

# PARISH CHURCH OF BARBOURNE ST STEPHEN

2020

## ANNUAL REPORT



Michelle Walsh - Parish Administrator  
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1137099

## **From the Vicar**

Welcome to what may be the shortest annual report in the recent history of St Stephen's!

### ***The year that was...***

2020 was a year unlike any other. Who reading this could say that their life has been untouched by the Covid-19 pandemic? For many (perhaps most) people the impact has been profound, and very difficult. We have been separated from friends and family; we have lost loved ones, and in many cases have been unable to mourn their passing in the usual ways; many have struggled with illness, without the usual supports which might have made things a little more bearable; and throughout there has been the constant sense of anxiety and isolation. It is right that we mark and remember all this.

So much of life has been "on hold". One of the newspaper cartoons I remember from the year is of a man and his wife at their computer. He is saying to her, "The round robin note is easy this year", as he types on the screen: "2020. We've been nowhere. We've done nothing." Those same restrictions have profoundly affected our life as a Church community, too. The usual pattern of weekly services and fellowship in Church was at times impossible, at others much reduced. Many have felt this loss very keenly.

And yet ....

It was Geoff Hill who observed to me during the pandemic: "We have stopped thinking of Church as somewhere we go, and started thinking of it as something we do." He was absolutely right. We were forced to think of Church as far more than simply a building where we gather. Church continued, even when the doors had to be kept closed. I might go further, and say that, as the year progressed, we realised that Church is something we **are**.



Through the wonders of technology we were able, first to distribute "At Home" services, then to begin meeting on Zoom. People kept in touch with old friends and made new friends over the phone. Flowers and packs containing strange assortments of objects were delivered. Doorstep conversations were enjoyed. Despite the strangeness and difficulty of the times, a sense of still being a family emerged. And we reached out to the wider community, stitching PPE, baking cakes, singing carols ....

We did what we could, and I would like to celebrate that, and thank everyone who joined in in any way in being that Church family during 2020.

### ***And the year that will be...***

I suspect you will immediately understand what I mean if I say that the world has changed in the past year. But we have also changed as **people**. For some, there has been a re-evaluation of priorities, and a rediscovery of what is important. For others, there is a nervousness about gathering in the ways which used to feel quite natural.

I believe we can be hopeful that the restrictions which have governed our lives during the past year will have been largely lifted by September: but that does not mean that we can – or should – simply go back to doing what we used to do. There will rightly be a time ahead for asking some important questions:

- *What things have been lost to which we might need to say 'goodbye'?*
- *What new discoveries made in the past year might we want to explore further?*
- *What priorities should direct our course in the coming months?*

Above all, we should cultivate a sense of looking to God for His direction, and His priorities for our lives and our Church. I commend to you this prayer, which we have used in the past, but which seems especially relevant as we chart a path together into the future:

*Gracious and loving God,  
Thank you for the promised gift of your Holy Spirit  
to be our comforter and Guide;  
we ask you to bless and guide the people of this church of St Stephen  
as we seek to discern and to do your will.  
Inspire our worship, our fellowship and our service.  
Where we are fearful, give us courage;  
where we are complacent, challenge us;  
and so make us ready for Christ to be formed in us.  
We ask this in his name and for his sake. **Amen***

In the rest of this short report, I highlight just a few important areas in relation to the Church's life.

## **Finances**

With this report, you will have received a copy of the 2020 Financial Statements. Although they show a fair amount in reserves at the year end, it is really important to understand two things. Firstly, this was achieved by under-paying our Parish Share for the year by a full **£26,000**. Clearly, such a shortfall is not sustainable: Parish Share pays for parish ministry. Secondly, the reason this was done is that there are some sizeable repairs needed to the fabric of the building in the short-term.

I'm extremely grateful to everyone who supported the Church financially during the pandemic. Some have put aside money during the year; others have seen that their expenses had decreased in the year and have increased their giving accordingly; others have continued to give faithfully through planned giving. May I please encourage anyone who has not yet signed up for the Parish Giving Scheme to consider doing so? It has made an amazing difference to our Church and others this past year.

I would also like to thank Richard Hemmings for his continued faithful support of St Stephen's as Treasurer this past year.

## **Churchwardens**

As you will be aware, we have been unable to elect a Churchwarden this year. (We should have two.) We are extremely grateful to Geoff Hill for his massive contribution through to February 2021, when he stepped down. In the absence of a Churchwarden, the PCC has taken on responsibility for ensuring that the tasks which would have been performed *are* performed: but they cannot and should not be expected to do these tasks themselves, and we are very grateful to all who are considering sharing some of the Churchwarden duties, from welcoming at services to keeping an eye on the maintenance of the land and buildings.

In that connection, I would like to thank especially Adrian Everett, Paul Kennett, and .... Geoff Hill (!), who have given so generously of their time and energy to keep on top of urgent maintenance; and also Gordon Gething, who as Lay Chair of the PCC has been leading on coordinating the work to fulfil the various Churchwarden tasks.

## **Electoral Roll**

The electoral roll remains at 146 at the year end. There will be a need to review it as we emerge fully from Lockdown. Thanks to Paul Kennett for keeping on top of this.

## **Safeguarding (= Keeping one another safe)**

Churches, as well as all organisations, have been reminded this year of the importance of taking appropriate steps to keep everyone safe. The PCC is rightly clear that we should not begin any activities for which appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place, so, if you are asked to complete a form or do some online training, the request will not have been made lightly or carelessly, and please do not take it as a slur on your good character! It is purely and simply a case of doing the right thing. A huge thank you to Carol Amos for continuing to coordinate this area.

## **Thank you!**

I end by repeating a massive "Thank you" to everyone who contributed to the life of the Church during 2020: distribution teams, givers of money, flower providers, Church decorators and cleaners, Zoom readers and attenders, Nativity figure painters, garden tidiers, faithful pray-ers ... the list goes on and on! Please do not think that, if your contribution is not prominent, that means it is not important: it absolutely is – and has been very much appreciated!



Revd Andy Todd  
Priest-in-Charge  
May 2021



**The Parochial Church Council of the  
Ecclesiastical Parish of St Stephen's,  
Barbourne**

**Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of St Stephens PCC Barbourne**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2020 which are set out on pages 5 to 18.

**Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

As the charity's trustees of St Stephens PCC Barbourne you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the St Stephens PCC Barbourne's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of St Stephens PCC Barbourne as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

  
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M A Skellum FCA

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Date: 27/4/2021

