

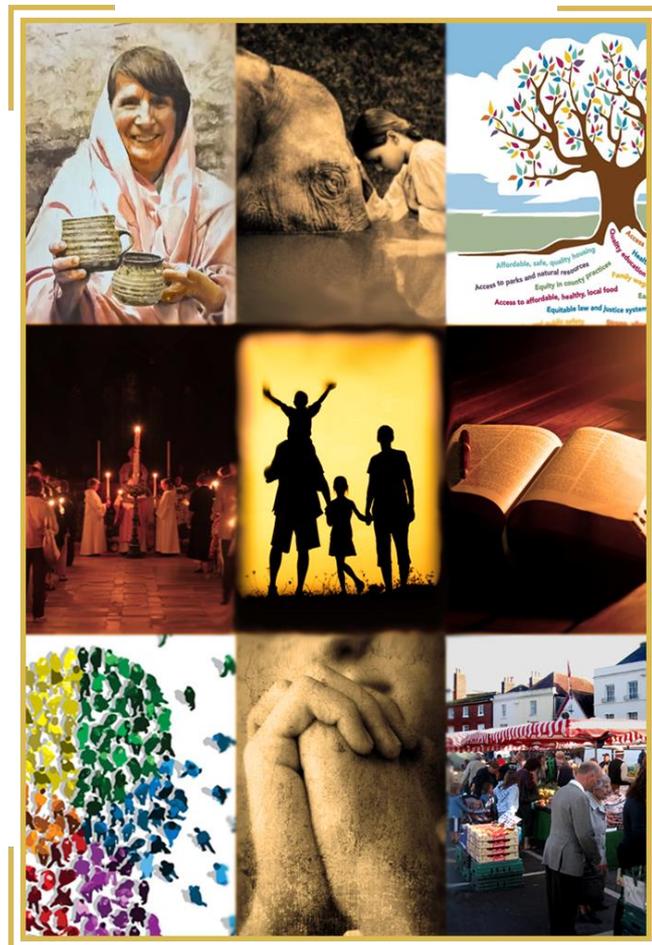


Devizes ST John & ST Mary

Heart and Soul in the Centre of our Town

The Ecclesiastical Parish
of
St John with St Mary, Devizes

Annual Report 2020



Our Vision:

The Lord calls us to do justly, love mercy
and walk humbly with our God: Micah 6:8

Administrative information

St John's Church is situated in Long Street, Devizes. St Mary's Church is situated in New Park Street, Devizes. The parish is part of the Diocese of Salisbury within the Church of England. The correspondence address is: the Parish Office, The Parish Rooms, Long Street, Devizes SN10 1NP.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a registered charity No.1133990 and is made up of:

Incumbent: The Revd. Canon Paul Richardson (until October 2020)

Assistant Curate: The Revd. Gerry Lynch (from June 2020)

Churchwardens: Peter Crofts
Jane Scorer (Lay Vice-Chair)
Bob Simpson

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Catherine Brown
Peter Crofts
David Evans

Elected members: Judy Bridger
Becky Edgington
Richard Evans
Alan Martin
Liz Overthrow (Secretary)
Karen Pugh
Stephanie Williams

Co-opted member: Becky Edgington (Treasurer)
Chris Cox (LLM)

Parish Ministry

Rector: The Revd. Canon Paul Richardson

Assistant Curate: The Revd. Gerry Lynch

Clergy with Permission to Officiate:

The Revd. Canon George Royle

The Revd. Robin Stephens

The Revd. Canon Chris Burdon

Licensed Lay Minister: Chris Cox

Lay Pastoral Assistants:

Claire Arden

Catherine Brown

Bankers:

Lloyds Bank

The Market Place

Devizes

SN10 1JD

Auditors: J S Weeks

REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF DEVIZES, ST JOHN & ST MARY

AIM AND PURPOSES

St John & St Mary Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Canon Paul Richardson, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of St John's Church, St Mary's Church and St John's Parish Rooms.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

- The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community.
- The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish.
- Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.
- When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Commission's guidance on public benefit and the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. We try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:
 - Worship and prayer; learning about the gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in God.
 - Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
 - Missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of our parish churches and the parish rooms.

Reserves policy

It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on free reserves (net current assets) which equates to at least three months' unrestricted payments.

It is our policy to invest the short-term investment fund balances with the CCLA Church of England Deposit Fund, and the remainder in the CCLA Church of England Investment Fund.

Structure, governance and management

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 is a Registered Charity.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules.

At St John & St Mary the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (our rector), the associate priest and the assistant curate, churchwardens, and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. All those who attend our services / members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. New members receive initial training into the workings of the PCC.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Covid 19 affected all our lives during this year and five of our meetings were held on Zoom.

