

Parish of Tettenhall Wood APCM 25 April 2021

Joint Report by PCC Secretary, Church Wardens and Incumbent

Presenting this joint report not only avoids unnecessary repetitions, but is representative of how closely the two churches of the parish work together.

It is only 6 months since our last 'annual' meeting (27 September, 2020) so you might expect little to report. However, the period covers a most difficult time for the church, as for the nation, during the continued Covid-19 pandemic. Collective worship in church was suspended for the month of November 2020 by law, and suspended again from 17 January to 14 March (9 Sundays) by decision of the Standing Committee on behalf of the PCC, in line with diocesan guidance and following strong recommendation of the Wolverhampton Public Health Director. This decision had to be taken rapidly, in the light of extraordinary high infection rates locally, but it certainly was not taken lightly, and everything was done to enable worship to resume safely in church as early as feasible.

For all the difficulties, we look back with thanksgiving. We are immensely thankful for all those who have pulled together across both churches, enabling us to maintain our weekly pattern of worship, both online and through the delivery of letters and DVDs each week, as well as our in-person services in between the periods of lockdown. In particular, we want to thank the band of volunteers who have made this all possible: Russell Taylor, David Fulljames, Stephanie and Ben Hemming, Stephen Read, Rachel Phillips, Stuart Cross, Anne Woolf and the virtual choir, and all those involved in delivering the weekly mailing!

A big thank you also to all those who have been keeping in contact by phone with our congregations – at Good Shepherd, Jane Brough, Chris Nickholds and Stephanie Hemming; and the larger team at Christ Church co-ordinated by Veronica Milward. So, thank you for all you have done to maintain the connections of Christian community when life experience has been so much of isolation.

Thank you, also, to those who have made 'in-person' worship possible when allowed – to the risk-assessors, additional cleaners, 'meeters-and-greeters', track-and-trace list compilers, and the hand-sanitizers; to those who have maintained our buildings, and those who've brought them to life with sparkling brasses and stunning flower displays. At Christ Church, we thank Graham Croft and Roger Malpass for inspecting the roof, counting the broken tiles, and arranging repairs (completed in the last couple of weeks) at one tenth the cost they threatened to be.

Thank you to members of our PCC and church committees, who have risen to the challenge of meeting by Zoom (three times – in November, January and March) and keeping an overview of all the church has been doing. Thank you to the finance team: Stephanie Hemming doing a sterling(!) job managing the money and working closely with Richard Humphrey, Les Key and Russell Taylor, to ensure the accounts can be presented for audit. And thank you to everyone who has maintained their giving through this time, so the church can continue to function, and also contributed to the special collections – at Harvest time for the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd, and at Christmas to the Children's Society. We are also thankful for a grant of £8000 from the government's Covid Community Recovery Fund, which did something to offset the lost income from our hall-hirers.

We are grateful to those in the preaching team, and to all who have read and led intercessions, adapting themselves to recording and the on-line world. It has been wonderful to have the fresh input from our curate, Rev Lin Vawer, whose enthusiasm, compassion and spirituality are transparent, as is her passion for knitting projects, resulting in flocks of angels flooding the parish at Christmas. Thanks also to the army of knitters who created them and the crosses for Easter.

Seasonal services were adapted to circumstances. The online Remembrance and Memorial Services, and Sing-Along-At-Home Carol Service, were all well received, as was the 'in-person' Quiet Christmas at Christ Church. Although numbers at Christmas Services were down on previous years, it was remarkable we could open the doors at all. The (partly) outdoor Crib Service at Good Shepherd was a great success, as was the combined Crib and Christingle at Christ Church (although the booking system did not really work as planned). Both churches made more of outdoor symbols at Christmas (Crib at Good Shepherd, Christmas tree and Christ Church) and at Easter, with crosses outside both churches. Thanks to the phenomenal efforts of those involved, the Joint Virtual Christmas Fair gave a real sense of drawing the churches back together, as well as being a successful fund-raiser.

One area of real progress is in digital technology, meaning we can begin to be able to record the actual services in church. At Christ Church, equipment has been installed for digital recording and streaming of services, paid for by a grant from Ibstock Enover of £9000, and an extremely generous personal donation. At Good Shepherd, the audio-visual project reported last year is on-going, but it is hoped to use portable equipment to record services in the shorter term.

I will say something about the future shortly, but for now, the final group of thank yous to those in whose name this report stands. As Incumbent, I want to pay enormous tribute to those who make up the Standing Committee, that's Wardens Joan Collins and Pam Humphrey, David Hughes and Jane Brough, Treasurers Steph Hemming and Richard Humphrey, Secretary Sue Wilson, and my colleague Rev Lin Vawer, for sharing with me the burden of decision-making, as well as for their continued diligence with their own responsibilities. Joan also wants especially to thank all the tall people whose long reach is invaluable to her!

I believe as a parish we have pulled together effectively in many different ways. This in itself is a demonstration of God's love through difficult times. There is so much for which we give thanks to God.