



Annual Report 2020

Parish of St Mary the Virgin

Introduction by Christoph Lindner, Rector

Dear Church Member,



Every year, the Oxford English Dictionary chooses a “Word of the Year”, but in an unprecedented move, they felt unable to do this after an unprecedented year (surely one of the most used adjectives in 2020!).

Unsurprisingly, one of the frontrunners was *lockdown*. There were also new creations such as *covidiot*. Some people even suggested that there were two eras in world history – BC and AD, but it’s not what you might think: BC (Before Coronavirus) and AD (After the disease)!

It has become clear that we will not return to normal. Instead, we are seeing a ‘new normal’ or ‘different normal’ or even ‘new different’ emerge.

As a church family we have shared the pains of this last year, but we have also seen God’s faithfulness. It seems especially important this year to come together to review 2020, to thank God for his faithfulness and to renew our hope that he will build his church, which even the gates of hell will not overcome. God’s church was never closed – even in lockdown!

Please join us on Sunday 23rd of May for our Annual Parochial Church Meeting at 10.30am, either at St Mary’s or on Zoom. We will also elect Churchwardens, PCC members and Deanery Synod representatives.

Please register on our website (www.denhamparish.church/events) or via our church office.

Our APCM will take place on Pentecost Sunday when God poured out his Holy Spirit on the disciples and the church was born – quite a poignant day to look beyond 2021 together as part of the meeting.

Here are the lyrics for a new hymn, commissioned for “Thy Kingdom Come” prayer this year (sung to the tune “Abide with me”) – they beautifully express our mission as Jesus’ church:

*We seek your kingdom throughout every sphere | We long for heaven’s demonstration here
Jesus your light shine bright for all to see | Transform, revive, and heal society*

*Before all things, in him were all things made | Inspiring culture, media, and trade
May all our work serve your economy | Transform, revive, and heal society*

*Peace, truth, and justice reigning everywhere | With us be present in our public square
Fill all who lead with your integrity | Transform, revive, and heal society*

*Forgive us Lord, when we have not engaged | Failing to scribe your heart on history’s page
Make us again what we were made to be | Transform, revive, and heal society*

*Faithful to govern ever may we be | Selfless in service, loving constantly
In everything may your authority | Transform, revive, and heal society*

Yours in Christ,



**Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Denham
Annual Meeting of Parishioners and
Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 23rd May 2021, 10.30am
St Mary's Church, Denham and Online via Zoom**

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

2. Vote of thanks to the Churchwardens for the previous year
3. Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

4. Number of parishioners present and apologies for absence
5. Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 11th October 2020
6. Matters arising

Reports

7. Presentation of the copy of the church Electoral Roll
8. Annual Report for 2020
9. Financial Report
10. Churchwardens' Report
11. Deanery Synod Report

Elections

12. Election of Deanery Synod Member
13. Election of members for the PCC
14. Appointment of sidesmen/women
15. Appointment of Independent Examiner
16. A.O.B.
17. 2021 and beyond: Recovering and Rebuilding
18. Closing Prayer

APCM (provisional date):, Sunday 8 May 2022, time TBC

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Denham
Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners & Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 11th October 2020

The Rector, Christoph Lindner, was in the chair. The meeting took place at St Mary's and also via Zoom, hosted by Chris MacQueen.

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

2. Vote of thanks to the Churchwardens for the previous year

The Rector thanked Carlene Litchmore and Samantha Carter for all their hard work as Churchwardens last year. Their ministry work is appreciated by many and their love for God shines through their commitment for growing God's Kingdom. He also thanked them for the support they had given to himself and Edda.

3. Election of Churchwardens

Carlene Litchmore and Samantha Carter agreed to stand for election as Churchwardens for the coming year. Both were duly elected.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

4. Number of Parishioners present and any apologies

29 parishioners were present at St Mary's and 27 on Zoom – a total of 56 attendees. Apologies for absence were received from Cynthia Sterry, Sharon Williams, Sue Richardson, Jane Brown, Dexter Brown, Joan Bell, Michele Lee, Laura Riley, Stephen Riley Tim Sole, Kath Sole and Marion Francis.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 7th April 2019

No corrections were made. Robin Doran proposed the minutes, Pam Montgomery seconded. A show of hands was given to adopt the minutes.

6. Matters arising: No other matters were raised.

The Rector gave thanks to all who submitted reports. Thanks to Robin Doran and to Anne Thomas for proofreading the report and also thanks were given to Victoria Lucas for her role as Parish Secretary and the added responsibilities she took on during the pandemic.

REPORTS

7. Presentation of a copy of the Church Electoral Roll

The Rector expressed his thanks to Maurice Litchmore for his diligence as Electoral Roll Officer. The Electoral Roll has grown from 141 to 144 members. This year there were 8 new first time applicants. Some members of the previous Electoral Roll passed away and we acknowledged their loss. Others moved away and are serving God in other parts of the world-wide church.

8. Annual Report for 2019 (available in advance).

The Rector commended the printed annual report to the church. A special mention of thanks was given to those who stepped down from voluntary positions. Those mentioned were Hilary Richins for her role in organising the vestry teas, Tony Drane for looking after the churchyard and Carole Wadlow for the distribution of Denham Parish News. All of them had served for many years. Thanks also to John Breese for continuing to look after the roses. The churchyard became more significant during Covid as the church was closed.

9. Financial report.

2020 was a successful year after considerable change. The accounts show cash balances of just over £300k. The outlook for this year is looking brighter than it did earlier in the year and thanks were given to those who donated to the church at this difficult time. There was no Fayre in 2020 which contributes substantially to the fabric fund. Next year will be challenging again; however, the church is financially secure at the moment.

It was clarified that the different rates in insurance figures from St Francis to St Mark's House were due to one being let out and the other occupied by a church worker.

Thanks were given to Mike Stewart for his diligence and his hard work.

The Parish Giving Scheme was adopted before the crisis and Christoph encouraged those who do not give via PGS to consider this. ChurchSuite, our new church management software, which is managed by Victoria Lucas, has been a blessing in this crisis.

Hilary Richins proposed to receive the financial report, Charlie McClelland seconded. All in favour.

10. Churchwardens' report

The Rector encouraged all to read the report in the booklet.

11. Deanery Synod Report

The Rector thanked Michael Carmody and Janet Allen who represented Denham Parish at Deanery Synod over the last year. He commended the Deanery Synod report in the annual report.

ELECTIONS

12. Election of Deanery Synod Members.

No new candidates had been received for Deanery Synod this year. There is one post vacant on the Deanery Synod. Michael Carmody and Janet Allen offered to stand again as Deanery Synod representatives for the following three years. Both were duly elected.

13. Election of Members for the PCC

The Rector gave thanks to all the PCC members who have continued to meet on Zoom during the crisis and especially for helping to shape the draft Mission Action Plan.

Carole Wadlow, Pam Montgomery, Tim Sole, Anne Thomas and Kathy Paine's term of office came to an end. Carole, Pam and Tim will not be standing for election for another term.

The Rector thanked Carole for all that she brought to the church, for her pastoral heart and for the many things she has done for the church. He thanked Pam for her long term commitment to the life of the church, for her gift of flower-arranging and pastoral care. Tim has brought a family perspective to the PCC and the Rector thanked him for his dedication to the PCC.

We seek to encourage younger members to join the PCC. Candidates need to be on the Electoral Roll for a minimum of six months.

Anne Thomas and Kathy Paine agreed to stand again for another term. Sandy Wickenden was nominated as new PCC member. All three candidates were duly elected with a show of hands.

14. Appointment of Independent Examiner

The Rector gave thanks to David Steel who examined the accounts. He has offered to audit our accounts for another year. David is a qualified accountant, a member of St James Gerrards Cross and Fulmer, and is also their treasurer. Michael Carmody nominated David Steel as independent examiner and Robin Doran seconded. All in favour.

15. A.O.B.

Michael Carmody had been in the chair at St Mark's for 6 years and he was now standing down. Thanks were given to Michael for all his time, hard work and dedication as chairman. St Mark's Committee is looking for a new chair.

16. 2020 and beyond. A new Mission Action Plan.

A set of slides was shown.

Our vision statement was adopted about three years ago and our Mission Action Plan at the end of 2017. At the end of 2019, we were able to give thanks to God for all that we have achieved. There was only one point on the action plan that was not fulfilled, which was to draw up plans to improve St Mark's.

Lockdown happened in March 2020 and over the next months we continued to lean into our mission statement to **pray, welcome** and **share** like Jesus:

Praying like Jesus: Many are deepening their connection with Christ with the Lectio365 prayer app. We set up online coffee which has allowed deeper conversations about the services during lockdown. We had a 7.14 prayer week, where we prayed for 7 days, 14 hours each. Bible Book Clubs have been established and, as a result, relationships have deepened and the groups have reflected on the upcoming Sunday bible passage. The churchyard has been used as a prayer space with prayer trails and stations.

Welcoming like Jesus has been difficult over the last 6 months, as hospitality has been almost impossible. Buildings were closed and church had to go online, with online and telephone services, but it has never been easier to invite people to church. Follow up with initial contacts has been difficult and we are trying to work out how to establish a connection with those who have watched our YouTube service. We have set up a contact form on the website for newcomers. In August we hosted marriage sessions on Zoom for all who are getting married or have been married. This was a success but it is hard to continue with the connection once the sessions have come to an end.

Sharing like Jesus: Small groups, Lifegroups and Bible Book Clubs for all ages have helped us to grow in faith and friendship. During lockdown Sunday Club and Destiny moved online but maintaining the connection with children and families has been very difficult. We need to help families to invest in spiritual life at home ('Faith at Home') and to offer God's love and care to those in need. Pastoral support has been amazing over the last six months and thanks were given to all who gave their time during the pandemic. *Give and Share* has been launched and is an area of ministry which will grow in importance.