We spent a long time discussing how we could keep the churches open for worship and Risk Assessments were carried out to enable this to happen safely. We are grateful to Alan Martin for all his work as Health and Safety Officer.

A new structure of PCC teams was introduced:

Ministry Team, Spirituality Team, Leadership Team, Parish Life Team, Buildings and Grounds Team and Finance Team.

When services went online, pastoral arrangements were made for PCC members to contact members of the congregation regularly.

In May we accepted the resignation of Ian Brown as our Treasurer and welcomed Becky Edgington as our new Treasurer. Ian Brown has put in enormous efforts on our behalf over many years and we are very grateful for his work.

Gerry Lynch, our new curate was welcomed at our meeting in August.

The Living Churchyard project was discussed but had to be postponed because of Covid-19.

Regular updates were received on the progress of the plans to redevelop St Mary's church.

Members were saddened at the Rector's decision to take early retirement and move away in September.

A Parish Profile was prepared, and a programme set in place for advertising, shortlisting and interviewing for a new Rector.

'Beyond the Present' - the diocese asked us to hold a discussion on the future, using questions from Bishop Karen. Feedback was gathered from members in preparation for the re-opening of our churches for worship.

Liz Overthrow

THE ELECTORAL ROLL

As ever, we have lost some friends throughout the year and gained some more. At 31 December 2020 there were 148 names on the Electoral Roll.

As always, I would urge members of the congregation to ask if those sitting next to them each Sunday are on the Electoral Roll.

If they are not on the roll, encourage them to see me and complete an application form. Forms will also be available in church.

Catherine Brown - Electoral Roll Officer

SAFEGUARDING

A definition of 'Safeguarding' is the action that the Church takes to promote a safer culture in all its churches.

During the year our safeguarding administration has been relatively quiet, partly as result of some activities reducing during the pandemic and partly due to a phase when few Data and Barring Service (DBS) checks or renewals have been required. Things will pick up from now on, as revised Church-wide procedures will require DBS checks and additional declarations for all the PCC, rather than just for some members.

Meanwhile the system of DBS checking has continued to work well. Some processes have been adapted temporarily, for example allowing document checks via Zoom where considered prudent. Similarly, some safeguarding training that previously required personal attendance has been moved online.

As usual in these reports, it is worth mentioning that, while some may find these procedures intrusive and cumbersome, they help to create an environment that is safer for all. Importantly they ensure that the PCC has complied with its duty to have "due regard" to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding. If you have a question about any aspect, by all means contact me.

Jerry King - Parish Safeguarding Officer

CHURCHWARDENS REPORT 2020

In the 2019 annual report Churchwardens' Thoughts began: 'The past year hasn't been an easy one for the parish'. As it turned out 2020 was significantly more testing, in many different ways and generated unprecedented challenges for us all.

A year dominated by a global pandemic that spread with alarming speed affecting millions, causing devastating social and economic disruption, with over 125,000 deaths in the UK alone.

As in parishes everywhere the wardens and PCC have had the safety of parishioners at the forefront of their minds, in making very difficult decisions about ministry and mission, which for us was made more demanding without a Rector in post.

Last spring, we were hopeful that Paul would be resuming his parish duties after a prolonged spell of ill health and during the first national COVID lockdown he celebrated Easter Day with an online service from his garden.

But, sadly his health problems persisted, preventing him from resuming his responsibilities here, and he decided to take a house for duty post in the Oxford Diocese, leaving the parish after his farewell service in September.

The search for his replacement has been hampered by the COVID restrictions, but the appointment process is continuing with plans to re-advertise the post after Easter 2021.

In line with Church of England guidance both churches closed during the first lockdown, so we made Sunday services available on-line and PCC members were asked to make regular contact by phone with isolated members of the congregation and those on the electoral roll.

Thanks must go to our Parish Administrator, Catherine Brown, who has worked hard to keep members of the congregation connected with regular updates on the website and via a weekly parish ebulletin, which she hand-delivers to those without email access.

St John's re-opened for communal worship in July with attendance limited to meet social distancing regulations and access defined by risk assessments, which our Health and Safety Officer Alan Martin has made sure are assiduously updated.

We had established a well-rehearsed pattern for managing Sunday services when the second national lockdown was imposed. With great reluctance, and not without criticism, it was decided to suspend communal worship again and return to recorded services masterminded by our new curate, the Rev Gerry Lynch.

There was further dismay when it was decided to withdraw the two scheduled live Christmas services at the last minute following a tightening of the government's original Christmas guidelines.

However, we were always clear that the churchwardens and the PCC have a duty of care to all those who come into the church and that we have a collective responsibility to each other.

It has been a baptism of fire for Gerry, who arrived in June and was eventually ordained in September. He has gone well beyond what would normally be expected from a newly ordained curate in training and his contribution in these strange times has been invaluable.

