

**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 2020**

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

Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 December 2020

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 2020 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		resigned April 2020
	Dr J Hunt		resigned May 2020
Other Members	Rev S Sealey	Assistant Priest	retired May 2020
	Mrs L Adams	Deanery Synod Rep	resigned Dec 2020
	Mr P. Aldred	Spooner Row Rep	
	Mrs S. Barton-Wood		resigned June 2020
	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		resigned Aug 2020
Mrs S. Ward	Safeguarding Officer		
Mr S. Waterson		resigned Feb 2020	
Treasurer	Mr C. Davies		

Electoral roll, Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

There are 185 on the Parish Electoral Roll, of whom 36 live outside the parish.

There have been 2 deaths and 9 new enrolments.

4 Marriages, 6 Funerals (5 services at the Abbey then cemetery,) 3 Interments of Ashes. There were no Graveside services.

Average weekly attendances: pre Covid 128. July 5 to Dec 31 28.

PCC Meetings

The PCC met on three occasions in 2020 – The Vicar has been steadfast in retaining the central focus of the PCC on Mission. The following report gives a flavour of some aspects of this.

The PCC wholeheartedly supported the Vicar and Church Wardens in responding to the challenge of meeting the needs of the whole parish of Wymondham during the continuing Covid pandemic. The PCC also remained resolute in wanting the Vicarage to be returned to the parish, and in not paying the Parish Share for 2020.

Fellowship group

The Fellowship Group met fortnightly in January and February 2020 but in March, with the first lockdown, we set up a WhatsApp Fellowship Group. This later was renamed "Reflections". Here, we post reflections, poems and passages for reflection and we can share our responses to them. It's not like meeting together of course but keeps us in touch and keeps us thinking and praying.

Prayer Hub

As prayer groups in person have not been possible, a small WhatsApp group called 'Prayer Hub' was set up. This group undertakes to pray for any who have requested prayer on their own or another's behalf and to respect total confidentiality.

Lent Meetings

Two meetings were held by Zoom. On the 3rd March we discussed 'Jesus and the multitude', with reference to biblical stories and also to human behaviour in today's world.

On 10th March we discussed ' Being blessed in adversity'.

It was good to have that time 'together' and hear many different views and perspectives on

both topics.

Children and Young People

Children and young people are a vital part of the community - they have parents, grandparents, friends etc and supporting their well-being and developing faith is a vital part of Christian mission.

We have a growing number of young people involved - both in attendance at church services as well other initiatives.

20 young people of High School age are involved in the 'Happiness project' which provides a space and time to enjoy each others company and a variety of activities. In early 2020 there were regular Happiness meets at the Abbey and outings. When the schools closed in March, it quickly became apparent many of the children and teenagers were finding lockdown difficult. A Happiness project WhatsApp group was set up to enable the high school kids to stay connected with each other and the Abbey. Weekly zoom meetings were organised and activities included quizzes, debates, cooking, murder mystery as well as opportunity for prayer.

A WhatsApp group for families was set up and parishioners with children were invited to join to share news, prayer and maintain a sense of community. A regular zoom group was also organised for primary age children with quizzes, scavenger hunts and games.

As lockdown lifted the children's group and (separately) Happiness project group met outside in the Abbey grounds for socially distanced games, prayer and activities finding God in nature. The improvement of the wellbeing of these children was so good to see.

36 children of the Abbey children and young people were involved in the Christmas preparations – sharing ideas and planning for the online crib service. They each pre-recorded clips which were compiled into a Christmas story. This has been viewed online over 600 times.

The coronavirus and lockdown has caused a huge increase in anxiety and mental health difficulties of children and young people. The Abbey is working to recognise and respond to this.

Prayer

There continues to be 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'.

Many of the increasing number of people spending time in the churchyard participate in the opportunities for prayer and reflection which are offered and have joined online services or view online content.

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.

Kay Dorling – has been in contact with nursing homes sending cards and making phone calls even during lock down. She also began to be involved in the interment of ashes

Links with Local Schools

Sadly, the work with local schools had to pause during lockdown and all educational trips and planned Easter and Christmas services were cancelled.

We are working to continue to build links with all the primary schools as well as Wymondham High.

The Abbey Website and Social Media

The website and social media are proving invaluable, especially during the period of enforced isolation and the closure of churches.

Mother Catherine and many others worked to evolve the design of the website to meet current needs and to focus on keeping people supported and feeling connected in a community of love and care.