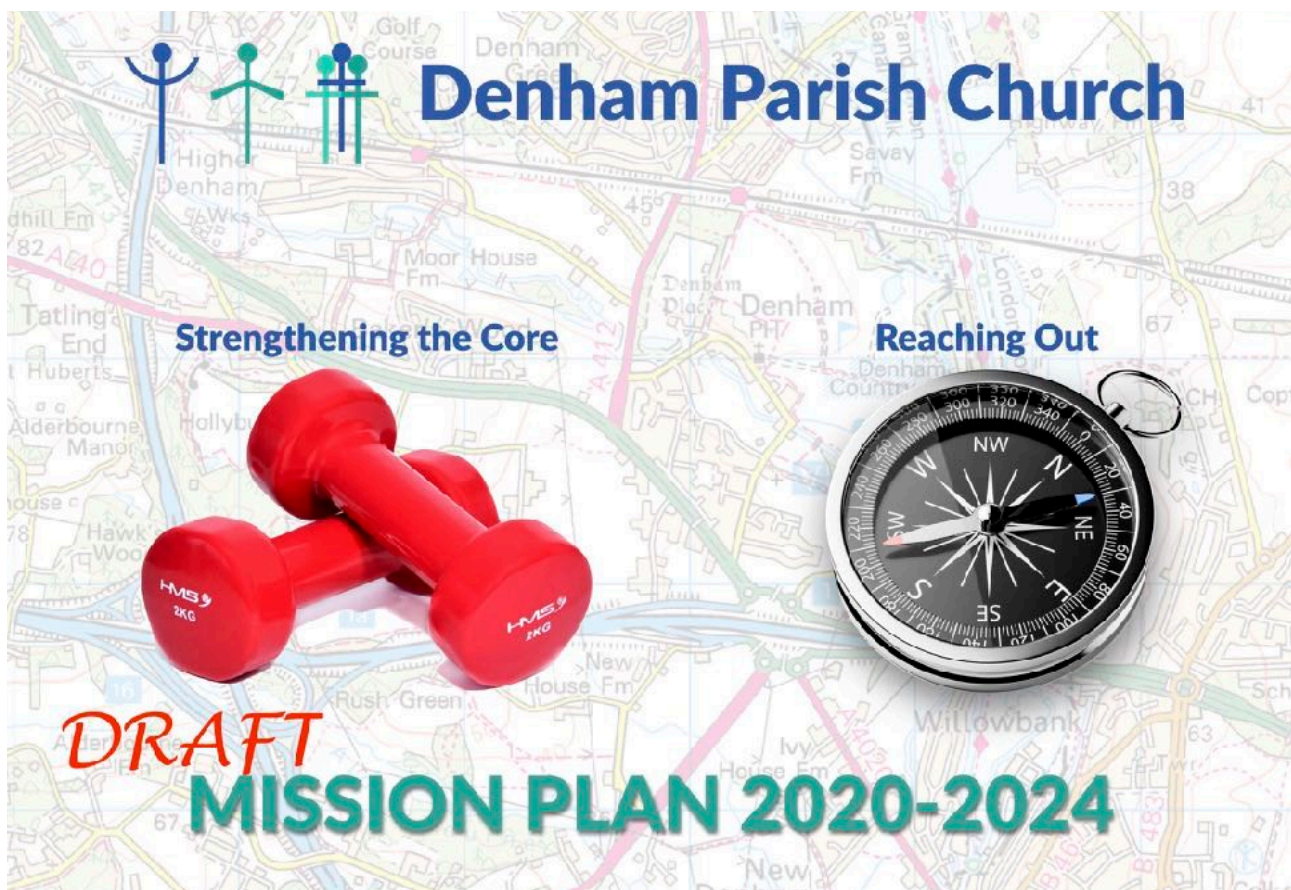
We need to grow in confidence to share the good news of Jesus. The ministry team has been meeting via Zoom on a Thursday morning and we have grown in our relationship, prayer and support. The Rector gave thanks for the generous giving and the finances will be an ongoing challenge in 2021. We lost some of our most generous givers and we would like to build that up again. We continue to support our core missions and have given Trinity SHOC an extra donation to help them through difficult times. Our relationship with Wycliffe Bible Translators via Samuel Kpagheri has deepened during the crisis, he has featured on our online service. We also had an interview with a Tearfund representative.

The Rector gave an outline of the draft Mission Action Plan 2020-2024.

- We will explore and practice healthy family habits.
- We will refresh our 10.30 service and make it more accessible for people with no previous experience of church. We are exploring a new service pattern with an online service continuing.
- We will start 'The Well' – a monthly gathering for worship and prayer.
- We will obtain funding for a new community outreach pastor with a focus on families and young people.
- We will develop new forms of community over the next few years (community meals, children's choir, etc).
- We will run Alpha at least once a year with a goal to eventually offer it each term.
- We will conduct a feasibility study for the re-development of St Mark's Hall and implement the results. We are hoping to receive a feasibility grant. We have a vision of St Mark's being a community hub.
- We will put a plan together to renovate St Mary's church and raise the necessary funds. We need to review the need for multimedia and streaming capability.
- We need to do all these things at the right speed and to be flexible.
- The ministry team and some members of the PCC will take part in the ChurchNEXT course with a view to discern what the future of our church might look like and plan accordingly.

The meeting ended with the *Leading your Church into Growth* prayer.

Next APCM date (provisional) 23rd May at 10.30 am.



- We will explore and practise **healthy ‘family habits’** (bible study, fellowship, worship, prayer, giving, service, hospitality, generosity, making more disciples).
- We will **refresh our 10.30 service** (more opportunities for community, learning, prayer ministry, more accessible for people with no previous experience of church).
- We will start **“The Well”** – an informal monthly prayer meeting with contemporary worship.
- We will obtain funding for a **new community outreach pastor** with a focus on families & young people.
- We will develop **new forms of community** (these will emerge over the next years – examples are community meals, seniors group, children’s choir, an informal worship service).
- We will run **Alpha** at least once a year with the goal to eventually offer it each term, hosted by a lifegroup.
- We will conduct a feasibility study for the **re-development of St Mark’s Hall** and implement the results.
- We will produce a plan to **renovate St Mary’s Church** and raise the necessary funds.

**Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Denham
Annual Report and Financial Statements
of the Parochial Church Council
for the year ended 31 December 2020**

Incumbent:

Rev'd Christoph Lindner, The Rectory, Ashmead Lane, Denham, UB9 5BB

Bank:

Barclays Bank, 142 High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1JX

Independent Examiner:

David Steel, Danescroft, 37 Kingsway, Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 8NX

Background

The PCC of St Mary's Church Denham has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, Christoph Lindner, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church through regular public worship, pastoral work, teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses, events, small groups and religious assemblies in schools; children's and youth work; working for the common good of the parish in co-operation with other agencies; supporting other charitable work in the UK and overseas; ecumenical co-operation with other churches.

Membership

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure and in 2011 was registered with the Charity Commission as THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, DENHAM with Charity Registration Number 1144358.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the annual parochial church meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Up to the APCM 2020:

Incumbent: Christoph Lindner, the chairman

The churchwardens: Carlene Litchmore (vice-chair), Samantha Carter.

Elected members of the PCC were Robert Ash, Clive Ashcroft, Dexter Brown, Charles McClelland, Pam Montgomery, Brian O'Regan, Kathy Paine, Tim Sole, Mike Stewart, Anne Thomas, Carole Wadlow, Sharon Williams.

The representatives on the Deanery Synod were Michael Carmody and Janet Allen. The treasurer was Mike Stewart. The secretary was Victoria Lucas.

From the APCM 2020:

Elected members of the PCC were Robert Ash, Clive Ashcroft, Dexter Brown, Charles McClelland, Brian O'Regan, Kathy Paine, Mike Stewart, Anne Thomas, Sandy Wickenden, Sharon Williams. Dominic Birkby was in attendance.

The representatives on the Deanery Synod were Michael Carmody and Janet Allen. The treasurer was Mike Stewart. The secretary was Victoria Lucas.

Committees

The *Cockpit Crew* is the *Standing Committee* of our PCC. It has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. Apart from its statutory members (Rector and Churchwardens) the members were Clive Ashcroft, Kathy Paine and Mike Stewart.

Our *Fabric Team* looks after the fabric of St Mary's Church and the churchyard. The members were Robert Ash (chair), Clive Ashcroft, Dexter Brown, Tony Drane, Philip Hardy, Roy Lyle, Gerald Miller and Mike Stewart.

St Mark's Committee is a sub-committee of the PCC within the ministry of Denham Parish Church, responsible for the maintenance and running of St Mark's Church Hall. The Committee members were Michael Carmody (chair), Brian O'Regan (treasurer), John Breese, Edda Lindner, Anne Thomas. The Rector and churchwardens are ex officio members. After the APCM in October, Michael Carmody retired and the chair was vacant.

St Mark's Development Group continued to meet as a sub-committee of the PCC with the brief to explore how St Mark's Hall can be developed. Its members were Brian O'Regan (chair), Clive Ashcroft, Charlie McClelland, Kathy Paine, Mike Stewart and the Rector.

Church Attendance

Please refer to the Electoral Roll Report below for details on the Electoral Roll.

Due to the pandemic, it is much harder to measure church attendance for 2020. For much of the time our church buildings were closed. When St Mary's was open for worship from August to December our capacity was much reduced due to social distancing rules. For those months, St Mary's attendance varied between 35 and 50 on Sundays. Our new online service at 10.30am had between 50 and 85 devices 'live' during the service, total views between 100 and 250, with special services significantly higher. Our Community Carol service on Youtube had 129 peak concurrent devices viewing with the total number of views standing at 967 at the time of going to print.

Occasional Offices

In 2020 we had 1 baptism, 1 wedding and 19 funerals.