In addition, we have been well supported by the Archdeacon of Wilts, the Venerable Sue Groom, together with locally based retired clergy, namely Canon Chris Burdon and the Rev Robin Stevens, our LLM Chris Cox and LLM in training Mark Harrison.

Their willingness to embrace technology and adapt to conducting services electronically has ensured a choice of worship has been maintained.

We have much missed live singing from our talented choir, but Chris Totney, our Director of Music, has recorded contributions from members for inclusion in online services as well as playing uplifting pieces on the organ, which have been well received.

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to being back in St John's for communal worship in March after the third lockdown.

However, it seems likely that online services are here to stay as a way in which we can reach out to those unable to attend services in person or anxious about returning to church.

No doubt we have all, at times, felt weighed down by what has happened, and may worry about what the future is going to look like, but let us remember that here in Devizes, as in so many other places, we have seen people coming together unselfishly to support those struggling to cope through anxiety, insecurity, or immobility. Clearly there have been many unseen acts of care and friendship both within our church family and outside in the wider community.

Frustratingly our activities and planned initiatives have been curtailed by COVID restrictions, but we can be thankful that many continue to use their gifts, their time, and prayers to sustain our church life. We are especially grateful to those who, despite not being able to attend services, are continuing to make their financial contributions to the fixed costs of running the parish, which are not significantly reduced despite the churches being closed.

The fallout from the pandemic will long outlive the health crisis, but with God's love to sustain and guide us, and working together, we can look forward to the future with hope and resolve to overcome the challenges we face in these testing times.

Jane Scorer, Bob Simpson and Peter Crofts

FROM THE CURATE:

I haven't had the start to curacy that any of us could have imagined at the start of 2020! My first nine months in the parish have been marked by an interregnum, two lockdowns, and the church being closed for public worship for three spells amounting to many months. It has, in a strange way however, been a particular privilege to start ordained ministry with you at a time like this. I have always been and remain absolutely delighted that I was called to serve my title at St John with St Mary.

Thank you for making me feel so welcome insofar as any of us have been able to give and receive hospitality in these strange times. One parishioner told me that he was sorry that it had been impossible to "wine and dine" me as was the normal custom of the parish; I can assure all of you that I would be delighted to receive – and indeed to give – such invitations once the present health restrictions are lifted for the remainder of my curacy.

We have been living with coronavirus for so long now that it often seems like the present emergency will never end; but it shall. Renewal most often follows periods of despair and death such as we have been enduring, and we Christians as people of the Resurrection should be especially expectant for new life, probably coming from directions we could never have predicted.

I think there are two key questions for us as a congregation to engage with during the remainder of 2021. Firstly, how can we deepen in faith and in relationship with one another? Part of that is deepening our trust that we really are the people God has called to serve him in this place, focusing on our many gifts rather than our inevitable limitations. In particular, I think we should be less concerned that our average age is relatively high than we often are. In a country and world that has dramatically aged and will still further at a time of falling birthrates and rising life expectancy, everyone will need to learn to depend more on the gifts of older people.

Secondly, how can we give people who are not yet part of our congregation the opportunity to engage with us, and provide pathways to faith for them in an era where cultural Christianity is over? We are, I think, people of open and welcoming hearts; how can we help more people to be transformed by our life of worship and our faith in Jesus Christ? Can our exploration of digital worship over the past few months assist in that, and if so, how?

As we emerge, perhaps a little stunned, into a new reality that none of us could have imagined, let us remember that this was precisely the experience of the disciples on the first Easter morning. Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us in this new world into deeper faith in one another, hope for the future, and love for Christ and our neighbour.

Gerry Lynch

REPORT FROM BUILDING & GROUNDS SUB-COMMITTEE

Progress on most fronts has been hampered this past year both by the pandemic and the lack of a rector in post. The latter has meant there has been no progress at all on either reordering within St John's or the issue of replacing the organ. Otherwise progress of note is as follows:

- St Mary's – planning permission has been granted for changes to the building to convert it to a multi-use function.

Likewise, the Diocesan Advisory Committee has now given the project a green light to proceed. So the project can now move forwards.

- Photo-voltaic cells and a linked storage battery system have now been installed in St John's and are operational. The cost of this scheme was borne by the Glanville Trust to whom we are most grateful. As yet we are still awaiting confirmation (after more than 5 months) from OFGEM that we will receive a (FIT) Feed-In Tariff. Hopefully, during 2021, we will start to reap the benefits from this installation both of reduced electricity bills and a modest FIT income.
- Plans are in hand to create a 'Friends of St John's Churchyard' group of volunteers. Once pandemic restrictions are lifted, we would hope to move forwards with our plans to create a 'Living Churchyard' to benefit the local community whilst at the same time developing our 'Eco' credentials as stewards of our own small plot of God's earth.
- The pigeons have finally been evicted from the porch at St Mary's through enhanced defensive arrangements – grills and pigeon spikes.
- It has been agreed with both our architect and the Archdeacon that the Quinquennial Review at St John's should be postponed by one year to 2022. The Review at St Mary's will go ahead this year as planned.

