



**AGENDA, REPORTS and  
FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
for the  
MEETING OF PARISHIONERS  
and the  
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021  
10.30am**

*The front cover shows a photograph of a socially distanced Sunday in 2020.*

*From the Rector, Fr Stuart Owen*

Dear Members of the Electoral Roll,

I have pleasure in introducing these Agendas, Reports and Financial Report in readiness for our Annual Meetings which take place this year at **10:30am** on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at St Peter's Church and via Zoom

Do please make every effort to be present at these Meetings when they happen. They are a significant occasion in our communal parish life.

Yours sincerely,

*Fr Stuart Owen*

Annual Meeting of Parishioners  
for the election of Churchwardens

**MINUTES**

**11.00AM Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October, St Peter's Berkhamsted**

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for Absence: Julian and Sarah Dawson, Jean and Stuart Wild, Clive Freestone, Rowena Pike
3. Minutes of the previous Meeting of Parishioners received by Philippa Seldon (proposed) and Hilary Armstrong (seconded).
4. Election of Churchwardens for 2020-2021: Tim Hennessey and Mark Grego
5. Meeting closed at 11:05am.

## **ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

11.05am Sunday 25th October 2020 in, St Peters, Berkhamsted

### **MINUTES**

- 1.** Minutes of the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting (14<sup>th</sup> April 2019) approved by Philippa Seldon (proposed) and Hilary Armstrong (seconded).

The electoral roll is completely renewed every 6 years. This is the second year of the current roll. The total number on the roll is 195. Since 2019, 23 people have been added, 3 have died and 3 have moved away.

### **Elections**

- I. Affirmation of one All Saints representative to the Parochial Church Council for 2019-20: Richard Hackworth
- II. Election of new members of PCC (appointed without election) Oliver Fradgley, David Cooke, Nick Goss, Susan Holmes
- III. Deanery Synod Elections (appointed without election): Alan Conway, Christine Cowie, Peter Matthews.

Thanks to those who have stepped down from these positions and their hard work and contributions throughout.

### **2. Other Business**

- I. Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Parochial Church Council for 2020, including the General Fund Summary Budget for 2019 received by Tim Hennessey (proposed) and Miles Nicolas (seconded).

Richard Hackworth (treasurer) commented that there is a much more significant deficit this year than the previous year and whilst St Peter's do have enough reserves for this year (2020) careful thought will need to be made about 2021. The Courthouse Cottage has been re-let and All Saint's House is nearing the point when it is ready to go on the market for letting. An estimate of £20,000 has been spent on the house this year and when it is on the market it will generate significant income. Any questions in regards to the Finance report, please speak to Richard.

Thanks to Hilary Armstrong and Kate Perera (Church Office) and the Church Wardens, as well as to Miles Nicolas and Jane Bartholomew (HMRC).

- II. Re-appointment of Hillier Hopkins LLP, Chartered Accountants, or another qualified firm if advantageous to the PCC, as the auditor or independent examiner, dependent on the requirements of charity law, Tim Hennessey proposed and Uli Grego seconded. All approved.
- III. Report from the Churchwardens on the Fabric, Goods & Ornaments of the Churches received.

Mark Grego thanked Christopher Greene, who stepped down as Chairman of the Buildings Committee after 30 years service on the committee, for his diligence in this position and selfless giving. Christopher Green is now producing articles online on the history of St Peter's so his knowledge is being documented.

- IV. Reports of Parish Activities received with no additional comments or questions.

### **3. Rector's Report**

Fr Stuart expressed immense gratitude for the warm welcome he and his family and received from the community of St Peter's. He thanked those who had carried positions of leadership during the interregnum, particularly having to make difficult decisions during the time of the pandemic. He has been pleased to see the Church building coming back to life over the last several weeks and looks forward to journeying with the Church family through his and their time in Berkhamsted. Particularly looking forward to the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the opportunity to grow the presence of St Peter's in the wider community of Berkhamsted. Grateful to all those who have been elected onto the PCC and the Deanery Synod but also looks forward to the gifts, talents and vision of those who will be involved in the planning and preparation of the anniversary.

