

St Mary's Church, Selly Oak
Annual Parochial Church Meeting 15 May 2022
Reports

1) Vicar's report

We began 2021 with high rates of coronavirus and a semi-lockdown, which impacted everyone's lives, including our church life. This time, however, churches were allowed to remain open for public worship, which we did, continuing to hold the 10am Eucharist on Wednesdays and Sundays. It was an anxious time: most churches took the decision to close in early January when government advice was to 'stay at home', and our numbers attending worship were low. However, we have a large space so could easily achieve the required social distancing, and also had willing volunteers who helped us to manage everything we needed to do to adhere to the guidance and remain as safe as possible for those attending. I am very grateful to everyone who helped with this, as well as to the ministry team and others who tried to ensure that we kept in touch with those not attending church.

For those unable to come to worship in the building, we continued to offer Evening Prayer on Zoom, as well holding meetings of PCC, Standing Committee, Ministry Team and other committees on-line via Zoom or 'teams'. During Lent we joined with the other churches in Selly Oak to offer Lent groups on Zoom, using the Church of England 'LiveLent21' material. For Holy Week and Easter '21 we had a range of services, some online (Compline, intergenerational Good Friday worship with others in the Diocese) and some in the building (Maundy Thursday, an 'Hour at the Cross' on Good Friday, and Easter Day worship at 8 and 10).

A gradual easing of Covid restrictions from mid-April '21 saw a gradual return to in person meetings and activities, and an expansion of our worship, including resuming the weekly Sunday 8am communion from Pentecost, and Baptisms from July. During July I also enjoyed welcoming small groups to the Vicarage at various times for tea, coffee, cake and/or wine. It was good to be able to get together socially again, and also to have conversations together about our worship at St Mary's, discussing what we value most, what we had missed during Covid, and whether we might make any changes going forward.

It was a great joy to be able to start singing again, and from September Choral Evensong resumed. Thank you to our choir for their patience as we negotiated the various steps out of restrictions, it was wonderful to have choir back in the choir stalls during the autumn to lead our singing. We also enjoyed a couple of concerts during the year, with young string players performing to a full church in August, and even younger string players performing in a packed church hall in December.

Activities in the autumn included social events and fundraising, with a very successful car boot sale, and a parish walk with a pub lunch. There was also a five week course on prayer led by members of the ministry team, and I led a Quiet morning in early December. We welcomed a good number of people to our Annual Service of Remembering in November '21, and it was great to be able to hold the Carol Service in church again.

Conversations reviewing worship fed into PCC discussions about our vision and priorities for mission and ministry here in Selly Oak. We had already reaffirmed our vision statement during 2020: **St Mary's is here to proclaim and celebrate the love of God for all.** During 2021 we identified 3 key areas of focus for our church life together: (1) creating inclusive community (2) exploring spirituality (3) outreach, particularly to children and young people. A bring and share lunch was held in November, open to all, to look in more detail at each of these areas and identify what we might aim to do over the next 3-5 years. I am grateful to Martin Sorby for facilitating those conversations in small groups.

The outcomes have been on display at the back of church, and the PCC continue to work through them. It is an ongoing work in progress, but I think we are already beginning to develop in these areas. For example, the Junior Youth club re-launched on Wednesday evenings in November, re-named 'St Mary's Junior Club', and I have enjoyed regular visits to build relationships with the 15 or so young people who attend. Junior Church has continued to grow, and our Christmas activity morning held in December '21 attracted a good number of children and their parents. One of the

questions asked of parishes in the annual 'Statistics for Mission' is 'how many people have joined your church during the year?' In compiling our return for 2021 I was able to say that we had 21 new people, including 17 adults and 4 children, which represents really encouraging growth.

I have continued to build relationships in the wider community, and was pleased to be invited to lead prayers at the outdoor carol service in Selly Oak Park in December. I've also resumed taking regular services in Sellywood house, a care home in our parish. I continue to meet regularly with the other ministers in our Cluster of Churches (St Gabriel's Weoley Castle and St Michael and All Angels' Bartley Green), plus the Vicar of St Peter's Harborne, and also with ministers of Churches together in Selly Oak. The Diocesan 'People and Places' process invites us to consider which parishes we should work more closely with in mission, and this will be an ongoing area of discussion in PCC during the coming year.

Contributing to the life of St Mary's CE primary school is a privilege. As well as being a member of the Governing body, the curriculum and standards committee, and the school ethos committee (which I agreed to chair from September '21), I have visited school to monitor RE and Collective worship, and also attended staff meetings to give presentations on key aspects of Christian belief, hopefully helping staff to be more confident in the teaching of RE. Taking school assemblies continued on-line during 2021, but it was a joy to be able to host the Y6 leavers' assemblies in person in St Mary's Church in July.