Mike McClelland

HEALTH & SAFETY

Throughout the past year the pre-occupation with Health & Safety, has required your PCC to consider Risk Assessments (RAs) relating to all aspects of worship, as we have found ourselves in and out of enforced COVID-19 lockdowns.

Understandably, the most comprehensive Risk Assessment related to our Sunday worship, while additional RAs were completed for home visits, visits to care homes, study groups and, should it be possible to hold the service, the service of compline.

At all times, RAs were drawn up following both Government and Church of England advice and guidelines. I am aware that some among our congregation found the RA disciplines our stewards were required to follow, somewhat regimental. However, they should be assured that all our RAs were in place to maintain required social distancing and the wellbeing of all attending services.

At the time of this Annual Parochial Church Meeting, we are on a pathway out of our third lockdown - but we should never be complacent about the possible recurrence of the pandemic. For this reason, our RAs will remain in place until we are satisfied we can return to what we consider to be normal. However, as has happened during this past year, additions to and deletions from the RAs will continue, in order to update current guidelines from the Church of England, the Government and additionally for the choir, from the Incorporated Society of Musicians.

A word of thanks must go to those who volunteered to steward our services during these difficult and uncertain times.

When we were able to attend our Sunday service, sadly, congregational singing was not permitted nor could our full choir join us. However, for those choir members who were permitted to join us, our Director of Music followed the strictest disciplines contained in the RA to ensure all were in a safe and COVID-19 free environment.

Finally, with no changes to the St John's and St Mary's Health & Safety policies, nor to St Mary's Fire Risk Assessment, your PCC agreed their annual review in February. (Any necessary changes required during the year were contained in specific Risk Assessments) The Fire Risk Assessment for St John's Church remains work in progress.

Alan Martin

PARISH ROOMS

The Parish Rooms group (Catherine Brown, Simon Fisher, Charles Slater and Judy Bridger) only met twice during the early part of the year because of the pandemic. During each lockdown, all bookings ceased, apart from Opendoors who continued to use the kitchen for preparation of meals delivered to guests. When lockdown eased in the summer, a few hirers returned with stringent risk and cleaning assessments. We are very grateful to Catherine Brown, our Parish Rooms Manager, Kevin Cox, our cleaner, and Alan Martin, our Health and Safety Officer, for all their work.

ST MARY'S FUTURE GROUP

Planning permission has been granted for the external build around the site of the Clergy Vestry on the north east side of the church. There are a number of conditions to this permission but they are all quite reasonable and will not impact the project.

The archaeological dig inside and outside the church has been completed and a report is available on the SMDT website.

The DAC has made it clear that it supports the plans submitted and at its meeting on 12th March the following statement was issued:

The DAC commended the scheme for its thoroughness and sensitivity. The committee approved the scheme and encouraged the parish to

move the application on to the next stage. The tenacity of the applicant was admired and members of the DAC look forward to visiting the church when the work is complete!

The formal faculty application papers will shortly be prepared for the DAC, which will give its advice to the Diocesan Registrar. It is the Registrar who will give us permission to do both the internal and external changes and building.

Support matrix.

The following project topics are being supported by volunteers:

Project Funding

Promotion of St Mary's as a top-class arts venue

Business Plan

Churchyard improvement and Zero Carbon

Heritage and Events

Governance

Spirituality

Interior fitments – IT Performance Housekeeping

Archaeological investigation

Sweetland Organ refurbishment

We would be delighted if anyone else wished to join one or more of these groups or be included in the reports they generate.

You can also get general updates circulated through the StMaryDevizesTrust.org web site, just sign up for the mailing list.

Funding. The costs of the project development phase so far have been covered by The St Mary Church and Poor Lands Charity – Church Branch, for which we thank them.

Sourcing funds for the construction phase is the next important step and a general strategy has been formulated. Our current estimate is in the region of £1.5m but we are awaiting a report from a Quantity Surveyor, who will itemise the build costs.

We have formally asked the Poor Land Charity for additional financial help during this phase, which would help kick start fund raising and be an exemplar to other major funders.

It is likely that funding will come from many different sources including national funding bodies, business organisations, local companies in cash or kind, as well as the invaluable support of the local community.

Tony Scorer, Project Manager, St Mary's Future Group

TREASURERS REPORT

2020 started off with a deficit of £11,235. Church closures linked to the COVID-19 restrictions have obviously made a difference to the income from worshippers during the year.

