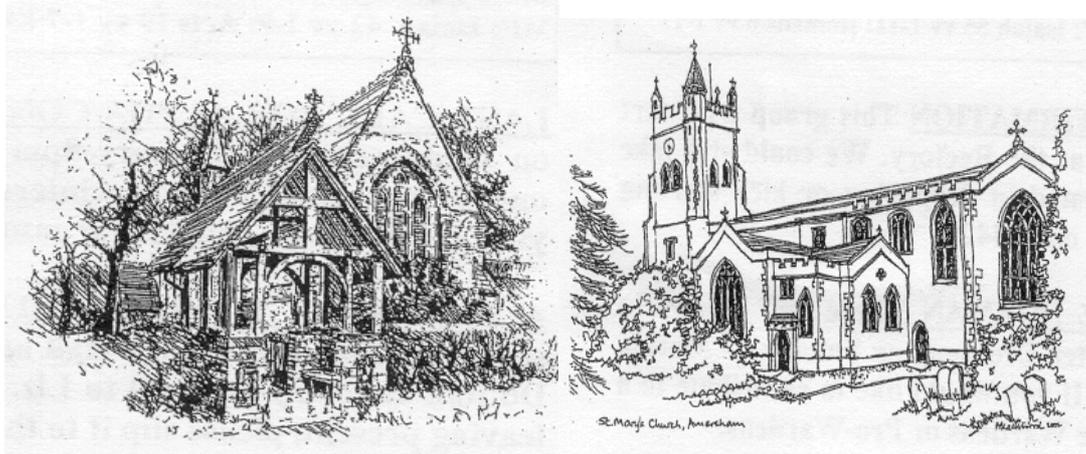


# **THE PARISH OF AMERSHAM WITH COLESHILL**



## **Annual Report 2020**

**Come to the Annual Parish Meeting  
on Sunday 18th October 2020 at  
12.30am in St Mary's Church**

**To discuss the past year and elect  
Churchwardens and PCC members**

**All welcome**

RECTOR'S REPORT TO THE PARISH AGM 2020  
AMERSHAM WITH COLESHILL

For all of us there is a distinct before and after feeling; before Covid and the lockdown, and then after the summer easing a current move to further restrictive measures. Not since the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918-20 has our country seen anything like it! And as I write in early October, we still face uncertainty and challenge.

Up to March we had had a pretty standard year. Most things in the parish had ticked over smoothly, major festivals had gone well, we were about to advertise for a new children and family worker, our schools were in fine form. Then overnight came lock-down. The local authorities told us to identify sites for mass burials, and the Diocese decided to waive fees for the expected rush of funerals. At least all this never materialised. While I took some dozen covid-19 death funerals (6 from the same care home) the total was nothing like this worst-case scenario, doubtless down to the sterling efforts of our NHS professionals. All our weddings were cancelled or postponed. We turned to the telephone to call round all those for whom we had contact details, a mammoth pastoral task! It seemed only right to postpone my planned retirement indefinitely. How can the captain leave the bridge when a hurricane hits?

Like most parishes, from Palm Sunday, with much fear and trembling we vicars turned to our tablets and phones to stream our Sunday and other services. It proved astonishingly successful, with hundreds and sometimes thousands of views each week on the open access FB platform and Zoom. For six months each Sunday at 10, Rosie and I streamed a short Modern language HC service from my study seated in matching leather armchairs, which was the subject of an article in the Times! Even though we returned to our church buildings in a limited way in July, we have continued to stream services and will go on doing so for the foreseeable future. Maybe this mixed mode will become the new norm.

At St Mary's we took the opportunity to rewire and re-light the church building. This has been followed by a complete interior redecoration, which is due to be completed by the end of October. PCC approved the very large expenditure from property reserves on the basis that this was what they were there for, and an opportunity for action to arise while the church was closed anyway was a wonderful chance to make good. Under the guidance of our PCC treasurer and wardens the work has been completed to a very high standard. All Saints being in good nick has been open for private prayer for much of this time.

Of course, our finances took a hit as collections and envelope planned giving were impossible. However, I have been amazed by the number of you who have switched to standing order and others who have made very substantial donations to tide us over. Thank you so much.

Our schools reopened fully in September. Classes and years are bubbled, and so far it has been an outstanding success. The downside is the amount of anxiety among parents about health, money, social contact, in fact a multitude of issues, has resulted in our teachers and head teachers especially being given a very hard time. Please remember them all in your prayers.

I pay special tribute to our wardens, treasurers, hon secretaries and all our parish officers and school governors who have resolutely supported me through the storm so far. It has been wonderful to have Dorothy our Parish Administrator back from serious illness too.

I also thank our clergy and readers, who have turned out week by week in church and online to lead high quality worship when asked. As a long term 'luvvie' it is second nature for me to stand up in front of a microphone or camera, but to most it is a huge challenge! Well done all.