Safeguarding

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. Please refer to the separate report by Samantha Carter for details.

List of Sidesmen approved by the PCC

Craig	Alexander
John	Breese
Jane	Brown
Philip	Constable
Robin	Doran
Marion	Francis
Sylvia	Gammond
Caroline	Goodwin
Carlene	Litchmore
Maurice	Litchmore
Victoria	Lucas
Cathy	Macqueen
Charlie	McClelland
Pamela	Montgomery
Brian	O'Regan
Heather	O'Regan
Kathy	Paine
Hilary	Richins
Mike	Stewart
Anne	Thomas
Cheryl	Webb
Sharon	Williams

Electoral Roll Report

St Mary's Denham Church Electoral Roll has been reviewed and amended as required by the Diocesan Synod and is available for viewing at this meeting. The roll will also be displayed on St Mary's, St Francis and St Mark's Notice Boards.

The review for this year has seen the removal of three names and the addition of ten new entries. This has resulted in an increase of seven on the 2020 roll. The number of names entered upon the Church Electoral Roll for the parish is one hundred and fifty one (151)

Parishioners who are listed on the roll are entitled to vote at this meeting. However in order to qualify for nomination to the PCC they must have been registered on the Electoral Roll for at least six months.

Addresses have been checked and verified by the Churchwardens and are held on the Electoral Roll Database. In accordance with the Data Protection guidelines, addresses of members are not published on copies of the roll that are on display in the churches of the parish.

New applications may be submitted after the closure of this meeting for inclusion on the next roll. Application Forms are available from the Electoral Roll Officer or St Mary's Church Office. They can also be downloaded at www.denhamparish.church/apcm.

Copies of the Church Electoral Roll Certificate will be displayed for a minimum of fourteen days alongside the roll already on display in the parish churches after this meeting. A further copy will be sent to the Secretary of the Deanery.

Maurice W Litchmore, Electoral Roll Officer

PCC REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2020

Aims, Objectives & Activities

Our aims and objectives are summarised by our vision statement, which the PCC adopted in 2018:

We pray like Jesus. Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God as 'Father' and was in constant communication with him. As his followers we want all our life to be grounded in our relationship with him.

We welcome like Jesus. We have experienced God's welcome in Jesus and want to be a welcoming community for everyone.

We share like Jesus. We are called to share life, faith and ministry and to develop a culture of generosity that speaks of our generous God.

From this broad vision statement flows our *Mission Action Plan*. In the first months of 2020 we finalised a new draft Mission Action Plan for 2020-2024, which was approved by our PCC in March (see page 8). However, it became clear very quickly that the disruption caused by the pandemic was of such magnitude that we were going to hold off a final mission plan. The draft plan was shared with our congregation at the last (delayed) APCM in October.

The PCC met ten times in 2020 - twice at St Francis Chapel and eight times on Zoom. Naturally our focus was to steward the life, mission and ministry of our church at this time of crisis, to discern what God is saying to us and to plan and prepare larger church events and seasons such as St Mary's Festival and Christmas.

Our standing committee (Cockpit Crew) met eight times. It was a helpful 'coincidence' that our scheduled meeting in March was in the week before lockdown took effect and it helped us to respond quickly to the evolving situation.

Achievements and Performance

How do you begin to measure the achievements of a year like 2020?

It has been said that a **crisis is a revealer and an accelerator**: it reveals realities that were already at work, but like a murky lake that suddenly becomes clear, it now shows what has been at the bottom all along. It accelerated trends that were already under way and forces us to respond more quickly.

All that has been true of 2020. **Agility** is one of the key skills required in a crisis and we had ample opportunity to practise it – experimenting with new ways of church (some of which worked, others didn't), staying connected with existing

members and continuing to reach out to our community, recognising the opportunities in (most) problems.

Edda and I soon adopted a simple sign-off in our online services: “**Stay safe. Stay connected. Stay hopeful.**” It expresses well what we have tried to achieve as a church in 2020.

Crisis management typically involves three phases: **Responding, recovering, rebuilding**. The picture is complicated by the fact that these three phases don’t always happen in a tidy sequence (every new lockdown triggered a new *response*!) and members of the community will find themselves in different phases.

Our first task in 2020 was to RESPOND:

Much of our church’s activity moved online - services, lifegroups, PCC meetings, Alpha, prayer meetings, WhatsApp groups. At the same time we tried to ensure that those who are not online are still very much part of our community and that we don’t lose touch (telephone services, pastoral calls, little gifts to encourage,



Sunday Club bags, etc.). Many events had to be cancelled (notably the Fayre). Shortly after my arrival in Denham we moved the **church office** into St Mary’s vestry and this proved to be a blessing: not only because Victoria couldn’t have worked from the Rectory, but because she was a steady presence in the church building and kept an eye on the church and churchyard. Our tower captain Andrew Simpson continued to chime the bells on Sundays and we lit the large stained glass window in the tower to remind everyone that the church was alive and active.

We established a WhatsApp group of people who were offering to help with errands and shopping and then supported the emerging Denham Food Bank. Later in the year we established **Give & Share** (see report); the Rector’s pastoral fund provided an unbureaucratic way to respond to need. Another WhatsApp group gathered intercessors, who were able to respond quickly to prayer requests.

In a crisis such as this pandemic, a vicar-centric church will struggle because one person can never respond adequately to the need for connection and help. It was

a blessing that most **lifegroups** continued to meet online and to support one another; that many people helped in practical ways and with phone calls; that Ian and Nnamdi were already established as ministers.

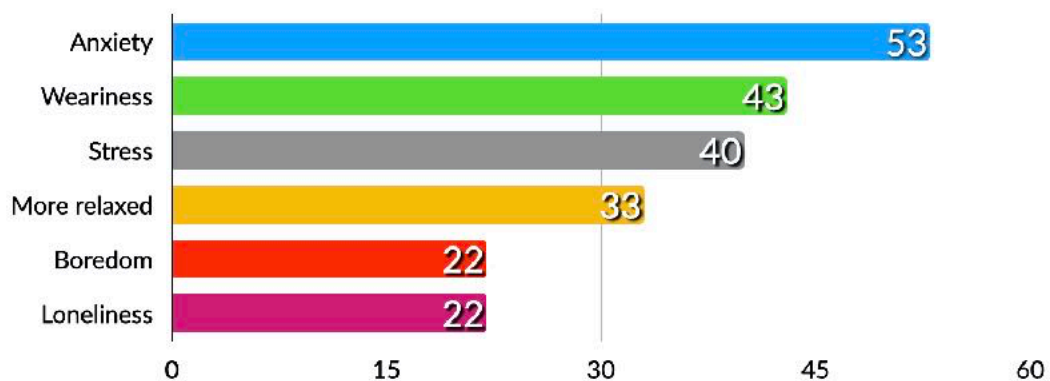
RECOVERY ...

... is about acknowledging the loss and trauma and helping us to find our feet again. This is still very much ongoing at the time of writing! All of us will have felt the trauma of the last year in different ways. We are grieving the loss of some of our much-loved church members. Others have lost their jobs or have lost contact with friends. One of our major challenges in lockdown was to stay connected with children and young people. Not having our cherished regular church routines, meetings and services will have been a significant loss for many church members.

Ian Jennings was finishing his second book on the grief journey ("**What is life without my love?**") in the first half of 2020 and he ran a pilot small group on Zoom in the autumn. Many families felt the strain of being in lockdown, dealing with homeschooling, being furloughed, etc. In August Edda and I ran four **marriage sessions** to help strengthen couples and families.

A **community survey**, conducted in the summer and early autumn, helped us to understand how the pandemic has affected people in our community.

Anxiety is the most common emotional response.



"I am experiencing the following emotions as a result of the crisis."

(Multiple responses possible. Numbers represent percent of responses.)

Recovery was also about discerning the opportunities that lockdown opened up. One example is the **Bible Book Clubs**, which we started in the first half of the year, prompted by a suggestion from a church member. We lost the use of our



church buildings, but discovered how we can use our **outdoor spaces** creatively - prayer trails at St Mary's, gifts of daffodils and palm crosses at the church door, perspex boxes with complimentary copies of Denham Parish News at St Mary's and St Mark's are some examples.

In a recovery phase we re-assess what is important in life – this presents a wonderful opportunity to re-commit ourselves to the God of hope who reveals himself to us in Jesus. Establishing *Healthy Habits* can embed our faith in daily living. This crisis is also a call to the church to be salt and light and to carry this hope of the gospel into our world – **the church has left the building in more ways than one!**

Working together is key in recovery and we were delighted when Harefield Hospital enquired whether they could use St Mark's Hall for two of their regular clinics.

REBUILDING will start properly in 2021, but we have already spotted creative opportunities to do things differently and to implement existing plans more quickly. Just before lockdown Phil Thompson installed WiFi in the church building, which enabled us to stream some events (notably the APCM in October) from church. Our services have become more interactive - a change that will flow into the development of our service pattern in 2021. Our leadership style became much more collaborative (weekly ministry team meetings, a logistics group to plan the re-opening of St Mary's, a "new normal" group, Christmas planning groups, etc.) – a gain that will stand us in good stead in the future.



ChurchNEXT themes

Leaders always need to be a step ahead: when most people are still in recovery, they begin to discern what God is saying to us about the shape of our mission as a church. We have been greatly helped by joining **ChurchNEXT**, a one-year programme for churches specifically designed to navigate this pandemic and create space to make plans in the areas of vision and values, leadership, mission and discipleship. One major take-away from the programme so far is that God is calling us to be courageous – to pray, welcome, share and **dare** like Jesus.

And so, rebuilding needs reimagining what church will be in future and reaching those who are far from God. Here are some of the questions we are asking together:

- What have we lost that we do not want to regain?
- What have we lost that we must regain?
- What have we gained that we don't want to lose?
- What have we gained that was only for a season?
- What do we need to address more urgently than ever?

