

## **Clergy Report 2020 January to August**

If last year was a year of change this year was even more so. We began the year with great optimism as we prepared to recruit a new Rector. As planned, the leadership Team led by Revd Stuart prepared the Parish Profile and Role description and by February the post was advertised in the Church Times, and on the Diocesan website, and we waited with great anticipation.

Meanwhile Revd Stuart continued to co-ordinate the worship with the assistance of our APA Jackie and lay leader Simon, drafting in retired clergy to provide cover whenever possible. By the end of February and into the beginning of March we invited a candidate for interview and set the official Parish Visit and interview with parish representatives, Bishop Paul, Archdeacon Bob and Area Dean Vernon. Revd Lesley Jones was offered the post and accepted, and we all looked forward to welcoming her and her family.

And then the pandemic struck and the country went into a national lockdown! All churches suspended public worship and building were put in mothballs. In an attempt to reach out to our parishioners and maintain some form of regular prayer and worship Revd Stuart began to livestream worship via our parish Facebook page, with a service of the word broadcast from his study at the Vicarage on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday on a weekly basis.

Pastoral contact was reduced to telephone calls and church meetings becoming 'Zoom' events. By July we were beginning to re-emerge from Lockdown and after an outside meeting in the Vicarage Garden adhering to the rule of six, we made plans to initially reopen St Paul's Church for a public Sunday Service adhering to all the COVID-19 protocols with numbers restricted to a maximum of 50 people, also live-streamed for those unable or unwilling to attend in person.

We began this in August, with the midweek services remaining live-streamed only. In September we welcomed Revd Lesley at an installation Service at St Paul's with the Bishop of Durham and the parish entered into a new phase of its mission and ministry.

## **Rector's report 2020 September to December**

With some time to reflect on the first four months with you here it has been like no other 'new start', because as the second lockdown arrived it felt that we had all been here before. I am however really enjoying working as part of a team with Revd Stuart and Jacki, and really grateful for the opportunity to begin to get to know our parish wardens, PCC and members of our congregations. Thank you for your grace and patience as I spent a great deal of time pouring over government guidelines in those early months!

Our wardens Carol, Gordon, Rita and Roy have been a tower of support, and patiently put up with a lot of questions and thinking out loud.

Despite the strangeness of it all, there were a great many **highlights** including:

- **The Licencing service with Bishop Paul on September 6<sup>th</sup>**
- **St. Peter's Golden Jubilee, again with Bishop Paul, October 25<sup>th</sup>**
- **Remembrance Sunday and Remembrance Day November 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>**
- **Services through Advent and Christmas - online and in-person**

Working more closely with **The Key 2 Life Foodbank** to include referring families for hampers and emergency food parcels connected our churches with people locally during the second Lockdown November and December; feedback from our neighbours was encouraging, and we saw a marked increase in donations from across the community. Thank you to all who contributed to that emergency support.

An unexpected highlight in Advent was the joy and fellowship at the **outdoor carol service** at St. Peter's as restrictions prevented us following the usual pattern of worship. Members of the congregation of all ages mingled with neighbours and friends from churches together as we gathered in the car park beneath the newly illuminated cross to share in a family friendly service.

"Let's do that again next year" was heard several times that evening, and so I hold on to the hope that through the turbulence of Covid 19, we will see some of the new things stick, such as services on-line, outdoor carols, doorstep visits and finding new ways to connect with resources sent home.

So, it has been very much stop/start for all of us, and as I write, the third lockdown is gradually easing and we can begin to plan ahead... albeit in pencil at the moment.

What has quickly become clear to me is the rich diversity in the parish, all four church buildings and the people who worship in them. I am also aware of how important it is that each church retains their own identity as well as benefitting from the inter-dependence of all four.

So while everything has changed around us, working alongside Revd Stuart, our APA Jacki, Simon and Jimmy, I hope that the core services, traditions and local flavours will continue, and as we move forward, we can do so together, looking ahead to the day when we can raise our voices in song in our buildings again.

And, as we see the regular rhythm of services return, we are looking at spaces for members of our congregations to simply spend time together again, socially, after midweek services; spaces where our neighbours can find friendship too.

So many people appear to be looking for a safe space to talk, for someone to listen, space to light a candle and remember a loved one; for others it's an opportunity to step away from the loneliness and isolation of recent months. And in this way, I trust, we will see our churches at the heart of our communities again.

Looking ahead in 2021 a number of themes are already developing, and a considerable amount of prayer, time and energy is being invested to enable us to:

- Worship together in-person and on-line
- Continue to care for one another
- Re-connect with schools, children, families and young people
- Walk alongside people across the community who are struggling
- Welcome pilgrims and visitors exploring The Way of Learning
- Ensure our buildings are safe and fit for purpose
- Re-imagine our giving and fundraising for a sustainable future

I thank God for calling me here – even in these strange, unpredictable days – and look forward to walking alongside you on the journey ahead.

Assuring you of my prayers,

Lesley

## **Financial Review (Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020)**

Total actual receipts on unrestricted and designated funds were £74,435. Restricted income of £2349 was also received plus a restricted legacy of £370,000 from the late Winn Futter. These are detailed in the Financial Statements. 35 members of the congregation donated regularly via the planned giving scheme, and once the churches were closed due to the Covid 19 restrictions this became our main source of income.

£83735 was spent from unrestricted funds to provide the Christian ministry from the Parish of Jarrow, including the contribution to the diocesan parish share of £35,700. (being the full amount of our pledge) The parish share contributes to the provision of clergy stipends and housing.

The actual net result for the year was a deficit of £9300 on unrestricted and designated funds,

The PCC agreed to make a charity donation as in previous years, but at a reduced level. £125 each was donated to the Leprosy Mission, St Oswald's Hospice, Mission to Seafarers.

the Al Shurooq school for the blind in Palestine and the Smile Train . Other charitable giving during the year, £125 to Christian Aid (St Paul's candle box), Children's Society £454 (Christingle and School Carol services) . The Young Parenting pathway £360 and the Key Project £365 (Harvest appeal)

## Annual report of the Parochial Church Council

The PCC only met several times during the year 2020

Andrew Lamb, indicated his intention to resign as Safeguarding Officer and Keith Hemmer volunteered to stand for election at the APCM. It was suggested that St. Simon's church could be left open during the day from Easter. No decision was reached. An advertisement for the post of Rector to the Parish was to be placed at the beginning of February with an interview date for March. Four children are to be admitted for confirmation at St Paul's from 1<sup>st</sup> March

Following the APCM in October which was delayed because of Covid-19, all officers to the PCC were elected. The meeting in November was also attended by members on Zoom. St. Peter's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary service was attended by Bishop Paul. We have no official PCC secretary. Revd. Lesley outlined her vision for the Parish in the future. A sub-group has been formed to look at major repairs, grants etc. to be Chaired by Revd. Stuart