As I write I have no idea how the so called Covid '2<sup>nd</sup> wave' will affect us. But as we continue our journey through the unknown, as the Lord said to Joshua, *'Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'* (Joshua 1:9)

Tim Harper  
Rector Amersham with Coleshill  
October 2020

### **Parochial Church Council: Secretary's Report, 2019 to April 2020**

Not counting the very brief meeting to elect officers immediately after last year's annual church meeting, PCC met formally on four occasions between April 2019 and April 2020. The twenty members continued as PCC members beyond their initial twelvemonth until the Covid restrictions were lifted and the annual church meeting could take place. The names of the members appear at the end of this report. Average attendance at meetings this year was a fraction under 16. The minutes of all PCC meetings are available in the file on the table at the west end of the church.

The Standing Committee of core PCC members is empowered to take decisions on specific issues when no full PCC meeting is imminent; this it accomplishes by email consultation and informal discussion. During the Covid lockdown, when meeting formally was impossible, electronic means became essential. Standing Committee decisions are always reported, and occasionally reviewed, at the next PCC meeting, though the period between PCC meetings is currently far longer than usual.

The Wardens of both churches give a report at every PCC meeting, as does the Treasurer. The PCC also receives regular reports on Youth Work, Charitable Giving, Mission, the two schools and the Almshouses. Safeguarding and Data Protection are permanent agenda items. There is a report from the Deanery Synod, if a meeting has taken place. Of the two Church Committees, All Saints holds scheduled meeting; the St Mary's Committee has not met since November 2015 as its agenda overlapped almost totally with that of the PCC.

### **Main matters discussed by the PCC 2019-20**

1. The Treasurer presents a report at every meeting, enlightened and lightened by his lively commentary. Obtaining best value for money in everyday expenditure, as well as on major projects, remains the basic strategy, as well as pursuing all potential sources of funds for specific purposes. Parish running costs have been brought directly to the attention of parishioners to spur planned giving and, as a further fillip in an increasingly cashless society, the opportunity for

contactless payment has been introduced. However, the Covid closure of the church poses a major threat to our financial position.

2. The Charitable Giving Committee considers how we can raise money for various charities. About £10,000 is raised each year, as support for Steve Poulson, our Mission Partner working with Street Kids Direct in Honduras, and for a range of charities in the UK and abroad.

3. Another permanent agenda item is Fabric and Property in both churches, the main aspects of which are covered in the Church Wardens' reports.

4. Youth Work in the parish is a major concern. Much discussion has produced a job description and provisional appointment schedule for a Parish Youth and Family Worker. Ann Pearse's Sunday School and First Steps are run with her typical care and enthusiasm. Some activities for older children have been organised by Martin Pounce.

Steve Johnson,  
PCC Secretary.  
May 2020

### **Safeguarding Report 2019-20**

Everyone working with children and young people under the aegis of the parish has been DBS checked and all records are up to date and securely stored. There are no current reports or concerns which would require referral to the diocese or to local social services. During the year, we took on responsibility for safeguarding at St. Michael's Convent in Gerrards Cross, monitoring their policies and co-ordinating DBS applications.

The review of our safeguarding policy and practice, initiated at last year's APCM, was completed and we are following the action plan to address areas of weakness. In particular, PCC has adopted and adapted the diocese safeguarding policy and this is now displayed in both churches, along with a form on which to register a safeguarding concern; both can also be found online. In carrying out the changes needed, I am grateful for the help of Clare Samuels, whom PCC appointed as Joint Parish Safeguarding Officer at its meeting in November 2019.

A major task this year has been the Diocese Past Case Review. This required the clergy to review all previous incidents of safeguarding concerns or actions, whether on record or simply remembered by the clergy or by any member of the congregation, and to report them to the diocese, even if this was not considered appropriate or necessary at the time. We referred for review by the diocese three minor incidences (2007, 2008, 2013) which were not reported at the time. There has been no response from the diocese review team which suggests that the incidents were managed properly at the time.

The Diocese Safeguarding Team remains very keen to raise parish safeguarding to a higher level. While I have misgivings about some aspects of this drive, their emphasis on training cannot be criticised. Their latest changes require all members of PCC to have taken at least the online Basic Awareness training module, and encourages all members of the congregation to access this training, especially if they perform any roles, voluntary or otherwise, however peripheral, in the running of the church or parish. This, apparently, means you.

1. Go to <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>, select 'Online courses' then C0.
2. If you haven't already, you will need to create a new account, which is a matter of filling in an online form (choose "Not part of a Training Institution" when asked).
3. Select the course and begin. C0 will take about an hour. There's a fair bit of reading (or listening, if you prefer) and an occasional quiz to keep you focussed.

I hope my record is up to date, though it shows only a small increase in the number having taken Basic Awareness training this year. Claire Samuels is happy to lead a group of parishioners who prefer not to work online through the Basic Awareness module if there is demand and when we can safely meet to do this. Please remember always to email me a copy of the confirmation when you complete a training course or module.

Steve Johnson,  
Joint Parish Safeguarding Officer.

May 2020

**Amersham with Coleshill PCC**  
**Annual Treasurer's Report**  
**For the year ended 31 December 2019**

I am pleased to provide you with our annual accounts and this Executive Summary:

Key objectives for 2019 were to:

1. To continue to implement strategies and controls to overturn disappointing 2018 financial results in order to build financial sustainability that will future proof the finances of the parish.
2. Provide finance and strategic guidance to support both Mission and major fabric proposals at St Marys in 2019 and beyond.
3. Consider and deliver initiatives to support both fundraising and church giving.