Thank you for being part of this church family and for sharing in the mission of Jesus, who “for the joy set before him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12.2). We follow a Lord who entered the mess of our humanity and sits at the right hand of God to lead us through this crisis!

One of the great encouragements for me was to work more closely than ever before with our *ministry team* (Samantha Carter, Louise Hardy, Ian Jennings, Edda Lindner, Carlene Litchmore, Victoria Lucas, Nnamdi Maduka). We met weekly on Zoom and prayed, planned and ‘wrestled’ together - thank you!

Please take the time to read the individual reports in this booklet, which expand on my reflections above and show in more detail how we have responded, recovered and begun to rebuild!

On behalf of the PCC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Lindner', written in a cursive style.

Rev'd Christoph Lindner, Rector

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT 2020

This year has been an unprecedented time and, with due respect to those who experienced life in the Second World War, not many of us would have envisaged anything like the restrictions placed on us due to the current pandemic. Whilst the changes imposed on our (expected) daily routine, Denham Parish Church remained active and supported the community both physically and spiritually, with a wide spectrum of activities. Although not all are included, the ones that are here are to provide an insight into the role of the Churchwardens.

The Churchwardens are pleased to report that the church buildings and contents are in good order. More detailed maintenance activities are highlighted within the Fabric Report.

Denham Parish Church, like all churches, has had to cope with the life-changing demands of Covid-19. Whilst during February and March we planned as normal with the additional option of the "what if factor" we did hope that we would not have to implement it. At the end of March, we executed the "what if" option resulting in the cancellation of our APCM. Our annual May Fayre promptly fell by the wayside. Thankfully we had not placed much financial outlay on this event and so suffered no cost.

Following the closure of the church buildings we were fortunate to remain connected and we hope that through personal contact, telephone, online media or postal correspondence everyone had the opportunity to be in contact with the Church Family.

We have been able to continue to keep connected and had regular fellowship. How blessed we are that our church family embraced and adjusted to the online environment which now plays a key role in our daily lives. "ZOOM" became the buzz word for 2020! Our Rector, Christoph Lindner, rose to the challenges brought upon us by Covid-19 and our congregation, Leadership Team, Ministry Team, PCC and sub-committees actively participated in shaping the daily life of our church and the local community.

PCC and sub-committee meetings continued uninterrupted as physical presence was replaced with digital participation; similarly, most of our other group meetings.

2020 required us to be even more prayerful and whilst lifegroups conducted via ZOOM continued, we introduced weekly prayer meetings and we also developed a Prayer Team that pray each Friday and are connected through a WhatsApp group, headed by Nnamdi Maduka. During the year all members of our church and the wider community who are connected to the internet had the opportunity to join in the Sunday worship each week. Those who were not connected to the internet had the opportunity to listen to a shorter service via a dedicated local telephone number at any time of their choosing.



Although the buildings were closed for Mothering Sunday, the service was conducted online for the first time, and the traditional offering of daffodils to mothers was left outside the entrance of the main building (on a help yourself basis). We are pleased to report that this was well received and there were no leftovers!

Like Mothering Sunday, the usual Easter services, reflections and celebrations happened online as St Mary's adhered to the government's pandemic regulations and guidelines which saw our buildings still closed at that point.

In the wider community, members of the church family answered the call of the emergency and provided support

to the local community; organising and delivering shopping and medicine to the vulnerable members of the parish. In 2020 Denham Parish Church launched a new ministry "Give and Share" – an initiative to support vulnerable, isolated and food-poor people in our parish (see their separate report).

The Churchwardens particularly express their acknowledgement and appreciation of the work done by the "Logistics Team" specifically formed to manage the complex reopening of church buildings for individual prayer and regular worship. At the end of "lockdown one", our logistics team devised and delivered a plan that saw private prayers, followed by the restart of weekly services at St Mary's from August. Thus, St Mary's reached its optimum capacity, while ensuring the wellbeing of all worshippers and visitors who entered the church.

With their due diligence and with some support from other volunteers we were able to start worshipping once more in the building, enjoyed the St Mary's Festival in September and had the confidence to feel safe during the delayed APCM in October.

The APCM took place both with physical attendees at St Mary's, as well as a live-stream on Zoom.

The Churchwardens' admission took place during the November PCC Meeting (ZOOM). This provided an insight to the PCC on how Churchwardens are admitted to their office.

During “lockdown two”, the Remembrance Service took place online, with a short wreath-laying ceremony at the War Memorial, again following Covid-19 governance and later streamed online: A very warm and mindful reminder of the sacrifices made in the past and being made now.

We prepared the church building ready for our Christmas services, but only days before Christmas, “lockdown three” struck and saw the closure of our buildings once more.

Carlene and Samantha thank Christoph, Ian and Nnamdi, Philip Constable (unofficial Verger), Victoria (Parish Secretary), the Logistics Team, the PCC and the congregation for their support and prayers during the period of this report.

(Carlene Litchmore and Samantha Carter)

2020 FINANCIAL REVIEW AND RESULTS

The accounts, which have been reviewed by David Steel FCA, acting as an Independent Examiner, show an increase of £2,175 in the General Fund and reductions of £8,806 in the Fabric Fund and £817 in the Church Growth Fund.

At 31 December 2020 the General Fund stands at £49,244, the Fabric Fund at £200,696 and the Church Growth Fund at £22,593. The Give and Share Fund, which was established this year, stands at £7,721.

Cash balances at the year end totalled £303,742.

When the Covid pandemic forced the closure of our church buildings early in 2020 the PCC was concerned about the impact this would have on our finances, in particular we were concerned that there would be a substantial deficit in our General Fund. In practice our prayers were answered and many members of the church donated generously and as a result our Planned Christian Giving increased from £47,831 last year to £60,793 this year, an increase of over 27%.

Whilst Gift Aid reduced in the year from the exceptional amount in 2019, increases in Donations and Legacies and rental income from St Mark’s House enabled us to report total income in the General Fund of £127,604 only slightly down on the £132,462 in 2019.

I would particularly like to express our thanks to the families of members of our church family who remembered us in their wills and having given, in many cases, a lifetime of service to the Church have made this final donation. It is an essential and invaluable part of our ongoing funding.

Costs in the General Fund were either in line with last year or were reduced due to the closure of the Church building. For example energy costs were reduced to £2,800 from £3,865 last year.

In most years the Denham Village Fayre generates the bulk of the income for the Fabric Fund, so the loss of the Fayre led to income from this source reducing from £17,987 last year to £1,221 this year. We were therefore particularly grateful for donations that totalled £11,500 specifically for the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings.

Expenditure from the Fabric Fund was reduced this year to mainly essential maintenance but we did carry out some important repairs to the roof and guttering at a cost of £5,848. The church building does have significant problems with damp that need to be addressed in the short to medium term that will undoubtedly cost significant amounts. Professional advice has indicated the actions that may need to be taken and it is intended to take a step at a time, assess the impact of that remedial work before moving to the next stage. In that way it is hoped that the most expensive remedial work can either be avoided or reduced in scope.

As a result of the loss of the Fayre expenditure exceeded income in the Fabric Fund by £8,806 but there remains an ongoing balance of £200,696 in this fund.

This year a new Fund – The Give and Share Fund was established with generous donations of £8,791 and ended the year with a balance in the Fund of £7,721.

Due to the pandemic there was limited income or expenditure in the Church Growth Fund that stands at £22,593 at the year end.

It is self-evident that without the faithful commitment of all givers, the work of Denham Parish Church could not continue. Thank you very much for your support in 2020 and through the coming year.

(Mike Stewart, PCC Treasurer)

Correspondence Address for the PCC:

St Mary's Church Office

Village Road, Denham, UB9 5BH

Extracted from the Annual Report of the PCC for the Year Ended 31st December 2020

The Parish of St Mary the Virgin Denham

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	Note	General Fund (Unrestricted)		Fabric Fund (Designated)		Give & Share Fund (Restricted)		Church Growth Fund (Restricted)		Total Funds	
		2020 £	2019 £	2020 £	2019 £	2020 £	2019 £	2020 £	2019 £	2020 £	2019 £
INCOMING RESOURCES											
Weekly collections		2,839	8,992							2,839	8,992
Planned Christian Giving (PCG)		60,793	47,831							60,793	47,831
Gift Aid Tax recovered		16,363	35,093							16,363	35,093
Donations & Legacies		10,844	8,136	11,500	-	8,791		584	5,219	22,928	13,355
Incoming resources from donors		90,839	100,052	11,500	-	8,791	-	584	5,219	111,714	105,271
Vestry Teas & Sunday coffees		-	2,094							-	2,094
Miscellaneous		2,324	2,404	53						2,377	2,404
Other voluntary income resources		2,324	4,498	53	-	-	-	-	-	2,377	4,498
Wedding & Funeral Fees		9,208	10,518							9,208	10,518
Transfer from General Fund								10,000		0	10,000
Denham & Patronal Festival Fairs				1,221	17,987					1,221	17,987
St Marks Church - Rental Income		1,900	5,200							1,900	5,200
Church Houses Rent Received	1	20,034	8,236							20,034	8,236
Income from Charitable & Ancilliary Trading		31,142	23,954	1,221	17,987	-	-	-	10,000	32,363	51,941
Income from Investments - interest		3,299	3,958							3,299	3,958
Total Incoming Resources		127,604	132,462	12,774	17,987	8,791	-	584	15,219	149,753	165,668
RESOURCES EXPENDED											
Gas & Electricity		2,800	3,865							2,800	3,865
St Francis House	2	1,760	1,719							1,760	1,719
St Francis Church		135	600							135	600
St Marks House	3	1,349	963							1,349	963
St Marks Church	4	3,581	5,200							3,581	5,200
Cleaning		2,400	2,555							2,400	2,555
Secretarial Expenses		11,973	11,970							11,973	11,970
Printing, Post, Books & Stationery		1,911	1,653							1,911	1,653
Clergy Administration & Training		2,249	3,000							2,249	3,000
Telephone		694	1,342							694	1,342
Organist		1,764	3,990							1,764	3,990
Parish Share		67,711	65,104							67,711	65,104
Childrens Ministry		315	675							315	675
Parish Hospitality		347	1,677							347	1,677
Associate Ministers / Tfr to Growth Fund	5	15,336	10,000							15,336	10,000
Donations to Charities	6	6,000	8,842							6,000	8,842
Miscellaneous		5,104	4,938							5,104	4,938
Fabric Fund Expenditure	7			21,580	38,328					21,580	38,328
Give & Share Fund Expenditure	8					1,070				1,070	
Church Growth Fund Expenditure	9							1,401	19,382	1,401	19,382
Total Resources Expended		125,429	128,093	21,580	38,328	1,070	0	1,401	19,382	149,480	185,803
NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES		2,175	4,369	(8,806)	(20,341)	7,721	0	(817)	(4,163)	273	(20,135)
Balances brought forward at 1st January		47,069	42,700	209,502	229,843	0		23,410	27,573	279,981	300,116
BALANCES C/FWD AT 31st DECEMBER 2020		49,244	47,069	200,696	209,502	7,721	0	22,593	23,410	280,254	279,981