- 4. No questions or discussions on any matters of Parochial or general Church interest – including Safeguarding.
- 5. **Next PCC Meeting:** Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS  
FOR THE ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS**

10.30am Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021, St Peters, Berkhamsted

**AGENDA**

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for Absence
3. To Receive the Minutes of the previous Meeting of Parishioners (25<sup>th</sup> October 2020)
4. Election of Churchwardens for 2021-22
5. Closure of Meeting

## **ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

10.35am Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021 in St Peter's, Berkhamsted

### **AGENDA**

1. To receive the Minutes of the last Annual Parochial Church Meeting (25<sup>th</sup> October 2022)

2. To receive a Report on the Electoral Roll.

#### ***Other Business***

3. To receive the Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Parochial Church Council for 2020.
4. To re-appoint Hillier Hopkins LLP, Chartered Accountants, or another qualified firm if advantageous to the PCC, as the auditor or independent examiner, dependent on the requirements of charity law.
5. To receive a report from the Churchwardens on the Fabric, Goods & Ornaments of the Churches.
6. To receive the other written reports of Parish Activities as circulated herewith.
7. Rector's report.
8. Questions and discussions on any matters of Parochial or general Church interest – including Safeguarding.
9. To note the following date:

**PCC Meeting** Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021



## REPORTS FROM THE PARISH

The following groups (here in alphabetical order) have met, worked and contributed regularly or in part throughout the year within the parish community, and the reports of those who particularly wished to write them will be found in the body of this Annual Report.

**The Buildings Committee**

*Mark Grego*

**Castle Church of England Federation:  
The Thomas Coram Church of England School and  
Victoria Church of England Infant School and Nursery**

*Rob Halls, Executive Head Teacher*

**Julian Meetings**

*Ruth Treves Brown*

**The Mothers' Union**

*Margaret Burbidge*

**The Music Department**

*Adrian Davis, Jean Wild, Jon Lee*

**Pastoral Care Group**

*Philippa Seldon*

**Sundays Together Lunches**

*Carolynne Charman*

**St Peter's Ladies' Club**

*Barbara McKenna*

**Youth Work**

*Olivia Davies*

### **SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT**

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

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- 1) **Treasurer's Report for the Parish** *Richard Hackworth*
- 2) **St Peter's Churchwardens' Report:** *Mark Grego / Tim Hennessey*
- 3) **The Rector's Report** *Fr Stuart Owen*
- 4) **The Buildings Committee** *Mark Grego*
- 5) **Online Technology** *Robin McMorran*
- 6) **Pastoral Care** *Philippa Seldon*
- 7) **The Mothers' Union:** *Margaret Burbidge*
- 8) **Youth Work** *Olivia Davies*
- 9) **Castle Church of England Federation: Victoria and Thomas Coram**  
**Schools:** *Rob Halls, Executive Headteacher*

## **1. THE TREASURER'S REPORT**

The full 2020 Trustee Report and Accounts for the Parish of Great Berkhamsted is available on the St Peter's website, and copies have been displayed in St Peter's. The report sets out details of the Parish finances for 2020 with the usual supporting commentary. If anyone has any questions, please contact me.

These are the important headlines for 2020.

- Because of the Covid-19 pandemic income from Court House and church lettings, and from church collections, has reduced in total by about £20,000 compared with 2019. Regular costs have remained pretty level. The PCC has also absorbed the one-off costs of responding to the pandemic such as setting up routine Internet streaming of regular services, installing screens round some choir stalls and arranging additional cleaning. We also received income support of £7,000 from the Government Cov-19 Job Retention Scheme.
- The PCC General fund (that covers all routine costs) ended 2020 at about £7,000, compared with £23,000 in 2019. We have drawn on specially held reserves to cover this.
- Between 31st December 2019 and 31st December 2020, total PCC net current assets held in all funds reduced from £245,000 to £198,000.
- Despite the constraints of the pandemic regular donations to St Peter's have slightly increased during 2020. Regular donations income through bank Standing Orders and the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) is mainly unaffected. Donors who would normally use Gift Aid envelopes have either continued to send their envelopes to the Parish Office, or now donate by cheque or have transferred to PGS.
- Overall, St Peter's has fared better than many parishes in the Diocese through the 2020 pandemic and St Peter's has met its parish share commitment in full.

As at April 2021, the outlook for this year is stronger than 2020. All Saints House has been let since early January and is generating welcome additional income. Our two top financial priorities are to maintain an adequate balance in the General fund to support all day-to-day expenditure, and as far as practical to strengthen the Buildings fund to enable essential maintenance of St Peter's church and the PCC's other properties. To these ends I am, and will continue, to

monitor PCC finances closely through this year and will provide the PCC with regular commentary.

*Richard Hackworth  
Hon Treasurer*

## **2. CHURCHWARDENS REPORT**

Well it's safe to say that this year did not pan out as expected! But the Psalms do say that one of the things that makes God laugh is our plans.

