

**THE ABBEY CHURCH OF
ST MARY AND ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY WYMONDHAM
Together With
HOLY TRINITY, SPOONER ROW**



**ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
DECEMBER 2019**

**The Parish of St Mary and St Thomas of Canterbury Wymondham with Holy Trinity
Spooner Row**

Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 December 2019

The primary object of the PCC is the promotion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England.

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC at Wymondham Abbey has the responsibility of co-operating with the Vicar to promote, in this ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church – pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has the responsibility of maintaining the fabric of the church. The PCC accepts the House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance, both policies and practice, and it publishes and regularly reviews its Safeguarding Policy.

Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. During 2019 the following served as members of the PCC:

The Vicar	Revd Catherine Relf-Pennington	
Churchwardens	Mr B. Douglass	PCC Secretary
	Ms S. Martin	
	Dr R Maguire	
	Dr J Hunt	PCC Vice Chair
Other Members	Rev S Sealey	Assistant Priest
	Mrs L Adams	Deanery Synod Rep
	Mr P. Aldred	Spooner Row Rep
	Mrs S. Barton-Wood	
	Ms V Coates	
	Mrs K Dorling	
	Mrs R. Jackson	
	Mr M. Jordan	
	Ms T. Kelly	
	Mrs C. Lowe	
	Dr S. Lyall	
	Mrs C. Mack	
	Mr A. Naylor	Fabric Officer
	Mrs B Randall	Deanery Synod Rep
	Mrs S. Sayer	
Mrs S. Ward	Safeguarding Officer	
Mr S. Waterson		
Treasurer	Mr C. Davies	

Electoral roll, Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

It was not been possible to issue the usual invitation to check and update the electoral roll. There were 194 on the Parish Electoral Roll, of whom 36 live outside the parish. There have been 2 deaths and 2 new enrolments, 1 from within the parish and 1 from outside the Parish. The average weekly attendance at the Abbey Church in 2019 was 178, including 25 children. There were 14 Baptisms, 10 Marriages (1 Renewal of Vows/Blessings) and 19 Funerals, including 9 Cremations and 8 services at the Abbey then cemetery. There were no Graveside services.

PCC Meetings

The PCC met on ten occasions in 2019 – 6 ordinary meetings and 4 extraordinary meetings. Whilst a considerable amount of time was spent discussing the PCC dispute with the Diocese about the appropriation of Wymondham Vicarage as a residence for the Bishop of Thetford, the Vicar has nevertheless been steadfast in retaining the central focus of the PCC on Mission.

Fellowship Group

The Fellowship Group, started a year ago, has been meeting fortnightly on Monday evenings at 6.30 in the School House. It has been a time for honest reflection, an opportunity to ask questions, discuss ideas, express our feelings and pray together. The meetings, in which we ponder on a poem or other Christian writing, are informal and friendly. Anyone is welcome to come along.

Themes we have considered so far include the Christian seasons and festivals as well as general topics such as Light, Joy, Love, Forgiveness, Prayer, Faith and Trust, the Mystery of God, Angels and Saints.

We have enjoyed reflecting on many unfamiliar poems such as “Reflected Light” by David Adam, “Let your God love you” by Edwina Gately, “The Avowal” by Denise Levertov, “and The Prayer of St Aidan” but also the well known and loved “The Journey of the Magi” by T.S. Eliot. Our reflections lead to a short time of prayer which concludes the meeting.

Creativity Days

These are times to enjoy the stillness and serenity of the present moment, coming close to God in centering prayer and also in quiet creativity, painting, drawing, reading, writing, modelling, or just relaxing in the calm and pleasant surroundings.

On one occasion we had a demonstration of book-binding which was fascinating and anyone who wished to do so was able to participate and try out the techniques. On another occasion, the art of block printing was used to produce some stunning patterns on bags. During the day there is the opportunity for a shared lunch and fellowship.

The Happiness Project

The group, overseen by Ruth Jackson, our minister for families, was set up to provide a peaceful, happy break from the stresses today's young people face. It started in September 2019 and is proving a great success. The Happiness Project sees young people of High School age gather at the Abbey every other Sunday afternoon to enjoy each other's company and a variety of activities. Each session ends with quiet, candle-lit worship in the Lady Chapel. It is encouraging to see how much our teenagers enjoy this time of tranquillity and closeness to God.

There have also been much appreciated outings including visits to alpaca farms and a trip to the theatre.

