

Annual Report 2020



Parochial Church Council of Higham with Merston

Incumbent:

The Reverend Canon James F Southward

Principal Address:

The Vicarage
Hermitage Road
Higham
Rochester
Kent
ME3 7NE

Registered Charity No.: 1169926

Independent Examiner:

Mr G Cousins
Merston
4 Chalk Road
Higham
Nr Rochester
Kent, ME3 7JX

Banks:

Barclays Bank PLC
Dartford Group
Gravesend

National Savings Bank
Glasgow
Scotland

Santander PLC
Merseyside

CAF Bank Ltd
West Malling
Kent

Parochial Church Council of Higham with Merston

Report on the proceedings of the Council

Aim and Purpose

St. John's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Reverend Canon James F. Southward, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to use and worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St. John's. The PCC collaborates with the incumbent in decisions made about acts of worship particularly with a view to involving the groups and organisations that operate within the parish. Our pattern of worship is hinged on the daily celebration of Mass and Morning and Evening prayer. Our worship puts faith into practice through prayer, scripture and Sacrament.

Public Benefit

When planning our activities for the year, the incumbent and PCC have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel
- Provision of pastoral care for both those who live within the parish and non-resident worshippers
- Leading our Church into Growth – Missionary and outreach work

To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of the Church of St. John and its churchyard and the churchyard of St. Mary's, Higham.

Administrative Information

St. John's Church is situated in Higham, Kent. It is in the Deanery of Strood: part of the Church of England Diocese of Rochester, and under the Episcopal care of the Bishop of Richborough.

The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers and Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2020) and a charity registered with the Charity Commission. The PCC takes regard of the Charity Governance Code and is working towards compliance with the Code where it is relevant to the PCC's activities.

PCC members who have served during 2020 are:

Ex Officio:

Incumbent	The Revd. Canon James Southward	Chair
Churchwardens	Mrs Helen Walker	Vice-Chair
	Mrs Teresa Joblin	

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Mrs Kim Wood	Vulnerable Adults Representative until September 2020 and stepped down from the Deanery Synod role in October 2020.
Mr Christopher Hanson	
Mr Stephen Phillips	Elected October 2020, previously an elected PCC Member.

Elected Members

Mr Edward Hance	Served until October 2020.
Mrs Elizabeth Croker	Asst. Hon. Treasurer & Data Compliance Officer
Mrs Valerie Laurens	DBS First Recruiter
Mrs Carole Rough	Hon. Secretary & Electoral Roll Officer
Mrs Sarah Wright	Hon. Treasurer
Mrs Anne Tammas-Williams	Parish Safeguarding Officer. Stepped down from DBS Second Recruiter role in November 2020.
Mrs Catherine Ody	Served until October 2020.
Mrs Tessa Packer	DBS Second Recruiter. Elected October 2020.
Mrs Nancy Hughes	Elected October 2020.
Mrs Julie Aldous	

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Recruitment and appointment of New Trustees

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

Induction and training of New Trustees

All new members of the PCC are mentored by serving members and are advised of their duties and responsibilities.

Committees

To manage its time in an effective way, the PCC operates several committees, which meet as appropriate throughout the year. The Incumbent is an ex officio member of all committees and one or both Churchwardens sit on most committees. Committees have the power to co-opt non-PCC members for a specified period of time as appropriate.

Standing Committee: is the only committee required by law. It has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. The Churchwardens are ex officio members and usually the Secretary, Treasurer (and/or the Assistant Treasurer) and one other PCC member. This should equate to about one third of the PCC.

Finance Committee: oversees the general financial dimension of the work of St. John's by monitoring income and expenditure and preparing budgets for future expenditure. The committee usually comprises the Treasurer, Stewardship Recorder and both Churchwardens.

Planned Giving Committee: is responsible for the co-ordination of the annual review of Planned Giving, which takes place during February and discusses matters relating to charitable and missionary giving. The PCC, meeting on 17th March 2020, agreed to merge the committee with the Finance committee.

Social Committee: is responsible for the organisation of various fund raising events throughout the year, refreshments after special services and any other social aspects of life at St. John's to bring together our Church and our community.

Policies Committee: was established to ensure that matters which require a standard response to any possible enquiries are agreed by the Vicar and the PCC, e.g. baptism, burial, St. Mary's Church and Churchyard, marriage, blessings, St. George's School, content in principle/management of St John's website, etc.

Social Media & Communications Committee: was established to co-ordinate and oversee all aspects of media used by St. John's as tools in furthering the Church's work in the Community.

Volunteers

Members of the PCC act in a voluntary capacity and very much rely on the assistance of people outside of the Council. It has not been possible to quantify the value of volunteers.

Church Attendance

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on the 16th October 2020 it was reported that the number of names on the Electoral Roll stood at 78.

The Coronavirus situation began to escalate in February 2020 and the country went into 'lockdown' in March 2020 when St John's Church had to close. Daily Mass continued to be offered, transferring the celebration online, from clergy homes, initially via Skype then moving onto Zoom as numbers 'attending' these increased. Two Sunday morning masses were offered and a Sunday evening Mass was also available for a period of time via Facebook. The Vicar's weekly emails and the Church website and social media sites were used to share key information, including making hyperlinks available so bible readings could be accessed. As the Coronavirus situation began to improve and following Government and Diocesan advice, St John's was able to re-open a small area of the Church cordoned off for private prayer starting on Monday 15th June. This was followed on the 12th July when St John's was able to re-open for parishioners to attend some weekday Masses and the two Sunday Masses. St John's Church then became open again every day for daily Mass with the continued offer of accessing Mass via Zoom. There was a mixed pattern of attendance, some parishioners attending Mass in Church, some continuing to access Mass via Zoom, some combining both. Sunday attendance of adults, together with the number of communicants, has fallen slightly over the year due to deaths, infirmity and due to the Coronavirus situation. Sometimes weekday Masses are only supported by those who live OUTSIDE the parish. Junior Church continued as usual at the beginning of the year. The lack in the number of children attending continued to be a real problem, and

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weekly attendance was utterly erratic. Junior Church also ceased when 'lockdown' started and is yet to re-start.

Achievements and Performance

A total of 6 PCC meetings took place between January and December 2020 on a bi-monthly basis with an average of 10 members in attendance. There has been 1 Extraordinary meeting and 5 Standing Committee meetings during the year.

The Focus on Renewal and Growth Group, established 2013 by the Incumbent as a 'think-tank' to support him in considering new or different ideas for worship, outreach and care both in our Church and the wider community, has not met this year.