Looking back at last year's report, Fr Simon was set to guide us through the Vacancy, and we were excitedly looking forward to the Installation of Fr. Stuart in the summer. However, through the latter half of February and into March it was apparent that Coronavirus was cutting a relentless swathe across the world. Little did we know that Sunday 15th March would be the last time we would open our doors for public worship for nearly four months— the first time St Peters had been closed in nearly 800 years, a deeply distressing action! Cometh the hour, cometh the man, and that man was Fr Simon with his BBC experience; together with technical input from Robin McMorran and Jon Lee they had us live-streaming our services from 21st March.

Despite COVID restrictions the Parish remained busy. A band of volunteers transformed the Rectory in preparation for the arrival of Fr Stuart and Susie with their boys James and Barnaby. And a network of telephone support was established among parishioners to help everyone keep in touch.

In June we were permitted to open the church for private prayer only. Hilary Armstrong drew up a rota of volunteers to welcome visitors and to make sure they kept to COVID rules. Thanks are due to Hilary and her team of supervisors who did a fantastic job. On 5th July we were finally allowed to resume public worship, albeit hidden behind face-masks, with no singing and communion in one kind only. Once again we must thank Hilary for making the church safe for our return, and to the team of volunteers who worked hard to implement Hilary's COVID compliance plans. A little bonus in the COVID gloom was that the volunteers all agreed they benefited by getting to know each other and members of the congregation better.

At the end of July we had to relinquish Fr Simon to take up his new role in Sawbridgeworth. The wretched virus prevented us from giving him and Charlotte the send off we wished and they so deserved.

Through the summer Frs. Anthony, Chris and David with support from Fr. John kept us going in a way none of them could have imagined when they 'retired', we have been very blessed to have their support.

On Saturday 12th September, Bishop Alan presided over Fr Stuart's Installation in an elegant and moving service. As with so many events this year, it was not quite as we would have wished. Once the virus is under control we will have a proper party for Fr Stuart and his family – I know he will not let us forget! In the meantime, what a challenge it has been for Fr. Stuart to try to get to know his congregation when they are wearing masks.

Finances are a constant challenge for the church and COVID only served to make matters worse. Richard Hackworth, our extremely able Treasurer, has wrestled with the problem. Among the actions we had to take to make savings was to reduce resources in the Church Office. This meant, very sadly, that Kate Perera stood down. We are very grateful for her many years of service.

A great deal of thanks is also due to Michael Anderson. Over many years, he has dealt with the management of All Saints House and the Court House Cottage. But this was a heavy burden and the PCC agreed he might relinquish the responsibility and that the role be undertaken by estate agents. After project managing ASH refurbishment, both properties are now let.

Later this year Olivia Davies will be moving on. Olivia has been a wonderful asset to us; a lively presence and a most impressive preacher. We wish her all the best for the future.

Churchwardens cannot undertake their responsibilities without support. We are indebted to the members of the PCC, and all the volunteers who give their time to ensure that everything runs smoothly and plans are made and actioned.

Being forbidden for a period to worship together in church has only served to highlight what we missed. Let us look forward to a time, hopefully soon, when we

can all return in safety to enjoy the blessings of fellowship, with music and song in our beautiful church and praise God.

*Mark Grego & Tim Hennessey*

### **3. RECTOR'S REPORT**

Having been licensed as Rector of St Peter's on September 12th last year, this report covers a grand total 110 days, and so I'll keep it commensurately brief. I would like to begin on a personal note, by thanking all those who contributed to making our arrival in Berkhamsted such a happy one; we felt thoroughly welcomed and very glad to be here.

Although rather less dramatic than the second quarter of 2020 when we had our first experience of 'lockdown', negotiating the final quarter of last year was not without its complications. As regulations and guidance changed across those three months, and indeed with a second lockdown in November, it was sometimes difficult to navigate our course week by week, and to plan ahead. The shared desire of all, I think, was to do everything we could to keep the doors of the church open to as many as possible, whilst ensuring that people's safety remained paramount; and when we talk of keeping the doors of the church open these days, that now very much includes the virtual doors of our online presence as well as the great wooden doors of the west end. To all those who helped us to achieve that, an enormous thank you.

I've been greatly encouraged by the willingness of so many groups within the church to adapt to these changing circumstances and to keep offering the best that we're able to offer at any given time. Our musicians, both in the choir and in the tower, our pastoral care network, our welcomers, cleaning team, servers, and so many others have done a tremendous job of keeping the show on the road. Together we managed to ensure that in terms of our worship, All Souls', Advent and Christmas were all kept as well as they could be. Our Churchwardens Mark and Tim, parish administrator Hilary, musical combo Adrian and Jon, my clergy colleagues both here at St Peter's and in the Berkhamsted Team, and many others have been valuable sounding boards and sources of advice.