As reported at our quarterly PCC meetings, there were a number of head winds / key issues and trends that, entering into 2019, we had to build strategies to overcome:

1. Increasing fabric expenditure both at St Mary's (StM) and Piggotts End (PE) property
2. Steady decline in Planned Giving and rapid decline seen in cash collections across both St Mary's and All Saints.
3. Continued increase in our fixed costs eg insurances, utilities
4. Volatile markets for investments with steep declines evidenced from Q4/2018

Summary of Financial Performance for the year ended 31 December 2019:

- Operational Surplus: £14,351 significantly up from previous 2018's deficit (£32,791). This represents £47,142 positive swing in operational activities due to £14,882 increase in income and £32,260 decrease in expenditure.
  - Tax Efficient Giving down £3,992 (3.8%) however due to good management of Planned Giving we have increased our recovery of Gift Aid by £2,452 (10%)
  - Cash Collections up £6,153 (45%)
  - Gifts & Cash Offerings down £16,889 (73%)
  - Income from Church Activities up £ 10,793 (88%)
  - Special Services –static on previous year

- Church Rooms – improved financial contribution to PCC - Good result.
- Operational Surplus (U/R only) & incl PE expenses: £8,918 significantly up from 2018. However, it must be noted that this has been significantly improved with:
  - PE now generating positive cashflow of £12k – Following from substantial capex costs in 2018 we have continued to invest in the property (4k in 2019) and ensuring it is brought up to date in line with current rental market requirements – would envisage a similar 25% capex cost / rental income received in 2020.
  - Pleasing to now see PE making substantial contribution however important that property is continually invested in and we work closely with Hadlands (property agents) to minimise any potential voids.
- Operational Expenditure decreased by £32,260. Key areas that supported this was reduced PE spend and reduced staff costs (no Youth worker in 2019).
- In addition, through continued strong focus on cost management we reduced a number of key areas of expenditure including church running costs and administration.
- Balance Sheet: As you may remember our Balance Sheet in 2018 had fallen by £48,768 to £628,161. In 2019, we saw a welcome return to positive movement in our balance sheet by £79,450 to £707,611.
- Therefore, the total funds of the church increased over the period largely due to strong performance in our investment assets. It is important to understand when analysing Parish Finances that there are 3 types of Funds:
  - Unrestricted Funds – general funds for general objectives of the church – Day to day operational cash flow but does include unrestricted assets of which £89,000 is the Curates House – increased by £15,892 to £295,461. The PCC is well endowed and has c£200k (not incl PE fixed Asset value) on unrestricted funds as at 31 December 2019. Funds also exist for the maintenance of both churches.
  - Restricted Funds – can only be used for the specific purpose for which they have been given eg Fabric – increased by £44,003 to £251,464
  - Endowment Funds – represent endowments where capital must be maintained and the dividend income used only for the restricted purposes specified in the establishment of the endowments – increased by £19,555 to £160,686.

In 2017 we had an exceptional year, benefitting greatly from substantial gifts and legacies and performance of our investments. A year later in 2018 saw a reversal in investment performance that largely contributed to significant balance sheet reduction. However, delighted to report that our balance sheet in 2019 has more than recovered that 2018 reversal. All of our fund types have grown through strong cash management but also due to the fact that the equity markets exceeded expectations.

2019 has been a strong year and shows strong signs of financial stability & sustainability. The figures above are not a surprise as due to the continued monitoring and management of our cash position, both Peter Clackett and I have been reporting that our operational performance was under threat and were taking measures to control and reduce the impact.

The vast majority of Parish Finances are based around St Mary's as it's a bigger church with a bigger congregation and a civic role locally. However, All Saints and Church Rooms in particular also play a vital role in parish financial performance. All Saints posted sustained performance with a reduced deficit (£4.1k deficit pre 5k deposit transfer). This is good result and we have now also addressed the monies to All Saints for Special services. Also, Church Rooms has shown a continuing increase in revenue. However, we have had to address a number of outstanding fabric

issues from earlier quinquennial inspections in order to future proof the property. This work has continued into 2020.

We were acutely aware that 2018 had been significantly impacted by Piggotts End property where we had seen a long one off period of reduced income. Pleased to report that Piggotts End has been a significant revenue contributor to the parish in 2019 of £12.7k despite being a huge amount of work. Special mention to Sue Pounce in particular for all the work gone into making it a success in 2019. We continue to invest in the property in ensuring we maintain it up to current rental regulations.

In addition, our fixed costs have reduced due to not having Youth leader leaving which although has impacted mission it has provided much needed short term headroom.

In my last annual report, I stated that we were embarking on further Planned Giving initiatives. It took some time as the whole contactless payments market has exploded but we got there in the end and we now have Good Box terminals. Well, we have 1 of the 4 ordered as there is a large waiting list but our brass plate machines for both All Saints and St Mary's are on order. However, we have already seen at our Christmas services how popular and relevant these types of payment machines are to modern day donation / giving. In terms of further initiatives and to support donations and cashflow during Covid19 we are embarking (with the help of Rev'd Tim Harper) on having donation buttons on our websites that link directly into our bank account. Bizarrely, all this new technology when we have actually seen our cash donation at services increase by 6k in 2019!

