

**Annual Report
of the
Parochial Church Council**

for 2020

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RECTOR'S REPORT

God has been faithful to us through this pandemic: we are still here, still together, opening up our buildings and our lives as the levels of coronavirus infection continue to fall this Spring, seeking to discern and respond to God's call and invitation in this new season. Many of us have actually grown closer together over the months through the phone calls and online worship and the sending out of news sheets and occasionally prayer resources too. Some of us have grown in faith or developed new ministries. Sadly, many of us have struggled with health issues, or with being able to connect or engage through the internet or phone calls. So some are feeling disconnected from the church fellowship, and we long for the time when we can meet freely again in person. Parents and grandparents and those in employment and those unemployed have faced particular challenges and demands, as have those who live alone. Psalm 23 and John 10 have been hugely comforting and encouraging to me throughout the past year – knowing that the Lord is our Good Shepherd who will not lose us or abandon us; he works for our health and flourishing and comes in search of those who find themselves lost and alone.

Because so many of our activities have been curtailed during 2020, this annual report is much shorter than usual. We are covering most of our review under the two headings 'gathering to worship' and 'ministry and mission'

I thank God for all the goodwill and appreciation and generosity shown by so many in our congregations, and for the prayer which sustains us. Thank you to everyone who is part of our 'church family'; we so need each other. And a particular thank you to our excellent churchwardens Phil Pattison and Erica Hayton for all their support, care, hard work and dedication this past year.

Kate Mier

GATHERING TO WORSHIP

Not only did 2020 bring a whole new pattern of worship, but that pattern adapted continually as the pandemic progressed and as various restrictions and easings came and went. Thanks to technology however, we have been able to create some valuable constants in our gathered worship.

While this brought some frustrations (frequently updated risk analyses and rules to work within), and also losses (most especially collective singing), it also offered up new opportunities: we have worshipped together as a united benefice frequently, gaining from the breadth of giftings across the wider church; we have learnt many new worship songs in the safety of our homes; church family have been able to join services while ill, shielding or on holiday, and we have been joined by new people, including from abroad; we have introduced morning and night prayer every weekday; seasonal services have been watched by very large numbers of people (over 1,000 at Christmas).

Sunday attendance on Zoom has been steady at around 50-70 people, and the opportunity to take part and interact, including in breakout rooms has made it worth 'sticking with the local church' even when people could join services literally anywhere on the planet.

Meeting together physically for services has been a precious opportunity when it has arisen, including outdoor services which have drawn people from across the churches.

It has been harder to offer worship for children and we have had to innovate much more with our Messy Church events, whether outdoors 'mossy church' -style, online with accompanying D-I-Y activity packs, or our Christmas and Easter 'walk-through' services in Studley Church.

Dan Corlett

GROWING IN FAITH AND GOING OUT IN WITNESS AND SERVICE: MINISTRY AND MISSION

Homegroups, Friendship Group, Lunchbox, Tramps, MU, worship in Care Homes, young people's uniformed groups, and Sunbeams have all been suspended for much of the year so there are no reports about these activities. But there has still been life and growth among us as shown in the individual reports collected here together with this summary of 'everything else':

We held online **courses**: Lent Course, LifeShapes, Worship in the Waiting. And in 2021 Worship in the Wilderness and the Lent Course 'Living His Story'.

MOSAIC group has been meeting valiantly via Zoom.

There were 24 hours of **prayer** leading into Advent Sunday and our Gift Weekend.

Ordinand and former Scargill community member, **Linzi Blundell**, joined us on placement. She taught us about hospitality and led an online children's summer holiday club.

Our own **Jacque Ayton** continued her training for ordination, including a placement at Mappleborough Church. We will soon send her and her family on their way with our prayers for God's blessing as they move to a curacy in Coventry.

Dan Corlett was (finally) ordained priest on 26th September. His ministry here, focussing particularly but not exclusively in Studley, is bearing much fruit and is much appreciated by many people. His gifts and commitment have been a huge gift to us and made such a difference to us through lockdown.

We held **PCC forums** to explore together how to grow in our everyday faith, how to open church buildings for worship, discerning priorities for 2021 and considering appointing a Family Link Worker.

There have been countless phone calls made and neighbourly **care** offered within and beyond our church congregations. We wrote to everyone in Mappleborough Green to offer help as needed. We have encouraged and been encouraged by the amazing work of the Studley Isolation Support Group. And we joined in with the VE Day and Remembrance Sunday online Studley village activities. And we have had **fun** especially on the Zoom Race Night and at outdoor worship events.

We recorded videos for Collective Worship for our **schools** each week. Linda Ngamlana from Amasango School joined me from South Africa for a live Zoom video to Mappleborough School. 'The holy family' visited the schools in person at Christmas.