The signs seem largely positive, that the second half of 2021 will see a sustained return to normality, and that's something I'm very much looking forward to. I'm looking forward to seeing what 'normal' Sunday worship is like at St Peter's. I'm looking forward to visiting people in their homes and taking Communion to the housebound. I'm looking forward to seeing the 'no entry' signs and the lengths of blue rope removed from the pews. I'm looking forward to the plans for our 800th

anniversary next year continuing to take shape. I'm looking forward to seeing how the lessons we've learnt over the past twelve months will help us to grow together in our service of one another and the people of Berkhamsted.

Above all I'm looking forward to learning from you, and learning with you, as together we seek to understand what God is calling us to, and sending us out for.

*Fr Stuart*

#### **4. ANNUAL FABRIC REPORT – THE BUILDINGS COMMITTEE**

##### **Arrangements and responsibilities**

The Buildings Committee has delegated responsibility for the care and maintenance of the PCC's properties which are:

- St Peter's Church
- St Peter's Churchyard
- The Court House
- The Court House Cottage
- All Saints House
- The detached churchyard (Rectory Lane Cemetery)

Following the desire expressed by Christopher Green in 2019 to stand down as chairman of the Buildings Committee, we spent some time talking to Christopher and members of the committee on how we should respond to the changed circumstances. It has given us the opportunity to review current practices, identify problems and address them but to also build on what we currently do.

The role of chairman has been in place for decades and covered many areas of responsibility, delegated by the churchwardens. In the absence of a successor to Christopher, and my view that the churchwardens should become more involved, I have taken over chairing the Committee and now present the Committee reports to the PCC. I felt that the only realistic way of managing this onerous responsibility was to introduce a more formal delegation of roles and tasks. There have always been individuals responsible for building and project leaders, but I aim for this to become more formalised and extended. For example, Peter McMunn, is managing the Court House project and has attended PCC meetings to provide updates.

I am pleased to say that David Cooke, a practising architect, has joined the Committee as has Carolynne Charman. I am also pleased that Carolynne, as both

an internal user of the Court House, and deputy churchwarden, agreed to become the lead for maintenance of the Court House; she will continue to work with Clive Freestone.

I asked for a volunteer to take on the responsibility for running working parties and I am grateful to Stephen Lally for taking on this role. Stephen recruited volunteers and coordinated redecoration of the Rectory (which is maintained by the Diocese). This was a major piece of work which has saved several thousands of pounds, so we are incredibly grateful to the Stephen and volunteers.

Ian Imber continues to be our unofficial handyman (and heating plant operator) and Alan Conway has helped with the Eco Church Survey.

One positive outcome of the lockdown was the use of online video meetings which has enabled more frequent but shorter meetings. Chris Clegg continues to keep the meeting minutes which are so important in our work.

A final point is that we have decided that in future the Buildings Committee will not liaise with the occupants of our rental properties and that the letting agent will provide full management including maintenance for a small increase in fees.

### **The Church**

After a considerable passage of time Oxley Conservation was approved as our quinquennial inspector by the Diocese of St Albans but were unable to undertake the quinquennial inspection until September and October because of the pandemic. I am grateful to Christopher Green, Mike Below and Astrid Biddle for their assistance on both days, particularly as, of course, the surveyors were unfamiliar with the building. We are currently awaiting the report.

There are half a dozen roof leaks but one of these, in the St John's Chantry, has progressed from being intermittent to a permanent one. Currently, water from the gutter of the nave roof runs from the downpipe across the lower roof to the lower gutter and we believe that connecting the two will prevent such an ingress of water.

The repair to the ceiling of the South Transept was carried out by the stonemason during the Christmas period and the cordoned-off area is now open again. We are waiting before deciding whether painting is required.

The building was assessed for fire safety last November and a few minor changes will be implemented during the coming months as a result. BREES Electrical carried out remedial Category 2 work, and some additional minor repair work to faulty lights.



Maintenance work to bells and bell frame will be necessary within the next few years. The PCC has accepted the need for this work, and it has been added to the list of priorities.

by



### **Crime prevention**

The Diocese of St Albans has been strongly advising Parishes to install roof alarms to protect against metal theft due to the continuing spate of thefts, particularly that which occurred in Houghton Conquest in Bedfordshire.

