

St Mary the Virgin, Higham Ferrers

2019 – 2020 Reports

**For the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
to be held in the Church on
Sunday 23rd May at 12.00 noon.**

£1 donation



AGENDA

Part 1

Annual Vestry Meeting

1. Prayers
2. Apologies
3. Election of Churchwardens

Part 2

1. Minutes of the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting
2. Electoral Roll Report
3. Election of the Parochial Church Council
4. Presentation of the Accounts and the Treasurer's Report
5. The Appointment of the Auditor
6. The Sidespeople's Report
7. Election of Sidespeople
8. Presentation of other reports
(Please see the Reports in this booklet)
9. Any other Business
(to be submitted to Rev. Michelle 48 hours before the meeting)

MINUTES of the Meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting for the Parish of Saint Mary the Virgin, Higham Ferrers, held in the Bede House on Thursday 4th April 2019, at 7.30 pm.

PRESENT: The Revd. Michelle Dalliston, The Revd. Tom McLean, The Revd Linda Bond, Carol Allen, Georgia Barnes, Brian Behagg, Ruth Bond, Margaret Britchford, Sue Dennis, Pat Ellis, Linda Ellson, Jo Green, Keith Green, Derek Harber, Avril Harlow, Karen Holmes, Celia Ingram, Marion Knott, Rachel Lee, Justin Maltby-Smith, Leona Mantle, Barry Matson, Karin Matson, Lynda Needle, Christine Newell, Graham Newell, Alison Oberman, Richard Oberman, Ann Pack, Ruth Pack, David Pocock, Lynne Pocock, Penny Reading, David Rockley, Pat Rockley, Annette Robinson, Darren Robinson, Jane Smeathers, David Stuttle, Peter Swindley, Sue Thompson, Jennifer Tuffnail, Stephen Tuffnail, Linda Vickers, Caroline Walker, Jessica Walker, Nicky Way, Pam Whiting, Raymond Wildsmith, Stewart Wiles and Joy Yorke.

APOLOGIES were received from Diane Behagg, Peter Bond, Elizabeth Bradshaw, Terry Broughton, Bob Dennis, Susan Fincham, Pat Hall, Richard Hall, Mary Harber, Anna Sauntson, Elizabeth Swindley and Margaret Tuffnail

Introduction

In opening both meetings, Revd. Michelle welcomed those attending, and introduced the proceedings with prayer.

Meeting of Parishioners

There were two nominations, properly proposed and seconded, for the posts of Churchwarden, namely Caroline Walker and David Stuttle. An election was therefore unnecessary, and Caroline and

David were duly appointed as Churchwardens for the Parish for the ensuing year. Revd Michelle expressed her personal thanks, and that of the Parish, to the Churchwardens, for putting themselves forward for the offices, for the welcome and help they had given her, and for their hard work for the Parish in the preceding year.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1 Minutes

On a motion by Barry Matson, seconded by Richard Oberman, **it was resolved** that the minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, held on 19th April 2018, be agreed and signed as a true record.

2 Electoral Roll Report

In presenting his Report, the Electoral Roll Officer, Stewart Wiles reminded members that, to comply with the Church Representation Rules, a new Electoral Roll had had to be prepared this year, and he outlined the steps he had taken to prepare that document. On 20th March 2019, the date on which the new Roll closed, it contained 123 persons, of whom 70 lived outside the Parish. He explained the reasons for the reduction in numbers since the last Roll; firstly, a number of entrants had died or moved away; secondly a number of previous entrants, although issued with application forms, had not applied for inclusion in the new Roll. However, 11 persons, not on the previous Roll, had applied for inclusion in the new one.

Richard Oberman queried certain calculations made in the Report. Sue Dennis asked what steps had been / were being taken to “chase up” the previous entrants and other candidates who had not asked to be included in the new Roll. Mr Wiles and Father Tom

indicated that this was being addressed. Mr Wiles reminded the meeting that the Roll was now open for new names to be added.

Members thereupon **agreed** to accept Mr Wiles' report, and expressed their thanks for his work in preparing the new Roll and keeping it up to date.

3 Election of Lay Representatives to the Parochial Church Council

Revd Michelle advised members that there were fourteen candidates, properly proposed and seconded, for election. Of these, two would be admitted to the Council in another way (as co-opted member or Deanery Synod Representative) leaving twelve candidates for the twelve vacancies. The remaining candidates were Sue Dennis, Derek Harber, Karen Holmes, Jane Jackson, Justin Maltby-Smith, Leona Mantle, Barry Matson, Alison Oberman, Darren Robinson, Sue Thompson, Nicky Way and Raymond Wildsmith.

On a motion by Dave Stuttle, seconded by Linda Bond, **it was resolved** that these twelve candidates be appointed to serve as the Lay Representatives on the Parochial Church Council.

Michelle advised that meeting that it was intended that Stewart Wiles and Brian Behagg would be made co-opted members of the Council.

She further indicated that it was expected that Brenda Elldred would be admitted as Reader for the Benefice in the Autumn. On a motion by Georgia Barnes, seconded by Ann Pack, **it was resolved** that Brenda would be made a member of the Council on her admission.

Michelle also mentioned the terms of office of the new Representatives, Previously, they had served for only one year. This did not prove wholly satisfactory, in that there was no guaranteed continuity.. She suggested that the Representatives be appointed for a period of three years, with one third retiring every year. The question of applying this process to the terms of the newly elected Representatives (who should serve for one, two, or three years) should be devolved to the first meeting of the new Council.

Richard Oberman spoke in support of this proposal and, on a motion by Georgia Barnes, seconded by Ann Pack, **it was resolved**, that this practice be adopted, both to the newly elected Representatives, and to future elections of Lay Representatives to the Parochial Church Council.

4 Treasurer's Report and presentation of accounts for 2018

The Treasurer, Brian Behagg, presented his report and the audited accounts for the year ending 31st December 2018. He advised that the Parish's core income, from giving by worshippers, continued to fall, and that our payment towards the Parish Share had been £14,274 short. He further drew attention to the imminent need for substantial capital expenditure – something like £430,000 – for the installation of an effective heating system and the structural repairs identified by the Quinquennial Inspection Report.

Two individual queries were raised concerning the report; The first was by Alison Oberman as to the recording of income from sales of the Parish Magazine. The second was by Joy York, who queried whether some items of expenditure falling under the general "Charitable Activities" heading was properly included in that category. Mr Behagg responded to these queries and indicated that, where appropriate, he would look into the matters further.

Richard Oberman commented that the accounts did not present, in simple form, an overall picture of the Parish's finances and its financial difficulties. Mr Behagg replied that the accounts were purely historical. They did not, and were not designed to, report on likely financial obligations to arise in the future. Members reported that much of this information was available elsewhere, Father Tom added that the information Mr Oberman required would be made available in the context of a future stewardship campaign.

On a motion by David Rockley, seconded by Barry Matson, **it was resolved** that the annual accounts for 2018 be accepted. Members expressed by applause their appreciation of the hard work Mr Behagg had done, both recently and over many years, in seeking to control the Parish's finances.

5 Appointment of Auditor

Brian Behagg advised members that the existing auditor, Kevin Bond, was prepared to continue as auditor for the next twelve months. On a motion by Barry Matson, seconded by Karin Matson, **it was resolved** that Mr Bird be appointed Auditor for the ensuing year. The Secretary was instructed to write to Mr Bond, advising him of this decision, and thanking him for his services.

6 Sidespeople's Report and appointment of sidespeople

Members were referred to a report as to the contribution made to the Parish by the sidesmen and sideswomen. The meeting was advised that the present list comprised Carol Allen, Jennifer Tuffnail, Ann Pack, Paul O'Dell, Pat Ellis, Sue Dennis, Pam Whiting, David Batchelor, Linda Vickers, Margaret Britchford, Anna Sauntson, Stewart Wiles, Mary Harber, Elizabeth Bradshaw, June Alder, Karen Matson and John Appleton.

Members **agreed** that the existing sidespeople be re-appointed for the ensuing year, with power to co-opt other parishioners to fill any vacancies when required.

Revd Michelle expressed the Parish's thanks to person taking on this task. It was an important one, and often represented the first contact people attending worship had with the Church.

7 Reports

The meeting received reports from the following persons and organisations, or on the following topics

- a) Clergy Report by Father Tom
- b) Churchwardens' Report on the Parochial Church Council
- c) The Pastoral Team
- d) Higham Deanery Synod
- e) Tiny Tots
- f) 1st Higham Ferrers (St Mary's) Rainbows
- g) 3rd Higham Ferrers (St Mary's) Brownies
- h) Bede House
- i) The Parish Safeguarding Officer
- j) The Magazine Editor
- k) The Acting Director of Music and Choir Chairman
- l) The Bellringers
- m) The Mother's union
- n) St Mary's Handymen
- o) The Fundraising Committee
- p) The Church Website
- q) The Holy Dusters
- r) The Sunday Coffee Team (Verbal Report from Pam Whiting)

On a motion by Stewart Wiles, seconded by Derek Harber, **it was resolved** that the reports be noted and accepted, with thanks to

those who had prepared them, and for the contribution to Parish life shown by the activities they described.