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination no matter has come to my attention :-

- 1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - a) to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 41 of the Act and
 - b) to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the requirement of the Act, as also contained in the Church Accounting Regulations 1997 have not been met.
- 2) to which in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

David Stool ACA

Date:

4/5/24

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin Denham

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2020

	2020 £	2019 £
Current Assets		
Short term deposits	254,500	274,500
Bank current account	49,242	27,909
	<hr/> 303,742	<hr/> 302,409
Current Liabilities		
Creditors and accruals	(23,488)	(22,428)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net Assets	£ 280,254	£ 279,981
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Funds		
General Fund (unrestricted)	49,244	47,069
Fabric Fund (designated)	200,696	209,502
Give & Share (restricted)	7,721	-
Church Growth Fund (restricted)	22,593	23,410
	<hr/> £ 280,254	<hr/> £ 279,981
	<hr/>	<hr/>

**Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 2 February 2021 and signed on their behalf by
Rev. Christoph Lindner (Rector) and Samantha Carter & Carlene Litchmore (Church Wardens)**

Original document signed
Rev C Lindner

Original document signed
Mrs S Carter

Original document signed
Mrs C Litchmore

The Notes below form part of these Accounts

Accounting Policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 1997 together with applicable accounting standards and the Charities SORP

Funds

The General Fund represent the funds of the PCC that are not subject to any restrictions regarding their use & are available for application to the general purposes of the PCC.

The Fabric Fund is designated for improvements, major repairs, insurance and maintenance of the Church and the Churchyard.

The Give & Share Fund is designated for charitable purposes in and around the Parish.

The Church Growth Fund is designated for the growth of the christian message in the Parish and beyond as deemed appropriate by the PCC.

Accounting Records

The accounts, include all transactions, assets & liabilities for which the PCC are responsible in Law. They do not include the accounts of Church groups that owe their affiliation to another body nor those that are informal gatherings of church members.

Incoming Resources

Collections, planned giving & donations are recognised when received by or on behalf of the PCC. Income tax recoverable on covenants or gift aid donations is recognised when received. Funds raised by the Village Fair are accounted for net of associated costs.

Assets

Consecrated & beneficial property is excluded from the accounts by s96(2)a of the Charities Act 1993, and no value is placed on movable church furnishings. All expenditure is written off as incurred.

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin - Denham

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>		<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
	£	£		£	£
1 Church House Rents			7 Fabric Fund		
St Marks House - net	20,034	8,236	Churchyard Paths & Drainage	-	2,857
	20,034	8,236	Church Houses	-	1,589
2 St Francis House			Professional Fees	383	4,358
Insurance (2020 & 2021)	960	1,000	Roof Maintenance	5,848	784
Boiler service/ Alarm maintenance	800	590	Tree Felling & Inspection	-	4,134
Miscellaneous	-	129	Organ Deep Clean	-	4,088
	1,760	1,719	Nave Cleaning & Painting	-	4,512
3 St Marks House			Vestry Carpets	-	2,400
Insurance (2020 & 2021)	1,250	565	Miscellaneous	-	2,086
Boiler/alarm service	99	99	Electrical Wiring Survey	850	-
Maintenance	-	299	Insurance	4,344	4,193
	1,349	963	Churchyard	5,557	4,209
4 St Marks Church			Maintenance (See Note 10)	4,598	3,118
Utilities	671	1,156		21,580	38,328
Cleaning & Maintenance	1,885	2,776	8 Give & Share Fund		
Insurance	900	996	Computer & Software	545	-
Miscellaneous	125	272	Printing	105	-
	3,581	5,200	Packaging & Products	420	-
5 Associate Ministers				1,070	-
Rent	10,600		9 Church Growth Fund		
Utilities	2,636		Associate Ministers Accommodation	-	18,033
Council Tax	2,100		Miscellaneous	1,401	1,349
Transfer to Growth Fund	-	10,000		1,401	19,382
	15,336	10,000	10 Maintenance		
6 Charitable Donations			Rodent Pest Controls	480	-
Trinity / SHOC	2,000	2,125	Boiler Maintenance	480	-
Tearfund	1,000	2,125	Waste Collection	1,132	942
Church Army	1,000	1,125	Security	1,383	1,248
Bible Reading Fellowship	1,000	1,125	Clock	266	266
Wycliffe Bible Translations	1,000	1,125	Miscellaneous	857	662
Royal British Legion	-	507		4,598	3,118
Vestry Teas & Other Donations	-	710			
	6,000	8,842			

REPORTS FROM OUR GROUPS AND MINISTRIES: FROM A TO Z

ALPHA AND EVANGELISM

In January we started **Alpha in the Rectory**. Of the 23 people who signed up, we had on average 16-18 people each Monday, enjoying a simple supper in two rooms (dining room and Christoph's study) and then gathering in the living room to watch the evening's video (it was cosy!). After the video we returned to our small groups for discussion. When the first lockdown came into effect, we paused Alpha for a few weeks and then finished it online on Zoom. Here is what participants are saying about the course:

"Alpha 2020: The start of some very special friendships which have grown during the past year." *Andrea*

"I found the Alpha sessions very enlightening, understanding how everyone responded to the videos and the discussions afterwards. It made me want to explore more." *Ken*

"I clearly don't stand alone in my curiosity in the meaning of religion. I have to say I did find it very interesting and heart-warming to the extent it made me feel very peaceful." *Lynn*

"My experience on the 'whole day session' looking at the Holy Spirit was a truly enlightening, comforting and treasured memory and gift." *Linda*

"Alpha has been great to help me accelerate my faith journey and it was a fantastic opportunity to be able to grow relationships with other members of the church family and local community." *Vicky*

"A welcoming space where you can openly ask any questions about faith and Christianity." *Laura*

2020 has highlighted the challenge of inviting people to explore the good news of Jesus when we don't have the use of our buildings. We had to learn very quickly to use the internet and the churchyard around St Mary's (Easter, Christmas and prayer trails). Offering free resources (our magazine, "Hope in an uncertain world" and others) is another way to help the wider community explore faith.

Experience shows that the most effective way is a personal invitation by someone who is already part of our church – and inviting someone to come to our services was never easier than in 2020 – all they needed was an internet connection. How we can help those who 'dip in their toes' in that way to connect with us and take the next step on a faith journey is an area where we have much to learn.

BAPTISMS

Due to the pandemic we had only one baptism in 2020. However, we had two baptism preparation meetings online (plus one in the Rectory in February). Online preparation sessions allowed godparents who do not live locally to join us. We expect a busy season of baptisms once social distancing rules have been relaxed sufficiently.

BELLRINGERS

Ringling this year has of course been affected by the pandemic. A physical activity with a group of people facing each other in a close circle could hardly be better designed to spread a virus, so we have been unable to ring normally since March 2020 even when restrictions lifted somewhat. Unlike the choir, we can't stand further apart or outdoors!



We are fortunate, though, to have our Ellacombe chimes, a mechanism which lets one person ring all 8 bells using a set of ropes and hammers. The bells hang downwards so the sound isn't as rich and doesn't carry as far, but better than them falling silent. Working with Christoph and the churchwardens to make sure everything was done safely, I have rung the chimes most Sunday mornings when the church building has been closed, as a call to worship before the online service. When the building was open Carl Jennings has been able to take some weeks, and I would like to thank him particularly for his support. As well as normal rounds and changes, keen listeners may have spotted a few attempts at hymn tunes, something we can't do with normal "full circle" ringing.

It has I gather been generally well received by those living in the village or out and about for exercise or contemplation, as a little bit of normality in a rather strange world for those in earshot. I was also able to provide bells for the only wedding of 2020, and the bells welcomed in the New Year.

The lack of ringing has reduced the need for maintenance, though some checks and a bit of lubrication will be needed before we restart. The chiming mechanism has stood up well to the extra use so far.

Roy Lyle has left us for South Africa and will be greatly missed as a ringer and a friend. I hope the other ringers will be keen to return once we can start up again, but we are very much on the lookout for new recruits. Anyone who would like to look into it is welcome to contact me. You can always try the chimes first if you're at all unsure.

2020 was set to be a quiet year for weddings even before the pandemic took hold, so the loss of fees (our only source of income to cover routine maintenance costs) was not unexpected. The lack of ringing meant nothing needed replacing and barring any major mishap our reserves will take us through another few years, but we may need to approach the wider church for financial help after that.