Abbey Voices and the Band

A group of children, most of whom regularly attend the 9.15 Contemporary Communion service, met every Friday from 6 to 6.45 pm to sing together for pleasure under the guidance of Tim Jackson whose encouragement and tuition has produced amazing results and brought as much pleasure to the congregation as to the young singers. They take part confidently in the 9.15 service and sing on other occasions, such as the Crib Service. Their gentle, pure and sweet singing is appreciated while the congregation receives the Eucharist.

Kay Dorling has done a wonderful job in leading the band which plays on special days and Feast Days, adding a new dimension to worship and celebration. It is a delight to see so many youngsters playing instruments to a high standard alongside some of the adults.

Prayer

There has been a very good response to our many initiatives to encourage a greater interest in and understanding of prayer.

The centering prayer sessions are well attended. This contemplative prayer offers an opportunity to experience what is really meant by 'the peace that passes understanding'.

The prayer request desk in the Lady Chapel is well-used as is the children's prayer hedge near the altar in the Lady Chapel. One cannot but be moved by the sheer number of heartfelt prayers that have been added by the children.

Prayer for healing during communion at the 10.30 service on the third Sunday of each month is much appreciated by those who come for the prayer and anointing.

AWAs (Authorised Worship Assistants)

We have a small group of Authorised Worship Assistants whose role is to support the ministry of the church in a variety of ways such as assisting at Eucharist, administering home communion, leading prayer and study groups and preaching.

Care and Residential homes that have been visited include Sutherlands Care and Nursing Home, Fairland Court and Ogden Court.

Authorised Worship assistants are also encouraged to read extensively, reflect and determine to increase their own spiritual development.

Events

The last year has seen an extraordinary number of people from the local community and beyond flocking to many enjoyable events organised by the Events Team and an enthusiastic group of volunteers.

The annual Duck Race on Monday 6th May attracted a surprisingly large crowd to the banks of the River Tiffey despite the unseasonably cold weather. The Craft Fair, held on the same day, was well attended and the high quality of the products was much appreciated and remarked upon.

On Tuesday 20th August a group of young people along with Mother Catherine and a few other adults enjoyed a beautiful day walking alpacas in the countryside at Neatishead and learning some interesting facts about those gentle, dignified creatures. This was followed by packed lunch by the river at Horning before returning to the Abbey.

The Veggie Fest, promoting cruelty-free products which took place on Saturday 14th September, was enjoyed by many visitors from the local community. Tasty refreshments in the spirit of the occasion were available in St Benedict's.

Saturday, 2nd November was the occasion of our Craft Fair. This is always a popular event and this year was exceptionally well-attended. There was a huge variety of stalls where all sorts of lovely, hand - made items were on sale. As usual, refreshments were available. It was great to see so many people from the local community, and some from further afield, enjoying themselves in the Abbey.

The Christmas Craft Fair was held on Saturday 7th December, to coincide with the town's 'Festal Wonder' event. It was another welcome opportunity to purchase high quality Christmas gifts and cards from a variety of well-stocked and attractive stalls.

A series of fascinating talks entitled " Abbey Scholars" took place on Friday mornings. Topics included 'the Rôle of Monasticism in the Evolution of the Church', 'the Rôle of non-verbal Communication in Worship and Liturgy', 'Heaven, Earth and the Four Seasons' and 'Esotericism in Christian Tradition and Thought'. These thought-provoking talks were followed by a shared soup lunch in St Benedict's

Links with Local Schools

We are pleased to report that the Abbey has increasingly strong links with local Primary schools. Ashleigh and Robert Kett Schools held their Christmas services in the Abbey Church and we have welcomed educational visits from both establishments. Father Stephen goes into Browick School regularly to take assemblies and Ruth Jackson has built links with Spooner Row School, who plan to visit the Abbey in the near future.

Tim Jackson is seeking to form another link with Robert Kett school in the future by running sessions with their choir in conjunction with their own music teacher.

The Abbey Website and Social Media

The website and social media are proving invaluable to engage with the community. Several people, but chiefly Mother Catherine, and others are managing the evolving design of the website and are reaching out to the community via social media, i.e. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Those who have access to the internet are able to note forthcoming services and events, and enjoy other articles of interest, poems and reflections. The website offers the opportunity to read the weekly newsletter, the Bible readings and the clergy's ponderings on them.

We were extremely grateful for all the work done for us by Sara Greenfield, who did so much to promote Abbey events via our social media platforms. Sarah will be greatly missed, as will her calm, capable input and the clear and patient guidance she offered to novices.