In summing up, Revd. Michelle expressed her thanks to Father Tom, Revd. Linda, the Churchwardens and all others concerned, for their hard work in keeping the Parish, and its worship and activities, alive during Father Richard's illness. She very much appreciated the warm welcome she had received since coming to the Parish. The Parish had a strong foundation of prayer and worship, which had continued to develop since her arrival. It was her intention to develop Parish life still further, to include a "Vision Day" in the Autumn, when we could look to how the Parish might develop its Mission in the future.

Barry Matson expressed his thanks, on behalf of the Parish, to Father Tom, and the others Revd. Michelle had identified, for keeping the Parish going during a very difficult time. He especially thanked Revd. Michelle for her achievements since her arrival, and the uplift she had provided for the Parish and its worshippers.

8 Conclusion

The Meeting ended with those present saying the Grace together.

Signed as a true record at the meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 23rd May 2021

Chairman

Electoral Roll Report

The Electoral Roll was last renewed in March 2019
The membership as of 1st April 2020 stands at 122.

This figure is 1 less than last years figure of 123 with the sad loss of Terry Broughton.

Of these 49 (40%) members live outside the parish.

A copy of the Electoral Roll minus telephone numbers and email addresses for privacy reasons will be posted on the notice board in the Church porch when a date is fixed for the APCM.

If anybody wishes to verify that these details are correct, please contact myself or one of the Churchwardens.

Stewart Wiles
April 2020

Treasurer's Report 2019

The challenge of 2018 continued into 2019, although there does appear to be a chink of light at the end of the tunnel. We have seen an increase in Regular Giving towards the end of 2019 and if this continues into 2020 we will be better prepared to meet our Fixed Outgoings. The current Standing Order Scheme is due to end latter this year and will be replaced by a Church of England National Direct Debit scheme based in Gloucester. For those of you who have not yet switched to the new scheme Authorities can be found on the Book Table in Church or from myself. Should you have any questions regarding the new system Stewart Wiles or myself will be happy to help.

In 2019 we paid Parish Share of £50,000 - £18k short of our target (The Accounts show Parish Share payments of £70k but this includes a payment of £20k relating to the 2018 Parish Share that was made in early January 2019).

The items under 'Miscellaneous' includes a Transfer of £15,000 to Chelveston PCC and relates to their share of Father Roger Davidson's legacy. The Legacy was received in December of 2018 and after discussions between the Church Wardens the transfer was made to Chelveston in January.

You will note that the Bede House Water Rates were exceptional high. This was due to the fact that Anglia Water could not find the meter! They therefore made an estimated claim totally out of proportion to our usual bill and have now refunded £1,330 in January this year.

2020 will no doubt provide a further challenge. In addition to bridging the shortfall in Parish Share we are currently looking at Major Building repairs to the Church and Bede House recommended in the last Quinquennial Report (including a new

heating system for the Church) in excess of £400,000. Whilst we currently have £144,000 in our Restoration Fund our only realistic hope of funding these projects will be by obtaining grants & donations. In this connection I would like to thank Derek Harber and Stewart Wiles for all their efforts in co-ordinating our Grants Application strategy. Their efforts have started to bear fruit.

Finally, a big 'Thank you' to Paul (and Graham, his understudy) for his help on Thursday mornings when we count the money whilst putting the World & the Church to rights

Brian Behagg
Treasurer

St Marys Church Higham Ferrers - 1132678

Balance sheet (Church of England)

As at: 31 December 2019

	As at 31/12/2019	As at 31/12/2018
	£	£
Current assets		
Investments	1,357	1,357
Cash at bank and in hand	179,186	240,531
	<u>180,543</u>	<u>241,888</u>
Liabilities		
Creditors: Amounts falling due in one year	1,484	709
Net current assets less current liabilities	<u>179,059</u>	<u>241,179</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	<u>179,059</u>	<u>241,179</u>
Total net assets less liabilities	<u>179,059</u>	<u>241,179</u>
Represented by		
Unrestricted		
Unrestricted - General fund	498	20,727
Designated		
Designated - Choir Vestry	—	—
Designated - Grace Milgate	21,222	21,183
Designated - Community Outreach	—	1,384
Designated - Choir Robes	—	—
Designated - Father Warnes	—	1,153
Restricted		
Restricted - Bell Appeal	9,791	9,714
Restricted - Chantry Chapel	—	—
Restricted - J Crew (Fabric)	1,357	1,357
Restricted - Childrens Corner	—	—
Restricted - Lady Chapel	—	—
Restricted - Restoration Fund	144,379	183,849
Restricted - Servery	1,811	1,811
Funds of the church	<u>179,059</u>	<u>241,179</u>

There may be minor discrepancies in the totals if the pence are not being shown

St Marys Church Higham Ferrers - 1132678

Analysis of income and expenditure
Selected period: 01 January 2019 to 31 December 2019

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Endowment	Total	
					This year	Last year
Income and endowments						
<i>Donations and legacies</i>						
0101 - Gift Aid - Bank	37,514	—	240	—	37,754	39,396
0110 - Gift Aid - Envelopes	3,691	—	—	—	3,691	3,733
0120 - Donations -Gift Aid	450	—	—	—	450	560
0301 - Loose plate collections	8,834	—	—	—	8,834	7,553
0302 - Envelopes - Non Gift Aid	2,655	—	—	—	2,655	2,637
0303 - Bank - Non Gift Aid	13	—	—	—	13	402
0550 - Donations appeals etc	704	—	1,000	—	1,704	924
0601 - Tax recoverable on Gift Aid	12,669	—	—	—	12,669	12,797
0702 - Legacy - Restricted	—	—	—	—	—	30,820
08A1 - Non-recurring one-off grants	9,000	—	6,000	—	15,000	11,960
0902 - Wall Safes-Candles	395	—	—	—	395	72
0903 - Wall Safe - Church Expenses	39	—	—	—	39	31
0904 - Smarties	—	—	—	—	—	16
0906 - Church Flowers	173	—	—	—	173	178
0908 - Misc	1,181	—	—	—	1,181	1,290
Donations and legacies Totals	77,322	—	7,240	—	84,562	112,374
<i>Income from charitable activities</i>						
1101 - Fees for weddings and funerals	7,696	—	—	—	7,696	9,025
1210 - Bookstall sales to promote objectives	73	—	—	—	73	247
Income from charitable activities Totals	7,770	—	—	—	7,770	9,272
<i>Other trading activities</i>						
0551 - Fund Raising	14,841	—	—	—	14,841	14,377
1102 - Heating & Lighting	1,019	—	—	—	1,019	900
1220 - Bookstall sales - fund raising	80	—	—	—	80	13
1231 - Bede House - Lettings	8,372	—	—	—	8,372	8,275
1250 - Magazine income - advertising	525	—	—	—	525	1,283
1260 - Parish magazine sales	787	—	—	—	787	212
Other trading activities Totals	25,626	—	—	—	25,626	25,061
<i>Investments</i>						
1001 - Dividends	81	—	—	—	81	80
1020 - Bank and building society interest	1,034	41	352	—	1,429	962
1030 - Rent from lands or buildings	300	—	—	—	300	300
Investments Totals	1,416	41	352	—	1,811	1,342
<i>Other income</i>						
0602 - VAT Reclaimed	—	—	3,692	—	3,692	—
1310 - Insurance claims	5,764	—	—	—	5,764	—
Other income Totals	5,764	—	3,692	—	9,457	—

There may be minor discrepancies in the totals if the pence are not being shown

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Endowment	Total	
					This year	Last year
Income and endowments	117,900	41	11,285	—	129,227	148,051
Grand totals						
Expenditure						
Raising funds						
1701 - Fees paid to fund raisers	—	—	—	—	—	500
1730 - Costs of fetes & other events	1,051	—	—	—	1,051	2,138
Raising funds Totals	1,051	—	—	—	1,051	2,638
Expenditure on charitable activities						
1801 - Giving to missionary societies	240	—	—	—	240	693
1830 - Giving - relief and development agencies	550	—	—	—	550	550
1850 - Home mission	661	—	—	—	661	300
1870 - Secular charities	1,501	—	—	—	1,501	1,092
1910 - Parish Share payments	70,000	—	—	—	70,000	27,500
2001 - Assistant staff costs	911	—	—	—	911	2,195
2101 - Working expenses of incumbent	1,185	—	—	—	1,185	1,980
2150 - Vicar's telephone	49	—	—	—	49	—
2201 - Parish training and mission	457	—	—	—	457	124
2301 - Church running - insurance	8,264	—	—	—	8,264	8,015
2303 - Miscellaneous	1,159	—	15,410	—	16,570	705
2310 - Church office - telephone	378	—	—	—	378	377
2320 - Organ / piano tuning	7,537	—	—	—	7,537	6,239
2325 - Choir	923	—	—	—	923	1,825
2330 - Church maintenance	9,629	—	900	—	10,529	7,991
2331 - Cleaning	—	—	—	—	—	42
2340 - Upkeep of services	2,787	—	—	—	2,787	18,590
2341 - Robes, Vestments	3,980	1,458	—	—	5,438	—
2350 - Upkeep of churchyard	396	—	—	—	396	55
2360 - Administration	332	—	—	—	332	2,247
2361 - Photo Copier/Printing	1,566	—	—	—	1,566	—
2370 - Visiting speakers / locums	—	—	—	—	—	35
2401 - Church running - electric	2,324	—	—	—	2,324	1,712
2410 - Church running - gas	3,048	—	—	—	3,048	3,614
2420 - Church running - water	—	—	—	—	—	8
2501 - Magazine expenses	1,580	—	—	—	1,580	1,611
2510 - Bookstall costs	—	—	—	—	—	225
2526 - Fees re Weddings/Funerals-Disbursements	4,389	—	—	—	4,389	5,791
2530 - Bede House - electricity	1,071	—	—	—	1,071	1,301
2540 - Bede House - gas	1,031	—	—	—	1,031	738
2545 - Bede House - Water Rates	1,723	—	—	—	1,723	543
2560 - Bede House - General Expenditure	8,980	—	—	—	8,980	5,356
2565 - Bede House - Cleaning	2,397	—	—	—	2,397	—
2601 - Governance costs examination/audit fee	100	—	—	—	100	100
2701 - Church major repairs - structure	—	—	24,495	—	24,495	8,550
2710 - Church major repairs - installation	—	—	8,872	—	8,872	25,207
Expenditure on charitable activities Totals	139,158	1,458	49,678	—	190,295	135,322
Expenditure Grand totals	140,210	1,458	49,678	—	191,346	137,961

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Sidespeople Report 2019.