(Andrew Simpson, Tower Captain)

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES: A Year Like No Other...

The year started full of excitement and with good momentum:

- 1) The experienced **Sunday Club** team provided weekly meaningful and age-specific worship opportunities for four to eleven year olds.
- 2) **Destiny**, the group for older children and teenagers met once a month in the Rectory for an age-specific worship programme alongside the 10.30am service, ably led by Jane Brown and team.
- 3) **Little Lions** in its fourth year continued to be a "sell out" most weeks, sometimes even a little bit too crowded, so we ventured out and started a group for those with babies – **Babycino** was born (see poster) to just focus on those with newborns and who might benefit from a smaller and calmer setting.



You are invited to **Babycino**... "Mini Little Lions!"

Mums and their babies - support each other - friendship - networking
Each session includes "TotSlot" & refreshments.
Tuesday mornings 10am-11.30pm - see dates below
suggested contribution £1
St Mary's Vestry, Village Road, UB9 5BH

Contact: Kathy (kathypaine16@gmail.com; 07939 600901 or
Edda (eddalindner18@gmail.com; 07944557814)

Please note, this is a "toddler free" zone - if you have a baby
and a toddler we warmly welcome you
at Little Lions on Wednesdays at St Mark's

25 Feb • 10 March
24 March • 07 April

www.denhamparish.church



Within the Little Lions team we have had so much continuity and the strong team made the weekly commitment sustainable. Susan Hearnden-Smith and Kath Sole helped since 2016 and both their boys started primary school in the summer. We are so grateful for their wonderful commitment to the group all these years.

Sue Fletcher's death early in the first lockdown came as a shock to us all. She was the very able administrator for Little Lions and Sunday Club. Sue and her husband Keith ran the Little Lions refreshments team with so much dedication.

(Right: Sue Fletcher and Carole Wadlow)

Please see the DPN Nov 2020 edition for further reflections:

www.denhamparish.church/magazine



4) With support from Sam Carter and Janet Allen, Kathy and Edda ran another **"Care for the Family" parenting course** on Thursday nights from 30 Jan - 12 March at St Mark's. Two dads and eight mums were taking part. This course was for parents of primary school children. We had very positive feedback and it was special to connect with families from the local community.

5) **School Assemblies** by the "Open the Book" team (eight people) have become an almost weekly feature in both local schools. A group of three team members visit the schools on Thursday mornings to lead a 15-minute-long assembly and tell a bible story from *The Storyteller Bible*, using the resources provided by *The Bible Society*.

And then Lockdown One happened.

First Little Lions was cancelled on the 18th March and thereafter everything else followed. We just about managed to complete the parenting course on Monday 16th March!

Sunday Club, Little Lions and Babycino did not resume in 2020.

We had to adapt quickly and here is the list of things we have tried. Our goal was to stay connected and to enable all ages to contribute and be encouraged.

- **What's App Groups:** Little Lions, Sunday Club, Destiny. Especially on the Sunday Club group, families are happy to share photos and the occasional insight into their daily lives.
- **Little Lions** met in local playgrounds a few times in the summer and autumn term. A Christmas activity pack was delivered to each registered member and provided a great opportunity to catch up - if at a distance!
- **Destiny Online** started to meet for 45 minutes on Zoom almost weekly between April and July. Attendance fluctuated between three and nine. The group resumed in November and culminated with an onsite event at St Mark's to wrap and pack **"Give and Share" Christmas boxes**. It was one of the outstanding moments of the year for me (see photo). It was also one of the first times we could welcome Tim Macqueen as a Destiny leader.
- Until the early autumn we offered short, weekly **Sunday Club videos**, after that we continued to offer Activity sheets and a link to assembly videos as part of our 10.30am online service, with occasional special craft activities. A special thank you to Sonja Clements, Kim Van Comfort and Kath Sole for contributing videos.



- Some of the **Sunday Club team** met on Saturday 3 October on Zoom to reflect and review on the crisis and what we can realistically offer to families.
- We started monthly **"Sunday Club @ Home" bags** from October 2020. The bags contain a variety of items that support the faith journey of all family members.

- We created and distributed “**Christingles in a Bag**” for the first ever Online Christingle Service at Denham Parish Church, in which we especially welcomed “lockdown babies”. With the help of a wonderful team we managed to make and distribute at least 70 bags and 150 oranges.
- **Assemblies restarted online** in October 2020. Sadly the team were “furloughed” due to technical and practical reasons. The pupils of both schools received a Christmas story booklet from our Assembly team. Sadly due to part-closures of some of the year-groups in one school, not everyone received this gift.
- Advent 2020 was particularly special around St Mary’s churchyard as Ken Moody built us a brilliant **stable for the nativity scene** which Kath Sole painted in 2019. Many families and passers by admired this outdoor installation and added a much needed focus of hope during this confusing time.



It's encouraging to write down this summary and to realise that “not all is lost”. While we are sad about the lost connections with families of babies and toddlers and the community aspect of onsite all-age church, we also see this season as an opportunity to innovate and have courage to try different ways to gather – whether that’s online or onsite. How can we introduce families in our community to the God who loves them and who wants to walk with them through all seasons of life? The journey continues!

(Edda Lindner)

Air Cadets *(Christoph writes)*

Due to the pandemic I had no opportunity to meet onsite with the cadets and strict ATC regulations did not allow for them to take part in the wreath laying ceremony on Remembrance Sunday. I was therefore delighted that several cadets contributed to our “We will remember them” video for our Remembrance Sunday online service.

CHOIR



We are so grateful for the technology (and ongoing expertise from Chris and Robert) that has allowed us all to meet each Thursday to catch up with each other, to pray, follow up on the themes of the Sunday online services, and to use breathing, relaxation, and musicianship material from Voice for Life (RSCM). Zoom has also enabled us to keep in contact with past members of the choir - Bill and Caroline in West Yorkshire and Marjo in Holland.

We have been excited to join in with other singers both from our parish and beyond in the Virtual Choir performances for the major festivals. It was such a joy to have a small group of singers at the two Patronal festival services in St Mary's last September and to film items for the Online Carol Service.

Choir members have continued to be active in reading lessons, leading prayers (online services and at the Advent prayers evenings), being part of Bible Book Clubs, PCC and Lifegroups etc. This has enriched our lives and enabled us to keep in contact with the wider church family and beyond. Craig joined us one evening to talk about the 'Give and Share' initiative and members have shared and talked to us in detail about their work and life in general.

There has been sadness. Joan McBurney died in October — such a well-loved chorister. Having celebrated Harrison's 99th birthday remotely we were unable to sing at his funeral in December although some of us were able to be at St Mary's for the lovely service. We are so thankful that Clive pulled through his battle with COVID-19 and that Carole's operation was successful and that she is recovering well.

Organists Ben Hunt and Cameran Johal took up their organ scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge respectively and it has been wonderful to hear/see them play on occasions at our online services. We wish them well in their studies.

I am grateful to every single member of the choir for rising to the challenges of online Zoom (we do have some amusing moments!) recording their singing for online worship, supporting each other and for continuing to share their faith and lives with the group and the people they meet. None of this would be possible without the support, encouragement and leadership of Christoph, Edda, Ian and Nnamdi and for the amazing journey they have taken us on this past year, providing such inspirational, engaging, and inclusive worship. We thank you all.

(Louise Hardy)

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Deanery Synod moved online from March 2020.

In June 2020 Martin Williams (Co-Area Dean) and member of *Lead Academy* gave a presentation on how to emerge from lockdown. The presentation focussed on key lessons learned from the 12 weeks of lockdown and developing processes to navigate out.

The September meeting focussed on the pandemic and included: a presentation from Nicola Flower, head of the Gerrards Cross C.E. School, on the experience and challenges of teaching children during the pandemic; Martin Williams spoke about the scattered church and the impact of online church on congregations; Nick Cuthbert from *Lead Academy* spoke about taking the opportunity online Church has given us to examine what our church services are trying to achieve and making positive changes to the way we do church.

The November meeting focussed on Bishop Steven Croft's message from the Oxford Diocesan Synod on "Living well through the pandemic" and the role of the people of the church as disciples and citizens, drawing from the character of Jesus. The Deanery Synod split into breakout rooms to discuss rebuilding ministry with children and working with adults coming to faith.

People changes in the Deanery over 2020 include new Rectors at Great Chesham, Penn Street & Holmer Green and three new ministers at Gerrards Cross & Fulmer. The Deanery also said farewell to James Leach from Gerrards Cross & Fulmer, who has moved to Whitchurch on Thames.

(Janet Allen)

DENHAM PARISH NEWS

Early last year we invited the magazine distributors to St Mark's to thank them and to get to know one another better. It was a happy occasion and the group photo (showing a current magazine and one from 1970, 50 years earlier!) is particularly poignant as several members of the team passed away later in the year.



Where there are challenges, if you look hard enough you can usually find an opportunity! That has been true for Denham Parish News (DPN) during 2020. Lockdown limited our ability to distribute printed copies to the usual time schedule so we switched to four issues over the year (rather than five), added an additional four pages of quality content (36-page bumper editions rather than the standard 32 pages) and included it free on the church website as a PDF file, potentially reaching an even wider readership.

Amongst a bounty of articles, we have welcomed new authors, including the Denham Community History Project; reflected on the blessing of grandparents;



covered book reviews; heard how God has been working in people's lives and included articles to support us through the pandemic. Our regular contributor Brian O'Regan has provided sensitive insights into the invaluable role of the Churchwardens, traced how each edition of DPN develops and described the joy of the first service we had together onsite at St Mary's (2nd August) after 20 weeks apart.

(Left: Jane and Dexter on the first Sunday back!)