Income from Donors is reduced by 14%. Other voluntary donations show an increase of 79% (£52k vs £29k last year) although the true figure is £24k due to catch up payments from the Glanville Trust and Poorlands. This includes £10k of legacies £8k from Devizes Municipal Trust.

Income as a result of Church Activities e.g. Parish Room Hire and Book/Magazine Sales have been reduced significantly.

The Parish Giving Scheme is at 58 Members which contributes approximately £2,860 per month which has generated approximately £700 in gift aid. There are 37 members who give regularly by direct debit into the Bank Account.

The Church invests in shares to increase its income; although the interest on these was minimal in the first half of the year the second

half saw an increase of £6,789 in the General Fund and £3,050 in the Bells Fund. This shows as 'Gains on Investments, unrealised increase in value'.

The following items appear in both income and expenditure for the reasons set out below:

- During the year Solar Panels were installed which was reimbursed by The Glanville Trust; this sum of £23,580 appears in the Church Income and in Church Expenditure.
- Also held in the unrestricted income was the £1,400 which was collected for Paul's leaving present which increased the costs by the same amount.

These items increase the income and expenditure by a total of £24,980

Taking this out of the income reduces the working income to £115,159 which is less than 2019 by £18,437 or 14%.

In order to support the Church cashflow during this time £10,443 was raised by cashing in a very low interest investment.

Where possible costs have been reduced but the Church carries a high level of fixed costs regarding Diocesan Share, staff costs and utilities. The Share was £82,857 in 2020 and £79,610 in 2019, and increase of 4%. The share is not increasing in 2021. Despite the lockdown utility costs increased by £200 in the year which is 2.75%. This is probably because the Church was in use during the cold months of the year when the doors had to be left open. Church Insurance was increased by £127 (1.66%) but the good news is that another company has quoted a better price for 2021.

The PCC was able to make small donations to Friends of Salisbury Cathedral, Riding for the Disabled, The Childrens Society, OpenDoors, Waiblingen Way Fire Fund and Community First.

Becky Edgington

SPIRITUALITY TEAM

The spirituality team aims to oversee and enhance occasions for spiritual engagement and expression within the parish, including:

- The pattern of services and seasonal worship
- The development and progression of the parish as a 'Contemplative Community'
- Opportunities for prayer and worship
- Opportunities for spiritual engagement during Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter
- The 'Reflection' group, Bible Study and Lectio Divina groups, the contemplative prayer group
- Quiet days, retreats and pilgrimages
- The musical and choral tradition within the parish.

Because of the COVID-19 restrictions the team last met on the 18th of March 2020 and discussed, amongst other things, the 2020 Lent course ('An Introduction to Contemplative Living'), and the parish retreat. The first two sessions of the Lent course were held on the 5th and 12th March before the remainder of the course had to be cancelled, and the parish retreat was postponed. Other groups overseen by this team were also temporarily cancelled i.e., 'Reflection' and the two Lectio Divina groups. Our monthly Compline service was also stopped.

A new weekly Lectio Divina group has recently been introduced (1st session held on 19th February 2021). This is an opportunity for individuals to practice Lectio at home. It is not an online group, simply a dispersed group of individuals engaging in this contemplative prayer practice at the same time each week in the comfort of their own homes. It is hoped that knowing that others are doing the same thing at the same time will engender a sense of togetherness.

Once COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed, the spirituality team will reconvene. Items for the agenda will include the reinstatement of those groups that had to be cancelled, the parish retreat, the 'Room to Breathe' initiative, the contemplative prayer group, the 'Mosaic Fellowship', and developing St John's as a 'Centre for Christian Spirituality'.

The Bible Study Group

The year began as the previous year had ended with the group meeting in the comfortable surroundings of Casterbridge, home of Julian and Becky Edgington, in order to study the Gospel according to St Matthew. Unfortunately, we fell victim to the national lockdown and our meetings had to be suspended. We hope that at some point in 2021 it may be possible to resume our activities. Things cannot be the same, however, because during the lockdowns Julian Edgington died, depriving us of a genial host and an astute commentator on the Biblical text.

MINISTRY TEAM

This is one of the new PCC teams with responsibility for co-ordinating ministry in the areas of worship, pastoral care, discipleship, vocations and outreach.

We noted with sadness that Paul, our Rector, had decided to take early retirement in the autumn and give thanks for his ministry among us.

We are very grateful to our Archdeacon Sue Groom, our retired clergy and lay ministers, and our new curate, Rev Gerry Lynch, for leading our worship, both actual and online, before and during the pandemic, to our organist, choir, sacristan and others, and to our churchwardens and parish administrator for organising this.

At the beginning of the year we began to look at developing our pastoral care, using Lay Pastoral and Eucharistic Assistants, with home communions which then, with the first lockdown, had to be put on

hold. Since then PCC members have continued some very limited pastoral care phone calls with elderly and isolated members of the congregation.

