

TRUSTEE'S REPORT FOR THE PCC ON 2020 TO THE APCM TO BE HELD 5TH MAY 2021.

AIMS AND PURPOSES

This report is based on a year like no other and this report must reflect that. The PCC have been even more grateful than ever this year for our Priest in Charge, Rev Linda Washington, and Associate Minister, Rev Nigel Washington, and have been happy to co-operate with them and have been glad of their leadership through this exceptional year. They have had to stretch their technological abilities to be able to continue the mission of the church while the coronavirus has raged around and through the parish. We hope we have helped them to maintain and progress the church as a caring Christ-centered loving community while the church building has been closed, partially closed and partially open with restrictions.

We have had the responsibility (mainly undertaken by our tireless and deeply conscientious churchwarden, Dee Curtis) for the building even when closed. She has arranged the usual annual maintenance and inspection programme and this year the Quinquennial and 5-year electrical inspection and worked to progress the re-installation of door curtains and replacement of the external notice board and the repair of the North Porch. We are, again, extremely grateful to the Friends for financial support for these projects and to John Bryant for the repair of the North Porch in memory of his mother, Dot Bryant. Dee Curtis has also ensured the Covid-19 requirements needed, prior to opening the church, have been in place and are adhered to by all.

OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND PERFORMANCE

We have achieved our objective this year in paying our Parish share in full. This is due in part to a generous Pastoral Aid Grant of £5,000, which we really appreciate, and, in this strange year with little chance of fundraising, to extraordinary generosity of

some parishioners' donations. This year we have again been given a Pastoral Aid Grant, and again we are very grateful to the diocese, but we must run a Stewardship campaign to work towards a sound financial future. This year we have not been able to fundraise but on the other hand our costs, such as heating, have been reduced. We are very grateful to our treasurer, Alan Chaney, for his clarity and insight and we are very aware of our need to build up our financial muscles, which presently are puny. If we do not improve our financial situation we will have to eat into our reserves.

The year started with Rev Linda Washington going on Extended Study Leave. Sunday services were taken by Rev Roger Wood, Stephen Farmer, Bishop Richard, Anne Barker, Malcolm Curtis, Rev Nigel Washington and Archdeacon Dave Middlebrook. We are very grateful to all of them.

In March, during Rev Linda Washington's extended study leave restrictions began due to covid and subsequently the whole country went into lockdown. She returned early to organize the closure of the church, online services and ministry opportunities. The Revs Linda and Nigel Washington worked with others throughout the Quintet to create weekly live zoom services, video and recorded services. We are particularly indebted to Robert Johns, Nicholas Hopton and Iain Grant for these.

By June we were legally permitted to open for private prayer, funerals and weddings with significant restrictions. Sunday services were held outside in the churchyard from June until September, we were blessed with good weather. Then we were allowed and agreed to meet in church, still with limitations and restrictions. All indoor services were socially distanced, masks worn, track and trace information taken, were without singing and hand gel used. We had a wonderful sunlit Harvest Festival with Bishop Alan when the church was as full as allowed and there was a great feeling of celebration. Weekly Sunday and Monday morning prayer services were held and, in early December, a

Youth Group service and a Messy church service but as Covid-19 cases increased locally and nationally, as did pressure on local hospitals, the PCC and Rev Linda Washington decided, with very heavy hearts, to severely restrict Christmas services. A booking and track and trace system were introduced. There was a service of Six Lessons and Carols, without singing, and a Christmas morning service but Crib services and the Midnight service were cancelled due to lack of demand and high infection rates.

Physically we have been separate from the Quintet but we have been closer than ever before on Zoom, especially in the Upper Room. Zoom has also given us the opportunity for Parish coffee mornings, teatime gatherings, webinar training, Lent courses and Morning prayer, leading to Sunday services on zoom for the Quintet in early 2021. Rev Linda Washington and members of the PCC have worked to stay in touch with parishioners who do not have internet by phone and on doorsteps and have distributed weekly service sheets to those who appreciate the link.

There have been one weddings, fourteen funerals (nine in church and five at the crematorium) and no baptisms.

Prior to the pandemic some of us attended a Leading Your Church into Growth weekend, which was inspirational and led to prayers prior to the Sunday service. We have also begun to develop a prayer group and have had times of prayer during Morning Prayer. We look forward to being able to meet and pray together in person and work together to grow the church.

The Youth group and Messy Church have been limited by the pandemic and Rebecca Caird's illness, but she has been able to stay in touch and the Youth Group, which additionally had some successful outdoor meetings.

Throughout the months Dee Curtis has collected goods for the Dunstable Food bank and taken over 70 crates of food to their depot. Before Christmas Bridget Chevalier potted bulbs to give "from the Church" as a sign of hope. Fifty were given to St George's lower school staff as a thank you for all they have done.

A small number of “goodies” hampers were given, through the lower school, to families in difficulties.

Although our usual fundraising had to stop in March there was a successful Scarecrow festival and Christmas hamper raffle. Dee Curtis raised funds for us and the Friends of Beds and Herts Churches on their Hike and bike day.

The PCC have discussed using the churchyard as a wildlife area. This and other environmental considerations are a work in progress.

Our spring cleaning of the Wilkinson Hall, a village asset, was halted by the pandemic so the Hall was unused from March onwards.

The PCC met in person in January, February and March. We remained in contact via e-mail and our subsequent meetings, monthly from June onwards have been on Zoom. In June we held an extra meeting to agree to support Iain Grant’s application for the Vocational Foundation course. We agreed that Stephen Farmer would join us as a Reader.

The APCM was held in person, not in May as originally planned but on 19th October 2020. 2019 already seemed a lifetime away by then.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Total receipts on Unrestricted Funds were £30,254 of which £23,361 was unrestricted voluntary donations, including gift Aid. Restricted donations of £10,527 were also received as set out in the accounts. In both cases this represents a significant reduction in income due mainly to the impact of Covid 19. As explained elsewhere in this report very little fundraising was possible in 2020 which had a severe impact on income.

Although income was much reduced it was possible to also reduce costs. Significant savings were made on energy costs and not having to pay a retainer to our organist for a large part of the

year. Repairs were also kept to a minimum.

Despite all the difficulties the Church managed to incur only a small deficit for the year of £63 made up of a deficit on Unrestricted Funds of £1,112 and a surplus on Restricted Funds of £1,049. However, this was after a deduction of £5,000 for a Pastoral Aid Grant.

This highlights the need to find additional sources of income through a Stewardship Campaign to enable the Church to maintain financial viability.

At the end of the year Unrestricted reserves amounted to £19,785 which will be sufficient to cover forward costs for the next few years. It is only when Covid 19 restrictions are lifted that we will be able to judge the long term impact on our reserves. Indeed it is our hope and intention to increase the level of reserves going forward in order to expand the work of the Church in the community.

The main item within Restricted Reserves is the Organ Fund which stands at £10,489 and which will be needed to cover further renovation work needing to be carried out in the short to medium term.

LOOKING FORWARD

We look forward to 2021 as a time where we will, very gradually, return to some kind of normality. The church will again be open for services and we will return to fundraising helped by a Stewardship campaign. Financially we see a struggle ahead to ensure a sound foundation to our mission but are encouraged by the generosity of our parishioners.