My roles in the wider Diocese have continued, including being available to meet with those discerning vocations to ordained ministry, contributing to the training programme for Curates, and seeing people for spiritual accompaniment. The Curate at St Francis Bournville was under my oversight (following her Vicar's departure for another post) until November '21, when she departed to become Vicar of Alvechurch.

Just before Easter '21 I received an invitation from our Bishops to train to become a Bishop's adviser for the new national discernment process for those exploring a call to ordained ministry. I gave this careful consideration before responding, as I am aware that my diary can get very full at times, and I want to ensure that the balance is right between time spent on the parish and time spent on wider diocesan and national commitments. After some reflection I agreed to take this on, and completed the training (via Zoom). The minimum commitment each year is one Stage 1 panel which takes place via Zoom in a day, and one Stage 2 panel which is residential over 3 days, my first is coming up in May 2022.

With the support of the PCC, I put in an application for a Curate. As a consequence it was good to announce just before Christmas that we will be welcoming Jacob Pallett in June 2022, following his ordination in Birmingham Cathedral. Jacob grew up in the countryside in the north of the diocese, and lived in the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, for nine years prior to testing his vocation to the ordained ministry. He is completing his training full time at Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford, and will be with us for three to three and a half years.

Dealing with the challenges of our unreliable and finally dead (!) boiler, as well as working towards its replacement, has been a theme woven throughout the year, but the saga of this is covered elsewhere (see Fabric report), so I won't dwell on it here. I would however like to record my thanks to those who have helped deal with these issues, in particular Gerald Fage and members of his family who did their best to keep the old boiler going, and George Harrison who has worked hard on faculty applications and all that has been needed to make progress towards replacing the boiler. Thank you too to the congregations for your patience whilst we moved worship to the warmer church hall for a time.

On 12th September '21 we celebrated the 160th birthday of St Mary's. So many people responded generously to the invitation to give financial birthday gifts to the church that we ended the year with a healthy set of church accounts. Many churches have not fared so well during the pandemic, and I am deeply grateful for everyone's commitment to the life of our church. To all who contribute in so many different ways to our church life together, thank you. We have much to look forward to in the coming months and years.

Revd Hazel White

2) Altar servers, lesson readers, intercessors and lay assistants

Altar Servers

There are currently only seven servers. Due to the restrictions and difficulties imposed by the pandemic, servers are only acting as crucifers at the 10:00 communion service on Sunday mornings and at the 6:30 choral evensong on the 3rd Sunday.

Lesson Readers

There are currently a twenty-one members of the congregation who read the first and second lessons at the 08:00 and 10:00 communion services on Sunday Mornings.

Intercessors

There are currently eight members of the congregation, plus the three clergy, who lead the intercessions at the 10:00 communion service

Lay Assistants

Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic the congregation have not been able to take the chalice since mid-March 2020. However, when the pandemic restrictions are lifted there is a group of ten church members, who, in the past were licensed to assist with the administration of the chalice at communion services. One of those members is currently licensed to support the clergy by taking home communion to the sick and housebound.

The role of deacon, which includes leading the prayers of preparation during the first part of the Parish Communion and the reading of the gospel is carried out by two lay members of the church as well as members of the clergy.

Richard Edmonds

3) Baptisms

Because of Covid restrictions, no baptisms were performed during the first half of 2021. Between July and December 2021, 4 baptism services were held, all at 12 noon, during which a total of 6 children were baptised.

As always the clergy are most grateful for the support of the baptism teams in preparing the church and welcoming guests, and to Angela Lidgbird for organising the teams during this period.

Revd David Parker

4) Bellringers

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and risk assessments of the Tower, St Marys Bells were not rung for practice or service ringing from Jan 21 – Nov 21.

The annual dinner and ringers outing was cancelled this year due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

A single Bell was tolled on -

23/03/21 - for Marie Curie National Day of Reflection.

10/04/21 - In memory of HRH The Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh.

17/04/21 - Half-muffled tolling, immediately prior to the 1-minute National silence and the Funeral of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

21/04/21 - Tolloed half muffled, 91 times in Memoriam of Sigvard von Sicard.

14/06/21 - Half Muffled tolling 72 times in memoriam of those lives lost in the Grenfell Tower Fire, ending with 4 rings for every year following the fire itself.

05/07/21 - 73 times as part of the national celebration of the 73rd anniversary of the NHS.

In October 2021 a Bubble of ringers from St Martins Guild were arranged to ring for a wedding.

In Dec 21 it was agreed after the ringers AGM that if the windows to the Tower could be opened then ringing should resume with guidelines.

Paul Lindley kindly offered to look at the windows, it is with great delight that both windows are now open and functioning.

The band were able to resume Wednesday Practice with guidelines, restrictions to time, both windows and doors fully open, the use of a carbon dioxide monitor, were all part of the risk assessment to ensure safety for ringers.