Episcopal Care: In 2015 the diocesan bishop made arrangements for St John's and other 'resolution parishes' to be moved from the pastoral care of the Bishop of Fulham to that of the Bishop of Richborough. Following on from the Church of England's decision to ordain women as bishops, the PCC gave considerable time to considering the way forward for St John's under the new arrangements. Formal application was made to the Bishop of Rochester in 2015 to ask for arrangements for episcopal care to be made in accordance with the House of Bishops' Declaration on the ministry of Bishops and Priests. We have still not received a written reply to date. However, the appointment of Bishop Norman as an Assistant Bishop of the Diocese implies that this meets our situation in part.

Worship and Prayer: The daily celebration of Mass continues to form our main act of worship at St. John's. Following suggestions from the Focus on Renewal and Growth group in 2014, we have planned to offer a range of services that our community might find beneficial and spiritually fulfilling, such as 'Holy Hours' before the Blessed Sacrament on a Saturday of each month, and at varying times each week during Lent and Advent and a healing ministry during Mass on some Saturdays through the year. Unfortunately, the Covid 19 situation has made it impossible to offer these services during most of 2020. The opportunity to request weekly intercession and thanksgiving prayers has continued to be made available. The chance to light individual, votive candles in memory of deceased loved ones on All Souls Day continues to be popular. The Church, being open for prayer, is used by others as well as members. Lighting Prayer candles is a frequent occurrence most days.

As well as our regular services, we enable the wider community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of life's journey. Here again, the Covid 19 pandemic has severely limited our opportunity to offer these life celebrations. We have celebrated 1 Baptism but no Marriages in our Church and have led 21 funerals for the Community, 15 of these at the crematorium, 6 in Church, once Church use was allowed again.

Music: We do not have a contracted Organist at St John's. We are fortunate to have Mr. John Mountford, Head of Music at Kings School, alongside other organists, to support us, when available, by playing the organ at services and working with the Singing Group. Support from Mr John Mountford continued in January and February 2020 but due to the Covid 19 situation and following recommendations from the Government and Diocese, music and singing in church has temporarily ceased.

Mission and Evangelism has continued to be at the forefront of the PCC's discussions. The Monthly Prayer Cycle continues to be used, ensuring that every road within the village is prayed for along with various village organisations and businesses. Bishop Norman's cycle of prayer for the 'Richborough family of Parishes' is also used daily. The monthly Coffee and Conversation sessions which provide a meeting place on a Saturday morning for anyone in the village wishing to get out of the house, meet/make friends and have a good chat, were held at the beginning of the year. They are currently on hold during the Covid 19 situation. Lent Lunches held on Saturdays started to take place in February but had to be cancelled due to the Covid 19 situation. The money raised from the initial two lunches that did take place was sent in support of Christian Aid.

There continued to be members among the congregation who serve the village community among Friends of S.Mary's, School Governors, Higham History Group, and Hiara.

Church members and the wider parish are invited to donate to a food collection at St John's, at least once a month, which is then taken to a Foodbank in Gravesend. The generosity of donors has been amazing, particularly during the Covid pandemic.

In these ways, the people of God and the church of Christ are working for the benefit of the entire community.

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Our Study Group, **M4**, which should meet on most first Mondays of the month, for **Mass**, **Munch** and **Muse** was adversely affected and suspended as with other meetings in 2020.

A new group was started early in 2020 by PCC Member, Chris Hanson, and our Hon. Assistant Priest, Father Peter Bolton. Called the Confraternity of Ss Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, it was formed to address the low number of men in St John's congregation and with the objects of adopting a rule of life, evangelizing and doing good works. Unfortunately, this group was in the early stages of formation when the pandemic struck and has been forced to suspend its activities for the time being.

Christmas Masses did take place in church (with restricted numbers and following the Covid 19 special risk assessment guidelines) and via Zoom e.g. Midnight Mass and Christmas Day. Unfortunately due to the Covid 19 situation some Christmas church events had to be cancelled due to the increased risks that these could pose, namely the children's Crib Service and the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

Parish Representative to the Cathedral: The PCC is grateful to Mr Roger Hill who continued as our Parish Representative until very recently. This scheme is now defunct.

Children and Youth work: All activities for the children and young people throughout the year are approved by the PCC and subject to the usual permission being granted. All volunteers working with children require the approval of the PCC and are DBS checked, where necessary. We follow Diocese & Parish guidelines for safeguarding and social media. The safeguarding contacts for children are publicised throughout St John's and on our website.

Due to the Covid 19 situation, Junior Church ceased to take place in the Church building from March 2020. Despite the Covid19 situation and the inability to meet in person, regular contact has been kept with Junior Church families through email, social media, and articles and Junior Pages in The Bridge. Activities have been shared online and a virtual Crib Service for Zoom was prepared by JC teachers and attended by JC families on Christmas Eve. Encouragement is given to continue worship; a couple of JC families regularly attend weekly mass either in church or on Zoom. There has been positive feedback that these efforts are appreciated, and we will continue these through 2021 until we can meet again.

The Teens N Twenties group did not meet in 2020 - particularly for Palm Cross and Christingle Making because of Covid19. Lent & Advent challenges/activities were posted on the TNT Facebook page to continue outreach.

Voice Rejoice, a singing group, for children which was established at the end of 2017, is led by Mrs Catherine Ody assisted by Mrs Anne Tammias-Williams. One of the objects of this group is to provide a possible entry into church life for children who have previously had no connection. The choir has 4 children regularly attending and they had sung at various church services during 2019. The choir met up for practice at the beginning of the year through January & February 2020. Due to the Covid 19 situation this group is currently not meeting.

In previous years both Higham Primary and Gads Hill School have made use of St. John's as an instrument in the teaching of Christianity during Religious Education. Again due to the Covid 19 situation the use of the church has temporarily ceased.

Social Committee: This group's role is to organise food following major feasts and solemnities, to facilitate, encourage and foster a greater ministry of welcome and hospitality. Apart from the Burns Night Supper, linked with dedication Festival, these events did not take place due to Covid 19.

Stewardship Committee: This committee continued to produce their planned giving appeal, taking into account GDPR, by distributing packs to all members of the Congregation. They also normally provide a recommended plan for the PCC's charitable giving each year. However, due to a drop in PCC funds owing to the Covid 19 pandemic, it was not possible for this committee to consider a plan of charitable giving for 2020. The functions of this committee will be taken on by the Finance Committee in future.

The Policies Committee: This committee has been unable to meet this year due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Vestry Hall: Is generally available to be used by the wider community for family celebratory events, for outreach groups, and others such as the Friends of St. Mary's for special meetings. The Icon group and some exercise groups normally use the facilities most weeks, as well as the hall being used for study

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groups and church social events which the wider community is encouraged and invited to attend. Unfortunately the use of the Vestry Hall has significantly reduced this year due to Covid 19. Following Government and Diocesan advice, access to and use of the Vestry Hall initially ceased on the 17th March 2020. During a Standing Committee meeting on the 16th August discussions took place regarding how to re-open the hall for use by outside organisations. The Covid 19 special risk assessment was updated and a Hall Guidance document was written to support users of the hall to manage and follow the appropriate guidelines. For a short period of time the hall was being used by the Yoga and Knit and Natter groups but this again has now ceased due to changes in the Covid 19 situation.