Planned Giving is our largest income source and we must thank every one of our congregation for their contribution. Without their kind donations we simply cannot function and our work supporting the community and mission giving would significantly reduce and our buildings would deteriorate. Thank you for what you donate now. If you are able to give more then I can assure you that we will put it to very good use and that every penny is accounted for and nothing is wasted.

I will continue to share with you what it costs to run our parish.

To bring this to life, the table below shows levels of Income and Expenditure for each church and at consolidated parish view on a daily / monthly basis based on 2019 figures:

	<b>St Mary's, Amersham</b>	<b>All Saints Coleshill</b>	<b>PCC</b>
<b>Income per day / month</b>	571 / 17,378	65 / 1,991	636 / 19,369
<b>Expenditure per day / month</b>	535 / 16,260	76 / 2,331	611 / 18,591
<b>Total Monthly Surplus / Deficit</b>	<b>1118</b>	<b>(340)</b>	<b>778</b>

\*Note: figures taken pre AS £5000 transfer.

The table shows clearly that in 2019 we needed £611 per day to run our church reduced by £90 per day from 2018 largely due to reduction in expenditure across the parish.

Key Finance actions undertaken to address our key challenges and support delivery of sustainable 2018 financial Performance:

- Parish Share of £94,728 was paid in full by deadline.
- Reduction in expenditure largely due to decrease in salaries (Youth Worker & Piggotts End spend)
- Overall, total youth / child costs at £15.6k down from £31.4k in 2018.
- Successful Listed Places of Worship scheme completed at StM – specific scheme to allow VAT re-claim on eligible fabric works on a 12month basis.
- All Regulatory (incl Pension Auto-enrolment exercise), Diocesan, HMRC & Charities Commission returns up to date.
- Auditors have given us a clean report in the way that we are managing our finances and regulatory obligations.
- Comprehensive Treasurers Report prepared and discussed at every PCC meeting.
- Mission Giving Committee created to ensure Charitable Giving Policy is alive and well and we are challenging ourselves to give more to good causes. £17.1k distributed to over 20 good causes in 2019. Our Mission Giving continues to be greatly supported by all those that work so hard to run our Church Fete.
- Ongoing committed support to Steve Poulson at CMS to support mission work in Honduras.

In summary, 2019 PCC's financial performance highlights a strong financial performance across all key areas but let's be clear from an I&E lens this is primarily down to Piggotts End's strong contribution and decrease in Youth costs. If for example, we had a Youth Worker remunerated at previous levels we would have been in deficit.

What is important is that we continue with focussed, disciplined management of our finances to ensure that we continue to support our church mission, mission giving & upkeep of our beautiful buildings.

The PCC is still well endowed with both unrestricted & restricted funds as at 31 December 2019 and as highlighted, funds also exist for the maintenance of both churches. As stated last year we do have ageing buildings that are expensive to maintain and keep to acceptable standards.

With a new government and what has undoubtedly been a "Boris Bounce", there are still many headwinds currently facing our economy – Brexit (UK's ability to secure a trade deal) & the Covid-19 crisis which we have already seen a number of corporate casualties and a Base Rate reduction down 0.1% - what price do we give on hitting negative interest rates in 2020? However, from a Church Treasurer view we will continue to focus on doing the basics well (strong cash management) and keeping a close eye on how our investments are performing and making necessary changes as & when required.

At PCC level, we also have a number of headwinds / projects / challenging decisions ahead of us:

St Mary's Fabric Projects – we have completed the part of the project and remainder will commence in Q2 /20 – we already took the decision to use monies set aside in the Parker Trust to support this project.

Church Rooms – we have commenced on the remedial outstanding Quinquennial works – these sadly were not planned and will have an impact on 2020. Wider discussions being held at PCC with regards to future of Church Rooms in it's current guise.

Youth / Family Ministry – substantial cost but important role in future proofing our work in local community.

Lastly and by no means least - Covid19 – at time of writing we are in unprecedented times with our churches closed and the whole world gripped in lockdown as a result of this pandemic. From a financial view this is potentially catastrophic and so far this Treasurer is extremely concerned with the lack of support and practical advice given by either Amersham Deanery or Oxford Diocese. We are closed, we are not getting the special services, the donations, the income we are used to having because we are closed for services. We do not have ability to furlough, apply to a bank for a CBIL or delay payments to suppliers and therefore our fixed costs remain broadly at same level. For the diocese to remind us to use our reserves for Parish Share is quite frankly insulting. Since being Treasurer, we have always paid our Parish Share and will continue to do so for as long as we can but the longer the crisis goes on the bigger the impact. Looking at our cashflow, this crisis and the lack of support we are getting will have an impact on the amount of Charitable Giving and also, importantly on when or on what capacity we take on a Youth / Family worker. There is only so much we can do with what we have and we need to ensure we are in a stable & sustainable financial position coming out of the crisis before we embark on large, long term investments into our infrastructure. I can already see substantial reduction in our income and a significant percentage of our pre-booked special services have been cancelled. There is no doubting that this crisis is going to have a significant impact on our 2020 financial performance.