Data collection from the Carbon dioxide monitor was critical to the time allowed in the tower.

The band were able to ring for 15 minutes for Sunday service and the Carol Service.

My personal thanks are extended to St Mary's band Russell, Gill, George, Paul, Alex, Holly and Ann and also to those who support weekly Will, Catherine and David, for their service to the church and weekly commitment to ringing.

We thank the clergy Hazel, Jayne, David and the congregation for their support. We look forward to serving the community of Selly Oak in 2022 with the selfless commitment from the band and the ringing community.

Joanne Goodall, Tower Representative

5) Bereavement chaplaincy

Clergy at St Mary's Church have again, for the year April 2021 to May 2022, been called upon to take many funerals, in cemeteries and crematoria throughout Birmingham and Solihull, and here in St Mary's Church.

Our bereavement group has continued to call bereaved families or friends of those who have died and whose funeral our clergy have taken. These calls are made to offer people time to talk, if they would welcome that and then to signpost them on, if further support might be helpful. Most people are appreciative of the call, even if they do not want to chat; it's meaningful to them that they have been remembered.

In November 2021, we were able to hold our first memorial service in Church, for two years. It was well attended by families and friends, coming to remember their loved one by sharing in worship, hearing the names of their loved one read out, lighting candles in their memory, leaving a message on our memorial tree and taking a small pebble to remind them of their time with us at the service.

Members of the bereavement group were available to speak with visitors, and those they have spoken with previously on the telephone.

We decided we would possibly resume offering refreshments next year when hopefully, Covid is less prevalent.

On behalf of the parish, I would like to express gratitude to those who have made those important phone calls, helped to prepare and send out letters of invitation to the memorial service and helped to share in the memorial service worship here at St Mary's Church. Thank you all for the special and valuable role you have in ministry.

Revd. Jayne Adams

6) Book group

In January 2021 we resumed Book Group on Zoom. Whilst sadly meaning that Sheila has not been able to join in, we have gained new members, Sarah, George and Laura, which has been great. We continued with Zoom meetings until August, when we had our first live meeting, hosted by Hazel at The Vicarage. Our next meeting in October was held in church but after that the boiler breaking down meant that church meetings were not really feasible. This led to a halt for the end of the year, but in 2022 the arrival of a new manager at Bridgewater Court has meant that we are now able to use their lounge for our meetings, with the added advantage that Sheila will be able to take part – as well as hopefully some new members. Books are chosen by a different person each time. I don't think we've ever read one we've all liked, but I think my latest – not very well researched – choice for May 2022 will definitely be one that is universally *disliked* (spoiler alert!!)

Books read in 2021

January 2021: *The Trouble with Goats and Sheep* – Joanna Cannon

February 2021: *The End of the Affair* – Graham Greene
March 2021: *Go Set a Watchman* – Harper Lee
April 2021: *Sacred Hearts* – Susan Dunant
May 2021: *Three Men in a Boat* – Jerome K Jerome
July 2021: *Where the Crawdads Sing* – Delia Owens
August 2021: *The Midnight Library* – Matt Haig
October 2021: *Reservoir 13* – Jon McGregor

Kate Cheyney

7) Choir/organ

2021 was yet another Covid year, with all the difficulties which ensued. As if that wasn't enough, in the latter half of the year, despite the valiant efforts of our volunteers, the church heating boiler finally packed up for good. Despite all these problems, we have managed as a Church and Choir to keep going, which is a blessing, as a number of churches have not been able to maintain a choir. The support and encouragement from Vicar Hazel and all the clergy team has been a great help.

At the start of 2021, in lieu of our Friday choir practice in church, we held a fortnightly Zoom session, not to sing, but to be able to meet together socially online, and invited a few of our past choristers to join in. As the year progressed with the easing of restrictions, we gradually moved from having a single soloist at services, to having 6 singers in the South Transept, and then the slow introduction of some limited congregational singing. With winter approaching and no heat in church, for a few weeks we sang in the church hall, but it was far from satisfactory. In September, we were able to resume singing Choral Evensong. At the end of the year, it was a great pleasure to be able to have a 'normal' Carol Service.

There were a few changes with our choristers in another difficult year. Student Ed, joined the choir as a much-needed bass singer, and towards the end of the year he was joined by Stephen Constable. We've been able to maintain our numbers of Tenors and Altos, but our Soprano numbers have thinned out, with Josie and David Brannon, plus expected baby, planning to move away from Birmingham in 2022. Inevitably attendance at practice and services has been influenced by the comings and goings of Covid infections, but I really must thank all our choristers who, despite Covid and a far from ideal environment in a cold church have given tremendous support to the Choir and St Mary's. Kate Cheyney deserves a special mention for the support and encouragement she's given me.