The Committee obtained two quotations from suppliers approved by our insurer and recommended to the PCC the system which is video-CCTV-based. We took up a reference

provided by the supplier, ACE Defence. If an intruder gets onto the roof, an image is sent to a monitoring centre and the police called. The system was installed last November (spot Darren the Squirrel in the picture).

In Autumn 2019, we took advantage of an offer from the Diocese for a crime prevention officer from Hertfordshire Constabulary to review the security of the church building and provided a report with recommendations. The PCC approved our plan to implement these recommendations and we have addressed most of them to date.

### **Churchyard**

800-year anniversary – Area of Reflection. We have supported the initial consultation with the Diocesan Advisory Council and our neighbours and will support the working group as required.

It is noticeable that since the first lockdown, that more people are using the churchyard, particularly as a coffee meeting point and it is to be hoped that this will help fundraising for the project.

### **The Court House and Cottage**

Maintenance: The building was assessed for fire safety last November and a few minor changes will be implemented during the coming months as a result. BREES Electrical carried out remedial Category 2 work.

Improvement project: Peter McMunn has been working with a local architect, Bob Thompson, on the design, planning consent, specification of requirements, and costing of work to improve the Court House. The project was initiated due to continuing leaks through the flat roof over the toilets.

The PCC asked for passed costings due to affordability with Phase 1a covering extension of the Court House Cottage bathroom over the flat roof and replacement of the flat roof itself. Phase 1b covers the replacement of the toilets and various other improvements. Phase 2 would create more space in the upper room area and Phase 3 which would replace the windows. The PCC has approved expenditure on Phase 1a, and we are currently investigating sources of grants to help fund Phase 1b. Our architect is currently inviting tenders from local builders with the intention that work starts this June.

### **All Saints House**

Following the departure of Father Simon and family, Michael Anderson worked tirelessly arranging for necessary repair and maintenance work to be carried out prior to the house being put on the rental market. Our letting agent has taken over full management of the property, which is now let. We thank Michael, Tim Hennessey and other volunteers and to Richard Hackworth for liaising with the letting agent.

### **The detached churchyard (Rectory Lane Cemetery)**

Management of this area is the delegated responsibility of the Friends of St Peter's. The cemetery reopened to the public on Sunday 1 November 2020 following the completion of the three-year transformation programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

<https://www.rectorylanecemetery.org.uk/visit/news-events/news>

*Mark Grego*

## **5. TECHNOLOGY AND ONLINE: A LOCKDOWN MINISTRY**

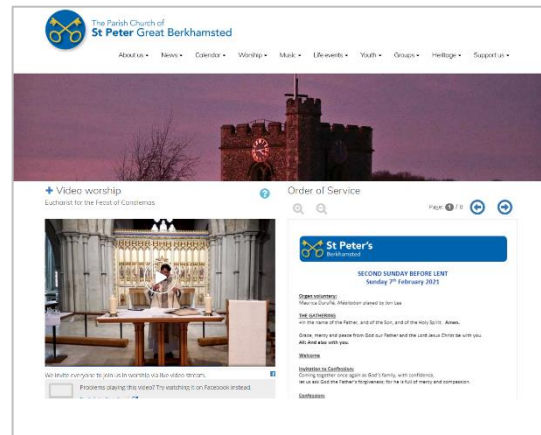


The lockdown periods during COVID-19 pandemic have been difficult for many. We were all so used to simple contacts activities like going to the shops, chatting to neighbours on the High Street, meeting friends at pubs and coffee mornings, the weekly experience of communal worship. We took it all for granted.

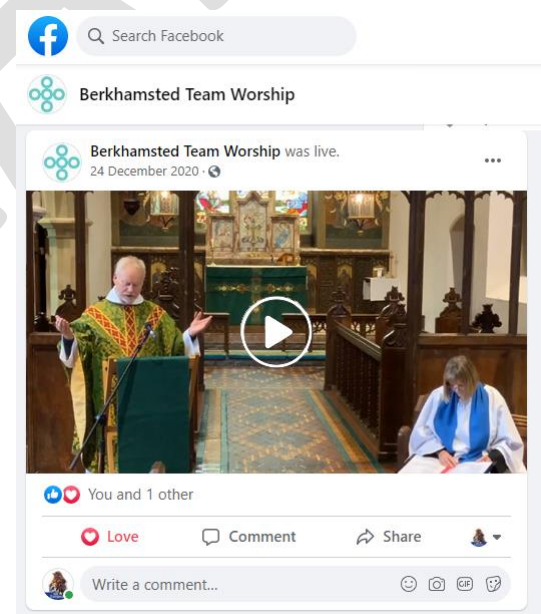
Then, in spring 2020, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic struck. Everyone from churches to corporations were caught out, unsure what to do, but forced to shut their doors in the interests of public health. Those small, daily social interactions were suddenly cut off. This was a nervous and uncertain time. For the church, unable to hold regular public worship for the first time perhaps in centuries, we had to work out what was our mission here? How could we minister to the community through closed doors?