I have spoken to a number of churches and church treasurers and my concern is very much shared. However, we are in a stronger position than most due to the work and decisions we have undertaken over the past few years. We can get through this but it will lead to difficult decisions having to be made unless the diocese / deanery give strong immediate financial support. As I keep on reiterating, we are currently closed and we always have to keep in mind that although it would seem on paper we have considerable reserves we are only 1 major building failure away from having to deplete our reserves therefore it is important that we employ prudent financial strategies at this moment in time which will include close management of our cashflow.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the support from the Clergy, Church Wardens, PCC Members, Steve Johnson, Dick Ware, Peter Clackett, Claire Atkinson. In particular, a special mention to Philip Woodhead, Dorothy Potter, Loraine Hollett and Sue Pounce without whose help my role as treasurer would be an awful lot more time consuming. Thank You.

Should you have any queries concerning the contents of this review or should you have any general questions about the parish finances, please do not hesitate to contact me via mobile 07703 963990 or email at [treasurer-pcc@outlook.com](mailto:treasurer-pcc@outlook.com).

**Graeme Coles - PCC Treasurer**  
**April 2020**

## Sunday School

A good year for Sunday school.

The production of Christmas cards made by the children was a great focus for all. We were able to donate money to the charity Mary,s Meals and this led to a series of lessons on family, home and sharing meals together including communion. We also did a few sessions on children in the bible, finishing with Jesus life in Nazareth and leading on to his visits to Jerusalem including Palm Sunday We have an average of 7 children per week with children attending 1 or 2 weeks out of 4. So 30 or so plus visitors will be participating over the terms plus any who come to baptisms.

We are called explorers and follow a junior church style of session with news, prayer, bible story or bible linked theme, followed by craft and activity.

The children have roles, so our scribe takes the register, all contribute to prayer time with a prayer monitor to time us, and the older children read bible stories and help the young ones with craft.

The children and families are a delight to work with and we are blessed to have them as part of our fellowship.

First steps is a service for mothers and toddlers, childminders,nannies and dads.

We start with coffee and chat and our rector provides a singing, prayer and story For all to participate in. We represent 30 plus families and the adults who come are from varying faiths, Jewish,Muslim,orthodox catholic and Protestant churches of Europe.and we have 15 nationalities including Brazil,South Africa, Estonia, China and America.

Our team of 5, include Lynne, Lorraine,Sheila and Miriam, volunteer each month now so we have allocated roles and can manage the morning safely and provide an enjoyable session of crafts, gardening or green activity table, educational and fun play.

This is a first experience of church for many and we are glad to serve and make this possible. The feedback from adults and children is rewarding and the children especially enjoy the space and fun activities.

## **Church Warden report for 2019/20 APCM**

Even with the Covid restrictions and accompanying anxieties, St. Mary's has continued to be a welcoming and stable community with our Rector becoming an 'Internet sensation' according to Duncan Dyason. We are so blessed to have Tim's strong leadership and inspirational ministry reaching beyond the church into the wider community. We thank him, Tim Barnard, Sue Gill and Charles Howlett for effectively streaming over the past few months and conducting regular services that have enabled us all to worship and reflect and remain part of a strong church fellowship.

One of the main responsibilities of the Church Wardens is to report on the status of the church buildings and fittings. We are happy to confirm that the buildings and fittings are in good order. In the previous year we had received a Faculty consent to replace two long lost Stone Roof Crosses on the North side of the Church. This work was completed in February 2020. We are pleased to report that we have received many favourable comments on how splendid they look.

Our grateful thanks go to Stephen Crawley our church surveyor who effectively prepared and managed plans for all the major fabric projects.

The installation of a new lighting system and rewiring (the year's third faculty) commenced in April and was completed during lockdown when the church building was closed. Prior to that we were able to get the Comper Chandeliers repaired and restored and we are extremely grateful to Paul van Veen for his skilful and sensitive workmanship in restoring the chandeliers to their former glory. We are pleased to hear the many positive comments from you all on the improvement the new lighting has made to our church. The new LED fittings should help save energy and reduce our electricity bills. Our thanks to Ant Brown and Charles Howlett for their regular support and advice on the project.

We are in the middle of our second major project: that of repair and redecoration of the inside of the church. (The year's fourth faculty) As the church is now in use for services including pre-booked weddings, the project will take longer.

Earlier in the year in response to a number of Fabric items requiring urgent attention the Church Rooms were repaired, redecorated both internally and externally. This work provided the opportunity to refurbish the parish office and create a much needed meeting room. We were able to claim on our insurance for roof repairs following storm damage in February 2020. We also drew up a hiring policy for both the church and the church rooms and amended the current terms and condition of hire for both buildings. The PCC ratified the hiring policy and will review the hiring costs annually.