No.17 Hermitage Road: Fr Peter Bolton, Honorary Assistant Priest to St John's, continues with the tenancy taken up in November 2018. Fr Peter has been a very welcome and highly involved addition to the St John's family.

A burglary took place at No.17 in November which necessitated the replacement of some locks (on-going insurance claim) and the installation of new security lights (funded by Rolfe's Charity).

An Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) inspection took place, a legal requirement, which highlighted that some minor improvements were desirable. The PCC will be dealing with these during 2021.

St. Mary's Church and Churchyard: No services were held at St. Mary's Church during the year due to the Covid 19 situation. The continued programme of vegetation clearance, to keep the Churchyard accessible to the Higham community and other visitors, has continued, funded by Rolfe's Charity.

General Church Repairs: General maintenance and repairs have taken place at St John's Church over the year. Work has taken place to:

Rebuild a section of the Churchyard wall (between the main gates and small gate on the main road). Further damage was caused to the corner of the wall, to the west of the main gate, this will need to be repaired as soon as possible next year.

Replace/repair the ceiling and insulate the flooring of the Vestry Hall. Also upgrading the current light system to LED's and installing emergency exit lights.

Repair some tiles on the Lady Chapel roof, together with a loose tile on the Vestry Hall roof.

Fix the lights in the Sacristy and the digital control box.

Further electrical work is about to take place in 2021 in connection with the lights outside the Church, as rainwater is seeping into the connection boxes for these.

Also work is planned in 2021 to remove one of the electric meters in the Church. For reasons unknown, St John's was historically fitted with and charged for 2 electric meters, one of which it has been agreed by the current energy supplier is not needed.

Bell Tower: Our group of bell ringers continues to improve and practise, aided by training from the Kent County Association of Change Ringers. New bell muffles were ordered in February 2020 and are stored in the bell tower ready for use. Following Covid19 guidelines, change ringing was not possible but individuals have been able to chime when required for Sunday Parish Mass and toll for funerals.

Financial Review: Finance remains a major item on the PCC's agenda. It continues to be difficult to raise sufficient funds to ensure the smooth running of St John's Church. The Covid 19 situation has also now impacted on the financial situation with income generally down.

Following consultation with the Diocesan Office, the PCC decided to switch the method of accounting from Accruals to Receipts & Payments from 2018 onwards. Mr G Cousins was appointed to act as Examiner for the PCC's accounts.

It is the policy of the PCC to maintain unrestricted funds, which are the free reserves of the PCC, at a level which equates to approximately two months' unrestricted expenditure. This provides sufficient funds to cover administration, maintenance and support costs and to respond to emergency situations. Reserves were maintained at this level during 2020.

Away-Giving: It is the policy of the PCC to work towards being able to give away to charitable causes a sum equal to 5% of our disposable income, less expenses beyond our control, e.g. Indicative Offer (formerly Parish Offer), rates and taxes, and restricted funds. Due to the reduction of income caused by the Covid 19 situation it was not felt possible to achieve this level of giving for 2020. It was agreed at the PCC meeting in March 2020 to donate all of our Away-Giving to Christian Aid this year.

£520 was sent to Christian Aid in February, which was raised as a result of the 2 Lent Lunches that were able to take place and via 'fines' and personal giving. Following a PCC meeting in November 2020 it was agreed to give another £800 to Christian Aid.

Planned Giving: Mrs Cheryl Robins carries on with her role as Stewardship Secretary.

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Risk Management

It is the PCC's intention to identify the major risks which impact on the work of the Church in the Parish. We already have in place, a policy on the Recruitment of Ex-offenders, a set of financial procedures, a grievance procedure for employees, a Health & Safety Policy and a policy on Domestic Violence. The PCC has also adopted the diocesan Dignity at Work policy. Health and safety risks are monitored on an on-going basis and are dealt with as they are identified and a risk analysis is updated annually.

The Council has complied with the 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. The PCC has appointed Officers to deal with the requirements of the Disclosure and Barring Service and Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection.

St John's was observant of the developing Covid 19 situation and sought guidance from the Government and Diocese to ensure correct procedures were followed and adhered to. Covid 19 situation, plans and decisions, is currently a standing item on the PCC agenda to be discussed at each meeting. The Standing Committee also met on a number of occasions to discuss issues connected to this that arose between PCC meetings. An initial Covid 19 special risk assessment was compiled and agreed following a Standing Committee meeting held on 29th June and has been regularly checked and updated as needed since. This risk assessment is uploaded onto the Church Website and a copy is also kept on the Church notice board.

Child Protection: Mrs. C. Ody continues in her role as Parish Safeguarding Officer. Mrs. T Jerome took on the role of Second Safeguarding Officer in September 2020.

Disclosure and Barring Service: Mrs. C Rough continues in her role as the Lead Recruiter and Mrs. N Hughes was elected to the role as Second Lead Recruiter at the November 2020 PCC meeting.

Safeguarding is a standing item on each PCC agenda. The PCC receives regular updates from Mrs C Rough regarding DBS. Now that the PCC is a charity registered with the Charity Commission, all members have undergone DBS checks and newly elected members will be DBS checked.

A procedure regarding 'Reporting of Serious Incidents' has been agreed and authority has been delegated to the Diocesan Secretary to submit safeguarding *Serious Incident Reports* to the Charity Commission on behalf of the PCC's trustees.

A Safeguarding Audit was completed in April 2019.

The PCC accepts and implements the House of Bishops' 'Promoting a Safer Church Policy Statement' and adopts the same as its own policy.

A Parish Safeguarding Handbook is kept in the Safeguarding folder in the church for easy access to all. Steps were taken to inform the current St John's congregation and wider community regarding the 'Community Guidance in relation to a Past Cases Review' by Rochester Diocese in December 2019. The Past Cases Review was then completed and returned to the Diocese with nothing to report.

All re-elected Members and Officers of the PCC have completed the required level of online Safeguarding training. Newly elected members will be supported to access this training if needed asap.

Health and safety: We have a CCTV system to help minimise the risk of leaving the Church building unlocked during the day. An asbestos check and a fire risk analysis on the church buildings have been completed and recorded. Fire evacuation procedure is outlined on occasion to the Congregation and large groups, and there are signs and notices on display. Full details of this procedure are also given to organisations using the church building for events. All Sidesmen are aware of the procedure. Maintenance of fire extinguishers and PAT testing of electrical items is carried out on an annual basis. A full electrical inspection and a lightning conductor inspection take place every five years.