During lockdown, many people found that modern conveniences such as online shopping and online video communications alleviated some difficulties. Here at St Peter's Church, we were fortunate to have technological assets that could help in a similar way – a parish website, a Facebook page and a YouTube channel. We perhaps didn't fully appreciate the potential of these resources until 2020, when every other aspect of parish life was suddenly and unexpectedly taken away from us – the use of the building, the collective worship, the handshake at the passing of the peace, receiving the sacraments, the smile of a friend.

Curate Fr Simon Vivian summoned a group of interested people to explore ways of making the most of our technology. To begin with, there was an immediate need to keep going the regular cycle of prayer and worship, and we began our first-ever video broadcast of Sunday morning Eucharist from the Lady Chapel of St Peter's. Thanks to modern advances in video recording and data streaming, this was something we could achieve relatively easily, without the need for an outside broadcast van or a television production crew. Using only a mobile phone on a camera tripod, we could record a service within a locked building and transmit the video data via the 4G mobile network. We could then post the live video on our St Peter's Facebook page and on our website for everyone to watch.



By modern standards, this is all fairly standard stuff, but somehow it still had the pioneering spirit of the first television transmissions from Alexandra Palace in the 1930s. Although the tech has become more accessible since then, it's not without its challenges. Getting the light and the sound levels right, getting the right people in shot, even having the camera rotated correctly can all go wrong. A team effort drew on our combined skills. We were very fortunate to have Fr Simon's guidance, as his past experience as a BBC producer on *Songs of Praise* meant that he could bring broadcast sensibilities to the whole effort. Lucy Biddle found a new vocation as camera operator, and I wrote the code to embed the video stream on the website with a (hopefully) user-friendly interface. Further support came from the local community – Paul Chambers and Berkhamsted School loaned us audio equipment to improve the sound quality.



The pandemic situation worsened, and for a period, churches were forced to close completely. Even under these restrictions, *"The voice of prayer is never silent, Nor dies the strain of praise away."* The video broadcasts instead went "on location" to private homes; a collective Berkhamsted Team Worship page was set up on Facebook, and Fr John Russell led online worship videos from his study for Great Berkhamsted, All Saints, Great Gaddesden, Little Gaddesden, Nettleden and



Potten End. Fr Simon also began a nightly broadcast on YouTube of Compline, pre-recorded in his home, with backing vocals kindly supplied by Charlotte.

Our Facebook activities were not limited to videostreaming of worship. We summoned help from people in the parish to start offering a daily Facebook post to



provide interest and stimulation through the lockdown: weekly recipes from Kate Perera; TV and Netflix reviews from Pru Murray; history articles from Christopher Green; music articles by Jonathan Lee (accompanied by a specially compiled YouTube video playlist); and “Pause for Thought” audio pieces from Fr Anthony Lathe and Fr David Lawson. With a rolling programme of posts to rival a Radio 4 schedule, St Peter’s offered social contact, intellectual stimulation and entertainment to the Berkhamsted community. Hopefully, we were able to lift the spirits of our friends and neighbours, and make this strange and unsettling time a little more bearable.

Later, the lockdown restrictions were gradually relaxed. Fr Simon was able to celebrate Eucharist on video, accompanied by pre-recorded music (which opened up a copyright minefield!). Soon, we were able to resume communal worship, and even bring a limited choir back into service (subject to enormous efforts with rotas, social distancing and Perspex screens). As we began to welcome people back into the building, we needed an effective and efficient way of managing numbers and keeping contact details for NHS Track and Trace. Once again, technology came to the rescue; Hilary in the Parish Office set up an online booking system using a website called EventBrite, and this has been integrated into the Parish website, so that anyone who wants to come to worship can very easily book a seat at the touch of a button.

The weekly video worship has been very warmly received and brought comfort to many. During the full lockdown period, we would typically attract 80-90 viewers to a video, although the video would reach hundreds more who would perhaps watch for a few minutes before leaving. Even when the Church building re-opened to public worship, we might have 30-40 viewers on top of the people attending in person. We also attracted viewers from further afield – such as South Africa, Northern Ireland, Thailand and Germany. Importantly, this online broadcast also attracted people in the Berkhamsted area who would not normally come to St Peter’s on a Sunday morning. For many “non-churchy” people, an ancient stone building and thick oak doors can represent an unwelcoming barrier. Broadcasting live video effectively knocked a great big massive hole in those old

walls and opened up St Peter's to the "outside world". New people have come into St Peter's services as a result. Our online followers grew (we now have over 850 page "likes") and our videos reached more people than you can shake a socially-distanced stick at (the broadcast of Midnight Mass was seen by over 2900 people). 2020 was the year when our online presence became our "shop window".