Our thanks must go to Amersham Town Council who have the responsibility to maintain the **Churchyard**. They carry out their duties so well. Professional advice was taken on the care of the two large **Yew Trees** in the churchyard. Following permission from the Diocese (the year's first faculty) maintenance work was carried out and paid for by ATC. Also, a dangerous diseased tree was removed from the perimeter of the churchyard (the year's second faculty). Part of the low brick wall opposite the Rectory was accidentally knocked down and rebuilt by ATC. Following our statutory tests on the graves in the churchyard, we were concerned about the safety of the large memorial outside the lower vestry and requested it be fenced by ATC. They have since carried out the work. All these items were paid for by Amersham Town Council. We are grateful to members of Amersham in Bloom who have replanted parts of the churchyard.

The "**Curate's House**" at Piggott's End is privately let as it is not currently required for a Curate and brings in a useful income for the PCC. Work was done at the house this year to install a new boiler. Sadly, because of unemployment due to the effects of Covid on the economy, the tenants had to return to Poland in July. However, new tenants were quickly found by Hadlands and moved in during August.

During the year Loraine Hollett kindly agreed to be the Church **Health and Safety** representative. We are extremely grateful that she and Martin Hollett carried out risk assessments in preparation for an external inspection of the Church by our Insurers, Ecclesiastical. The two recommendations from the inspection have now been addressed. We are making sure the electrical cupboard is clear of flammable material and we now have a Working at Heights Policy. We were grateful to Trevor Clayfield for checking all our ladders and these checks will be carried out annually. All the regular checks are up to date (gas safety, electrical report,

lightning conductor, fire extinguishers etc), and the organ has been serviced and tuned as per contract.

Learning to live with Covid has been a steep learning curve for us all and in July we set up a task force on reopening the church and the church rooms. At all times informed discussions were held using the government guidance for the safe use of places. The appropriate risk assessments were carried out and measures were implemented to make the buildings **COVID 19 secure**. We are grateful to Loraine and Martin for installing additional resources in the church rooms and to members of the congregation who have regularly cleaned the church between the Sunday services.

Since our last Annual Meeting, we have had some lovely social occasions such as the Harvest Lunch and mid-week evening talks. Although we haven't been able to hold our annual Fete, a team led by Martin and Loraine have set up the book stall throughout the summer which has brought in additional income. We are both humbled and encouraged by the generosity shown towards St. Mary's. Without financial support so generously offered by you, our church would simply not be able to function in the way it does. On behalf of the PCC, we would like to thank you all for your faithful on-going financial support of the work at St. Mary's.

In the role of Church Warden, we are privileged to be part of the PCC and the Standing Committee. We would like to thank all PCC members for their commitment throughout the year and for the unique contribution that each individual makes to discussion and decision making. The smooth running of St. Mary's Church is the result of the tremendous support and assistance received from the many helpers within our congregation and Parish throughout the year. This is, as ever greatly appreciated and our great thanks go to all who contribute to the Church services as well as the regular tasks of flower arranging led by Jo Coldham, bell ringing led by Jan Galloway, the choir, organists Olwyn Morris and Adrian, Simmonds, after church refreshments led by Janet Clayfield, the careful looking after our finances by Graeme Coles, and gift aid envelopes and stewardship details by Clare Atkinson. The Church as we know it would have difficulty functioning without all this, often unseen, work and we are truly grateful to everyone involved in its running.

Finally, our special thanks to our amazing Clergy team, we remain thankful for the great spirit and shared purpose shown in their ministry as we continue to listen to God and discern His vision for us in Amersham and our role in the wider church in the UK and abroad.

Susan Pounce and Howard Hughes  
September 2020

## **ALL SAINTS' CHURCH**

### **WARDENS' REPORT 2020**

The report this year, which relates to the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 is overshadowed by the impact of the corona virus in 2020. The Church was opened for private prayer, and subsequently for communion services as soon as legally permitted, and in accordance with safety and risk assessments.

## **WORSHIP :**

The pattern of services has remained generally as in previous years, with the addition of a number of themed services

Our house group continued to flourish, averaging 12 – very ably led by Audrey Tridgell with back-up from Louise Baneka.

Coffee (and a chat) immediately after Sunday morning service had become a firm institution.

## **SPECIAL SERVICES :**

We held themed services to encourage particular groups of people from the village and Winchmore Hill to join us, and especially welcomed the children.

The children from the village Church of England school and their families joined us formally three times in the year – for Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival, and Christingle services. They continue to prove a great success. In addition they visited the church at the end of each term. Bibles were presented again to school leavers at the end of the Summer term. Open school assemblies took place in the Church every month.

Baptism follow-up service continued for those children baptized during the previous year.

During Passiontide and Easter we held a special service on Palm Sunday, evening meditation for the Parish on the Tuesday of Holy Week, we joined the Christian Passover Meal at St Mary's before the Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday, we held an Ash Wednesday service, which included a soup lunch in Church for those unable to attend Sunday services, and we had a special service of hymns, prayers, and meditation, with the lighting of candles on Good Friday. On Easter Day, in addition to our usual Communion Service at 9.00, members of the choir joined St Mary's for the choral evening service.

Our pet service turned out to be a great success again. Sue Gill took the service and was able to bless all creatures great and small – the animals behaved impeccably !! Non regular churchgoers attended in numbers.

Other themed services included bees, patronal celebration, remembrance, and mothering Sunday. The aim was to hold a themed service each month.