Policies: The PCC has agreed and recorded local policies regarding burials, baptisms and marriages, the use of St Mary's Church and Churchyard and St John's Churchyard, which are additional to the Diocesan Regulations. Local policies have also been agreed regarding the signature by the Incumbent of application forms for entrance and free travel to St George's school, and the use of social media. Also policies regarding the personal safety of lone workers and legacies to St John's are in place.

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General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): The PCC took into account the new GDPR that became law in May 2018. The Parish's Data Controller is Rev. Canon James F Southward in conjunction with the PCC. Mrs V Laurens was appointed as Data Compliance Officer.

The Policies Committee worked to produce the following documentation to support the implementation of GDPR:

GDPR action plan.

GDPR policy – adopted by the PCC on the 17th July 2018.

Privacy notices for general use and for role holders.

CCTV policy – adopted by the PCC on the 10th September 2018.

An Annual Return of Processing Activities.

A letter sent out to all members of the congregation to inform them about GDPR.

In September 2020, Andrew Wooding Jones, the Archdeacon of Rochester, contacted Fr James and asked him to consider becoming the Priest in Charge at All Saints Church, Perry Street, Gravesend. Consultation with PCC members took place and there was agreement with Fr James taking on this role. This has now been officially confirmed. It was agreed that this could be a positive collaboration between St John's and All Saints.



Sarah Wright
Hon. Secretary



Rev. Canon James F Southward
Vicar of Higham and Rector of Merston

PCC ACCOUNTS

Year Ending 31 December 2020

Higham with Merston PCC

Receipts & Payments Accounts

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HIGHAM WITH MERSTON

**RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL FUNDS 2020 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	TOTAL FUNDS 2019 £
Receipts										
<i>Voluntary income</i>	2a	58,480	0	17,461	75,941	67,728	728	4,573		73,030
<i>Activities for generating funds</i>	2b	5,569	0	186	5,755	6,572	0	437		7,009
<i>Investment income</i>	2c	96	35	0	130	87	117	0		204
<i>Church activities</i>	2d	2,726	0	3,492	6,218	11,927	0	0		11,927
<i>Other incoming resources</i>	2e	2,690	0	0	2,690	2,640		0		2,640
		69,560	35	21,139	90,735	88,955	846	5,010	0	94,810
Payments										
<i>Costs of generating voluntary income</i>	3a	64	0	0	64	82	0	0		82
<i>Fund-raising trading costs</i>	3b	379	0	0	379	661	0	0		661
<i>Church activities</i>	3c	83,030	14,676	20,368	118,073	78,868	4,242	2,582		85,692
Total resources expended		83,472	14,676	20,368	118,516	79,611	4,242	2,582		86,435
Excess of Receipts over Payments										
		(13,912)	(14,641)	772	(27,782)	9,344	(3,396)	2,428		8,376
Transfers between funds - transfers in		8,200	12,900	12,000	33,100	0	10,291	150		10,441
Transfers between funds - transfers out		(8,200)	(12,900)	(12,000)	(33,100)	(10,291)	0	(150)		(10,441)
					0					0
		(13,912)	(14,641)	772	(27,782)	(947)	6,894	2,428		8,376
Bank current and deposit accounts 1 January 2020/19		77,916	22,587	(448)	100,056	78,863	15,693	(2,876)	0	91,680
Bank current and deposit accounts at 31 December 2020/19 4		64,004	7,946	324	72,274	77,916	22,587	(448)	0	100,056

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HIGHAM WITH MERSTON

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Notes	General Fund £	Designated Fund £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Fund £	2020 Total £	General Fund £	Designated Fund £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Fund £	2019 Total £
<u>Cash and bank deposits</u>										
Current accounts	13,422	3,258	670		17,350	21,994				21,994
Deposit accounts	12,121	40,794			52,915	12,025	55,032			67,057
Church repair fund		2,010			2,010		11,005			11,005
4	25,543	46,062	670		72,275	34,019	66,036	-		100,056
<u>Other monetary assets</u>										
			-		-					-
			-		-					-
	-	-	-		-					-
<u>Investment assets</u>										
					-					-
	-	-	-		-				-	-
<u>Assets retained for Church Use</u>										
No 17 Hermitage Road		300,000			300,000		300,000			300,000
					-		-			-
	-	300,000	-		300,000		300,000			300,000
<u>Liabilities</u>										
						-				-
Charity Payments					-	170				170
	0				-	0				-
	-	-	-	-	-		0	0		170

Description of any Assets
Semi detached 3 bedroomed house for use of retired clergy, estimated market value 300,000

Approved by the Parochial Church Council and signed on its behalf

Treasurer

Incumbent

Date

The accompanying notes form a part of these financial statements.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HIGHAM WITH MERSTON

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

1 Accounting Policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts & Payments basis. Receipts and payments include income as received and expenditure when irrevocably paid.

The accounts include monetary transactions, assets and liabilities for which the PCC is responsible in law. They do not include the accounts of church groups which owe their main affiliation to a wider body, nor those that are informal gatherings of church members.

Funds

Unrestricted funds are general funds which can be used for PCC ordinary purposes. These include designated funds which can be redesignated.

Restricted funds represent (a) donations or grants received for a specific object or invited by a specific object, and (b) income from trusts and endowments which may be expended on those restricted objects provided in the terms of the trust or bequest. The funds may only be expended on the specific object for which they were given. Any balance remaining unspent at the end of the year must be carried forward as a balance on that fund.

Endowment funds are funds, the capital of which must be maintained; only income arising from investment of the endowment may be used either as restricted or unrestricted funds depending on the purpose for which the endowment was established.

The following assets are recognised but not necessarily valued in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities: Movable church furnishings held by the Churchwardens on special trust for the PCC which require a faculty for disposal; Land and buildings held on behalf of the PCC.

The following assets are recognised and a monetary value given as part of the description in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities: Bank and deposit accounts; Amounts owing from HMRC where a formal claim has been made; Investment assets.

Liabilities are recognised and a monetary value given in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities where the supply had been received by 31 December.