A BIG thank you to all our sidespeople for their loyal service throughout the year.

They always provide a real contribution to the smooth running and greet you with a smile and kind word. They are always willing to step in to cover when people are on holiday or off due to illness. Many thanks go to those who have done extra duties for festivals and events.

Special thanks are also due to our Brownie and Rainbow units for their help on Parade Sundays.

We always like to invite more people to help our regulars so if you could possibly spare extra time before the service please see Diane or one of the sidespeople on duty.



Vicar's Report 2020-21



Our APCMs this year are a chance to stop and take stock as we look back on all that has happened over two such different years and all that

has changed as a result.

My first year with you all was a time of getting to know you, beginning to pick up some of the loose ends and working with Fr Tom especially to bring some stability and confidence after a difficult period. Fr Tom had done a remarkable job of keeping things going and it was a joy to work with him throughout 2019 when we were able to begin to plan and look ahead. In the autumn 2019 we held Vision Days at both St John's and St Mary's to explore together what 'God's dream' might be for us across the Benefice and within each parish. In January 2020, Fr Tom moved onto an exciting post as Interim Chaplain at King's College, Cambridge and while we were all sad to see him go, it was a fantastic opportunity and a role which he would relish.

Of course in the event 2020 was not what any of us had expected. Our last services before lockdown were held on Mothering Sunday, 22nd March, which at St John's was a live broadcast service. From then on we had to learn rapidly how to produce online services, which, thanks to Fr Paul's skills and expertise, became an audio broadcast format which allowed for us to bring a myriad of voices and creative options into play each week. Sometimes this literally meant a cast of thousands from across the whole world, let alone the Benefice! It has been a time-consuming, terrifying, exciting, breath-taking, white knuckle ride, but one which became clear, was reaching a very large number of people and enabling us to experience worship together even in our lockdown and isolation. Of course, there were also the Daily Podcasts, and a myriad of other online services, study groups,

social occasions, meetings and gatherings via Zoom that have enabled us to keep in touch and conduct parish business in ways we would never have imagined possible! I am enormously grateful to Fr Paul and my Ministry Team colleagues- Brenda, Revd Linda and Revd Lesley for all they have willingly offered into all this, and to Adrian Dale, Richard Hall and Pam Webbley who have made it possible for all the online services to happen across various platforms and of course to all those who have lent their voices, gifts and ideas to making these services come alive.

Despite the difficulties we were going through, many people said how they felt closer to one another and to God than ever before. The first Lockdown was especially hard in that we had to close our churches completely – at a time when we wanted them to be available more than ever. We found ways to be present despite the closed doors – our churchyards became both havens for daily walks and places where we could ‘meet’ via churchyard prayer walks, outdoor Easter Gardens, and creative ways of celebrating Pentecost with decorations of flames and doves. Alongside all this were phone calls, emails, What’s App groups, Facebook pages, the updated and more accessible website, noticeboards, weekly Newsheet mailings and Benefice magazine as well as pastoral care offered in as many ways as could be found. The Pastoral Team have been fantastic in this regard, as have so many of you who are in daily and weekly contact with each other – a loving, supportive and prayerful network of care that reaches across our communities.

Since last summer, the rollercoaster of opening for services, then closing again has been wearying and at times for us all, very hard to cope with, practically, emotionally and spiritually. All this set against the background of such loss of life and suffering that has left no-one untouched or unaffected, and one which has made us more aware than ever of our interconnectedness with our sisters and brothers across the world, and with the wonder of God’s

creation. This has been the other way in which we have been united in our renewed appreciation of the natural world and our wish to protect it at a time when this is needed more than ever. Now we look forward with hope as restrictions ease, as the weather warms and as some of the things we have most missed in our church and community life can begin again.

But we are exhausted, and fearful for the future. Our faith may have deepened in lockdown, but our world has also been turned upside down. We know that things have changed and we cannot simply return to what was, but how are we to make sense of where we are, let alone what comes next?

In the first lockdown we spoke of being in exile, or wandering in the wilderness – the image of the Ark was a very real one. Now we are like the exiles returning to their beloved Jerusalem, only to find the Temple destroyed and things no longer as they had been. There were many people absent, and those who were there, were changed. It was a disconcerting and distressing time – not at all what they had imagined in the time of exile when they were dreaming about how it would be if only they could get back.

So, now we are back, and some still returning, and some looking forward to doing that, and some perhaps who will not, or cannot. And so it is just as strange and uncomfortable for us and there are just as many mixed feelings and experiences. We need to be very aware and sensitive of each other in all this and know that what we might wish for or need will not be the same, and indeed may be the opposite, of what others need.

What is clear though is that we have a unique opportunity before us and many people locally and across the world are saying we need to reflect now on what is really important. As God's people, we need to hear what God is saying to us about how we reshape our lives and the life of the church. Our Archbishops speak of an

emerging church which must be in response to an emerging nation. In many ways this carries on the conversation that we began back in autumn 2019 but this is now a conversation that needs to be had as widely as possible, as part of our church family and our wider family of our community.

Over the coming summer and autumn, let's work out together how best to invite as many voices to be a part of that conversation as possible – to hear what God is saying into the hearts and lives of us all together. Let's not rush into trying to put back everything as it was, but to discover what new things God might be calling us into. What is important to all God's people now? How are we as the people of St John's and St Mary's to allow God to dream in us and grow us as a church, in our own faith and in being Christians in the world?

The Leading your Church into Growth Course, which a group of us are taking part in, will help us with this and Brenda Elldred, Jess Bernudez, Rick White, Sue Clarke, Dave Stuttle, Sandy Coleman and I are looking forward to sharing more about that with you all soon. For now though, the most important thing is that we pray together for growth and for God's guiding – that we pay good attention to one another, and to what God is saying to us all.

So many blessings for you all, and let's pray for the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit of grace and power to equip us for the exciting adventure of life and faith that lies ahead.

Revd Michelle

Here are two passages of scripture that might help us as we look forward, as well as the Leading Your Church into Growth Prayer that we are sharing in praying together as we ask God to help us grow together.

Isaiah 43

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert - for I give water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Mark 2:21-22

‘No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.

LyCiG Prayer:

God of mission, who alone brings growth to your Church,

send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness.

Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you,

and in service to our local community, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



ST MARY THE VIRGIN, HIGHAM FERRERS

REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) present their report for the period since the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), together with their consolidated financial statements for the years ended 31st December 2019 and 31st December 2020. The organisation was added to the charity register as charity number 1132678 on 12th November 2009.

The report covers the period from April 2019 to April 2021. As will be explained later, no APCM could be held in 2020.

Aims, objectives and activities

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent to promote in the ecclesiastical Parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Its responsibilities also include the maintenance of the Church building, together with the Chantry Chapel and the Bede House. In meeting these responsibilities, the PCC has been led by the incumbent, and has worked with other members of the Ministry Team.

When planning activities, the incumbent and the PCC consider the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion, in particular through worship and prayer, and the provision of pastoral care for people living in the Parish.

The method of appointment of the PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. The elected members are appointed at the APCM by those who appear on the electoral roll. All persons attending Church are encouraged to register on this roll

and to stand for election to the PCC. At the 2019 APCM, it was decided that members would be appointed for a term of three years. The PCC was authorised to make appropriate adjustments for the introductory period to allow continuity of proceedings.

REVIEW OF THE PERIOD 2019/2021 - ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Personnel

During the earlier part of the review period there were a number of changes to the Benefice's Ministry Team which serves Higham Ferrers. Father Richard Stainer left us for the Grand Union Benefice and was installed there on 9th September 2019. Father Tom McLean, the Assistant Curate, left us in the early part of 2020, following his appointment as Interim Chaplain at King's College, Cambridge. Father Richard's departure was followed by the formal appointment of the Revd Michelle Dalliston (formerly Associate Interim Vicar) as Interim Vicar for the Benefice. In the Autumn of 2019 Brenda Elldred was admitted as Reader for the Benefice and Father Paul Needle was added to the Clergy Team, joining the Revd Linda Bond and the Revd Canon Lesley McCormack as Assistant Priests. Dave Stuttle and Caroline Walker have continued as Churchwardens, although, to assist in their heavy workload, the PCC appointed Darren Robinson as Assistant Warden, to serve until the 2021 APCM.