## **MISSION ACTION PLAN :**

We continued to hold regular monthly prayer meetings in church. From a small start, the growing number of attendees is encouraging.

We held an afternoon tea for senior members of the congregation, which was enjoyed by all.

Children from the Magpie Club were invited to visit the church for a short service once a term – and attendance has been encouraging – with numbers growing steadily.

A bee club based on the bees kept in the churchyard was organized together with the school on Sunday mornings after Church for children and their carers. A generous donation from the Oxford Diocese supported the purchase of protective bee suits for the children,

#### **PASTORAL CARE AND OUTREACH :**

Events and activities were organized to support people within the villages of Coleshill and Winchmore Hill.

The Magpie Club continued to go from strength to strength. The Club met on a Friday morning in the village hall, specifically for carers and toddlers, but an increasing number of villagers were encouraged to join us for coffee or tea and a chat, managed by Jean Dover.

The Patch system is designed to support those who are ill or need company, and to welcome newcomers to the village. Regular meetings which are totally confidential try to ensure that all are included. A newcomers' party was held in the cricket club on

At Amersham Hospital the Chaplaincy team provided a rota of helpers to visit the hospital each week to establish those patients who would like to receive Communion, and to provide company to any who so require.

#### **ACTIVITIES :**

Kathryn Rideout, previously our youth worker, organized "Open the Book" regularly at the school. From March 2018 monthly open school assemblies were held in Church.

The format for Christian Aid week was changed to focus on soup lunches in Church.

#### **FABRIC :**

Running repairs were made to the Church. We now seek to explore possibilities of organizing a working party to remedy minor requirements arising from the quinquennial survey.

#### **PARISHIONERS :**

All Saints' is a beautiful 1861 Victorian rural church, designed by GE Street, which plays an important part in the community life of the village and surrounding parish.

The Church Committee met on four occasions during the year. There are many people with specific roles and talents who keep our church in an attractive, open, and welcoming state by giving generously of their time.

We are fortunate that our worship is enhanced by having a fine organ, a consummate professional organist and choirmaster, Ruth Murphy, and a loyal band of faithful singers.

One of the glories of All Saints' is the colourful and artistic floral decoration organized by Rosemary Valentine, but with the flair and hard work of the team of talented workers.

Chris Wege, as well as being the secretary to the Church Committee, devotes a great deal of time and care to the maintenance of the churchyard, including a redesigned flower bed, which is admired by local people and visitors alike

A beehive was introduced to the Churchyard in the Spring of 2017. The local Womens' Institute has planted a bee friendly garden in the Churchyard to provide suitable forage.

The Church school was subjected to rigorous Ofsted and SIAMS inspections. It achieved the very creditable "good with outstanding features" classification. A tribute to the acting Head, Sarah Hewat. It retained the SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) grading of outstanding – with exceptional input from children, the acting head, teaching staff, the rector, Kathryn Rideout, and governors

Jane Stefanovic has continued her duties as cleaner, and works very hard to keep the building spotless, shining, safe, and sanitized - which is appreciated by worshippers and visitors. Paul Evans ensures that the church is unlocked and locked – and therefore remained open to all during the day. Under lockdown provision, it is currently open on Wednesdays and Sundays.

The list is not exhaustive, and we are fortunate to have such a faithful team of sidespersons, readers, chalice bearers, as well as those who prepare the church for, and those who provide coffee after services.

We must also thank those few who provide regular financial support to the church.

Finally we need to register our huge thanks to our rector, Tim Harper, who despite the small size of our Parish, spends time with us, and in support of the school. He is wonderfully supported by his team of Tim Barnard, Sue Gill, and Charles Howlett, to give positive guidance and support to the congregation and the church.

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Dumpy Swerling

Howard Pool

And special mention of Dumpy Swerling, who has been churchwarden at All Saints' for 17 years, and is standing down at the 2020 AGM. A huge thank you from us all for the many years of selfless service you have given to the village Church and community.

#### Bellringers' Report March 2020

During the year we have continued to ring for all Sunday services, School Carol Services, weddings and other special services. We have also rung a number of longer lengths; peals (about 3 hours) and quarter peals (about 45 minutes). Some of these longer lengths were to mark special anniversaries and occasions, including:

Peals on 15 June for the Fete, 29 August for the platinum wedding anniversary of Beryl and Ieuan Roach, parents of Maryanne Roach, a ringer at Amersham, and also for Beryl Roach's 98<sup>th</sup> birthday, 21 December for Christmas and

Quarter Peals on 21 February in memory of Pat Westcott, 27 April for the wedding of Rebecca Newnham, daughter of Hilary and Stephen, a ringer at Amersham, 6 June to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day 17 October to welcome Cora Hazel Lockwood, second daughter of Magda and Oliver Lockwood, a ringer at Amersham 10 November for Remembrance Day and in memory of Joyce Vere, mother of Valerie Simmonds, Deputy Tower Captain.

We regularly attempt to ring quarter peals on a Thursday and many of them are the first attempts for someone in the band. We are often helped in these by friends who ring at other local towers and we are very grateful for their help. We are also always pleased when we have visiting ringers on a Sunday morning, allowing us to ring all 12 bells or to ring more advanced methods on 8 and 10 bells.