Another innovation has been the inclusion of photos of loved ones in the Family Register. At Christmas we ordered a double print run to enable us to give away complimentary copies to hundreds of households in the parish. Thank you for your support and for using DPN as a means to connect with others. If you have missed any issues, then joyfully I can now say - look them up on the website!
www.denhamparish.church/magazine

(Cathy Macqueen, Editor)

DENHAM VILLAGE FAYRE

There was no May Fayre in 2020 due to the pandemic. We said a special 'thank you!' to three church members who retired from the Fayre Committee in 2020: Robert Ash, Tony Drane and Chris and Phil Thompson – thank you for your dedication to the Fayre over many years!



DISCIPLESHIP

All our **lifegroups** made the move from meeting in a home to meeting online. They have been an incredible blessing to help members stay connected and find support at a very difficult time. One member of a lifegroup who does not have internet, called in on her phone to take part.

Much pastoral and prayer support happens through the members of lifegroups and we are committed to offering every member of Denham Parish Church the opportunity to join a group.

Not everyone was able or willing to connect online – groups tried to stay in touch with occasional phone calls, but we are aware that we have lost the close and ongoing contact with them that a weekly meeting in someone's home can provide. It is also much harder to join a new group online!

On 31 March we gathered seven church members for a trial of **"Bible Book Club"** - a 40-minute session on Zoom to read the bible passage for the following Sunday and then to discuss it together. As a result, ten Bible Book Clubs were formed (two of which were existing lifegroups). The idea was to use the lockdown as an opportunity to read the Bible together, but at the end of the year, eight groups were still meeting. Questions from the groups have been very helpful in helping the Sunday preachers to shape their sermon and in going deeper during Church Coffee Online. If you are interested in joining a group, contact our church office!

Lockdown offered many opportunities to grow in our faith through various online offerings. Spring Harvest - a Christian conference and festival - moved online and several church members found the talks and seminars helpful.

FABRIC REPORT

Church and Churchyard

Introduction

Unsurprisingly, the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, the associated restrictions and the total closure of the church for two lengthy periods during the year, has meant that efforts in addressing matters of fabric for St Mary's Church were directed towards building maintenance rather than preservation. Nevertheless, for the purpose of recording the achievements of 2020, we should firstly recall those fabric projects identified by the Fabric Group at last year's APCM:

- Nave roof guttering installation
- Lightning conductor installation
- Further development of a strategy for addressing the damp in the structural walls and floors
- West and South Doors restoration
- Damaged Tower beams (death watch) – structural survey and assessment of restoration works
- Chancel lighting

In only two of the above listed projects has progress been made.

Tower floor tiles

The Fabric Group removed the carpet tiles from the floor of the tower by the West Door and exposed the patterned flooring of coloured quarry tiles beneath them. (It was reported last year that the carpet tiles were aiding the accumulation of hygroscopic salts and the moisture beneath them. The carpet

tiles were past their 'use-by' date!). A preliminary clean of the exposed flooring was carried out using a mild detergent to remove dirt, rubber staining (from the carpet tiles) and various glues/grouting materials.

Consideration as to how best to proceed will be the next stage; either with further cleaning and repair/renovation of the floor tiles or re-covering them, but this time with some form of breathable matting.



Installation of new nave roof gutters

In February 2020 the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Oxford granted St Mary's a faculty authorising us to install new upper nave roof gutters, north and south sides of the church, and this work was eventually carried out in November, by contractors Summit Roofing. The aim of this new guttering is to reduce the amount of wind-blown rainwater onto the external walls of the upper nave and thereby help to eliminate rainwater penetration to the roof timbers and interior walls of the aisles, especially the south aisle, where there have been occasional rainwater leaks for many years. Additional roofs works undertaken at the time of installation: re-grouting and re-sealing of the lead flashing along the nave walls, in areas of the tower/nave roof interface and nave /chancel roof interface.



Churchyard Roses – Stage 2

The second phase of replacing the dead/ailing standard roses in the churchyard was undertaken in the spring when fifteen new standards were planted in the

churchyard as the wet winter weather abated and before lockdown was imposed.

Subsequently, new listings and plans were produced that record the replaced roses (30 of them, including Stage 1). This information is held by Victoria in the church office.

Fabric projects for consideration in 2021

In no particular order of priority:

- Lightning conductor installation
- Further development of a strategy for addressing the damp in the structural walls and floor
- West and South Doors restoration
- Damaged Tower beams (death watch) – structural survey and assessment of restoration works
- Chancel lighting
- Stage 3 of standard rose replacement
- Screen or partition between tower porch and nave

(Robert Ash on behalf of the St Mary's Fabric Group)

GIVE & SHARE

Give & Share is a ministry that has grown out of a community project supplying boxes of food and household essentials at Christmas to families struggling with the day-to-day cost of living. During the first nine months of 2020 we worked together with the leadership of Denham Parish Church to develop this into an integrated ministry of our church. Our purpose is (1) to support families who are struggling with the day-to-day cost of living and (2) to express the kindness and care of Jesus through the response of the local church.



Last September we became a ministry of Denham Parish Church, which gives us charitable status and integrates our work with the mission of our church. Our first few months were really successful with a huge number of Christmas boxes delivered to local families in our community and surrounding areas through schools. We delivered 192 hampers of food and toys. We also received two large cash donations.

(Craig Alexander and Caroline Goodwin)

MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND ENRICHMENT

The downward trend in the number of weddings was set to continue in 2020, but



due to the pandemic we had only one wedding (*Andrew and Dione, below*).

Many couples had to postpone a planned wedding date (some of them more than once) and we have been working with them to be as flexible as possible and to support them at a difficult time. For some couples the crisis made them review their lives and decide they wanted to get married.

Our marriage preparation helps couples to understand and embrace the vows they are going to make and to build strong foundations for a lifelong marriage. One of the helpful tools we use for this is a couple survey which bride and groom fill in independently. This is then followed up by an invitation to meet with a couple from our church for supper and for an informal conversation about the results (it is not a test and you cannot fail it!). Couples have found this a very helpful process and it has helped us to build stronger relationships with them.

Lockdown was a difficult time for many families, especially those with smaller flats and houses and for couples whose relationship was already strained before the pandemic. Marriage enrichment seeks to equip couples for a lifelong, thriving relationship.

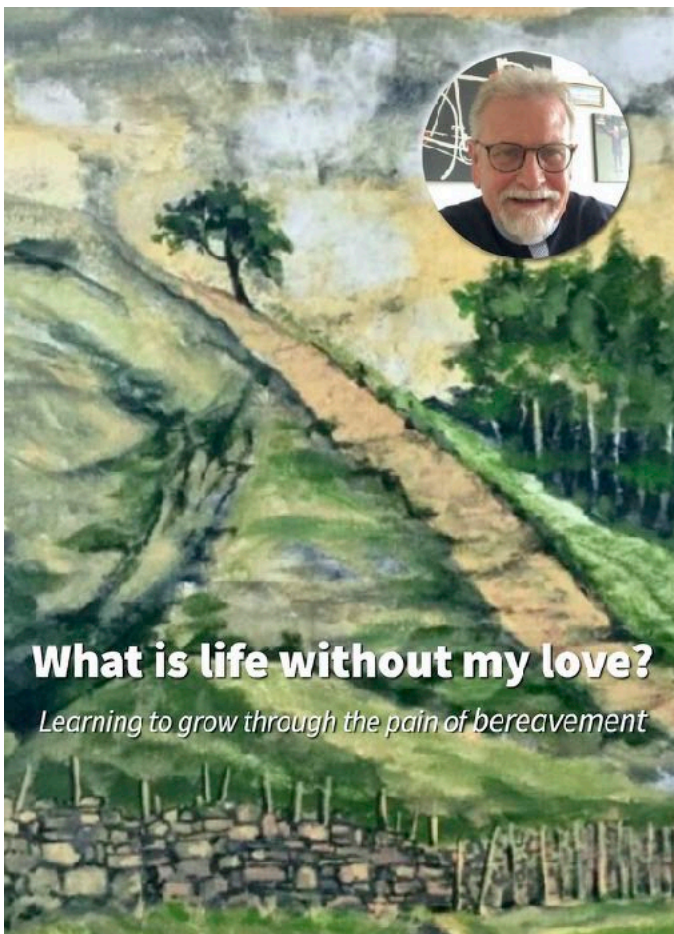
In August Edda and Christoph offered four *marriage sessions*, based on materials developed by *Care for the Family*. They were held on Zoom and twelve couples took part. It was a special joy to reconnect with some of the couples who were married at St Mary's Church in past years. The themes were Cherish | Connect | Collaborate | Commit. We'd like to offer similar events in the future. If this is something you would like to help with, please let us know!

PASTORAL CARE

This was one of the areas of ministry most affected by lockdown. Our contact with residents of care homes, people unwell or in hospital was restricted to phone or video calls for much of the year.

When you study our updated Electoral Roll you will find some notable gaps. In 2020 we had to say good-bye to much-loved members of our congregation, including some of our oldest church members. We are grateful that they were part of our church family and will miss them. In total there were 19 funerals and we thank God that the dire predictions of a much higher number did not materialise. A special thank you to Nnamdi Maduka, Martin Davies and other ministers in our area, who conducted many of the funerals while Ian and Christoph weren't available due to their status as vulnerable and highly vulnerable people.

Our pastoral care team met once in February. After lockdown our three ministers co-ordinated pastoral care with phone calls to church members, supported by other members of the pastoral care team. Churchwardens and ministry team meetings were important opportunities to raise pastoral concerns and ensure they were followed up. Thank you to everyone who looked out for neighbours, friends and church members!



During October and November, Ian Jennings led the **online seminar "Learning To Grow Through The Pain Of Bereavement"**, based on his book "What is Life Without My Love? A Practical Guide to Coping With the Loss of a Loved One". Eleven participants found the sessions very helpful. We are planning to run this seminar again once we are able to meet onsite.