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**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

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	Unrestricted Funds £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL FUNDS 2020 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL FUNDS 2019 £
a Voluntary income				0				0
Planned giving by standing order	33,786			33,786	32,834			32,834
Planned giving envelopes	9,006			9,006	10,505			10,505
Income tax recoverable	13,127			13,127	16,708			16,708
Collections	1,519			1,519	4,414		539	4,954
Charity Collections			520	520			1,615	1,615
Donations and appeals	1,042		16806	17,848	2,717		2284	5,001
Legacies/Grants			135	135	550	728	135	1,413
	58,480	0	17,461	75,941	67,728	728	4,573	73,030
b Activities for generating funds								
General fundraising	1,403			1,403	3,109		39	3,148
Parish Magazine/VotiveCandles/Flowers	4,166		186	4,352	3,463		398	3,861
				0				0
				0				0
				0				0
	5,569	0	186	5,755	6,572	0	437	7,009
c Investment income								
Dividends and interest	96	35		130	87	117		204
	96	35	0	130	87	117	0	204
d Income from Church Activities								
Church Hall Income	739			739	5,125			5,125
Fees from weddings, funerals, etc	1,820			1,820	3,563			3,563
DBF element of fees			3,492	3,492	2,042			2,042
Refreshments	167			167	648			648
Social Committee	0			0	550			550
	2,726	0	3,492	6,218	11,927	0	0	11,927
e Other incoming resources								
Sundry	50			50				0
Other income	2,640			2,640	2,640			2,640
	2,690	0	0	2,690	2,640	0	0	2,640
Total receipts	69,560	35	21,139	90,735	88,955	846	5,010	94,810

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HIGHAM WITH MERSTON

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

3 Payments

	Unrestricted Funds £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL FUNDS 2020 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL FUNDS 2019 £
a <i>Costs of generating voluntary income</i>				0				0
Stewardship costs	64			64	82			82
	64	0	0	64	82		0	82
b <i>Fund raising costs</i>	379			379	661			661
				0				0
				0				0
	379	0	0	379	661		0	661
c <i>Church Activities</i>								
Missionary and charitable giving (Note 6):	1,050		690	1,740	1,782		2,022	3,804
Ministry Costs				0				0
Diocesan Offer	52,966			52,966	52,482			52,482
Expenses	2,514			2,514	1,386			1,386
Vicarage costs	4,049			4,049	3,551			3,551
Other Benefice account costs			2,555	2,555	162			162
Other Ministry costs				0				0
Church running expenses				0				0
Utilities	4,937			4,937	5,470			5,470
Refreshments	86			86	342			342
Insurance	3,586			3,586	3,653			3,653
Church maintenance	9,578		261	9,839	1,712		150	1,862
Major Structural work		14,144	15,000	29,144				0
Upkeep of services	1,067		1,324	2,391	2,171		410	2,581
Organ Tuning and Playing	835			835	2,719			2,719
No. 17 Hermitage Road				0				0
Maintenance	576			576	558			558
Insurance	211			211	201			201
Administration	1,189			1,189	1,992			1,992
Training/Childrens Church	67			67	255			255
Other costs	320	532	537	1,389	431	4,242		4,673
	83,030	14,676	20,368	118,073	78,868	4,242	2,582	85,692
Total payments	83,472	14,676	20,368	118,516	79,611	4,242	2,582	86,435

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HIGHAM WITH MERSTON

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

4 Statement of Fund Movements

	Bal b/fwd 1 Jan 2020	Income	Expenditure	Transfers between funds	Bal c/fwd 31 Dec 2020
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted Fund					
General fund	32,231	69,560	(83,472)	9,000	27,319
	32,231	69,560	(83,472)	9,000	27,319
Designated Fund	65,922	35	(14,676)	(9,000)	42,281
	65,922	35	(14,676)	(9,000)	42,281
Restricted Fund	1,902	21,139	(20,368)	0	2,674
	1,902	21,139	(20,368)	0	2,674
Total bank and current accounts	100,055	90,735	(118,516)	0	72,273
Endowment Fund					0
		0	0	0	0
Total funds	100,055	90,735	(118,516)	0	72,273

The General Fund is available to the PCC for day to day income and expenses. Its assets are held in a Santander and Barclays Current Account.

The Church Repair Fund has been designated by the PCC for the repair of that building. The monies are held in a deposit account with Rochester Diocese Board of Finance.

The Bell Tower Fund which forms part of the Restoration Fund is held for the purpose of making repairs to the tower, bells and church clock. This fund is financed from donations and charges made at weddings.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF HIGHAM WITH MERSTON

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

5 Staff costs

	2020 £	2019 £
a Wages and salaries	0	0

b Payments to PCC members

No other payments, apart from reimbursement of expenses, were made to PCC members.

6 Missionary and charitable giving

	2020		2019	
	£ Undesignated	£ Special Collections	£ Undesignated	£ Special Collections
Bishop of Richborough Discretionary Fund			150	
Christian Aid	800	520		1,200
Gravesham food bank				22
National Churches Trust	50		50	
Save the children		170		150
Barnabas Fund			382	
Rochester DBF - Conf. Collection				-
Zimbabwe appeal			1,000	
Ellenor	200		200	
Yes Liberia				650
	1,050	690	1,782	2,022

7 Reserves policy

It is PCC policy to maintain a balance on liquid unrestricted funds which equates to approximately 2 months' unrestricted payments, to cover administration, maintenance and support costs and to respond to emergency situations. Reserves were maintained at this level during the year.

Compatibility Report for Final 1.xls
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Annual Report 2020



Parochial Church Council of Higham with Merston

Incumbent:

The Reverend Canon James F Southward

Principal Address:

The Vicarage
Hermitage Road
Higham
Rochester
Kent
ME3 7NE

Registered Charity No.: 1169926

Independent Examiner:

Mr G Cousins
Merston
4 Chalk Road
Higham
Nr Rochester
Kent, ME3 7JX

Banks:

Barclays Bank PLC
Dartford Group
Gravesend

National Savings Bank
Glasgow
Scotland

Santander PLC
Merseyside

CAF Bank Ltd
West Malling
Kent

Parochial Church Council of Higham with Merston

Report on the proceedings of the Council

Aim and Purpose

St. John's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Reverend Canon James F. Southward, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to use and worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St. John's. The PCC collaborates with the incumbent in decisions made about acts of worship particularly with a view to involving the groups and organisations that operate within the parish. Our pattern of worship is hinged on the daily celebration of Mass and Morning and Evening prayer. Our worship puts faith into practice through prayer, scripture and Sacrament.

Public Benefit

When planning our activities for the year, the incumbent and PCC have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel
- Provision of pastoral care for both those who live within the parish and non-resident worshippers
- Leading our Church into Growth – Missionary and outreach work

To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of the Church of St. John and its churchyard and the churchyard of St. Mary's, Higham.

Administrative Information

St. John's Church is situated in Higham, Kent. It is in the Deanery of Strood: part of the Church of England Diocese of Rochester, and under the Episcopal care of the Bishop of Richborough.

The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers and Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2020) and a charity registered with the Charity Commission. The PCC takes regard of the Charity Governance Code and is working towards compliance with the Code where it is relevant to the PCC's activities.