At our practices we are trying to increase our repertoire of methods. Sometimes it takes us a little while to learn the methods, but we are getting there.

We took part in the Lorna Newton striking competition again this year and were pleased to come first, so the handsome winner's cup still graces the bookcase in the tower. We were not quite so successful in the 6-bell Branch striking competition, coming second to High Wycombe, again! We will beat them one day!

I would like to thank the band for their support this year and to the church for allowing us to ring the bells.

Jan Galloway, Tower Captain  
March 2020

### **Sunday Morning Get Together after the 10.15 Service**

Another year has passed during which St. Mary's congregation has enjoyed a social half hour after the service to partake of coffee and biscuits, and sometimes cake, and have an enjoyable discussion with other members of the congregation. This is where we can welcome new members, and make new friends.

The numbers staying for coffee remain consistently high, in fact we have had to purchase 50 extra mugs! We have also had to replace a couple of our thermal jugs.

The coffee team now has a 'coffee man' as Steve Johnson has joined us, and we have several new 'coffee ladies' joining the team. We said goodbye to a few of our long term regulars as Julia Munro, Gill Richards and Julia Godwin stepped down, but are pleased to welcome Angela Downes, Susan Finnis, Karthika Erampamoorthy and Rebecca Gray. We now have a strong team of 28 people to serve us.

As I write this piece, we regretfully have had to suspend all church catering as from 15<sup>th</sup> March until further notice, due to the Corona Virus pandemic. However, hopefully, when this has

subsided, we will look forward to being able to resume our services, which are much appreciated by all who attend regularly.

Janet Clayfield  
March 2020

### **Sacristan's Report**

The team continues with care and devotion to accomplish all the tasks associated with the smooth running of services, in particular Holy Communion.

Our two young people, Carrie and Isobel, are continuing to serve once a month.

During my absence for a period of time I have especially to thank Loraine Hollett for keeping things going, Dorothy Potter for all her support and Susan, Louise, Kelly and Ernest for serving at 10.15 services.

Candles and flowers were again presented to families at Baptism; flowers were distributed on Mothering Sunday, palm crosses on Palm Sunday and Easter eggs to the children on Easter Day. All are greatly appreciated by the recipients.

The candle stand continues to be well used but, sadly, because of damage and theft from its money box, donations now have to be placed in the safe box by the main door. The stand was again used at the Remembrance Sunday Memorial Service.

This year we purchased some new albs and all others have been cleaned.

Judyth Allday continues as candle supremo but would welcome some assistance.

I am very grateful to all who help with Sacristy duties.

Brenda Woodhead , Sacristan

### **The Sides Team**

The sides team continue to be a lovely group of efficient, happy and enthusiastic members. Being on the team is a great way to get involved at St Mary's and to get to know people. We cover all services including special services and support the Verger role for weddings and funerals. The team has the important role of welcoming people to the Church and the feedback received shows how well this is received and appreciated.

Everyone on the sides team work so well together in a caring and supportive way with each typically on duty two or three times a quarter. There is a small but steady turnover of team members with new people regularly joining the team of around 40, please speak to Howard Hughes if you'd like to join us. Lockdown has impacted on the role of the sides team and we have new ways of working. This is to keep people safe, to comply with the guidance but to retain the warm welcome for which we are known at St Mary's. Thank you to such a great team

**PARISH OF AMERSHAM-WITH-COLESHILL**

**CHURCH OFFICERS FOR 2018**

**Elected at the Annual Meetings 28th April 2019**

**Parochial Church Council:**

<b>Rev'd Tim Harper</b>	Rector	<i>(Chairman)</i>
<b>Rev'd Tim Barnard</b>	Honorary Rector	
<b>Rev'd Sue Gill</b>	Curate	
<b>Howard Hughes</b>	Churchwarden(St. Mary's)	<i>Lay Vice-Chairman</i>
<b>Susan Pounce</b>	Churchwarden(St. Mary's)	
<b>Dumpy Swerling</b>	Churchwarden(All Saints')	
<b>Howard Pool</b>	Churchwarden(All Saints')	
<b>Steve Johnson</b>	Deanery Synod representative	<i>(Secretary)</i>
<b>Graeme Coles</b>	Deanery Synod representative	<i>(Treasurer)</i>
<b>Stephen Fitzjohn</b>	Deanery Synod representative	
<b>Loraine Hollett</b>	Lay representative	
<b>Clare Atkinson</b>	Lay representative	
<b>Charles Howlett</b>	Lay representative	
<b>Nadia Daly</b>	Lay representative	
<b>Peter Clackett</b>	Lay representative	
<b>Brenda Woodhead</b>	Lay representative	
<b>Sarah Ainsworth-Coles</b>	Lay representative	
<b>Louise Baneke</b>	Lay representative	
<b>Clare Samuels</b>	Lay representative	

**Representatives to the All Saints' Committee:**

**Ruth Murphy**  
**Helen Spencer**  
**Audrey Tridgell**  
**Lindsey Eardley**  
**Chris Wege**  
**Pat Dawson**  
**Maddie Murray**