Meetings and activities

The PCC has, since April 2019, met on 15 occasions., with an average attendance of 85%. A further meeting is to be held on 12th May 2021. Since 21st June 2020, these meetings have been held by Zoom. In addition, two meetings have been held by correspondence, as permitted by the Church Representation Rules.

Committees of the PCC have met as appropriate, with reports of those meetings being submitted to and discussed by the full PCC.

Administration

So far as the lockdown restrictions have permitted, the Parish Office continues to run efficiently and effectively, thanks to the contributions made by Diane Behagg, who has given her time voluntarily as required. The need for further administrative assistance for Revd Michelle has also been recognised and a volunteer, Derrian Le Brun Powell, had been found to fulfil this role. (Derrian has now had to stand down from this role following changes in her paid employment due to the lockdown. We are also grateful to Diane for the additional work she has carried out in taking responsibility (pre-lockdown) for Bede House bookings. We look forward to her continued assistance in this role with the re-opening of the Bede House once the lockdown comes to an end.

WORSHIP

The Coronavirus Pandemic

Our worship and activities have been significantly affected by the action taken, both nationally and locally, to deal with the spread of the Coronavirus (Covid 19). The spread of virus began to be a matter for serious concern in the latter part of 2019 and early part of 2020. It culminated in a Government decision to impose a lockdown on 22nd March 2020. Subject to certain exceptions, this required people to remain in their homes and to take appropriate steps to avoid contact with others. This obviously precluded the holding of an APCM in 2020. The Bishop dealt with this problem by making an order extending the period for holding such a meeting by one year, until 31st May 2021. In the same order, he extended the terms of office of all Churchwardens and elected members for the same period.

Most significantly from our point of view, the lockdown required the closure of Churches for public worship. This resulted in the cessation of Sunday's 10.30 Family Mass, and the 9.00 Family Worship. The lockdown was partially lifted on 10th June 2020, following a reduction in the infection rate, and, alongside other removals of restrictions, public worship was again permitted. It was however subject to strict safeguarding conditions, including social distancing, the avoidance of personal contact, and the wearing of face coverings. Sadly, the improvement did not last, and, after a few months, the infection rate rose again. The response of the Government was to reimpose many of the previous restrictions. Unlike the original lockdown, these restrictions did not forbid worship in Church, but there were serious concerns about its risks. Following advice from senior clergy, including the Bishop of London, Chair of the Church of England's Recovery Group, on 8th January 2021 we decided, with considerable reluctance, again to suspend worship in the Church. We returned to church for our worship on Easter Sunday and from the 18th April, services in church have once again resumed on Sundays.

However, the requirement/decision to suspend worship in church, did not mean the end of public worship. It provided an opportunity to extend the facilities for worship through the Benefice website, recently improved and made more accessible. Thanks are due to Richard Hall and Pam Webbley for their ongoing work with this. A range of online resources have been made available including a Sunday Service for the Benefice, a weekly online Celtic service and weekly Morning Prayer by Zoom. At other times daily podcasts, a Midweek Message, services for special feast days and civic occasions, including VE Day in June 2020 and Remembrance Sunday 2020 were accessed by a large number of people.

Being available for people to access at their convenience encouraged a wide engagement, but the suggestion to join together

when possible at 10am for the Sunday Service and 7pm on Wednesdays for the Celtic Service has helped maintain a sense of the community worshipping together.

Resources, activities and worship for children and young people has also made sure that our families are continuing to meet and every effort has been made especially to assist our older members to access services via laptops, tablets and smart phones, and where necessary, to find ways to include others such as via the phone or through printed material.

The Sunday Online Service has proved a great success, attracting worshippers far beyond the Parish boundary – indeed beyond the boundary of the UK. Although the preparation of this act of worship was and is costly in terms of time we plan to continue to offer this service even as church services resume as it is reaching a different and wider congregation, as well as enabling many people from across the Benefice to take part in leading the service. We extend our thanks to Father Paul for his skill and time in technical production and to all those who have contributed to these services in so many ways.

Zoom has enabled us to meet socially for After Church Coffee on Sundays, Wednesday Morning Prayer, Compline, Family Worship and First Friday Club. We have also held numerous study groups, including Advent and Lent Groups, as well as joining with Rushden & Higham Council of Churches Lent Prayer meetings.

Families have been encouraged (with due regard to social distancing) to build outdoor Easter Gardens (2020 & 2021) and to ‘Follow the Star’ – a trail through Higham leading to the church nativity scene, and follow the ‘Easter Trail’ which told the Easter story via stations in the churchyard leading to the Easter Garden and the empty tomb. When regulations have allowed in-person

services have happened during ‘Café Church in the Bede House and outdoors for ‘Wild Worship’.

We have also been keeping in touch with one another via the weekly Newsletter and monthly Benefice Magazine which is sent out electronically and several active WhatsApp groups. Resources based on the Gospel each week for children have been circulated as part of the weekly mailing which reaches some 200 people. Where required we are making these available as hard copies too for those who cannot access electronically.

Attendance at or participation in public worship

Until 20th March 2020, the average Sunday morning attendance (for Morning Worship and the Family Mass combined) was 87 adults and 16 younger members under the age of sixteen.

Weekday Services held during that period had a combined average attendance of 80. These figures discount special occasions like civic services, parade services and baptisms. In the period between 15th June 2020 and 9th January 2021, when worship in Church was resumed, the average attendance at the Family Mass was 35.

Since its introduction on 15th June 2020, the average number of worshipers accessing the Benefice Website for the Online Worship provisions was approximately 300 a week.

Music

The lockdown provision imposed serious restrictions on music in Church. Not least public singing has been largely forbidden, although we have on a few occasions sung outside in the Churchyard. The choir have recorded pieces remotely for use in Online Services and have sung when allowed socially distanced as part of our services in church. We look forward to the ultimate

removal of the restrictions, permitting us to sing our hymns once again.

Our efforts to appoint a new Director of Music have so far been unsuccessful, but we are grateful to Keith Green, as Acting Director of Music, and the choir under his leadership, for the steps they have taken, notwithstanding the lockdown restrictions, to keep the musical life of the Church alive.

MISSION

A principal theme of our discussions throughout the review period has been the advancement of our Vision for Mission in the Parish; how we can best bring the Christian Faith to the Community at large. This began with the consideration of the Diocesan paper “Thy Kingdom Come” in April 2019. It was followed by the organisation of an “At Home Day” in the Autumn, with members of the Parish Family being asked for representations and suggestions as to how our Pastoral Objectives could best be met. The discussion and implementation of the proposals so made, culminated in the publication of the “2020 Vision and Mission at St John’s and St Mary’s” in March 2020, but the lockdown interrupted its further development.

On 24th March 2021, The Revd Roger Woods, the Diocesan Urban Support Officer, introduced us to the national programme: “Leading your Church into Growth”. This encourages the growth of the Church in terms of numbers, spirituality and impact on the local community. This was of particular relevance to the post-lockdown situation which was likely to necessitate changes from what had gone before. We have representatives attending a training course on this, who will report back to us for discernment about how to move forward. This is also informed by the Church of England’s ‘Vision 2020s’ – a vision and strategy put forward by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell as a result of

conversations with adults and children across the Church and the Anglican Communion and in considering what the emerging church needs to be.

In addition we have been asked to consider “Living in Love and Faith” a Church of England report resulting from a period of consultation exploring our faith and our identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage and asking the question, what does it mean to be human? Our feedback from discussion groups is invited to be part of the response to be considered by General Synod in the autumn.

Many of the points made during these discussions have already been met. 2019 saw an increase in the numbers being prepared for confirmation and in the requests for baptism. Our Ministry to the Young was further represented in the introduction of a monthly Sunday morning venture ‘Second Sunday Cool’ and in the creation of a monthly Youth Club. This was in addition to our ongoing work with younger children and their families through our weekly ‘Tiny Tots’ on Wednesdays and our Toddler groups – ‘Toddle In’ on Monday and ‘Play Club’ on Wednesday and Friday. Unfortunately, these physical activities came to an end with the Coronavirus lockdown, but, as previously mentioned, further contact with young people continued through the Benefice website and through monthly Zoom First Friday Club sessions. In another youth-centred venture, in March 2020 we agreed to participate in a proposal by the Higham Deanery for the employment and training of a Deanery Youth Enabler, to work in with teenagers in secondary schools, in Church and in the community, in an effort to counter the drop off of the involvement of young people in religious matters.

A further aspect of our Mission concerned our engagement with the local community. Until closed by the lockdown, the Bede House provided excellent facilities for such engagement. It

enabled us to join with the Town Council in celebrating the Town Charter Day, including the display of the Town Charter and the Chichele panels. Further opportunities for contact with the Town Council were provided by the appointment of the Revd Michelle as Mayor's Chaplain in 2019.