Through the adversity of the pandemic, our eyes have been opened to new possibilities. We must look to the future and how to make the best of what we have learned as a parish. If the world goes back to some sort of "normality", this will not be the end for video streaming in churches. We hope to continue broadcasting services, but we need to do better, to invest in better audio/video technology, to aim for better production values and to improve our skills as video producers. This will require some expenditure, but the return on investment will be a more open, welcoming and forward-looking parish community. We hope that video worship will become the "new normal".

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If you would like to join in the Sunday morning video worship, you can watch on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stpetersberkhamsted>

If you don't have a Facebook account, you can also watch the video on the parish website:

<https://www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk>

*Robin McMorran*

## **5. THE PASTORAL CARE TEAM**

Since March, at the beginning of the first lockdown, the role of the pastoral care team has changed. Regrettably, we are unable to visit the house bound, take Home Communion, organise pub lunches, or give lifts to Church etc. Instead, like many other members of the congregation, we are keeping in touch with everyone by telephone.

Initially Hilary Armstrong, as Parish Secretary, asked for volunteers to contact and give practical help to anyone who needed it. Altogether 36 responded. An efficient and caring network was soon established, who were in touch with 206 people. In addition to the support it gave, it was good to see that the parish came together in this important pastoral ministry.

The All Soul's Day Requiem Mass was well attended and the congregation was

able to light a candle for their departed loved ones. The choir, from behind their perspex screens, excelled themselves in singing Faure's Requiem.

The pastoral care team have continued to meet each month on zoom and we are grateful to Fr Stuart for his support and advice. As the past few months have proved, pastoral care is incumbent on all of us. If you are worried or uneasy about another member of the congregation, please let Fr Stuart or one of us know. Our meetings and everything we do is confidential.

*Philippa Seldon*

## **6. BERKHAMSTED DEANERY SYNOD**

Our Rural Dean is Revd. Jonathan Gordon. Unfortunately, because of the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020 it has not been possible the Synod to hold any meetings or event during the year. There is therefore no substantial business to report.

*Richard Hackworth*

## **7. SUNDAYS TOGETHER LUNCH**

We meet for the luncheon once a month, the first Sunday of every month. Anyone on their own can join us for a friendly and welcoming two course meal for a small fee. We have one volunteer cook and four helpers at each luncheon and usually about 20 guests.

Due to coronavirus restrictions the last time we were able to meet was March 2020.

*Carolynne Charman*

## **8. MOTHERS UNION**

Only two meetings were possible at the beginning of the year. After March when we became confident using Zoom, we met virtually; in June for the Wave of Prayer service, and then four times in the autumn. In November we took part in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Each virtual meeting has included prayer and time to chat and share experiences of living with a pandemic.

To keep in touch with everyone, and mindful of those who cannot or do not wish to use Zoom, we have sent letters by e-mail or paper copy twice a month to them and to MU friends, and also phoning members regularly. We appreciate everyone's support and generosity, especially that of Revd Joe Roberts of Potten End. All diocesan events and services have been virtual gatherings, helping us to feel connected to each other and the wider MU; the worldwide family of over 4 million members, committed to making a difference to family life and communities, and to building healthy relationships.

*Margaret Burbidge*

## **9. YOUTH WORK**

In this difficult year we have tried to be creative and imaginative in the way we have approached our ministry to children and young people. During the lockdowns we have provided worship resources and activity ideas via Facebook and Sunday Club has embraced Zoom. From aged 2 to 13, a group of youngsters meet online after the Sunday morning Eucharist. It is brilliant to be able to catch up and check in on each other and to reflect on the Gospel reading through games and crafts. Being in our own homes, means we are also allowed to have a go at some singing! Thank you to all parents who have provided craft materials during these sessions.

For some months of the past year we have been able to run in person children's activities in the Sunday service and I take this opportunity to express huge thanks to our Sunday Club leaders and helpers: Sarah, Vicky, Heather, Helen, Wendy and Sarah, as well as to our new recruits of Junior Leaders: Katy, Tilly and Maddie. I am particularly grateful for their ability to adapt sessions to fit with the social distancing guidelines and quickly respond to changing regulations.