Life events: we had the privilege of conducting 5 baptisms, 1 wedding and 35 funerals for families in 2020.

On 16th November 2020 the Bishop of Coventry signed a Direction authorising us to call banns and conduct weddings (for couples entitled to be married in one of our churches) in any of our four churches. This offers couples more choice, and gives us greater flexibility.

Kate Mier

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

During 2020 very few of our regular activities took place before Covid-19 took hold and on 23 March 2020 the weekly services and activities in our churches and church halls were closed. As restrictions were lifted in the summer our churches were opened for a few services and are open once a week for an hour for private prayer.

The PCC and DCCs continued to meet as usual, but by Zoom, during the Covid restrictions. DCC agendas always include reports on finance, fabric, schools and safeguarding, as well as items from the rector. The Administration team met weekly, a new team was set up to maintain regular contact with the congregation via the telephone and news sheets were either delivered by volunteers or by post to members who are unable to receive them by email. The Parish Office remained open with the administrator working from home when necessary.

We would like to thank Kate and Dan for steering us through what has been a busy year (albeit in a different way than they would have liked), ensuring that the worship life and pastoral care of all our churches continued despite the restrictions placed upon us.

Holy Ascension - Mappleborough Green

The vestry project was largely completed by the end of 2020, with further minor works continuing until April. Having a smaller vestry has necessitated rationalisation of furniture, effects and papers, and a tall bookcase was purchased from auction to replace lost shelving. The altar frontal cupboard is now behind the altar. The toilet is now operational, and there is also a small area with a Belfast sink and storage cupboard. In the northwest corner of the north aisle, we now have a kitchen sink and a freestanding servery, while the sound cabinet has been moved to the nave near the southwest pier, and two tables moved to storage. The same company have largely completed the works deriving from the last Quinquennial inspection, including repairs to the tower roof.

Covid rules meant the removal of the chairs with cushions, which are currently stored in the Lady Chapel, and black plastic chairs are in use in the nave. Risk assessments have been completed and reviewed when we were allowed to have some limited opening of the church for prayer and worship.

Annual maintenance tasks were largely not completed due to the pandemic and the vestry works. The boilers were serviced twice and the organ was tuned and checked.

A new oil tank has been installed for Ankcorn House, and roof repairs and gutters cleaned. We have one regular hirer, and a drama group hired the room for one week for rehearsals. A sub-committee has met once to consider improvements to access/signage/lighting.

A hay meadow has been created in the churchyard to the south of the church.

The Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Studley

Despite our buildings being closed there are certain tasks that have continued to be carried out during 2020.

Our Terrier and Health and Safety Policy have been updated and Risk Assessments have been prepared where necessary. The maintenance of equipment - PAT tests on electrical equipment, fire Alarm, security alarm, emergency lighting, firefighting equipment, boiler servicing and organ maintenance have all been carried out by qualified contractors. All maintenance visits are recorded in the maintenance log and as with our other churches we have put in place Covid-19 protocols in line with advice received from the Church of England.

During the year we have received List B approval to instal a safe in the church and bench in the churchyard in memory of Alan and Eileen Dodsworth. We have also received an Interim Faculty to carry out the repairs to the Tower which will commence in Spring 2021.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to church life and the upkeep of our buildings during the past year.

Erica Hayton and Phil Pattison

THE PARISH CENTRE

The Parish Centre has been closed throughout the time of the main Covid restrictions. We did open up in summer 2020 for a few groups with very strict Covid regulations in place. We are hoping to get back to offering a full service as things open up in 2021. We have kept the car park locked partly because some of the local youth were meeting there to, we think, deal drugs. We have also had a serious fire – the hedge/fence bordering the alleyway next to the car park was set on fire destroying a large section of the fence. I am very grateful to Phil Pattison for all his help with the Centre during these last few months and his help obtaining quotes for a replacement fence.

Tony Drake

STUDLEY CHURCHYARD

I am so grateful to everyone who has continued to give up their time each month to keep the churchyard looking good. As I have not been well for several months it was really encouraging to see the work carry on. I am also grateful to Dan, Phil P and Hilary V for the work that they have put in coming up with a plan and strategy for managing the churchyard in such a way that it maintains a rural feel encouraging wild plants and butterflies etc while at the same time looking well kept and tidy for weddings etc. We have an amazing churchyard which I know is appreciated by many people in the village and beyond.

Tony Drake

2020 STEEPLE KEEPERS REPORT

Following an inspection by the John Taylor Foundry, maintenance work on the bells was identified with an original quotation of £2397. This amount was dramatically reduced by the work carried out by the steeple keeper with help from Stephen Grubb, and from grants obtained from the Ringers Associations.