The Churchyard is also an important feature in our contact with the Town and community, both pre and post lockdown. Various informal events have been held in the Churchyard, and its contribution to the community has been enhanced by assistance provided by the Friends of St Mary's. They have constructed a Memorial Garden between the Church and Chantry Chapel, initiated an eco-conservation 'Re-Wilding Project celebrating our involvement with nature and the environment; and, on a religious note, have set up a plain wooden cross during Lent and Easter, reminding passers by the significance of those seasons.

A further aspect of our relationship with the community has been the opening of the Church to the public outside worship times. The implementation of the plans we put forward 2019 to extend opening times was interrupted by the lockdown. However, where the lockdown provisions permitted, the church was opened for private prayer on one day per week. At our meeting on 24th March, we discussed opening the Church more widely, including permitting unsupervised access. To begin with the Church has been open for Private Prayer two days per week and we wish to thank all those who have volunteered their time to be stewards during the opening hours, especially during the cold winter months. Plans to introduce these extended provisions are currently being drawn up.

BUILDINGS AND FABRIC

In addition to our Mission based responsibilities, one of our primary functions is the preservation of the church buildings. To

this end, the stonework repairs to the Chantry Chapel, recommended following the latest Quinquennial Inspection, have been completed and appropriate surge protection has been installed on the spire. Work on the Spire is nearing completion. We have left other external works in abeyance for the time being, pending the completion of the next Quinquennial Inspection. Internally, problems with the Bede House heaters have been dealt with and we have approved policies for the letting of the Bede House and Chantry Chapel, once the lifting of lockdown restrictions make this possible.

A major concern has been the church heating system. The system has not worked properly for some time, and recently it has ceased to work at all. To deal with the problem, we have appointed James Sheehan, a Heating Consultant, to advise us on a new system. We considered a detailed report he prepared at our meeting on 9th October 2019. Having concluded that other options were impracticable, we have accepted his recommendation for a gas-fired system using new fan convectors, with the installation of new boilers and some new pipework. The proposals include the re-ordering of the pew platform and some of the pews immediately in front of the nave altar. Mr Sheehan estimates the likely cost of the system as £120,000, with a further £20,000 for associated building work (Ex VAT). The financial aspects of this problem will be discussed later in this report.

We have not made as much progress as we might have liked with the servery/hospitality centre planned for the rear of the south aisle. It will be remembered that our original proposals required some adjustments after initial consultation with the DAC. We are now ad idem with the DAC on the nature and details of the project, and are awaiting the preparation of final plans by our Architect, to enable a petition for a faculty to be presented.

On a day-to-day basis, responsibility for the completion of the projects we have mentioned rests with the Fabric and Maintenance Committee. We have concluded that these projects will require the involvement of a Project Manager, and we have amended the constitution of that Committee to provide for this.

Before leaving the question of buildings and fabric, it is appropriate to pay tribute to the work of the Holy Handymen, who operate under the aegis of the Fabric and Maintenance Committee. They have able on a regular basis to handle many building and fabric-based problems as they arose, and thereby save the Church significant sums of money.

FINANCE

Both before and during the reporting period, one of our aims has been to rebuild our general reserves and to retain a balance on unrestricted funds to cover approximately six month's unrestricted payments; investing funds not required for immediate expenditure with the CBF Church of England Deposit Fund. As will be seen, we have not been able to achieve this object, but it is something that will need to be borne in mind once our financial position improves.

We are grateful to our Treasurer, Brian Behagg, for his wisdom in leading us along a sound financial route and we rely on his report for a more detailed description of our finances. We would however mention the following:

- The need to promote individual membership of the national Parish Giving Scheme, which will replace the diocesan based system.
- We have installed a card machine, to facilitate the making of "one off" payments.

- The Epiphany Gift Scheme, where worshippers were able to identify particular targets for their donations, proved a success, particularly in 2020.

The financial problems arising from the Coronavirus Lockdown are obvious. Whilst regular giving via the Parish Giving Scheme has been largely maintained, plate collections have decreased substantially.

It is in this context that we would mention, and pay tribute to, the contribution to our funds achieved by the Social and Fundraising Committee. In 2019, they raised some £500 from the Town Charter weekend, and £571 from the Harvest Lunch. Their contribution to that year's Town's 'Christmas Sparkle' weekend was as successful as ever. However, the lockdown brought events of this type, many of which were then in the planning stage, to a temporary halt, with a consequent reduction in our income. In spite of this, members have continued to organise fundraising activities within the lockdown's limitations. But we should also remember that their work is important, not just for the funds they raise, but also for the opportunities they provide for social interaction between members of the Parish Family.

One area in which the lockdown has had a considerable effect is in relation to the payment of the Parish Share. Whilst we were not able to pay it in full in 2019, we did manage to raise £50,000. Our contribution for 2020 is much less, at £24,000, 37.66% of the sum requested. No doubt other parishes are facing similar difficulties, but the fact remains that, if the Diocese is to continue its ministry on an acceptable basis, this situation cannot be allowed to continue. For example, the Diocese points out that the average cost of each full-time incumbent is £66,885.

Our overall financial difficulties are something that we intend to address, not least through holding, with the assistance of the

Diocese, a Stewardship Campaign beginning on Pentecost Sunday.

A further major financial problem we have had to address is the need for funds for the Church heating project. To assist in that regard, we have applied for, and been granted, a loan of £50,000 from the Diocesan Church Major Works Fund. The loan is interest free for the first five years and the dioceses is prepared to offer advice as to the loan's repayment. Although this is perhaps the worst time to launch a fund-raising activity, a Fund-Raising Group has been set up, with Sue Dennis as Chairman and Avril Harlow as Treasurer, with the object of raising the necessary funds, under the heading "St Mary's 600 Appeal". Phase 1 is aimed principally at the heating system, and also to fulfil the long awaited servery facilities in the back of church. Phase 2 of the appeal will also include other structural repairs to the Church buildings and improvement of the interior of the Bede House. The Group has so far been extremely successful. Substantial donations have been made or promised by members of the Parish Family. Some applications for grants have been successful, and others are outstanding. Many other fund-raising activities have taken place, or are planned. The measure of their success can be seen in a report the Group made to the PCC meeting on 24th March 2021 that, with the Diocesan loan, all but £30,000 of the sum required for the heating project had been raised or promised.

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults is an integral part of our parish life and is the shared responsibility of all as we care for each other. We are grateful to Patricia Ellis, who served as Parish Safeguarding Officer during the earlier part of the reporting period, and to Brenda Elldred who then took over as Safeguarding officer for the whole Benefice. The Safeguarding Policy, based on that suggested by the Diocese, was re-approved early in the review

period, and appropriate arrangements made for the Policy, and its associated material, to be publicised as required. All PCC members have now undergone the necessary Safeguarding training, and have been issued with appropriate DBS clearance. Further advances in the Safeguarding field include the creation of a Benefice Safeguarding Team and the production of material for a Safeguarding Audit.

MISCELLANEOUS

As another part of our safety remit, we have approved a Health and Safety Policy to cover the church activities, and are grateful to Dave Stuttle, our Health and Safety Officer, for preparing the Policy.

Chancel Repair Liability

The Parish has Lay Rectors who, by virtue of their ownership of land in Newton Road, are subject to Chancel Repair Liability, which is appropriately registered at the Land Registry. The PCC has not had occasion to seek to enforce that liability in the reporting period

As already mentioned, during the review period we have said goodbye to two of our Clergy; Father Richard Stainer, the Vicar, and Father Tom McLean, the Assistant Curate. We extend our thanks to both for all they achieved in office, and convey to them our best wishes for the future.

There are countless folk in our Church who, week by week, give of their time and talents and for that we are very grateful. Some we have already mentioned, but there are also those members of the Parish family who arrange flowers, clean and tidy, mend items, provide coffee after Mass, collate and edit the Benefice magazine, change altar frontals, run the Parish Office, set the

Church and Bede House heating and help with maintenance. There are also so many others who together contribute to the smooth running of the Parish and consequently to our mission. These include the choir, servers, sacristans, handymen, Eucharistic Assistants (including those who administer home communions), bell-ringers, vergers, flower arrangers, sidespeople and stewards, Baptism Support Teams, readers and intercessors and those who lead Morning Worship and our activities with the young. It is recognised that many of these activities have not been possible during the Coronavirus Lockdown, but we look forward to their continued assistance once the lockdown is at an end. We would also add our particular thanks to those who have helped us get through that episode, including maintaining and operating the Parish Website, and the facilities for worship and mission it provides; and ensuring that we achieve the social distancing and other safety precautions to counter the dangers the virus produces. We are grateful to Richard Hall and Pam Webbley for re-vamping our website to make it more attractive and accessible. The website, along with our Facebook, presence and our very active WhatsApp groups have ensured our continued communication with the parish and the wider world. The Benefice Magazine is now available on the website every month and there is a growing number of people who receive it electronically.