The Organ continues in the care of Paul Daly, Pipe Organ Maintenance and Tuning Services, who have fortunately been able to continue trading despite the lockdown and have kept oversight of the organ. With the lack of any heating, there have been a number of tuning problems, and with widely varying humidity levels, the organ's internal humidifier will need to be re-located and connected when things get back to normal. I am greatly encouraged that St Mary's PCC judges the upkeep of the organ to be important in its many other priorities. Towards the end of 2021, there was the prospect of a significant donation to the Organ Fund, which is now confirmed, and will allow us to tackle some long-standing issues concerning pipework inside the organ which, through lack of suitable finance, we have not previously been able to address.

John Stormont, Organist & Choirmaster.

8) Church flowers

We are currently a team of three, Jane Edgington, June Sutton and Kirsty Simms and are arranging flowers in Church on a fortnightly basis. During the past year the number of weddings has increased and we have enjoyed the challenge of arranging flowers to fit with the wedding couple's themes.

We have tried to source foliage from our own gardens and the Churchyard and during the summer were able to use garden flowers to cut down on expense.

We have been grateful for the very kind donations made by members of the Church, which have helped to increase the Flower Fund.

We would be pleased to welcome new members to the team.

Kirsty Simms

9) Church hall

Once again the continuing pandemic has had an impact on the work of the hall. However, during the year it has been possible to maintain the pre-school group, breakfast club and after-school groups, as this was providing support for essential workers. The downside was that these groups were working with reduced numbers, and as a result of this the National Education Funding provided us with a sum of money which was to be used in support of maintaining the property, and this enabled us to purchase two tables and eight chairs, and to lay an area of industrial flooring in the extension to replace carpet tiles, and industrial flooring in the kitchen.

With the ending of the lock-down restrictions we have been able to welcome back outside groups who are using the hall in the evening. This has helped us to be more self-sufficient financially.

In June we were approached by the Prince's Trust to see if we could offer a placement to one of their students to help her in her "Introduction to childcare" course that she was doing as she wished to work in the childcare sector. This trust, set up by Prince Charles, is a charity which helps young people to develop their skills, and helps them get into employment. This student was with us for a fortnight, during which time she was regularly visited by her supervisors, and the Trust were grateful to us for our support, and we hope that we will be able to provide further support in the future.

The hall continued to be managed on a day-to-day basis during the lockdown, and essential maintenance work continued, including tree surgery because of wind damage. The quinquennial electricity report was obtained, and the electrical circuits are compliant with current regulations. Refurbishment has continued, including replacement of damaged glass in the parlour, and the kitchen was finished.

The committee looked at further plans for refurbishment, and set out their priorities for the coming year. The sports hall ceiling needed replacement, and it was agreed to do this in the same manner as the kitchen with an overlay, which would also enable asbestos to be boxed in. The ladies' toilets were considered to require a complete refurbishment with new toilets, vanity units and washbasins, and to have the breeze blocks covered over to give a better aesthetic appearance.

One of the issues which has continued to be a problem has been the lack of toilet facilities for the use of the church. Although there are the toilets in the hall, it has not been possible to physically separate them from the rest of the hall which meant that they could only be open for church use during the working week if someone was physically present to ensure that no one could enter the other part of the hall. It has been decided to replace the door between the parlour and the toilets, and to put new locks on all the doors off the corridor where the toilets are, so that it will be possible for the toilets to be accessed through the side door, and the rest of the hall will no longer be accessible unless the communicating door is unlocked.

During the year, because of the various lock-downs, it was not possible to meet in person until July, and during that time, Wendy Parkes retired from her post as treasurer, and I am grateful to John Surtees for taking over this position. Also, Donald Knight retired after many years of service. We are grateful to them for all their support over many years.

I remain grateful to Gerald Fage for his services as Hall Manager and continuing supervision of contractors working on the site and to the whole committee (including Pat Finney and Kirsty Simms) for their continuing contribution to the running of the hall.

George Harrison

10) Fabric committee

The Fabric Committee has been continuing to look after the fabric of the church during the year, ensuring that there has been regular internal and external maintenance of the fabric and grounds. Internal work included contracted church cleaning, organ tuning, photocopier and alarm system service. Volunteers have continued to maintain flowers, floor polishing, silverware, altar dressing and kitchen equipment.

Externally there was cleaning of the gutters (which included the high level gutters this year), replacement of failing lights, and tidying up the churchyard, although the main work on the

churchyard is undertaken by the City Council as they have responsibility for this, and they have kept the hedges trimmed, the weeds kept down, and trees removed when damaged or dead.

However, although the graveyard is the responsibility of the City Council, the long drive to the Bristol Road remains the responsibility of the PCC and this requires regular cleaning to deal with the annual leaf-fall. In the past this has been managed by working parties. However, over the last year the average number of people turning up is about five, and in view of this it was considered appropriate to employ a gardener to assist with this work, as well as looking after the grounds to the south of the church, and this has helped to keep the grounds and drive tidy.