We hope to develop this team's remit further in the future.

Omnes Ad Unum - St. John's does...

We had plans to run the Annual Autumn Fayre and Christmas Tree Festival but of course Covid-19 put an end to that and all other usual events. At Christmas we decided that, as the church was open and a there was a Christmas Eve midnight Mass due to be held, we would put up 2 big Christmas trees in the Churchyard plus strings of lights to welcome everyone to the service. Thanks to some of our sponsors we were able to do this without cost to ourselves. Sadly, with the worsening situation with the virus, the Church did not open for this service, however these decorations were obviously appreciated by people passing through the Churchyard.

We also started a new event which took place during December. The 13th Advent Calendar event was expanded to businesses and traders in Devizes and it attracted 48 entries. We invited the people of Devizes to walk around the Town and to enter a competition to identify hidden themes displayed in windows. Over 500 route maps and competition entries were collected reflecting the numbers viewing the displays.

We were amazed at the ingenuity and creativity of the displays notably Reeves Gingerbread Wise Men, the origami Three ships at Urban Rustics, Wansbrough's childrens' Christmas trees and Winkworth's entire Dickens room. The enthusiasm to participate, time and expense incurred notwithstanding obvious concerns regarding the pandemic and its impact upon income was amazing.

We are also delighted that many have come forward both from this year's participants and others to say they wish to be included in 2021. All are very welcome.

There are many specific thank you's required: firstly to all participants especially the individuals who continue each year with the original daily opening Calendar, the Town Council for printed material, our main Sponsors Grist Environmental and Cross Engineering and finally all of those who have made donations. All funds collected will be directed to Devizes vulnerable and needy.

Hopefully we shall be able to get back to organising fund-raising events later in 2021, when restrictions are lifted.

30/12/2020 OPENING BANK BALANCE		£6800.48
INCOME		£2100.00
EXPENDITURE	£8313.72	
CLOSING BALANCE 31 DEC 2020		£586.76

Breakdown of deposits and expenditure for Year 2020.

JAN/FEB 2021 CARRY OVER CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL AND GRAND DRAW FROM 2019

INCOME		£1500.00
EXPENDITURE	£1123.72	

DISTRIBUTION

PCC ST JOHN'S CHURCH	£1500	
TRINITY SCHOOL	£100	
WILTSHIRE AIR AMBULANCE	£800	
WILTSHIRE YOUNG CARERS	£800	
JULIA'S HOUSE	£800	
ALZHEIMERS SUPPORT GROUP	£800	
DOROTHY HOUSE	£800	
DEVIZES FOOD BANK	£250	
DEVIZES OPPORTUNITY GROUP	£250	
5 LANES PRIMARY SCHOOL	£100	
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION	£50	
MAYOR'S FUND	£100	
St PETER'S CHURCH	£100	
DRAW PRIZES	£200	
ADVANCE BOOKINGS FOR AUTUMN FAYRE 2020		£450
RETURNS DUE TO CANCELLATION	£450	

2020 CHRISTMAS ADVENT TRAIL for BUSINESSES and CHRISTMAS CHURCHYARD LIGHTS

EXPENDITURE	£90.00	
INCOME		£150
OVERALL TOTAL FOR 2020.	£8313.72	£2150.00
OPENING BALANCE FOR FUNDRAISING YEAR ENDING 01/01/2022		£586.00
PLUS CASH IN HAND		£73.30
TOTAL FUNDS		£659.30

Tim Lacy Hulbert – Hon Treasurer Omnes ad Unum

ST JOHN'S ANNUAL REPORT: CHOIR AND MUSIC (2020)

Although 2020 will go down as 'the year like no other', there was certainly no hint of what was to come when the choir started the year in style with a highly successful visit to sing the services at Bristol Cathedral on 5th January. The following day, a healthy number of us made the journey over to Zeals for Ben's installation in his new parish.

On the first Sunday back at St John's, Lauren's magnificent reign as Head Chorister came to an end, with the baton being passed on to Belinda.

Attention then turned towards a busy schedule over the following two months, with a magnificent programme of music for Candlemas, a performance at the Eisteddfod Celebration Concert and an Evensong at St Peter's Church. A team of 14 children once again took part in the annual Lions' Swimathon, raising £500 for the choir fund, before Annelies and Martha became the latest duo to conquer Allegri's *Miserere* on the First Sunday of Lent. With Chloë having surprised us with a new commission on her departure from the choir the previous year, the world première of Richard Sisson's setting of Psalm 121 took place as part of the Rule of Law Service for the High Sheriff on 15th March. Never has a 'farewell' piece been more poignantly received, as it turned out to be the last time that the full choir sang together.