Members of the Parochial Church Council

The members who served during the reporting period were as follows:

Ex officio members

The Revd Canon Richard Stainer (Vicar and Chair – until September 2019)

The Revd Michelle Dalliston (Associate Vicar/Interim Vicar and Chair)

The Revd Tom McLean (until January 2020)
Brenda Eldred (Benefice Reader)
Caroline Walker (Churchwarden)
Dave Stuttle (Churchwarden and Deanery/Diocesan Synod member)
Linda Ellson (Deanery Synod Member)
Graham Newell (Deanery Synod Member)
Peter Swindley (Deanery Synod Member)

Elected members

Sue Dennis; Derek Harber; Jane Jackson, Karen Holmes, Justin Maltby-Smith, Leona Mantle, Barry Matson, Alison Oberman, Darren Robinson, Sue Thompson, Nicola Way and Raymond Wildsmith (Secretary)

Co-opted members

Brian Behagg (Treasurer) and Stewart Wiles (Electoral Roll Officer)

Keith Green attends meetings as Acting Director of Music

Legal and Administrative details

Saint Mary's Church is situated off the Market Square in Higham Ferrers. It is part of the Diocese of Peterborough in the Church of England.

Principal Address: St Mary's Parish Office, The Bede House, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire, NN10 8BT.

Bankers: Lloyds Bank plc., 133, High Street, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0NX

Independent Examiner: Kevin Bond, 16 Blake Walk, Higham
Ferrers, Northamptonshire, NN10 8DB

On behalf of the Parochial Church Council

Caroline Walker
Churchwarden

Dave Stuttle
Churchwarden

Dated 23rd May 2021

APCM 2021

Higham Deanery Synod Report 2020

1. Higham Deanery Synod has met three times since the 2019 Annual Parochial meetings, with all meetings having also been open to non-members of the Synod:

i) Tuesday 11th June at All Saints' Church, Great Addington

This included an update on mission opportunities in the Rushden East Development and the work of various ROC (Redeeming Our Communities) action groups – e.g. seeking befrienders for elderly isolated people. There were also spoken updates from Diocesan Synod and General Synod, including an invitation for members to feed in comments on a consultation taking place on whether the period of office for lay members of deanery synods should be limited to six years (two terms) as a default.

ii) Wednesday 16th October at St Laurence's Church, Stanwick

Rev Dr Linnet Smith spoke to those present on supporting people with dementia, including an overview of ideas for making churches more dementia-friendly. This was one in which the Deanery Mission Plan's aim of encouraging the support of vulnerable people was being put into practice.

iii) Thursday 6th February at All Hallows' Church, Hargrave

The main item was a presentation on the Generation to Generation (gen₂) youth project that had recently started within Higham Deanery, supported by national church funding and providing for a Deanery Youth Ministry Enabler, Lizzie Mouesbauer, currently based at Whitefriars Church, to train at Ridley Hall Cambridge and then work with other churches in the Deanery, with a view to working one day per week for a term each year. The Synod also agreed to an updated Deanery Mission plan for 2020. This was also Revd Chris Youngman's first meeting as Rural Dean, having

taken over from Revd Canon Steve Prior.

2. **Other news from 2019 and early 2020:**

- A big thank you to all parishes in the Deanery for their contributions to the **Diocesan parish share in 2019**, and to **Steve Prior** for all his work as Rural Dean.
- We had a **Beer & Hymns evening** at Newton Bromswold on Monday 24th June, and **Higham Deanery Evensong** at Irthlingborough on Sunday 17th November.
- Meetings for **PCC Treasurers** from across the Deanery were held on 22th April and 23rd October 2019 at St Peter's, Rushden. The next one will be at St Peter's, Rushden on Wednesday 22nd April.
- Gatherings of **Church Wardens** in Higham Deanery took place in Rushden on 6th June and 7th November 2019. The next one will be at Newton Bromswold Village Hall on Thursday 6th June.
- **The next Deanery Synod meeting** will take place on Wednesday 10th June at Chelveston; and the next **Beer & Hymns** will be at Newton Bromswold on Monday 22nd June: details of these and the 2020 Evensong to be circulated in due course.
- **Elections of lay members of the Deanery Synod** for 2020 to 2023 will be taking place at this year's APCM. They will also form the electorate for the Diocese's lay members of **General Synod**, in elections taking place in September/October

Andrew Presland (Lay Chair) and Chris Youngman (Rural Dean)

Tiny Tots 2019.

Wednesdays during Term Time we welcome lots of little ones with their Mums/grannies and child minders to church.

We begin singing and clapping as we parade round church with our musical instruments. This is followed by a game relating to the story for the week and then they have a picture to colour in. We always display their pictures on the wall in the children's corner for the week and they take them home the following Wednesday.

Please have a look at their lovely pictures!

Following this we sing songs with actions and have prayers before going over to the Bede House for drinks and biscuits.

An Easter story book and cream egg are given to the children when we break for the Easter holidays.

We have a party in July when we say goodbye to our older children who are moving up to 'big' school.

A lovely Christmas Party is always enjoyed in the Bede House with a special visit from the man in red before the Christmas break.

I would like to thank Stella and Angela for organising the toys, tea and biscuits in the Bede House, and special thanks to Beccy for her help organising the story and activities.

Unfortunately our numbers have dropped this year so please spread the word for us and hand out the leaflets that can be found in church.

Diane Behagg

1st Higham Ferrers (St. Mary's) Rainbows – 2019

Our Rainbow unit meets weekly at the Infant School during school term times.

2019 was another exciting year for the unit. We took part in a long list of activities which included playing games, fun crafts, learning new skills and gaining badges, singing songs, exploring our local area and having fun! We enjoyed the girl guiding programme and the many opportunities it offers.

A few of the highlights were:-

- Having a trip to St Mary's Church and ringing the bells!
- Golf adventure at Paradise Golf, Rushden Lakes
- Celebrating World Thinking Day.
- Making new friends
- Enjoying a teddy bears picnic
- We have enjoyed learning new games and exploring what we like to do.
- Crafting is one of the activities we enjoy the most and try to fit in as much as possible. We have made some wonderful craft items to take home such as cards, promise mementoes, Christmas tree decorations, marshmallow sculptures and time machine parts.
- Enjoying the outdoors and summer sun by playing in the playground.
- Making a giant picture together to decorate the church window at Harvest time.
- Adventure at Stanwick Lakes
- Achieving our Drama Llama Challenge badge
- Making memories at our end of term parties
- Climbing fun at Rock Up Rushden Lakes
- Attending church celebrations and the Christingle service
- Welcoming new Rainbows and Leaders to our group.

Jelly Bean (Katie)

Pear Drop (Sally)

Haribo (Carla)
Bubblegum (Karen)

Skittles (Phillipa)

FERRERS DISTRICT: If you would like your daughter to join either Rainbows, Brownies or Guides in the future please register them at www.girlguiding.org.uk.

Bede House Report 2019.

The Bede House is a difficult building to keep well maintained and we must thank our Holy Handymen for their valued help every Thursday.

Our monthly Farmers Market Coffee Mornings are still very popular and are hosted by various organisations, some Church, some secular. We still have many regular hirers including our uniformed organisations plus zumba, ballet and badminton which all provide a regular income source.

Bookings for parties and weddings are very popular as word spreads of the unique and impressive nature of the Bede House. Lots of fundraising events take place including fashion shows, film nights, quiz nights etc. for local charities and our own funds.

Unfortunately 2019 saw our lettings income at £8,372 whereas outgoings were £15,202. This reflects the cost of the new heaters but shows we need to keep our bookings up.

Benefice Safeguarding report 2019 and 2020 St. Mary's, Higham Ferrers

2019

The Safeguarding Officer in 2019 - mid 2020 was Patricia Ellis who for health reasons handed over the Benefice Safeguarding Office to Brenda Elldred in September 2020.

On September 9th 2019 a safeguarding training session for levels C0 & C1 was arranged and took place in the Chantry Chapel at St. Mary's. This was attended by 16 people and those who required training but could not attend were encouraged to either rebook a convenient date or complete online. Over the course of 2019 and 2020 training and DBS checks for all relevant personnel has been completed.

On September 9th 2019 a Benefice Safeguarding Group was set up its role and purpose being; -

- a. The main purpose of the group is to ensure Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is a priority in all events and activities across the Benefice.
- b. To be an integral part of the life of our Benefice for which responsibility is shared by all.
- c. To Identify and cascade information to all church groups across the Benefice.

This group will meet quarterly or more frequently should an extraordinary meeting be required. This group also oversees the policies and procedures in place along with the promotion of Safeguarding in the Benefice.

The diocesan dashboard is regularly updated and produces an action plan for the church. This is currently waiting for update after the APCM as there was no APCM in 2020 and there are still some actions to be completed.

2020

During 2020 new posters and information with contact numbers have been made and posted in the church and in the Bede House. These posters now also have a photograph of the Vicar and the Benefice Safeguarding Officer so that they can be easily recognised by anyone who wishes to raise an issue or has a concern.

March 23rd - June 24th the church was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At this point Safeguarding was focused on Pastoral care and keeping in touch with our congregational members specifically those in the vulnerable groups.

Churches reopened with the first service being 22nd July but with tight Covid restrictions in place. Safeguarding information was updated and placed prominently for the reopening. The Church was stewarded for private prayer times using 2 stewards for safety reasons at all times.

During the year this pattern of lockdown and reopening occurred again and all safeguarding procedures were adhered to and wherever the church or Bede house was being used the normal processes and policies were in place.

Online safeguarding became a new focus, particularly with young people on Zoom. Leaders of the Youth First Friday Zoom club were made aware of the dangers of online and social media and in order for children and youth to participate a parental consent form had to be signed.