PCC members who have served during 2020 are:

Ex Officio:

Incumbent	The Revd. Canon James Southward	Chair
Churchwardens	Mrs Helen Walker	Vice-Chair
	Mrs Teresa Joblin	

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Mrs Kim Wood	Vulnerable Adults Representative until September 2020 and stepped down from the Deanery Synod role in October 2020.
Mr Christopher Hanson	
Mr Stephen Phillips	Elected October 2020, previously an elected PCC Member.

Elected Members

Mr Edward Hance	Served until October 2020.
Mrs Elizabeth Croker	Asst. Hon. Treasurer & Data Compliance Officer
Mrs Valerie Laurens	DBS First Recruiter
Mrs Carole Rough	Hon. Secretary & Electoral Roll Officer
Mrs Sarah Wright	Hon. Treasurer
Mrs Anne Tammas-Williams	Parish Safeguarding Officer. Stepped down from DBS Second Recruiter role in November 2020.
Mrs Catherine Ody	Served until October 2020.
Mrs Tessa Packer	DBS Second Recruiter. Elected October 2020.
Mrs Nancy Hughes	Elected October 2020.
Mrs Julie Aldous	

Parochial Church Council of Higham with Merston

Recruitment and appointment of New Trustees

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

Induction and training of New Trustees

All new members of the PCC are mentored by serving members and are advised of their duties and responsibilities.

Committees

To manage its time in an effective way, the PCC operates several committees, which meet as appropriate throughout the year. The Incumbent is an ex officio member of all committees and one or both Churchwardens sit on most committees. Committees have the power to co-opt non-PCC members for a specified period of time as appropriate.

Standing Committee: is the only committee required by law. It has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. The Churchwardens are ex officio members and usually the Secretary, Treasurer (and/or the Assistant Treasurer) and one other PCC member. This should equate to about one third of the PCC.

Finance Committee: oversees the general financial dimension of the work of St. John's by monitoring income and expenditure and preparing budgets for future expenditure. The committee usually comprises the Treasurer, Stewardship Recorder and both Churchwardens.

Planned Giving Committee: is responsible for the co-ordination of the annual review of Planned Giving, which takes place during February and discusses matters relating to charitable and missionary giving. The PCC, meeting on 17th March 2020, agreed to merge the committee with the Finance committee.

Social Committee: is responsible for the organisation of various fund raising events throughout the year, refreshments after special services and any other social aspects of life at St. John's to bring together our Church and our community.

Policies Committee: was established to ensure that matters which require a standard response to any possible enquiries are agreed by the Vicar and the PCC, e.g. baptism, burial, St. Mary's Church and Churchyard, marriage, blessings, St. George's School, content in principle/management of St John's website, etc.

Social Media & Communications Committee: was established to co-ordinate and oversee all aspects of media used by St. John's as tools in furthering the Church's work in the Community.

Volunteers

Members of the PCC act in a voluntary capacity and very much rely on the assistance of people outside of the Council. It has not been possible to quantify the value of volunteers.

Church Attendance

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on the 16th October 2020 it was reported that the number of names on the Electoral Roll stood at 78.

The Coronavirus situation began to escalate in February 2020 and the country went into 'lockdown' in March 2020 when St John's Church had to close. Daily Mass continued to be offered, transferring the celebration online, from clergy homes, initially via Skype then moving onto Zoom as numbers 'attending' these increased. Two Sunday morning masses were offered and a Sunday evening Mass was also available for a period of time via Facebook. The Vicar's weekly emails and the Church website and social media sites were used to share key information, including making hyperlinks available so bible readings could be accessed. As the Coronavirus situation began to improve and following Government and Diocesan advice, St John's was able to re-open a small area of the Church cordoned off for private prayer starting on Monday 15th June. This was followed on the 12th July when St John's was able to re-open for parishioners to attend some weekday Masses and the two Sunday Masses. St John's Church then became open again every day for daily Mass with the continued offer of accessing Mass via Zoom. There was a mixed pattern of attendance, some parishioners attending Mass in Church, some continuing to access Mass via Zoom, some combining both. Sunday attendance of adults, together with the number of communicants, has fallen slightly over the year due to deaths, infirmity and due to the Coronavirus situation. Sometimes weekday Masses are only supported by those who live OUTSIDE the parish. Junior Church continued as usual at the beginning of the year. The lack in the number of children attending continued to be a real problem, and

Parochial Church Council of Higham with Merston

weekly attendance was utterly erratic. Junior Church also ceased when 'lockdown' started and is yet to re-start.

Achievements and Performance

A total of 6 PCC meetings took place between January and December 2020 on a bi-monthly basis with an average of 10 members in attendance. There has been 1 Extraordinary meeting and 5 Standing Committee meetings during the year.

The Focus on Renewal and Growth Group, established 2013 by the Incumbent as a 'think-tank' to support him in considering new or different ideas for worship, outreach and care both in our Church and the wider community, has not met this year.

Episcopal Care: In 2015 the diocesan bishop made arrangements for St John's and other 'resolution parishes' to be moved from the pastoral care of the Bishop of Fulham to that of the Bishop of Richborough. Following on from the Church of England's decision to ordain women as bishops, the PCC gave considerable time to considering the way forward for St John's under the new arrangements. Formal application was made to the Bishop of Rochester in 2015 to ask for arrangements for episcopal care to be made in accordance with the House of Bishops' Declaration on the ministry of Bishops and Priests. We have still not received a written reply to date. However, the appointment of Bishop Norman as an Assistant Bishop of the Diocese implies that this meets our situation in part.

Worship and Prayer: The daily celebration of Mass continues to form our main act of worship at St. John's. Following suggestions from the Focus on Renewal and Growth group in 2014, we have planned to offer a range of services that our community might find beneficial and spiritually fulfilling, such as 'Holy Hours' before the Blessed Sacrament on a Saturday of each month, and at varying times each week during Lent and Advent and a healing ministry during Mass on some Saturdays through the year. Unfortunately, the Covid 19 situation has made it impossible to offer these services during most of 2020. The opportunity to request weekly intercession and thanksgiving prayers has continued to be made available. The chance to light individual, votive candles in memory of deceased loved ones on All Souls Day continues to be popular. The Church, being open for prayer, is used by others as well as members. Lighting Prayer candles is a frequent occurrence most days.

As well as our regular services, we enable the wider community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of life's journey. Here again, the Covid 19 pandemic has severely limited our opportunity to offer these life celebrations. We have celebrated 1 Baptism but no Marriages in our Church and have led 21 funerals for the Community, 15 of these at the crematorium, 6 in Church, once Church use was allowed again.