During the year Faculty has been sought and granted to enable the church to permanently lay up the flag of the 42nd Company of the Birmingham Girl Guides, which were quite active until the latter part of the 20th Century, and this took place during the morning service on the 31st October. Also, Faculty was granted to allow the erection of a plaque to give thanks for the beneficence of Margaret Burcham whose bequest funded the work to enable the repairs to the spire in 2020. This is now situated at the base of the tower.

The onset of the pandemic has caused us, as many churches, to look at the way in which worship is conducted to enable the largest number of people to be able to join in worship, and this has included the use of the internet. It was accepted that the use of the internet is going to be important in the future and the committee started looking at what was necessary for streaming of services. It was agreed that this was a matter which could be dealt with by a separate working group. It was later agreed that the provision of Wi-Fi was necessary and that is ongoing.

The main problem which has been the primary focus of the committee was that of the church heating. The boiler had been held together by a combination of prayer and araldite, and it was hoped that this would hold together throughout the year, whilst plans were made to look for future options. Unfortunately, this did not turn out to be the case and in November the heat exchanger failed terminally. As a result, we have been without a central heating system in the church.

In the meantime, applications had been made to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) as part of the process to obtain Faculty to replace the heating system. The PCC was advised that it should obtain advice from a heating engineer, which was done, and the various options were considered, including a ground source heat pump. However, the price of this was over £200,000. This was not considered something that we could manage, as well as the problems with ground and air source heat pumps as they were not desirable for buildings which did not have adequate insulation, and that was the problem with our church.

Therefore, it was decided that we should replace the oil-fired boiler with a gas-fired boiler which was going to be able to use hydrogen gas which is a green energy of the future, although not at present, although it is being tried in one area of the North-East. This was considered the best option, and a further application was submitted to the DAC. This was turned down by the DAC on the grounds that the use of an air-source heat pump had not been sought, in spite of the reasons given for this not being appropriate. Therefore, we were advised to discuss this with Ian Simpson, Historic Places of Worship Support Officer for the Diocese. This we did, and he confirmed that for our church, the use of air-source heat pumps was inappropriate and that the best option was to continue with the application for gas powered heating. This is ongoing.

Finally, I would like to give my thanks to all the members of the Fabric Committee who have given freely of their time and knowledge to enable this work to be done.

George Harrison

11) Health and Safety

Accidents reported:

- None reported.

Work regularly carried out to prevent accidents includes:

- Gritting/clearing of paths during icy conditions
- Checking on loose masonry after storms

- Regular fire extinguisher checks; extinguishers fitted correctly in new places
- Loose tiles checked and re-mortared where required
- CCTV cameras checked periodically
- Walk around church at least once (ideally twice) annually by church warden and health and safety officer performing overall H and S audit of premises

Other improvements

- Holes/uneven parts in church path and hall driveway filled in
- Frequent Covid Health and Safety risk assessments have continued to take place. Stewards in place for all services, continuing to oversee safe movement of congregation in, out and around building
- Hot water installed in toilet, facilitating more effective hand-washing

Future improvements:

- New lighting needed for pathway round to toilet; may be able to be part of work on new boiler house?
- Upper room in need of tidying. George, Miriam, Stephen, Kate and Kirsty to undertake in the next few weeks

Safeguarding:

- This comes under a separate heading, with new guidelines issued by the C of E and diocese. Safeguarding is a regular item on PCC agenda. DBS status of PCC members is currently being updated. Serious incidents, if any occurred, would be reported separately from this report.

Kate Cheyney

12) Junior Church

At the start of 2021, Junior Church continued to meet virtually on Zoom. We maintained a consistent pattern of sessions with around 5 families attending most weeks. We continued the pattern we had been following of a bible reading / short talk and letting people know in advance what they would need for a craft activity. It was very helpful to maintain the contact with our families and keep the children engaged in their worship. Family services at this time were less well attended, as many families felt it wasn't right for them to be attending church with Covid cases so high in schools. Some families also attended a diocesan online service on Good Friday 2021 which was very enjoyable.

In June 2021, we were finally able to start holding Junior Church sessions once again in person. As the weather was fine, we began with some sessions outdoors in order to help with social distancing, with people bringing their own equipment as far as possible. With the nice weather and possibility of meeting friends and family once again, the attendance was lower to start with, but it was good to welcome back some families who had not attended online, as well as see those who had kept attending throughout as they were able to.

Over the summer holidays, we took a break from Junior Church sessions, and then returned in September to sessions in the hall once again. These have generally been well attended and we have welcomed a few new families across the year so far who have returned more regularly.