Compliance with DBS

All PCC members as trustees of a charity are now DBS checked. All Clergy, lay leaders and those in leadership roles currently in post are checked. This is all kept on a database and checked regularly.

Compliance with training

This is ongoing as every 3 years the training has to be refreshed. Members have the access to online training until we can reopen face to face training. The training dates are all logged and kept on a database and checked regularly.

Safeguarding reports

There have been no reports of any incidences over the past 2 years.

Brenda Elldred
Benefice Safeguarding Officer
APCM May 2021



Benefice Magazine



This has been a somewhat different year for the Magazine. 2019 into the beginning of 2020 went smoothly with the magazine being published every month as usual. Then the pandemic hit and we had to re-think how we can still publish the magazine. Distributing printed copies was ruled out by the Government Guidelines for Covid which prevented the handling of printed matter. However, we have managed to publish a few number of editions, but with more pages on a bi-monthly basis. These have been distributed to a reading list in pdf format by email and the the magazine has been added to the website.

My grateful thanks to Richard Hall for placing the magazine on the website each issue. Also, following on from changes to our printed copy requirements the few hard copies we have printed off have been done in-house in full colour. Looking ahead we would like to move to a larger uptake of the electronic version by subscription, with fewer subscribers having the printed version. More about this in due course as we get to grips with how it will be managed.

My thanks also to Adrian Dale who converts the magazine into two pdf versions for circulation and with his whizzy software also improves the quality of some of the pictures and graphics.

I must express my gratitude to all the regular contributors who send me their items for inclusion each month, most of them on time before the copy date! I am impressed by the quality of the contributions I receive and do my best not to make any drastic changes to them but occasionally space dictates that I must wield the blue pencil.

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Dave Stuttle

Editor

Acting Director of Music A.P.C.M. notes

First of all I would like to thank all members of the choir for their loyalty, and support, and to all the organist`s that play for us each week.



I do try and keep to the liturgy with anthems, which we strive to sing at every service. As we are a smaller choir sometimes it is difficult to make a choice, but with the encouragement Rev. Michelle gives us I usually know I'm on the right track. We must keep our music tradition at Higham alive.

For all our special services over Christmas 2019 we were able to argument the choir considerably. It gave a real uplift to our worship. We were hoping to do the same again for our Easter services, but alas effects and events of the coronavirus put a stop to everything. Throughout the time we were not in church we took on a very bold step and were able to record certain pieces for the podcast services. This was a learning curve for me, and for everyone. It was so good as well to include other voices that wouldn't normally be singing in the choir. To achieve these recordings we are very indebted to Michelle's daughter, Georgie, who has the equipment and expertise to link it all together for us.

We have been able to sing at services the past few weeks with reduced numbers. This is not ideal, but we have to follow the guidelines set out by the C of F, and the RSCM. At Pentecost we hope to return at full strength Let us hope we can continue with renewed strength, and possibly be able to welcome some new choir members. It would be wonderful to have a larger choir again, so that when members are not able to attend it doesn't make such a gap in the choir. I keep saying, more the merrier!!! If anyone would like to consider having a go, or know anyone

outside of our church family that likes to sing, please come and talk to me.

It was good last year to welcome Ethen Powell into the junior choir, and Ella Byan has joined in recent months, and Mandy Berry to the adult choir.

There have been several moves in the last year to find a new Director of Music. At one point we thought it had reached its conclusion, but unfortunately things didn't turn out the way we wanted them to. Our hopes were raised again, but once again nothing came to fruition. Three years ago I thought I would be keeping things going for just a few months, but I am happy to keep going so that St Mary's doesn't lose its music tradition.

It was a real shame because of the pandemic all our `Framers Market Recital's ` had to be cancelled. This was set up when Tony was with us, and was a function not to be missed, but already I am getting enquiries from groups of singers, and organist's eager to come back as soon as it is possible to brighten our Saturday mornings

In writing this we have been through difficult times, let us through God's good grace hope we can get back to glorifying God with the music we love.

Keith



ST. MARY'S BELLRINGERS REPORT 2019.

During the past year the Bells have been rung for most of our Sunday Services although due to unexpected illnesses and occasional clashes of holiday dates there have been a few non-ringing times. We have also rung for several special occasions including six weddings and Remembrance Sunday. Our Tuesday night practices are generally well attended by both our own regular ringers and visitors from other towers within The Diocesan Guild.

We have also welcomed visiting groups from various parts of the Country and local visiting bands have also joined us for ringing occasions. All the visitors have commented on how lovely both The Church and the Bells themselves are.

Over this past year we have welcomed new ringers to the Tower and the more advanced ringers have also continued to progress with more complicated method ringing. Several of our Ringers have taken part in Wellingborough Branch events including The Striking Competition and Monthly Branch Practices.

The Farmer's Market Quarter Peals continue to be rung on a monthly basis and there have been six full peals completed throughout the year.

The Bells and Bell-Frame are generally in good order with regular stewardship and maintenance being undertaken by our experienced ringers.

Our thanks go to The Rev. Michelle and The PCC for their continuing interest and support.

Bob Dennis. [Tower Captain]

Holy Handymen

Another year gone and still repairs /projects awaiting – perhaps it would have been simpler to re-build the Bede House and start again. However, whilst enjoying the coffee and socialising we did manage to fit in some action and actually achieve quite a lot – though I say it myself.

On the project side we spent some considerable time under Richard's direction building the plinths for the B.H. (Bede House) heaters and adjusting them so that outlet vents lined up with the rear of the heaters and waste gases passed out smoothly, after which it was then possible to attach the safety guards to the hooks we installed.

Once again the heavy church doors had to be prevented from dragging on the stonework below and this involved raising the doors a small amount and then moving the hinges to complete the repair – thanks to Ted and Richard. Thereafter, the gravestones received our attention and loose ones re-set to the safety margins required.

As usual the downpipes on the north side of the church and tower required rodding out and our £24 - worth of connecting rods proved to be a financial blessing. Not only that but they were again successful - after permission was readily obtained from our esteemed vicar -in clearing the blocked multi manhole drain junction of the BH in the vicar's garden – a job that had been delayed for months and carries the entire waste from the BH. A word on the former who has been most co-operative in our ventures and in identifying certain malfunctions on the premises.

As usual the toilets provided our attention with broken or disconnected toilet seats, toilet doors that had to be replaced/adjusted and a new grab bar installed. Clients there actually used the toilet roll holders as their most convenient grab bar with the

consequent result-broken and displaced holders. Considerable time was also spent in securing the BH hazardous cupboard and fixing combination locks to the BH cupboards.

Sparkle display, Xmas crib/tree and a new bier - for the Mary statue's festival walk round the Church (Chris) - tested our skills and inventiveness though routine matters – pressure washing paths, gutter clearances, moss removal and hedge cutting again occupied more time.

The repair of the Eagle and its relocation in the Church , a new socket on the outside of the Chantry (Justin), new office shelving and book ends all happily completed. Again Justin's expertise enabled the light in the tower staircase to be repaired and add to that the repair and replacement of kitchen taps and fittings and one gets the width of expertise within the group

Finally, we were pleased to help with the painting of the railings for the memorial garden and assisting with some general work in the Churchyard – not least the on-going removal of a bush prominently displayed near the B.H. Meanwhile Graham and myself have attended to the safety of the premises and some general repair work.

Again, my thanks to Graham Newell, Richard Hall, Justin Maltby-Smith, Nick Lee and the wonderful ladies and gents who make us coffee.

Chris Hales



Higham Ferrers Mother's Union

Branch membership remained steady in 2019, with meetings normally held on the first Thursday of the month at 2 pm in the Bede House. The Branch Leader and committee met regularly during the year and also attended deanery committee meetings and the Diocesan Forum.

In January we joined with MU members worldwide in welcoming Sheran Harper, our first ever Worldwide President from outside the British Isles. Closer to home the new Diocesan President, Jill Cannings, came to the deanery on a sunny July day as part of her Prayer Pilgrimage around the diocese. Deanery members and friends walked with Jill from St Mary's to St Peter's Irthlingborough then on to St Mary's Finedon for very welcome refreshments. In August we hosted the Deanery Festival, and in September Jill came back to Higham as the speaker at our Harvest Lunch. In December friends from the deanery joined us for our lunchtime Christmas Party in the Bede House when we enjoyed seasonal entertainment by the Stanwick Handbell Ringers followed by an early visit from Father Christmas. Branch members also attended the Deanery Advent Carol Service at St Katharine's Irchester,

At the AGM in March Pat Hall retired as Branch Leader and Angela Tobin as Branch Secretary. Dora Paynton was elected Branch Leader, Jane Smeathers as Branch Secretary, with Ruth Bond re-elected as Branch Treasurer. Dora and Jane were commissioned by Revd Michelle on Mothering Sunday.

During the year we enjoyed an after Christmas lunch at Rushden Golf Club in January and a visit (with lunch) to Emmaus at Carlton in June. Speakers at other monthly meetings included Revd Tim Short about his pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela; Major Jake Baker about his military experiences and his life

before and after enlisting; Helen Allan about her work with the homeless; Linda Norris about “Embroidery Through the Ages”, including church embroidery; and Revd Linnet Smith explaining how to find ways of expressing our Christian faith in everyday conversation (this meeting was held in the evening in the hope of increasing attendance).