Music: We do not have a contracted Organist at St John's. We are fortunate to have Mr. John Mountford, Head of Music at Kings School, alongside other organists, to support us, when available, by playing the organ at services and working with the Singing Group. Support from Mr John Mountford continued in January and February 2020 but due to the Covid 19 situation and following recommendations from the Government and Diocese, music and singing in church has temporarily ceased.

Mission and Evangelism has continued to be at the forefront of the PCC's discussions. The Monthly Prayer Cycle continues to be used, ensuring that every road within the village is prayed for along with various village organisations and businesses. Bishop Norman's cycle of prayer for the 'Richborough family of Parishes' is also used daily. The monthly Coffee and Conversation sessions which provide a meeting place on a Saturday morning for anyone in the village wishing to get out of the house, meet/make friends and have a good chat, were held at the beginning of the year. They are currently on hold during the Covid 19 situation. Lent Lunches held on Saturdays started to take place in February but had to be cancelled due to the Covid 19 situation. The money raised from the initial two lunches that did take place was sent in support of Christian Aid.

There continued to be members among the congregation who serve the village community among Friends of S.Mary's, School Governors, Higham History Group, and Hiara.

Church members and the wider parish are invited to donate to a food collection at St John's, at least once a month, which is then taken to a Foodbank in Gravesend. The generosity of donors has been amazing, particularly during the Covid pandemic.

In these ways, the people of God and the church of Christ are working for the benefit of the entire community.

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Our Study Group, **M4**, which should meet on most first Mondays of the month, for **Mass**, **Munch** and **Muse** was adversely affected and suspended as with other meetings in 2020.

A new group was started early in 2020 by PCC Member, Chris Hanson, and our Hon. Assistant Priest, Father Peter Bolton. Called the Confraternity of Ss Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, it was formed to address the low number of men in St John's congregation and with the objects of adopting a rule of life, evangelizing and doing good works. Unfortunately, this group was in the early stages of formation when the pandemic struck and has been forced to suspend its activities for the time being.

Christmas Masses did take place in church (with restricted numbers and following the Covid 19 special risk assessment guidelines) and via Zoom e.g. Midnight Mass and Christmas Day. Unfortunately due to the Covid 19 situation some Christmas church events had to be cancelled due to the increased risks that these could pose, namely the children's Crib Service and the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

Parish Representative to the Cathedral: The PCC is grateful to Mr Roger Hill who continued as our Parish Representative until very recently. This scheme is now defunct.

Children and Youth work: All activities for the children and young people throughout the year are approved by the PCC and subject to the usual permission being granted. All volunteers working with children require the approval of the PCC and are DBS checked, where necessary. We follow Diocese & Parish guidelines for safeguarding and social media. The safeguarding contacts for children are publicised throughout St John's and on our website.

Due to the Covid 19 situation, Junior Church ceased to take place in the Church building from March 2020. Despite the Covid19 situation and the inability to meet in person, regular contact has been kept with Junior Church families through email, social media, and articles and Junior Pages in The Bridge. Activities have been shared online and a virtual Crib Service for Zoom was prepared by JC teachers and attended by JC families on Christmas Eve. Encouragement is given to continue worship; a couple of JC families regularly attend weekly mass either in church or on Zoom. There has been positive feedback that these efforts are appreciated, and we will continue these through 2021 until we can meet again.

The Teens N Twenties group did not meet in 2020 - particularly for Palm Cross and Christingle Making because of Covid19. Lent & Advent challenges/activities were posted on the TNT Facebook page to continue outreach.

Voice Rejoice, a singing group, for children which was established at the end of 2017, is led by Mrs Catherine Ody assisted by Mrs Anne Tammas-Williams. One of the objects of this group is to provide a possible entry into church life for children who have previously had no connection. The choir has 4 children regularly attending and they had sung at various church services during 2019. The choir met up for practice at the beginning of the year through January & February 2020. Due to the Covid 19 situation this group is currently not meeting.

In previous years both Higham Primary and Gads Hill School have made use of St. John's as an instrument in the teaching of Christianity during Religious Education. Again due to the Covid 19 situation the use of the church has temporarily ceased.

Social Committee: This group's role is to organise food following major feasts and solemnities, to facilitate, encourage and foster a greater ministry of welcome and hospitality. Apart from the Burns Night Supper, linked with dedication Festival, these events did not take place due to Covid 19.

Stewardship Committee: This committee continued to produce their planned giving appeal, taking into account GDPR, by distributing packs to all members of the Congregation. They also normally provide a recommended plan for the PCC's charitable giving each year. However, due to a drop in PCC funds owing to the Covid 19 pandemic, it was not possible for this committee to consider a plan of charitable giving for 2020. The functions of this committee will be taken on by the Finance Committee in future.

The Policies Committee: This committee has been unable to meet this year due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Vestry Hall: Is generally available to be used by the wider community for family celebratory events, for outreach groups, and others such as the Friends of St. Mary's for special meetings. The Icon group and some exercise groups normally use the facilities most weeks, as well as the hall being used for study

Parochial Church Council of Higham with Merston

groups and church social events which the wider community is encouraged and invited to attend. Unfortunately the use of the Vestry Hall has significantly reduced this year due to Covid 19. Following Government and Diocesan advice, access to and use of the Vestry Hall initially ceased on the 17th March 2020. During a Standing Committee meeting on the 16th August discussions took place regarding how to re-open the hall for use by outside organisations. The Covid 19 special risk assessment was updated and a Hall Guidance document was written to support users of the hall to manage and follow the appropriate guidelines. For a short period of time the hall was being used by the Yoga and Knit and Natter groups but this again has now ceased due to changes in the Covid 19 situation.

No.17 Hermitage Road: Fr Peter Bolton, Honorary Assistant Priest to St John's, continues with the tenancy taken up in November 2018. Fr Peter has been a very welcome and highly involved addition to the St John's family.

A burglary took place at No.17 in November which necessitated the replacement of some locks (on-going insurance claim) and the installation of new security lights (funded by Rolfe's Charity).

An Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) inspection took place, a legal requirement, which highlighted that some minor improvements were desirable. The PCC will be dealing with these during 2021.

St. Mary's Church and Churchyard: No services were held at St. Mary's Church during the year due to the Covid 19 situation. The continued programme of vegetation clearance, to keep the Churchyard accessible to the Higham community and other visitors, has continued, funded by Rolfe's Charity.

General Church Repairs: General maintenance and repairs have taken place at St John's Church over the year. Work has taken place to:

Rebuild a section of the Churchyard wall (between the main gates and small gate on the main road). Further damage was caused to the corner of the wall, to the west of the main gate, this will need to be repaired as soon as possible next year.

Replace/repair the ceiling and insulate the flooring of the Vestry Hall. Also upgrading the current light system to LED's and installing emergency exit lights.

Repair some tiles on the Lady Chapel roof, together with a loose tile on the Vestry Hall roof.

