtain. However, two new Link coordinators have recently been appointed and we have made contact with them via WhatsApp. We understand that the village has not had many cases of the virus and that life continues as normal. Of the projects that Hadlow groups have been involved with, we have only had news of the solar-powered lighting in the girls' dormitory at Kibakwe Secondary School. We understand the system continues to function well.

Despite the pandemic St Mary's Kibakwe fund has shown solid growth. The deficit from 2019 has been cleared and the fund shows a credit of some £1,730, before attributable gift aid is included, for water and lighting projects in Kibakwe.

We hope that travel restrictions will be lifted in 2021 so that the postponed 2020 trip can be made, and the Link strengthened by renewing old friendships and forging new ones.

Jim May

Music

As with most things in 2020, there is little to report on music at St. Mary's. Although the year started as normal, Antony le Fleming became unwell and it was agreed that Michael Pound would fill the gap until Antony's return. Then the first lockdown was imposed and so no playing or singing could take place. At the easing of restrictions Paul said that he would like to have some musical input to the services where a limited congregation was able to attend, and it was agreed that Francis Griffiths and Michael would, on alternate Sundays, play before, during Communion and after the service. However, no singing took place. Meanwhile, Antony's health had not improved and he took the reluctant decision to resign. The next period of lockdown, closing the church, brought the playing to a halt.

At the beginning of December 2020, Paul, Francis, Will Pierce and Michael had a zoom conference at which all agreed to look ahead to resuming musical activity now that an end to restrictions was beginning to emerge. Thereafter the choir resumed during the Christmas period, culminating in leading the music at Midnight Mass and Christmas morning. The challenge of singing under the correct protocols, such as singing apart from other choir members, was met with fortitude, and it was great to be back.

Plans are afoot in terms of the choir emerging from lockdown with a concert when safe to do so, and at the time of writing, the choir hope to recommence on Easter Sunday.

Mike and Francis

February 2021

Newsletter Delivery

Many thanks to those who helped distribute the special April newsletter giving emergency community news and information. We then had a few months break until November, but could not meet as a group for folding and counting the newsletters, so some people took on folding at home and delivering to extra areas to replace those who were no longer able to carry on. Thanks to all our volunteers, both new and long-standing, also to Lesley Bright for compiling the newsletter and Janice, Mel and Paul for the printing.

It would be good to hear of anyone willing to deliver the newsletter to cover illness or someone moving away from Hadlow.

Anne Hughes 01732 850214

Parish Visiting

For many years, our team of visitors have faithfully enjoyed time sharing cups of tea and conversation with the housebound and vulnerable. Since Covid, contact has been restricted to telephone calls and letters. We all look forward to resuming face-to-face visits as soon as this is safe. This is an enjoyable and worthwhile activity for team members and those visited alike.

Cathy Brill

St Mary's Flowers

Thank you to the ladies who arranged flowers between lockdowns. Very little has happened with church flowers this year, for the obvious reason. There were few weddings and Harvest could not

be celebrated with the usual lovely displays. We did, however, have an artificial arrangement for the zoom services. It could stay in situ with no attention.

We look forward to having our flowers in the not-too-distant future. Things are certainly beginning to look more hopeful.

Carol Wickham

St Mary's Hospital Car Service

During 2020 we completed 210 journeys, which compares with 242 in 2019 (a decrease of over 13% but, considering the disruption to many routine NHS appointments since March, still considerable. Of these, 158 (75%) were for people not directly connected with St. Mary's. Some 'clients' need more appointments than others of course so, in 2020, we had a total of 39 clients (32 not directly connected with St Mary's), with 5 people needing 15 or more trips including 3 needing over 24 during the year. On average there were just over 4 appointments per week in 2020.

We had 11 active drivers last year (13 in 2019), although inevitably this decreased to just 3 or 4 of us due to people having to self-isolate for long periods, and of course it goes without saying that without them the service could not exist. I am extremely grateful to all our drivers for their co-operation and willingness to spend time sitting in waiting rooms at the various hospitals and medical centres. The drivers in 2020 were: Dominick Brown, Marie Dawes, David Gater, Mike Harvey, Ann Jenner, Jim May, Linda Moore, Richard Morley, Duncan Murray, Val Newell and John Pierce.

I have been responsible for organising the Hospital Car Service for about three years now, and it has become ever clearer to me that this highly personal service is hugely appreciated and very much needed by the people of Hadlow & Golden Green (and beyond if they attend St Mary's). Please be in no doubt that this is very much part and parcel of the extended pastoral care which St Mary's offers to our parishioners, even if some of the drivers do not attend our church themselves.

Although we have coped well during the Covid-19 pandemic, with what seems an ever-increasing need in our village I am always on the lookout for more drivers. If you are willing and able to give time between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm on weekdays (or at least some of them) and are interested in joining the Hospital Car Service as a driver, please do get in touch with me (01732 851881 or 07464 548448) for more information.

It is an extremely rewarding job, as I am certain all of the drivers would agree!

Mike Harvey

Servers

Prior to the restrictions introduced last year the serving team consisted of 9 individuals. For many years we have managed to maintain a large enough team so that the most any one person would have to serve is two Sundays a month. Due to illness, and Michael and John having increased duties as Church Wardens, we are now requiring more people to step up and join the team.

Were normal services to resume today we would estimate there would only be a team of 8; this is further complicated as not all members of the team are able to carry the cross for prolonged periods.

Serving is a simple role within the church which is at risk without more people stepping up to help. Please consider if you would be willing to join the team when normal services resume. The core team is well practised, and you would be fully supported all the way. We aim for just one

Sunday per month per person and you are only required to attend church 20 minutes before the service and clearing up afterwards normally takes around 15 minutes after the service.

If you are interested in trying this role when normal services resume then do speak with Paul, John or Michael.

Our current team members are Annie, Carol, Ian, Iris, Kelly, Mags, Maurice, Olivia. With Michael and John assisting where possible between their duties as Church Wardens.

John Speed

Who Let the Dads Out?

Sadly, in this difficult year, we have not been able to open the doors of the church to welcome mums, dads, grandparents, babies and children. Everyone has missed the fellowship and support we shared, and the privilege of watching the children grow. We look forward to better times ahead when we will be able to gather again.

Cathy Brill