At the end of September we joined with the choir to run the Farmers’ Market Coffee Morning, raising much needed funds for both organisations. On 30th October we held a successful Flower Arranging Demonstration by Keith Gubbins in the Bede House, and raised £140.50 for MU funds.

At the end of the year the branch launched an initiative to introduce more people to the work of Mothers’ Union by hosting an informal social evening at a local restaurant. Eleven members and friends enjoyed an evening of fellowship, food and wine, and listened to a speaker from the anti-bullying charity Kidscape. The group will meet again and is provisionally called ‘MU & Friends’. In common with other church organisations the branch was unable to meet for most of last year, so it is good to revisit activities in early 2020.

Our speaker at the first meeting of the year was St Mary’s Church Warden, Dave Stuttle, talking about his own faith journey and the retreats he has enjoyed. In February we visited Rushden Golf Club for a belated New Year lunch, and later in the month the branch hosted a second evening meeting of ‘MU & Friends’. It was planned to hold further events on a bi-monthly basis until covid intervened.

At the AGM in March Dora Paynton retired as Branch Leader and it was agreed that the branch would continue as committee-led. Ruth Bond was re-elected as Branch Treasurer and Jane Smeathers as Branch Secretary with Margaret Britchford, Diane Buckby, Pat Catlin, Angela Tobin and Linda Vickers remaining as committee members. Thirteen members had paid subscriptions

for the year. Following the formal meeting Marion Knott spoke to members about Northamptonshire Women.

During the remainder of the year members kept busy in a variety of ways – making blankets, face masks, busy bags for children (ready for family services in the future); supporting the food bank; and shopping etc for those who were housebound. We continued to support one another and the parish family in prayer, and also by telephone and socially distanced visits. It was so good to see familiar faces (behind masks) at the times when public worship resumed.

In December we heard the sad news that one of our longest serving members, Margaret Whiteman, had passed away. Margaret was able to be with us for the AGM in March but had subsequently struggled with various health issues. We are thankful for her long association with Mothers' Union.

Jane Smeathers
Secretary



The Fundraising and Social Committee January 2019 to December 2019

The first event for 2019 was the Coffee Morning on Saturday February 23rd which raised £209.65 for the Church.

In June we organized the refreshments for “The Open Gardens” in the Bede House from 12.00 noon until 5pm after which Choral Evensong was sung in the church. This event raised £388.99.

June was a busy month with the Charter Weekend at the end, an event which saw us doing refreshments over two days with tea and scones plus hot sausage rolls in the morning. It was a great event enabling us to raise £786.92.

In August at our Patronal Festival we organized a Parish BBQ which was not a fundraising event but a social one for all the parish family. We were lucky with the weather and finished the day with Choral Evensong.

October saw us organize our annual Harvest Festival Lunch in the Bede House after our service in church. It was another good social event with a lovely lunch and good for the parish family to get together. The Harvest Lunch raised £571.96 for the church.

Our next event was Sparkle which was held on Saturday 23rd November our major fundraising event of the year. In one day we managed to raise £5738.75. This event takes a lot of organizing with evenings of crafting and meetings to organize what we need to buy plus help on the day from the parish family.

The last event for 2019 was the Wreath Making Workshop in December where we sold all our tickets and raised £442.00. It was a very enjoyable afternoon and people went home with a lovely Christmas Wreath.

St Marys 600 Appeal



Back in the autumn of 2020, in the midst of a pandemic and lockdowns, we launched our five-year St Mary's 600 Appeal – the timing is designed to celebrate and remember Archbishop Henry Chichele's legacy of 600 years ago (in 2022) and also to aim to raise £600,000 for work needed on two of the three Grade 1 listed buildings in our own 'mini-Cathedral Close' (or that's how I think of our beautiful churchyard anyway). Not many towns of our size can lay claim to such magnificent historic buildings but with them comes responsibility and cost.

A new group of fundraisers came together and worked out a plan of how to tackle the fundraising in bite sized pieces – despite all the challenges. We divided the work into three phases with Phase 1 being all about the church including the spire repairs, roof and stonework repairs, the replacement heating system, and the server. This is what we have been very much concentrating upon. Once we have funded the work on the church - £263,400 plus VAT which is refunded, we will move on to Phase 2 which is external and internal work on the Bede House and continuing to be mindful of the loan repayment.

Thanks to the support of so many of you, our church family, and the talents of members of our fundraising group who have been so successful in getting grants for us (again, not at all easy in the present climate) and an interest free loan from the Diocese we are currently incredibly close to being able to put in the heating system and Server. Both will make our church much more suitable for community use as well as our services being more comfortable for us all. It will give us the opportunity for fundraising events to be held once again - as soon as the world

allows. These in turn will help us to repay our loan and raise future funding.

Please ‘watch this space’ for the beginning of both pieces of work in the coming months. We really cannot do it without your support, and we do owe it to future generations that they too can enjoy the history of our town for the next 600 years. Please support us in any way that you are able as we move on with our fundraising; if we do not press on with fundraising and completing the various pieces of work then the future of our historic town centre is a bleak one – and none of us want that, do we?

Sue Dennis
Appeal Leader



St Mary 600 Appeal Balance Sheet 2020

Bank Account opened 1st November 2020 for the following funds:-

1. Church Heating project
2. Repairs to stonework of Church and Bede House
3. Installation of a Servery in the Church
4. Redecoration and improvement to the Bede House interior

Receipts 2020

Church Heating project

Loan from Church Account - Make £10 Grow project	800
Profits from previous fund raising event	2,643
M Scarborough Print Sales	480
Make £10 Grow	6,605
Special Donations	12,000
Donation 'in memoriam'	10,000
Gift Aid Claim (to 30/11/2020)	2,562

Total 35,090

Payments

Repay loan to church account	800
Printing and packaging Prints and Notelets	493
Material for 2021 calendars	3
Total	1,296

Excess receipts over payments 33,794

Receipts 2020

Bede House Interior

Profits from previous fund raising events	2,560
The Co-op Community Fund	2,337
Donation St Mary Bell Fund	500
Donation "Higham Ferrers Charter 1215"	500
Total	5,897

Funds at 31.12 2020

Lloyds Bank – St Mary the Virgin PCC Higham 600 Appeal 39,691

Analysis sheet, bank statements, cheque and paying in books reconciled

Date 7.5.21 Signed [Signature]
W.J. ELLIOTT

Thursday Coffee Mornings

Thursday mornings are now seeing a few more people coming to enjoy a coffee and a chat.

In September we welcomed the ladies from the "Knit and Natter" group who used to meet in the Library. These 12 ladies meet on the first Thursday of the month and the needles are going at quite a pace, while enjoying a good natter.

I would like to thank those who come along to prepare coffee, Mary, Elizabeth, Pat, David, Richard, Shirley and Diane, who is always there to lend a hand when its my turn, and any week if needed, apart from folding the news sheets. Unfortunately we have lost the help of Maureen, who found it difficult to come across from Sywell following her knee operation.

Thank you all very much indeed. The money raised from Thursday mornings goes towards Church Funds.

Coffees served after the Sunday Mass were beginning to increase before the "lock down" and following a suggestion from Rev. Michelle, the money now goes towards the Served Project. Over the past year a total of £430 has been raised.

The biscuit stock never lasts long, as somehow everyone prefers the chocolate ones. Again grateful thanks must go to the people who come along to help serve every week. Ruth, Peter, Angela, Flo, Kerry, Pat, David, Joan, John and Nicky. A special thank you must go to David Batchelor, who without fail, fills and switches on the water urn every week.

I am sure we are all looking forward to life getting back to normal and as such a time as we can all get together over coffee once more. Until then stay safe.

Pam Whiting

Report on the church website for the APCM

The church website has been maintained for the past year to give up to date information on services and other events involving the church. We did make one alteration during the year to make it more of a Benefice website than exclusive to St. Mary's by adding an extra domain name, www.stmarystjohnunited.co.uk.

During the year the page received an average of ten visits per day, with double the number on Sundays. However, the use of the site increased enormously with the advent of the Corvid 19 lockdown and the decision of the ministry team to broadcast a Sunday service each week in addition to a daily "Keep in Touch" podcast and a Celtic Liturgy on Monday evenings. It culminated in the site having over 200 hits on Easter Day and numbers in three figures for subsequent Sundays and a total of 5176 visits in the last 3 months.

I am very grateful for the help and support of Fr. Paul who has spent hours putting the sound together for the services and podcasts, Rev. Michelle and Brenda for supplying the text for the services and for everyone for their help in supplying pictures etc. for use on the website.

We do know that the site is viewed worldwide, not only through personal contacts but because it is used to pass messages to the church.

Richard Hall.

HOLY DUSTERS REPORT

The group lost several member towards the end of 2019. It has been difficult to replace them as most people in the younger age group are working, so the average age of the existing group (except one lady) is between 70 and 80 years of age. About 5 or 6 people remain and when all of them are available it is possible to clean the church properly once a month as all of them are very hard working. An effort ought to be made to find willing people to take part or think about how the church will be cleaned in future.

This year we were arranging to have a group lunch just before Easter at Rushden Golf Club but, like everything else, it did not take place due to lockdown. When we can get into the church we will need some extra help.

Ann Pack