Fix the lights in the Sacristy and the digital control box.

Further electrical work is about to take place in 2021 in connection with the lights outside the Church, as rainwater is seeping into the connection boxes for these.

Also work is planned in 2021 to remove one of the electric meters in the Church. For reasons unknown, St John's was historically fitted with and charged for 2 electric meters, one of which it has been agreed by the current energy supplier is not needed.

Bell Tower: Our group of bell ringers continues to improve and practise, aided by training from the Kent County Association of Change Ringers. New bell muffles were ordered in February 2020 and are stored in the bell tower ready for use. Following Covid19 guidelines, change ringing was not possible but individuals have been able to chime when required for Sunday Parish Mass and toll for funerals.

Financial Review: Finance remains a major item on the PCC's agenda. It continues to be difficult to raise sufficient funds to ensure the smooth running of St John's Church. The Covid 19 situation has also now impacted on the financial situation with income generally down.

Following consultation with the Diocesan Office, the PCC decided to switch the method of accounting from Accruals to Receipts & Payments from 2018 onwards. Mr G Cousins was appointed to act as Examiner for the PCC's accounts.

It is the policy of the PCC to maintain unrestricted funds, which are the free reserves of the PCC, at a level which equates to approximately two months' unrestricted expenditure. This provides sufficient funds to cover administration, maintenance and support costs and to respond to emergency situations. Reserves were maintained at this level during 2020.

Away-Giving: It is the policy of the PCC to work towards being able to give away to charitable causes a sum equal to 5% of our disposable income, less expenses beyond our control, e.g. Indicative Offer (formerly Parish Offer), rates and taxes, and restricted funds. Due to the reduction of income caused by the Covid 19 situation it was not felt possible to achieve this level of giving for 2020. It was agreed at the PCC meeting in March 2020 to donate all of our Away-Giving to Christian Aid this year.

£520 was sent to Christian Aid in February, which was raised as a result of the 2 Lent Lunches that were able to take place and via 'fines' and personal giving. Following a PCC meeting in November 2020 it was agreed to give another £800 to Christian Aid.

Planned Giving: Mrs Cheryl Robins carries on with her role as Stewardship Secretary.

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Risk Management

It is the PCC's intention to identify the major risks which impact on the work of the Church in the Parish. We already have in place, a policy on the Recruitment of Ex-offenders, a set of financial procedures, a grievance procedure for employees, a Health & Safety Policy and a policy on Domestic Violence. The PCC has also adopted the diocesan Dignity at Work policy. Health and safety risks are monitored on an on-going basis and are dealt with as they are identified and a risk analysis is updated annually.

The Council has complied with the 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. The PCC has appointed Officers to deal with the requirements of the Disclosure and Barring Service and Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection.

St John's was observant of the developing Covid 19 situation and sought guidance from the Government and Diocese to ensure correct procedures were followed and adhered to. Covid 19 situation, plans and decisions, is currently a standing item on the PCC agenda to be discussed at each meeting. The Standing Committee also met on a number of occasions to discuss issues connected to this that arose between PCC meetings. An initial Covid 19 special risk assessment was compiled and agreed following a Standing Committee meeting held on 29th June and has been regularly checked and updated as needed since. This risk assessment is uploaded onto the Church Website and a copy is also kept on the Church notice board.

Child Protection: Mrs. C. Ody continues in her role as Parish Safeguarding Officer. Mrs. T Jerome took on the role of Second Safeguarding Officer in September 2020.

Disclosure and Barring Service: Mrs. C Rough continues in her role as the Lead Recruiter and Mrs. N Hughes was elected to the role as Second Lead Recruiter at the November 2020 PCC meeting.

Safeguarding is a standing item on each PCC agenda. The PCC receives regular updates from Mrs C Rough regarding DBS. Now that the PCC is a charity registered with the Charity Commission, all members have undergone DBS checks and newly elected members will be DBS checked.

A procedure regarding 'Reporting of Serious Incidents' has been agreed and authority has been delegated to the Diocesan Secretary to submit safeguarding *Serious Incident Reports* to the Charity Commission on behalf of the PCC's trustees.

A Safeguarding Audit was completed in April 2019.

The PCC accepts and implements the House of Bishops' 'Promoting a Safer Church Policy Statement' and adopts the same as its own policy.

A Parish Safeguarding Handbook is kept in the Safeguarding folder in the church for easy access to all. Steps were taken to inform the current St John's congregation and wider community regarding the 'Community Guidance in relation to a Past Cases Review' by Rochester Diocese in December 2019. The Past Cases Review was then completed and returned to the Diocese with nothing to report.

All re-elected Members and Officers of the PCC have completed the required level of online Safeguarding training. Newly elected members will be supported to access this training if needed asap.

Health and safety: We have a CCTV system to help minimise the risk of leaving the Church building unlocked during the day. An asbestos check and a fire risk analysis on the church buildings have been completed and recorded. Fire evacuation procedure is outlined on occasion to the Congregation and large groups, and there are signs and notices on display. Full details of this procedure are also given to organisations using the church building for events. All Sidesmen are aware of the procedure. Maintenance of fire extinguishers and PAT testing of electrical items is carried out on an annual basis. A full electrical inspection and a lightning conductor inspection take place every five years.

Policies: The PCC has agreed and recorded local policies regarding burials, baptisms and marriages, the use of St Mary's Church and Churchyard and St John's Churchyard, which are additional to the Diocesan Regulations. Local policies have also been agreed regarding the signature by the Incumbent of application forms for entrance and free travel to St George's school, and the use of social media. Also policies regarding the personal safety of lone workers and legacies to St John's are in place.

Parochial Church Council of Higham with Merston

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): The PCC took into account the new GDPR that became law in May 2018. The Parish's Data Controller is Rev. Canon James F Southward in conjunction with the PCC. Mrs V Laurens was appointed as Data Compliance Officer.

The Policies Committee worked to produce the following documentation to support the implementation of GDPR:

GDPR action plan.

GDPR policy – adopted by the PCC on the 17th July 2018.

Privacy notices for general use and for role holders.

CCTV policy – adopted by the PCC on the 10th September 2018.

An Annual Return of Processing Activities.

A letter sent out to all members of the congregation to inform them about GDPR.

In September 2020, Andrew Wooding Jones, the Archdeacon of Rochester, contacted Fr James and asked him to consider becoming the Priest in Charge at All Saints Church, Perry Street, Gravesend. Consultation with PCC members took place and there was agreement with Fr James taking on this role. This has now been officially confirmed. It was agreed that this could be a positive collaboration between St John's and All Saints.



Sarah Wright
Hon. Secretary



Rev. Canon James F Southward
Vicar of Higham and Rector of Merston