During the first lockdown, the choir started out by making several virtual recordings until the novelty gradually wore off. It was certainly worth the challenge but it was a lot to ask, particularly of the children, with the difference between singing with others around them in the choir stalls versus doing so into a microphone at home clearly felt! At that point, it was equally lovely, as well as nostalgic, to delve into past recordings made by the choir for use in the online services which followed.

We are indebted to James Carey, who spent hours putting the virtual recordings together, and those who wished found opportunities further afield to join up with other friends in wider virtual projects.

By late May, once it was becoming increasingly doubtful that the choir would be back in any shape or form until after the summer holiday, attention was turned to social activity. A Zoom Meeting was organised for the children and it was so successful that it has been repeated every fortnight during all the lockdowns. Belinda has certainly risen to the challenge of needing to be the most creative Head Chorister ever, organising a myriad of on-screen games for everyone to play every time we meet – the number of new forms of entertainment I have discovered in the past year is beyond belief! The adults have also met separately on Zoom for a ‘glass-in-hand’ style chat at regular intervals on Friday evenings, ensuring that everyone has had the chance to keep in touch until normal times return.

Once amateur music-making was given the green light again in mid-August, plans were speedily but carefully made to convene a socially-distanced choir for an ‘experiment’ at the service on Sunday 30th August, which just happened to be my daughter Rosie’s first birthday. Since we had had to postpone her baptism, Jenny and I were very grateful to Gerry and Archdeacon Sue for jointly presiding over a thanksgiving ceremony on that day and, when the volunteer choir sang Tallis’ ‘If ye love me’ during communion, it was the most magical

moment imaginable, as choral music was once again heard in St John's for the first time in almost six months.

Thanks to the swift action of the Churchwardens and PCC, we were then able to bring the choir back in two teams in September, with each team singing on alternate Sundays. This enabled us to give Paul the send-off he deserved with a rousing rendition of Wesley's 'Blessed be the God and Father', his favourite anthem, and there was also the joy of singing at the wedding of former Head Chorister Rachel Bradley.

Although the lockdown in November briefly halted proceedings, we were able to make the best of the opportunity to sing some glorious Advent music, with highlights including the Responsories for the season and Steph Williams' wonderful solo in Gibbons' 'This is the record of John', before another shutdown came all too soon.

Perhaps the single most significant event which occurred as a result of the year's challenges was our first ever full-choir video recording of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, shot with multiple camera angles in a socially-distanced setup. It was a fitting tribute to the commitment and dedication shown by all our choir members over many years that they simply appeared on the night of the recording and truly went for it in 'all-guns-blazing' style on absolutely no rehearsal at all – just sheer adrenaline, memory recall and the will to pull together for the community! We are hugely grateful to Gerry for all the technical wizardry involved and, with the help of social media pushing it out far and wide, incredibly, the service was viewed by over 10,000 people between Christmas and New Year. A milestone indeed, it looks set to remain the only time that the full choir will sing together between March 2020 and the summer of 2021.

With the Mayor's Carol Concert also having to move online, the Town Council were quick to jump on the bandwagon of our recording evening. So, by way of a warm-up for our own Carol Service, the session began with a couple of light-hearted numbers which were matched up with pre-recorded arrangements from the Town Band.

We are indebted to Kelvin Nash for inviting us to take part in this wonderful community initiative.

During the year we have said goodbye to several choir members, notably Annelies, Esmé, Archie, Alex and Emerson, and we wish them all well for the future.

But in terms of longevity, will there ever be anyone like John Stott again? John was a most incredible man on so many levels and, because of the situation we have all found ourselves in over the past year, it is difficult to believe that he is no longer with us, as he preached with such characteristic gusto only two weeks before worship was suspended. Following Fran's move away from Devizes, we send her and the whole family our very best wishes and hope to celebrate John's life properly in the fullness of time. I'm sure there was plenty of Bach's music to greet him at those pearly gates!

Due to the ongoing difficulties, a small number of other choir members delayed their return for personal reasons, and we continue to hold them in our prayers and look forward to seeing them back in the stalls as soon as the time is right. We were especially delighted to see Janice Payne back with us just four months after falling ill.

One of the greatest success stories of the past year must be Anna's progress on the organ. With the help of a practice instrument at home when travel to church has not been possible, she continued to work incredibly hard towards her Grade 8 exam and passed it with distinction in December. We are incredibly grateful to the PCC, the RSCM and the Diocesan PipeUp Scheme who have supported her at various points along the way, as she now turns her attention to developing her service playing skills and starting work on her Associateship diploma for the Royal College of Organists.

As we look forward to the lifting of restrictions, a number of cathedral outings to help keep the choir challenged and stimulated will no doubt appear on the horizon, as well as the sheer week-to-week joy of being back in one another's company.