Towards the end of last year, Hazel introduced us to the Roots materials which have readings, prayers, activities and ideas for leading sessions with children and young people. This has been a huge help in running sessions and taken off some of the pressure for those leading to come up with their own ideas for each session. We've all enjoyed the activities that have come from these resources, and they have linked very well to the themes being explored in church. We have also been able to start singing once again, and this has enhanced our worship.

At Christmas, we were once again able to perform a short nativity. With some of the children being a bit older, we were able to give out more speaking parts and it was held together with narration from some of the older children. We welcomed many of the families who have joined us in person and on Zoom in the last few years, and this was a very successful service.

Junior Church sessions have been led by a larger number of helpers this year, including Alessandra, Sophie, Adrienne and me as before, and we have been particularly pleased to have some sessions led by Peter, Martin, Kate and Hazel. The children have enjoyed the range of leaders, and it has felt good to develop a stronger link with the congregation and clergy by widening this group. There have been a couple of occasions where we haven't managed to run Junior Church sessions as planned, but this has been mainly due to Covid or other illness.

We have been very grateful for Hazel's monthly family services which involve the children more fully in worship in church. It has been good to have opportunities in some of these services for children to read, contribute their own prayers or share things they have been doing.

We have maintained communication with new and existing families through our Whatsapp group, which has been particularly helpful in organising meetings, rotas, and reminding families of events and services. We hope to continue to welcome more families and be able to fully involve them in Junior Church and the wider church community over the coming year.

Sarah Marshall

13) Kids' club and preschool

Kids club is now slowly returning to pre-pandemic numbers. We have a steady flow of children and continue to offer affordable child care for working parents. The staff have been supportive throughout and worked to help the key worker parents return to work in January 2021.

The preschool continues to operate during the day although numbers may be down this coming September due to the birth rate being low. We will be looking into an advertising drive to hopefully bring the numbers up. We thank Amy for all her hard work in managing the preschool.

Gerald Fage

14) PCC secretary

During 2021, six ordinary meetings of the PCC were held, virtually in January and March and in person thereafter. An additional four extraordinary meetings were held, either by email or in person, two relating to the church heating plans and two relating to risk assessments for Covid. As well as items relating to the routine running of the church, key additional items throughout the year included: vision and priorities for St Mary's; installation of wifi in the church; and the opportunity to appoint a curate. The May 2021 meeting confirmed officers and committees. Between January and December 2021, the following PCC members left the PCC and were thanked for their commitment and service: Julie Charlwood, Simon Charlwood. The following PCC members were appointed: Pat Finney and Sarah Marshall.

Susan Hunston

15) Safeguarding

The Parochial Church Council continues to comply with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in terms of training and its adoption of diocesan policy. Our Parish Identify Verifier, Suzanne Johnston, continues to ensure that all members of the PCC (and others required) have up to date checks and certificates from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Following the disruption of the pandemic over the last few years, an immediate priority is now to ensure that all members of ministry and lay leadership have up to date training in safeguarding. Training has to be completed through the diocese and relevant courses will be signposted as and when they arise. It is intended that all training will be up to date by the end of this year.

Our Safeguarding Policy, Domestic Abuse Policy, Promoting a Safer Church Policy Statement, Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy Statement and Safeguarding Complaints Procedure were reviewed and adopted at the PCC Meeting on 22nd March 2022. Annual reviews and revisions (where necessary) of these documents will take place to ensure we are in compliance with legislation,

guidance and best practice. The most recent documents will be published on the church website and copies displayed at the back of church.

We continue to use the online Parish Safeguarding Dashboard to help us keep track of safeguarding at St. Mary's, keep us up to date with local and national changes in safeguarding guidance and ensure we are fully compliant with church and legal requirements.

As we now emerge from what has been an incredibly difficult and testing time for many I would like to put on record my thanks and appreciation to all those in our Ministry Team and the wider congregation who have taken the time to support and reach out to those who are vulnerable, and whose vulnerability increased over the course of the pandemic. We still face incredible challenges, in particular with the implications of the increasing costs of living. But I know that all of us at St. Mary's will endeavour to support and safeguard all those who may be vulnerable at this time.

Martin Sorby

Churchwarden and Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator

16) Social committee

Social Committee had hoped that 2021 would herald the return of events and activities we had missed in 2020! But this was not to be – as the year began with us entering another period of lockdown. There were tentative talks about a Vicarage Garden Party in the early summer, but as the country's final lockdown restrictions were not lifted until July 19th, it was not possible to plan for a large gathering, albeit outside. Instead, Hazel kindly organised a series of tea, coffee or "something-stronger" mornings, afternoons and evenings, which allowed small groups of us to get together for some much-needed social interaction.

In September we were finally able to have our first proper social event – a tea party in church with entertainment provided by Lucy's young violin group. This also coincided with our first choral evensong for eighteen months, which felt like a social occasion as well as one of worship. Also in September, we resumed refreshments after the Sunday morning services.