Deanery Synod

A meeting was called on the 19th July 2019 to discuss the Wymondham Vicarage situation. Thereafter, Revd Colin Reed, the Rural Dean, was on Sabbatical for the autumn term. Another meeting was held in October 2019 at which Revd Tim Yau talked about pioneer mission.

Fabric Report

Although not a great deal seems to have happened this year to the Abbey buildings, we have been busy behind the scenes with much preparatory paperwork and the accompanying quotations and designs. In fact, as I write this we should have been seeing the first signs of scaffolding appearing over the roof of the chancel, but in the present situation even the best laid plans are on hold.

One of the beneficiaries of the present situation are the Abbey's bats, now enjoying six oak bat boxes in the trees of the Churchyard. Prior to commencing any work on the roof a bat ecologist surveyed the Abbey and detectors are currently present in the building, though preliminary findings are that our bat population is minimal.

Work on repairing the defects found in the 2018 QI was scheduled to begin after Easter, with the Church Commissioners funding re-leading the North side of the Chancel roof and repairs to the South side, as well as significant conservation work to the North Chancel

Clerestory windows and surrounding stonework. Scaffolding will need to be erected within the chancel for this work, and we had hoped to complete it in early summer. The start date is currently unknown due to COVID-19, but all permissions are in place and the contractors are ready to go ahead.

The new sound system is still in its “temporary” phase, but we have been working with stone conservators to find a solution to mounting and cabling that pleases the statutory bodies we have been asked to consult. Again we had hoped to move forward with this after Easter. Meanwhile, the technical aspects of the system have been well proven, and the enhanced sound quality has been much appreciated.

The light fittings at Spooner Row were upgraded to modern LED units, providing a much clearer light, and helping reduce both maintenance and energy bills. On this point, we have been focussing on proactively managing our various electricity and gas accounts and making sure monthly readings are supplied and that we are only billed for power actually used, rather than estimated amounts. We are also constantly reviewing our contracts and usage to make sure costs are well controlled.

Lighting within the Abbey itself is also set to change, with an exciting design from Norwich Architectural Lighting being approved by the DAC. The system will be of a very high quality and should substantially enhance the appearance and usability of the entire building, especially on dark winter evenings. The Friends have generously agreed to fund this project and work should be able to commence later in 2020.

Further into the future we anticipate more repairs to roofs and stonework as a priority and look forward to working with our Preservation Trust to ensure the building remains in good condition. Whilst one might think an empty church would be the perfect time for repairs to be completed – there is an embargo on all but emergency repairs during the coronavirus crisis.

Spooner Row

Our daughter church, Holy Trinity at Spooner Row, continues to hold regular services on Sundays. The Spooner Row PCC Rep is Philip Aldred, whose musical credentials are well known. The church is used for some community events and has a good relationship with the local primary school.

Music

Our choir has a broad Anglican repertoire. Rehearsals are every Friday evening from 19:00 – 20:30 (junior choristers rehearse from 18:30 – 20:00). The choir is musically proficient and socially active. Part of the junior chorister experience is RSCM Voice for Life training, giving them an opportunity to grow musically and earn medals. At the Abbey we keep most feast and Saint’s days celebrating them with a big procession, full choir, lots of incense, and special hymns. Feasts at the Abbey are grand affairs which are fun for everyone involved. Our Director of Music is Rob Goodrich and we have enjoyed the playing of two excellent organists – Mike Webb and Peter O’Connor. The Abbey has also hosted a number of

community music events including the Wymondham Symphony Orchestra as well as individual musicians.

Safeguarding

The PCC has recently appointed Sue Ward to the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer. She has already liaised with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and is ensuring that safeguarding is a standing agenda item at each PCC meeting. A regular safeguarding audit is undertaken to ensure policy is put into practice and appropriate and up-to-date training is undertaken. The PCC accepts the House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance, both policies and practice, and it publishes and regularly reviews its Safeguarding Policy.

Finance and Reserves Policy

The PCC agreed to pay the full Parish Share, £107,000 again in 2019 but needed to draw on its reserves to do this. It is the policy of Wymondham Abbey to hold in reserves the minimum equivalent of two months general running costs and an additional two months draw on its reserve do this. It is the policy of Wymondham Abbey to hold in reserves the minimum equivalent of two months general running costs and an additional two month's salary costs. This policy will be reviewed in seven months' time in the light of the impact of Covid-19 on Abbey income. It is anticipated that a majority of PCCs across the Diocese and across the country will be unable to afford the full Parish Share in 2020.