Despite the coronavirus restrictions, with the agreement of the church and following a strict safe and hygienic working practise, the clappers and roller boxes were removed on 27th June and sent to Taylors Bell Foundry of Loughborough for refurbishment.

The newly re-bushed clappers and roller boxes were returned and over the 2 Saturdays of 1st & 8th August we together with Simon Adams of Taylors refitted them into the bells. The bill for this work has been paid and the grant of £1000 has been received from Coventry Guild of Church Bellringers.

A £500 grant was received from The Worcester & Districts Change Ringing Association following their inspection from a member of the Belfry Repair Committee.

New rope guide boxes are required on the 2nd and Tenor bells, the steeple keeper has committed to do this work and the materials will be paid for from the Ringers Tower Fund.

Unfortunately, the bells are not able to be rung full circle at the moment due to necessary stonework repairs to the tower parapets highlighted in the quinquennial report. The work is about to be put in hand once all quotations are received.

Once this fabric work is complete and the bells are allowed to swing again a final check will be made by the steeple keeper before general ringing recommences.

Richard Spray

SAFEGUARDING REPORT FOR 2020

During 2020 we worked on Level 2 (Safer Activities) of the Parish Dashboard Safeguarding Action Plan.

Kay Middleton was appointed by the PCC as Parish Safeguarding Officer on 5th February 2020.

Church activities that are primarily for children or vulnerable adults were authorised by the PCC on 5th February. PCC noted that Safer Recruitment for these activities needs to be conducted retrospectively, and Risk Assessments conducted.

PCC members received a copy of the Church of England document 'Duty to have due regard to House of Bishops safeguarding guidance' explaining the meaning of 'due regard'.

DBS checks were conducted for all volunteers who needed such a check.

PCC and DCC members and volunteers who work with children were requested to undertake safeguarding training as needed. Training needs to be refreshed every three years.

No safeguarding allegations were made against clergy or church volunteers in 2020. A matter arose which did give rise to safeguarding concerns. This was investigated by the Diocesan Safeguarding team and the matter satisfactorily resolved.

PCC adopted the Policy for Recruitment of Ex-Offenders on 30th September 2020.

Kate Mier

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Well, what a year that was!

I worked from the vicarage, then from home, then back to the vicarage, then home again, now back at the vicarage! Technology made the working from home arrangement possible, not completely without hiccups but Kate and I managed to make it work.

There was all the usual publicity via Facebook, website, and email, albeit with a different slant. I.e., Zoom login details etc. Producing weekly newsheets, notices, and posters for, amongst others, Christmas, Messy church and Easter, with input from Kate and others.

There have also been service booklets to produce and PowerPoints to create.

There was still funeral, wedding and baptism enquiries, but at different times of the year, with different lockdowns and tiers, different criteria.

Hopefully now things are returning to a semblance of normal, whatever that is!

Judith McLelland

CHURCHES TOGETHER

2020 started well. Churches Together held a prayer breakfast at the Methodist church in January as part of the week of prayer for Christian unity. This was well attended and something we intended to repeat. After a joint service for Ash Wednesday the Lent course started with a showing of the film 'The Greatest Showman' and weekly meetings for discussion on aspects of the film started. These came to a halt after 2 weeks with the introduction of the first lockdown. As all churches found their new ways of worshipping the churches

together committee met via zoom to discuss what we were all doing and what we could still do together in these strange circumstances.

For Remembrance Sunday the service was filmed and used on Facebook, as a zoomed COE service, on YouTube, and on the Methodist circuit website. It has had over 400 views.

The week of prayer for Christian Unity 2021 was marked with a united zoom service at 10:00am. Similarly there was a joint service via zoom for Ash Wednesday. The Lent groups organised by Arden Marches were open to all churches. Several Methodists joined in our 6:30am outdoor service on Easter Sunday.

Hopefully as restrictions ease we will be able to meet and worship together in person soon.

Hilary Volrath

ENVIRONMENT GROUP

The Arden Marches environment group has grown in number during the year and all four churches are now registered with A Rocha Eco Church and are progressing well towards the first level accreditation (bronze). Care for the environment has become more central to our church life and teaching. We held a dedicated Climate Sunday service in September and were also privileged to be visited by the Diocesan Environment Coordinator, Godfrey Armitage, who spoke at Dan's first communion as priest. Studley and Mappleborough Green churches have been developing plans for their churchyards and are trialling a number of small changes to increase biodiversity and sustainability. In collaboration with Studley In Bloom, a 1000l rainwater tank was installed at the Parish Centre to reduce run-off and enable all the nearby SiB planters to be watered without using fresh water.

During the year, the Church of England voted to commit to becoming Carbon Zero by 2030, an ambitious target. To this end, the churches have begun measuring their carbon footprint and once this is fully understood (in a normal, non-pandemic year), we will be able to plan to reduce and offset our carbon output (from heating, food and drink, travel and other church activities).