In October we held our first car boot sale in two years, which was not only financially successful but also enjoyed by everyone who helped (perhaps this was because we'd had a two-year break!) Later in the month, David kindly led a group of us on a ramble around Kinver and back to *The Vine* pub for a good lunch, where we were joined by a few non-walkers.

We were able to hold a nearly normal carol service in December, which was followed by the usual mulled wine and mince pies – and I think everyone really appreciated how far we'd actually come since the previous Christmas.

In 2022 we hope to see some new members on Social Committee, as well as, crucially, more events being able to take place.

Kate Cheyney

17) Stewardship

In 2021 the number of planned givers was 54. Of these,

- 35 give through the Parish Giving Scheme (there were 36 in 2020)
- 18 give through standing order (there were 19 in 2020)
- 1 gives through the envelope scheme.

Our monthly income through planned (PGS and SO) income is:

- Parish Giving Scheme = £2,997.57 plus £693.69 gift aid;
- Standing order = £998 plus £249.50 gift aid.

Our stewardship Sunday in 2021 was held on St Mary's 160th anniversary and to mark the occasion we asked our congregation to consider giving a birthday gift to our church. We had a very generous response, receiving gifts totalling £6930.

We would still like to encourage those who give by standing order to join the Parish Giving Scheme, particularly so that St Mary's can receive any gift aid on a monthly basis.

With the impact that the rise in the cost of living is having on individual incomes, we are very grateful to everyone who helps to support St Mary's financially.

Laura Hart

18) St Mary's Junior Club

With nearly a two year break we were not sure how the club could move forward. After a chat with Hazel we re-named the club JUNIOR CLUB. With help from all the staff and Hazel's input we opened in October 2021 with eight children. In the six months of re-opening we have doubled that number and all looks to be going well. We look forward to the future and with Hazel's guidance and hopefully the worship team we may see the club in church on occasions as we did some years ago with our youth club. A big thank you to all the staff and Hazel for all their support on Wednesday nights and may we continue to flourish.

Gerald Fage

19) Way group

The Way group is a spirituality group which meets on the second Monday of each month except August, either in the church hall or in someone's home. It starts at 7.30 and runs till 9. It is open to all. The easiest way to give a taste of what the Way group is about is to give a list of some of the topics we covered last year and some of our programme for this.

We looked at the book *God of Surprises* by Gerald Hughes, discussed 'How we pray', spoke of someone one who had inspired us, the person we would most like to be shut in a church with, and a book that had a special meaning to us. Hazel led a session on praying with colour. In the rest of this the year we shall be discussing the idea that 'When I am weak, I am strong', the meaning of Michaelmas, we will meet our new curate and get a writer's perspective on the gospels. We share a Eucharist at our summer party in July, and bring nibbles and Christmas readings to our December meeting.

If you are interested in finding out more and/ or joining us, please talk to Mary Cutler.

20) Website report

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Visitors per day	44.0	42.6	38.0	38.8
TWS downloads per week	48	44	63	49

The very interesting piece of information taken from this year's statistics is that the number of times the This Week Sheet is viewed each week has been steadily falling. The graph at the end of this report shows the number of times it gets looked at on the website (with the most being 74 on 17th January, and the lowest being 8 on 18th July when I was working away and so it was uploaded late). There may be nothing to be concerned about, and it may just be a regression to the norm, but maybe we could have a re-think about what's on the Sheet.

The downloadable files were downloaded the following times:

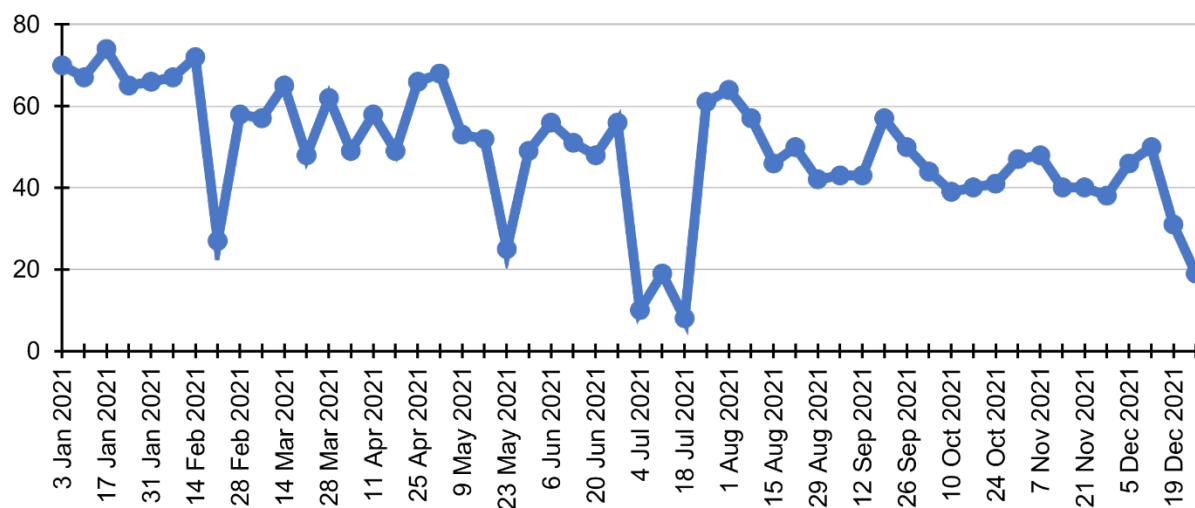
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Covid risk assessment	-	-	-	191
Data Protection Policy	-	123	146	116
Wedding FAQs	192	135	104	110
Interment of Ashes and Fees	377	141	99	104
Worried about a child	186	97	69	68