With the churches closed, a series of on-line offerings began with emphasis placed on establishing a pattern of worship for Sunday. This included readings, music, poems, a homily, Godly Play and a craft activity. These were provided on the website, with some elements also available on facebook and youtube. The Vicar pre-recorded the homily, parishioners were invited to record audio files for the readings – ensuring engagement and a sense of community of voices. A number of the teenagers became involved in learning how to lead Godly Play and pre-recorded the stories.

Many members of the congregation and other people too, have appreciated being able to watch and listen to Godly play sessions and the homily on Sundays.

When it became possible to meet for worship, particular care and attention was taken to ensure a safe environment. Two parishioners learnt to use technology for livestream, and time was taken to find camera angles so those watching from home could feel as much part of the service as possible.

Deanery Synod

Hingham hosted an evening to welcome Bishop Graham Usher on the 25th February 2020. Evening Prayer, followed by the Rural Dean interviewing Bishop Graham with questions sent in by people.

Fabric Report 2020

Andrew Naylor – Fabric Officer

Despite the lockdowns we managed to make good progress in 2020 in several areas with much more in the pipeline for 2021. Prior to commencing the work on the Chancel roof we were obliged to call in an ecologist to carry out extensive surveys of the Abbey's bat population. He placed detectors inside the building for a few weeks and spent at least one long evening listening and watching. Apparently our bat population is minimal (low single figures) and they now also have a choice of six oak bat boxes in the trees of the Churchyard. We are grateful to the Preservation Trust for funding this conservation work. 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. This was delayed until July due to lockdown, and the work was completed in October. We took advantage of the internal scaffolding to clean the inside of the windows, the stonework inside the Clerestory, and the tops of the Reredos, all of which were filthy. We also persuaded the Church Commissioners to repair the loose plaster over the South Choir stalls, which is now safe. While the roofers were on site they re-applied Smartwater deterrent to all the lead roofs and downpipes. Again, we are grateful to the Preservation Trust for funding all the items out of the Church Commissioner's remit. Planning for our lighting system was completed, with an exciting design from Norwich Architectural Lighting being approved by the DAC, and full Faculty granted in July, after scrutiny by Historic England and other bodies. The system is of a very high quality and substantially enhances the appearance and usability of the entire building, especially on dark winter evenings. The Friends have generously agreed to fund this project and at the time of writing (March 2021) the installation and much of the setup has been finished. 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. Full faculty approval has now been granted and we plan to do this work after Easter. Meanwhile, the technical aspects of the system have been well proven, and the enhanced sound quality has been much appreciated. 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. We were granted a third Faculty to put outside sockets on St Margaret's and St Benedict's and upgrade the emergency light outside the South Doors. This has now been completed, largely funded by a private donation, and all the town has enjoyed the improved lighting in the churchyard this winter. Lots of minor activity has also

been across the Fabric Officer's desk this year dealing with various upgrades and issues to the alarm systems (funded by the Preservation Trust again), as well as plumbers, electricians and blacksmiths. Looking into 2021, we hope to complete repairs to all the various roof leaks, and make a high level internal inspection of the Clerestory from a Cherry picker. We have quotations in for rope access surveys on the ruined East tower and conservation surveys on the "Sedilia", as well as other works on the roofs that will make access safer for contractors and maintenance staff.

Spooner Row

In 2020 Services in the usual pattern were held in Spooner Row until the lockdown of 23 03 2020. In July, one service was held without the knowledge of the Vicar or Churchwardens. As it was difficult to ensure Covid safety for Sunday worship the church was then closed, but it was possible to hold a wedding in November and a service on Christmas Day morning. Philip Aldred is assisting with risk assessments to look forward with possible services.

Music

2020 Singing and the playing of organs were forbidden on March 23 2020. The PCC have plans to use a variety of ensembles as soon as it is permitted and practical to do so. As well as the traditional choir, the PCC would like to include singers and musicians of many genres, as are appropriate in enhancement of the worship of God.

Safeguarding

Sue Ward to the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer. She ensures that safeguarding in this parish is of the highest quality, and 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 not to pay the Parish Share. 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. The impact of Covid-19 has been incredibly detrimental to the 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.

Events

It was impossible to run events during 2020. This added to the devastating impact of closing on the PCC finances and was a sad loss to the community at large.

Plans are in place for two craft fairs in 2020.