Dan Corlett

ARDEN FOODBANK

What a difference a pandemic makes! In 2019 the foodbank fulfilled 174 vouchers during the sessions at Studley and Alcester which fed 236 adults and 150 children. In 2020 after a slow start we fulfilled 480 vouchers feeding 703 adults and 572 children. Stock donations rose sharply from 6400 kg in 2019 to 8600 kg in 2020 (this includes 2500kg from Tesco delivered to all foodbanks in weekly donations for several weeks). The bank balance rose similarly.

It was at the sessions that changes were immediate and far reaching. All volunteers over 70 had to be stood down, clients weren't allowed into the centres and all food parcels were pre-packed. Incredibly after one appeal, sufficient new volunteers, including new team leaders, stepped up and we were able to keep the sessions going. Through Trussell Trust, who we are affiliated to, we received electronic tablets with SIMS so that we were able to issue and process vouchers electronically and thus reduce the need to handle paper. As people have returned to work, universal credit has been sorted or their furlough has been extended the demand on the foodbank has eased over the last two months, however it is still higher than in 2019.

Hilary Volrath

COMPASSION

What a year! At the end of March 2020 lockdown became the new way of life and all meetings had to cease. The Compassion team decided to implement a telephone rolling rota and each team member called three different group members each week.

Although we have all missed meeting weekly everyone agreed that having a chat on the telephone has been something that we have all looked forward to. Those telephone calls have brightened the week and we have all got to know each other better because we are able to spend more time on the telephone calls than our weekly face to face meetings normally allow.

Sadly during the past year we have lost some members. Two have died and two have moved away from the area. It has been a particular sadness that we have not been able to say farewell to those people in person.

We are all looking forward to the time when we can meet again, and we are planning to celebrate that by having afternoon tea at Studley Castle.

My thanks to the team members who have kept the telephone contact going and, in particular, to Helen who has ensured that all group members have received birthday and Christmas cards.

Alan Greathead

MAPPLEBOROUGH GREEN CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

At Mappleborough Green School, activities between the church and the school have been very limited as a result of Covid 19 regulations. A number of children have continued attending the school throughout the lockdowns, but most have been schooled at home. No church volunteers have been into the school since March 2020. Kate and Dan have provided video collective worship services on Wednesdays and these have been shown within classrooms. The school has also shown services prepared and videoed by the Diocese for Christmas.

On 14 July, the Year 6 leavers and staff plus a few church members attended a special Leavers' service in Mappleborough Church.

On 15 September, Kate, Dan, and Jennie Jarmy welcomed the new Reception children and families at the school gate, giving out welcome bags with a card, letter from Kate and breakfast pastries.

On 19 November, a meeting between Kate, Dan, Alex Finch and Jennie Jarmy was held via the Zoom facility.

On 17 December, the school attended the church for a Christmas service. No parents were able to attend because of the pandemic regulations.

Foundation Governors and Kate have attended Governors' meetings via Zoom.

No church/school activities involving the children have taken place during the Spring term of 2021 as a result of the lockdown.

We recognise the challenging and extensive work undertaken by all the staff during this difficult period and thank them for encouraging the continued learning and positive experiences for all the pupils.

Jennie Jarmy

STUDLEY ST MARY'S CE ACADEMY

- 2020 began with the (planned) resignation of our Head, just as we entered lockdown.
- Our Deputy Head led us through the first lockdown- we owe her a great debt of gratitude for her selfless hard work.
- Our new Head took up her post in October.
- She is an ex-pupil of the school, and of Alcester Grammar School, and could not resist the chance to move back to Studley.
- She has already made a significant impact in school improvement in a determined, professional way.
- During online learning, we have achieved a greater level of engagement than most schools nationally and more than any other academies in the Multi Academy Trust.
- A recent interim Ofsted Inspector's visit was very positive about the school's progress.

Prayer points are:

1. For Rebecca Gordon, the Head, as she makes difficult decisions to help move the school forward.
2. For all staff as they take on new or increased responsibilities.
3. For the pupils as they settle back into school life and try to catch up on lost time and learning.

Keith Johnson

DEANERY SYNOD

The synod met twice in 2020 (via Zoom). In July Archdeacon Barry Dugmore introduced the new diocesan growth strategy 'Growing the Heart of England'. In November the members newly elected for the next three year term met and introduced themselves and shared news of activities across the deanery. We heard that in 2021 the deanery would be able to cover the costs of its clergy and contribute about 0.6 of a clergy post to the wider diocese.

I continue to be Area Dean. Our parish reps are currently Phil Pattison and Linda Salisbury (and 2 vacancies), with Andrea Sowton for Morton Bagot and Oldberrow.
Kate Mier