Bereavement	238	69	61	57
Funeral information	151	114	62	52
Child Protection	168	95	80	125

I was baffled as to why the policy documents are so well read, but it's been pointed out to me that their remarkable popularity will almost certainly be because other churches or organisations will be using them as a template for their own documents.

I'm always very open to suggestions for improvements to the website. Please let me know what you think would make it better.

Ben Reeves



PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY, SELLY OAK
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 20

Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2021
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Stewardship	48,702			48,702
Stewardship tax	11,420			11,420
Cash collections	4,348			4,348
Donations/Grants	4,730		15,604	20,334
Gift Aid tax	1,594		2,245	3,839
Legacies/Memorials		100		100
Fundraising	1,074		70	1,144
Fees	3,856		1,408	5,264
Use of church	0			0
Interest	341			341
Church hall		14,610		14,610
Ringers			98	98
Total Receipts	£76,066	£14,710	£19,425	£110,201
Payments				
Charity donations	3,000			3,000
Common Fund	48,740			48,740
Clergy expenses	860			860
Parsonage	84			84
Services	621	575	647	1,843
Church running	15,829			15,829
Maintenance/repair	247	6,331	2,175	8,753
Education/training	427		108	534
Staff	4,462			4,462
Churchyard	735			735
Administration	696		55	751
Fundraising	207			207
Church hall		14,548		14,548
Ringers			15	15
Total Payments	£75,908	£21,453	£3,000	£100,361
Excess of Receipts over Payments	158	-6,743	16,425	9,840
Transfers between funds				
Funds at 1 January	298,400	231,894	27,875	558,170
Funds at 31 December	£298,559	£225,151	£44,300	£568,010

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 December 2021

		2021 £	2020 £
Fixed Assets			
Church hall and contents		267,289	267,289
Current Assets			
HSBC current account		21,396	14,754
CBF deposit account		273,000	270,000
Parsonage redecoration scheme		1,274	1,049
Church Hall account		3,888	3,826
Ringers account		3,877	3,794
Total Assets		570,725	560,712
Less Current Liabilities			
Childrens' Society	183		
Christian Aid	130		
Acorns	0		
Service fees	2,402	2,715	2,542
Total Net Assets		£568,010	£558,170
Unrestricted Funds			
General Fund		298,559	298,400
Designated Funds			
Hall	3,888		3,826
Legacies & Memorials	221,263		228,068
		225,151	
Restricted Funds			
Organ	5,710		5,592
Drive	2,639		2,313
Flower	878		1,059
Fabric	11,599		12,845
Bereavement	499		545
Youth	193		300
Choir	1,381		1,428
Deficit	8,525		
New Boiler	1,250		
Curate's Housing	1,250		
Ringers	3,877		3,794
Hall Building	6,500		
		44,300	
Total Funds		£568,010	£558,170

£267,289 of the General Fund represents the church hall and contents.
The disposable value of the General Fund is therefore only £31,270.

APPROVED by the Parochial Church Council on 22 March 2022 and signed on its behalf by

Rev'd Hazel White
Vicar

George Harrison
Churchwarden

2021
Total 2020
£
47,201
11,067
2,880
4,355
1,554
40,783
408
3,971
0
1,433
11,429
114
£125,195
2,800
49,810
588
2,502
1,330
15,315
23,334
523
4,420
723
1,018
12,579
279
£115,221
9,974
548,196
£558,170





INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS/TRUSTEES OF THE PCC OF ST MARY SELLY OAK

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2021

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Independent Examiner

As trustees of the charity, the members of the PCC are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility

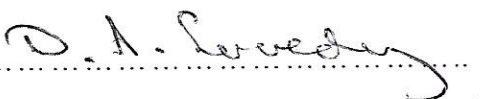
- to examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners in section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination no matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and to prepare accounts in line with these records have not been met or to which in my opinion attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

(signed) 

David Loveday
35 Bristol Road South
Birmingham
B31 2GH
Independent Examiner

Date 8-2-2022