Worship in our Parish Schools this year has been a combination of live streamed, recorded videos and in-person year group worship. This has given us the opportunity to watch Fr Joe showing 'perseverance' running from Holy Trinity,



Potten End to St Peter's Berkhamsted, listen to new songs, learn British Sign Language and engage in Bible stories through cartoons and hands on activities. Year groups from Victoria School were able to visit St Peter's for their worship in the Autumn term and for the whole school End of Term worship Fr Stuart, Fr Joe and I recorded services in St Peter's. In this way we were able to celebrate the year group's leaving Victoria and Thomas Coram in the summer and share the message and meaning of Jesus' birth at Christmas.

It has been great to welcome Fr Stuart, Susie, James and Barnaby to St Peter's this year and get to know them, whether that be on our screens, in St Peter's or at the school gate.

Even at this time, when worship is stripped back, it is wonderful to see young acolytes on a Sunday morning, youth bell ringers enjoying virtual bellringing and junior choristers (when permitted) singing out. We hope that amidst the uncertainty of school closures and ever-changing regulations the children and young people of this town know that they are held in all our prayers and in the love of God.

*Olivia Davies*

## 10. SCHOOLS



**“Flourishing in learning and love, within a happy, Christian family”**

Last summer results (although the government paused national testing) showed that the Federation's pupils continue to achieve high standards.

Last academic year didn't end as any of us expected, with our school buildings being closed (from March 2020) for the longest period since World War II to the majority of pupils. This halted Victoria's SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) Inspection, which was due at the point that inspections were suspended. Since we began to reopen from June, to limited numbers (and

more fully from September) we've had to employ a strict system of COVID controls.

Victoria and Thomas Coram's pupils engaged in a wide range of sporting, music and arts activities, events and trips, and each school has an active Parents' Association running events and raising vital funds for our schools. Although provision has altered since COVID, we've tried to safely maintain as many experiences as we can - with many moving online and being live-streamed into classrooms (or, since January, into children's homes).

The school communities would like to thank all those who, through the parish, have donated laptops/devices for us to wipe, rebuilt and distribute amongst those families that most need them – this became more crucial than we could have imagined in the Autumn term! Thank you also to Fr Stuart, Olivia and Fr Joe for their continued time, wisdom and support to our two schools in ensuring the parish's contribution to the education of young people in Berkhamsted. We've all had to get used to a very different way for working: collective worship has all been held online (Fr Stuart, Olivia and Fr Joe have become screen stars across our two schools!); we've not had either school together, or sung together, since March.

We wish to thank Luisa Clarke and Sarah Hyde for their dedication as a Foundation governor of, initially, The Thomas Coram CE School and then Castle CE Federation. We'll shortly be advertising for another Foundation governor – could this be you?

Further information can be viewed on our websites:

[www.castlefederation.org](http://www.castlefederation.org)

[www.victoria.herts.sch.uk](http://www.victoria.herts.sch.uk)

[www.thomascoram.herts.sch.uk](http://www.thomascoram.herts.sch.uk)

*Rob Halls, Executive Headteacher*

## **11. ST PETER'S CHURCH CHOIR**

The choir has been very fortunate to sing at the 9.30am Eucharist services. This has been made possible during the pandemic restrictions with screens being erected in the choir stalls and microphone nearby to relay the service to those listening online. The numbers of choristers allowed to take part has varied from only 2 or 3 to a maximum of 17. It has been an opportunity for some of the more experienced choristers to regularly sing psalms to plainsong

and to gain confidence in doing so.

As well as our own services being streamed online the RSCM have held singing events to help choristers to continue to exercise their voices and a few of our choir have taken part in these.

Many thanks go to Emma Grego for all her hard work as Head Chorister up to the end of 2020 and congratulations to Daisy Groet, our new Head Chorister and to Harriet Walker, our new Deputy Head Chorister.

All members of the choir wish to thank both Adrian Davis and Jon Lee for helping to keep the music going for services and to Adrian and Jean Wild who have been able to support the younger choristers with the some rehearsals on Tuesdays when possible. Without the hard work in the organisation of the choir stalls, robes and music copies by Hilary Armstrong and Barbara Groet to keep everything running smoothly none of this would have been possible.

After our very successful trip to Barcelona in 2019 it is very heartening that choir members continue to be very supportive and attend as and when they are required and allowed. Many choristers if not able to sing in the choir because of limited numbers have regularly been members of the congregation (perhaps frustrated, not being able to sing even a hymn!)

*Jean Wild*