PRAYER

Our goal is that prayer becomes a natural part of everything we do at Denham Parish Church. Every work of God is begun in prayer and we encourage all church members to develop a daily rhythm of prayer and for groups to open and close meetings with prayer.

Thankfully, prayer cannot be hindered and diminished by lockdown! An increasing number of church members are using the *Lectio365* app for their daily prayers, as well as other bible reading and prayer guides such as *Daily Light* by BRF.

During Holy Week, Ian, Christoph and Nnamdi offered daily morning prayer on YouTube.

In the week leading up to Pentecost Sunday we held our first ever 7.14 Prayer Week: For seven days we prayed 14 hours per day, taking our cue from 2 Chronicles 7.14 ("If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."). Church members were invited to sign up for an hour (or several hours) during the week to pray at home with the resources we provided and we were able to fill most of the 98 hours with at least one person. We created an online prayer wall, which can still be viewed: <https://padlet.com/rector11/xtpaudzdlgm08mjx>

For the August issue of Denham Parish News, we compiled "Great Prayers through the Centuries" as a four-page pull-out (based on contributions from our church family). These prayers were then turned into a "Prayer Trail" around St Mary's Church by Kath Sole and Cathy Macqueen.



On Fridays, Nnamdi Maduka is now posting weekly prayers on our website. He has also gathered a small group of intercessors who can respond quickly to prayer requests through a WhatsApp group.

During Advent we met daily for evening prayer on Zoom. About ten church members took it in turns to lead prayers, based on our Advent theme “Worship in the Waiting”.

Our draft Mission Action Plan includes the intention to hold a weekly prayer meeting “The Well” to worship and intercede together. We are hoping to start *The Well* in 2021.

(Christoph Lindner)

SAFEGUARDING

Five new volunteers were recruited using the safer recruitment policy as laid out by the Church of England. There were eight new Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) criminal record checks requested and three of these were renewals for existing volunteers. We continued to use APCS (*Access Personal Checking System*) as our umbrella body and found them efficient and approachable. We were sad to see three volunteers step down from their roles after many years of dedicated work. At the end of the year we had a total of 31 volunteers able to work with children and vulnerable adults in the parish in a wide range of ministries.

In March, the Parish Safeguarding Policy was reviewed and adopted by the PCC. The policy was displayed in all church buildings, once it was safe to do so, and a copy was sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team at Oxford to keep on record. The policy was put on our website with a link on the home page.

We continued to display A3 posters entitled ‘Promoting a Safer Church’ in all church buildings and toilets. The posters highlighted our safeguarding commitments, the local contact details for those with any concerns and the national helpline phone number.

We introduced a ‘Safeguarding Action Plan’ in September to help us ensure our policies were carried out and reviewed regularly. To reinforce this, Safeguarding became a standing item at every PCC meeting. I sent a short written report to the PCC members a week before our meetings. This allowed the trustees to bring any questions or input to the meeting and raise any safeguarding concerns they may have.

Before opening our church buildings after both lockdowns (July and December) we ensured that Health and Safety was paramount and carried out full risk assessments. This involved liaising with our cleaners and our hall hirers. We introduced a booking system for attending services and followed government

guidelines with NHS Test & Trace QR Codes in all our buildings. I would like to thank the teams at St. Mary's and St. Mark's for all the due care and attention that they devoted to ensure we were compliant.

In November the PCC approved a policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders to be given to all new volunteers at the beginning of the recruitment process.

Volunteers that were able to, used their time at home wisely by undertaking online or Zoom Safeguarding Training modules. Twenty two modules, covering Basic Safeguarding Awareness, Foundation Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Awareness were taken and passed with over fifty hours dedicated to this valuable work. I attended my second Parish Safeguarding Officer's meeting, on Zoom of course, where I met 43 others carrying out the same role. We had the chance to speak about any concerns, share good practice and meet the new Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Richard Woodley, and his team.

I would like to offer my grateful thanks to all our loyal volunteers for drawing alongside people, not only in our church family but the community they serve, in the most remarkable and adaptable way. It has been a privilege to be part of the Denham Ministry Team and PCC in this most challenging but hopeful year. Thank you to Christoph and Carlene for their listening ears and Victoria for her support as DBS Administrator.

(Samantha Carter, Parish Safeguarding Officer)

ST FRANCIS HOUSE

Nnamdi Maduka and his family have continued to live in St Francis House throughout the year. Insurance and routine maintenance costs in the year were £1,760.

(Mike Stewart)

ST MARK'S HALL

St Mark's Hall has been very quiet this year due to the pandemic.

The committee met four times and, following the first lockdown, prepared the Hall for reopening in October in compliance with the government guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19.

Two groups returned briefly before the second lockdown.

The good news is that we were able to offer the premises to Harefield NHS Trust on a weekly basis from October 2020 to enable them to carry out a rehabilitation programme for patients. This had become extremely difficult for them on the hospital site due to space and resources being diverted to the needs of the pandemic. This will continue for the foreseeable future and they are most grateful.

Reopening for regular hirers will be phased in accordance with the government road map.

The small sub-committee, set up by the PCC to evaluate how we might improve the Hall to better serve the Church and community particularly in Denham Green, continued their work in the autumn after a pause and is expected to report and make their recommendation to the PCC in June 2021.

Michael Carmody has retired as chairman after seven years but he's very happy to carry on supporting the committee. We all express our thanks to Michael and are currently exploring options for a new chairman and secretary.

(Anne Thomas)

ST MARK'S HOUSE

St Mark's House has been rented out throughout the year generating income for the General Fund, net of letting agent's fees and minor repairs, of £20,034. Insurance and other costs totalled £1,349.

(Mike Stewart)

ST MARY'S PATRONAL FESTIVAL

In September we celebrated a socially distanced festival in and around St Mary's Church and online. Special highlights were the guided walks, runs and bicycle tours on Saturday morning, the open garden at the White House on Sunday (a big thank you to Philip and Irene Courtenay-Luck!) and an interview with Meyrick Beebe at our celebration services (online and twice at St Mary's). There was a beautiful sense of community – appreciated even more in a year when we often couldn't come together. The weekend was also a welcome opportunity to raise funds for our fabric fund, especially in a year when we had to cancel our May Fayre. *(Below: Cooling off in the river at The White House)*



VESTRY TEAS

We were not able to offer vestry teas in 2020 and are reviewing how we can best offer hospitality to our community in the future, based on our church vision to pray, welcome and share like Jesus.

WORSHIP

For the first 10 weeks of 2020 we continued with our regular worship patterns - 8am BCP Holy Communion and 10.30am Sunday Worship at St Mary's. Our series of services with the theme "God in the Life of ..." at our monthly Café Church at St Mark's continued. In February we welcomed Val Dewhurst who was delighted to reconnect with old friends and to meet new church members.

Monthly services were held at St Francis Chapel, Denham Garden Village, Denham Manor and White Plains residential care homes.



Sunday 22 March was Mothering Sunday and it was the first time we were not able to meet in our church buildings. Very quickly we established alternative forms of worship - online, on a dedicated local phone line and printed on the inside pages of our Parousia news sheet so that those who were not online were

able to read their own service at home.

More people than ever contributed to our new-style services for the rest of the year - with readings, prayers, interviews, photos and technical support - thank you! While we missed meeting together in the same place - especially the singing, the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, the casual chats before and after the service - we also discovered new ways to connect and worship together: interactive chat during the services, online interviews with church members and mission partners from all around the world, virtual choirs made up of singers from Denham Parish Church and further afield, and *Church Coffee Online* after the service. The latter provided a forum where we were able to get to know one another better and reflect on the themes of our services in a way that many found at least as engaging as coffee in the vestry. Friends of our church who do not live locally were able to re-connect with us online, while some church

members did not have the internet in their homes or found it difficult to worship together in this way.



(Virtual Choir for Pentecost)

Over the course of the year we alternated the regular lectionary readings with specific sermon series to help us develop aspects of our discipleship. In 2020 these were “Healthy Family”, “The Life We Were Made For - Union With Christ”, “RESET: family, money, online, job, finishing well” and (during Advent) “Worship in the Waiting”.

From Pentecost Sunday we introduced the first three of ten “Healthy Habits”: prayer, fellowship, gladness & generosity. The goal is to explore and embed these habits in our daily life so it becomes more Christ-like. “Healthy Habits” will continue in 2021.



Our churchwardens have already described the care that went into preparing St Mary’s Church for re-opening and it was a joy to come together again from the beginning of August, while the online services continued.

Our services have become shorter and more informal in 2020 and we are beginning to discern how the pandemic will influence our future worship pattern. Initially we were confident that we would return to a semblance of normality in the summer and autumn. But our plan to refresh our services in the autumn was abandoned as it became clear that we might be heading into another lockdown, which then materialised in November.



Although our Remembrance Sunday service at St Mary's had to be cancelled, we still conducted a very meaningful wreath-laying ceremony at the war memorial, which was filmed and then streamed on Youtube. The online service was appreciated by many – members of our community contributed short videos to affirm that “we will remember them”. Our yew tree in front of St Mary's Church was transformed into a 'Remembrance tree' and many members of our community contributed poppies.

From the outset we had planned Christmas services and activities for online, onsite and outdoors. We therefore still had a varied offering

when new restrictions came into force a few days before Christmas. Sadly we had to cancel our candle-lit carol services at St Mary's, but the Christmas trail and community Christmas trees (*below: White Plains residents after decorating their tree*) at St Mary's and the fantastic online services allowed hundreds of people to celebrate the good news of God becoming one of us in Jesus Christ. We were particularly pleased how many members of our local community made contributions - one example was the carol *Away in a Manger*, sung by various community groups for our online Community Carol Service.



(Christoph Lindner)



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