



**Parish of Tettenhall Wood**  
**Incumbent's Interim Report for 2019-2020**



The Annual Parochial Meeting was due to be held on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April. Like everything else, it has been postponed. But it still seems in order to give an interim report on the year past and to direct our thoughts to the future for the parish.

For myself, the year began as it ended, separated from usual parish activities. In April, 2019, I was in Jerusalem as part of my Extended Study Leave. Thoughts of the Holy Land continued to inspire me through this year's home-based Easter celebrations. Immediately on my return last May, our Curate, Rev Ness Tobin, departed – a sad day for us, but just right for Ness to start her ministry in Pensnett then. Her departure highlights the need to raise up more vocations for lay and ordained ministries.

I returned from sabbatical with two phrases in mind: 'the renewal of creation' and 'the renewal of worship.' The former corresponded with international recognition of the climate crisis. The liturgy, readings and preaching through 'Creation Season' taught of the depths God's love running throughout his creation and challenged us to change our ways as individuals, churches and society. One response was made in February: planting trees in the pouring rain. Christ Church worked to obtain its bronze Eco-Church award, and Good Shepherd should not be far behind. Bronze is not the end of the challenge, but a staging point on the way to silver!



One aspect of the 'renewal of worship' is to improve our use of modern technology. We now have projects at both churches. At Good Shepherd, we are looking at a major overhaul of the sound system and the installation of audio-visual equipment. At Christ Church, the aim is to undertake live projection of services to enable everyone to see what is going on. Both projects had reached the point of seeking quotations from contractors before the current restrictions came into place.

Meanwhile, actions from previous Mission Action Plans have continued. The work to improve electronic communications, especially through the WhatsApp group and the website (which is now a single site for the two churches) has really shown its worth during the lockdown. Seeing what other churches are doing should inspire us to develop this further for the future.

Having touched on the current situation, I must pay tribute to the pastoral teams of the two churches who have worked tirelessly to make sure no one is left without contact, and that where practical support may be needed it is offered. I want also to thank those who have helped me send out prayers and sermons to bolster our individual spiritual lives during this time of isolation.



At Christ Church the big social event of 2019 was the concert by the Treorchy Male Choir. In both churches a mix of coffee mornings, afternoon teas, suppers, fairs and sales gave plentiful opportunities for fellowship and mixing, as well as for raising funds. We were pleased to support Josh Morris in his charitable expedition to Ecuador, and enjoyed his report on his adventures.

The regular work of the church continued. Important behind the scenes jobs have been carried out, such as up-dating our safeguarding training and procedures, risk assessments, health and safety policies and the like. Buildings have been maintained. At Christ Church, the last quinquennial report highlighted the need for a large number of minor repairs to the roof, work that is planned for 2020.

Finance: we had a strong year for fund-raising, with nearly £10,000 raised between the churches, and also for hall-bookings by outside hirers (approaching £20,000). As a result, both churches paid their way during 2019 and we had a broadly balanced budget. 2020 is inevitably going to be challenging. With both these income streams cut back, we are all the more dependent on our core income, the generous giving of church members. Ultimately, we believe it is God who provides: ours is to be good stewards of his resources.

A brief report on numbers: at Christ Church the Average Sunday Attendance in 2019 was 81 adults and 10 children, which was down by 2 and 1 respectively from 2018. We estimate that the 'Worshipping Community' (ie those we expect to see within a month) was 176 (all ages), which is down by 8 from the previous year. At Good Shepherd, Average Sunday Attendance was 35 adults and 1 child, which is unchanged from 2018. The Worshipping Community is 59 (also unchanged).

Ministry at the Christ Church schools has grown over the past year. In addition to the work of Foundation Governors, and leadership of regular in-school worship, the *Open the Book* team has added twice-termly visits to Juniors to its weekly Infants' sessions. In addition to the end of term services, both schools held Harvest services in church, Juniors also came for Ash Wednesday, and new 'Creative Church' slots have started in school. For the first time, I had an invitation into Smestow School at Christmas, and a year group from Woodlands came to church for Harvest.

As always, the church exists through the efforts and prayers of its members: so my thanks especially to the Wardens, Treasurers, Ministry Team, Pastoral Team and the whole range of people who offer themselves in different forms of service. We all depend on each other. This remains the case in the strange present we live in and the uncertain future we look towards. We cannot really know how the church as an institution will emerge, but spiritually the experience of living through this pandemic takes us back to basics, summed up by three words: faith, hope and love.

- Faith: As we have done 'church at home' over these weeks, so we are drawn back to our own individual relationship with God. Our faith will prove resilient, as God himself is faithful.
- Hope: These are tough times. We see how fragile life is and know ourselves to be but mortal. The Easter message says there is nothing to fear. Trusting Christ frees us to live hope-filled lives.
- Love: Enforced separation causes us to value community all the more and to be genuinely thankful for those we depend upon. As we feel the absence of the fellowship we may have previously taken for granted, we anticipate with eagerness the day when we can meet together again.

I mentioned 'renewal of worship' as a theme for the year, and I talked of plans to enhance technology (which is important). But true renewal of worship comes from the hearts of the worshippers, and if these hearts are spiritually renewed in faith, hope and love, other things will fall into place.

Rev Phil Wootton (Team Rector)  
21<sup>st</sup> April, 2020