As always, my thanks to everyone who has helped keep the ship sailing through these choppy waters. When the power of music within the liturgy starts its engine up again, and the choir stalls are as full as we once knew them, I can see us all being deeply moved by just how much we missed it all. As we look forward to that day, please continue to hold in your prayers everyone who has been affected during this time.

Chris Totney, Director of Music

FAIR TRADE

Our Fair Trade stall continued to run in the first three months of the year but then had to stop because of the pandemic - thank you to all those who generously support us. Since then we have gradually sold off most of our perishable stock and given the remainder to Devizes Food Bank.

Judy Bridger and Trudy Fisher

THE FLOWER GUILD

The Flower Guild has now only twelve flower arrangers as Ann Sinden has moved away to be nearer her family. Julie Gilmore normally helps at Harvest time. Due to the restrictions, there were only two occasions when the church was decorated during the past year, for a wedding on November 6th and for Christmas.

Heather Blyth

THE BELLS AND BELLRINGERS

Importantly, throughout this past year we have remained a caring and enthusiastic group of friends who share the mutual love of bellringing.

Although we have not been able to ring the bells during the last year, we have still remained very active with bell work. Our last Sunday morning ring, when the Covid 19 restrictions forced us to stop, took place on March 15th and we certainly didn't imagine that one year later, we would still not be able to ring our bells.

We did ring four bells on Christmas morning, 'bubbles' observed, socially distanced and managing the masks with difficulty. Towards the end of January, one of our ringers, Richard Heath tolled a bell one hundred times to commemorate the one hundred thousand people who had sadly died from Covid 19. Dr John New tolled a bell at St Mary's on Saturday February 27th in tribute to Capt. Sir Tom Moore who by walking near his home, raised the staggering amount of over thirty-two million pounds for the NHS. On March 23rd I tolled a bell following a minute's silence when we remembered the anniversary of the very first lockdown in the UK.

I felt that it was very important to keep in touch with everyone so we started a weekly newsletter to which all of our ringers contributed by emailing me their news and photos and then every Thursday, the day of our regular practices, I emailed everyone a compilation. Now, after fifty-two editions it has proved a great success and we have learnt so much about each others' families, friends and hobbies and we all look forward to the weekly updates. We have also kept in touch on Zoom, phone and videos so that all ages have been catered for and the band is well informed.

With the prospect of the Ringing Chamber being empty for a few months we decided to have a thorough Spring clean and a team was formed, and overseen by our expert Richard Heath, they set about the task which took many hours of dusty endeavour . Working under strict Covid 19 regulations, pairs of ringers worked at carefully removing all the old paint, dirt and grime from the walls, revealing the clean stonework with the splendid Norman Intersecting Arches. Ropes and curtains were washed, lighting updated, drafts blocked and new carpet secured, the room now looks bright and welcoming and we are anxious to return soon. We have received enquiries from someone wishing to learn to ring and another experienced ringer wishing to join our band.

They will be very welcome and as will anyone else who would like to join our friendly group as we resume practices on Thursday evenings and once again enable the sound of our bells to ring out over the town.

Liz Merritt, Tower Captain

Deanery Synod.

The national lockdowns disrupted the usual pattern of Synod meetings, in that the spring meeting had to be cancelled. At the summer and autumn meetings churches reported their attempts to adapt to novel conditions especially by streaming online services. It was clear, however, that the pandemic had greatly aggravated the financial difficulties faced by many of our parishes. Keith Brindle, Assistant Rural Dean, made clear his view that the churches of the deanery might be able to work together to find a way at least to mitigate these problems. By the end of the year it had been decided to put Keith's proposals to a meeting of Synod members and additional parish representatives, which would allow the establishment of a group to make proposals concerning the way ahead.

The other important topic raised during the year was the situation of the churches in South Sudan and Uganda linked with our diocese. The continuing violence and consequent refugee problem are creating enormous difficulties and an urgent need for financial aid.

David Evans

What Will You Do?

What will you do, the poet said, with this
One wild and precious life you have today
Within the womb the Baptist leaps for bliss
Upon the cross He gives his life away

What will we do indeed, for heaven's sake
We motley crew of children, priests, and fools
We offer fairy cakes and prayers, and break
Communal bread according to the rules

What did he do? He died, and rose again
Was unconventional, and wild, and brave
He gave his precious life that other men
Might rise in easy conscience from the grave

And you, sat there all cosy in your pew
What will you do with what he gave for you?

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Being Welcoming and Hospitable



Showing Care and Respect for the Natural World



Being Concerned about Social Justice



Worshipping with Reverence, Joy and Praise



Living our Wild and Precious lives by...



Being informed by Scripture, Tradition and Reason



Being Inclusive



Being Contemplative and Rooted in Prayer



Being Focused on the Needs of the Wider Community