



ST PETER'S
ST ALBANS

Yearbook 2020

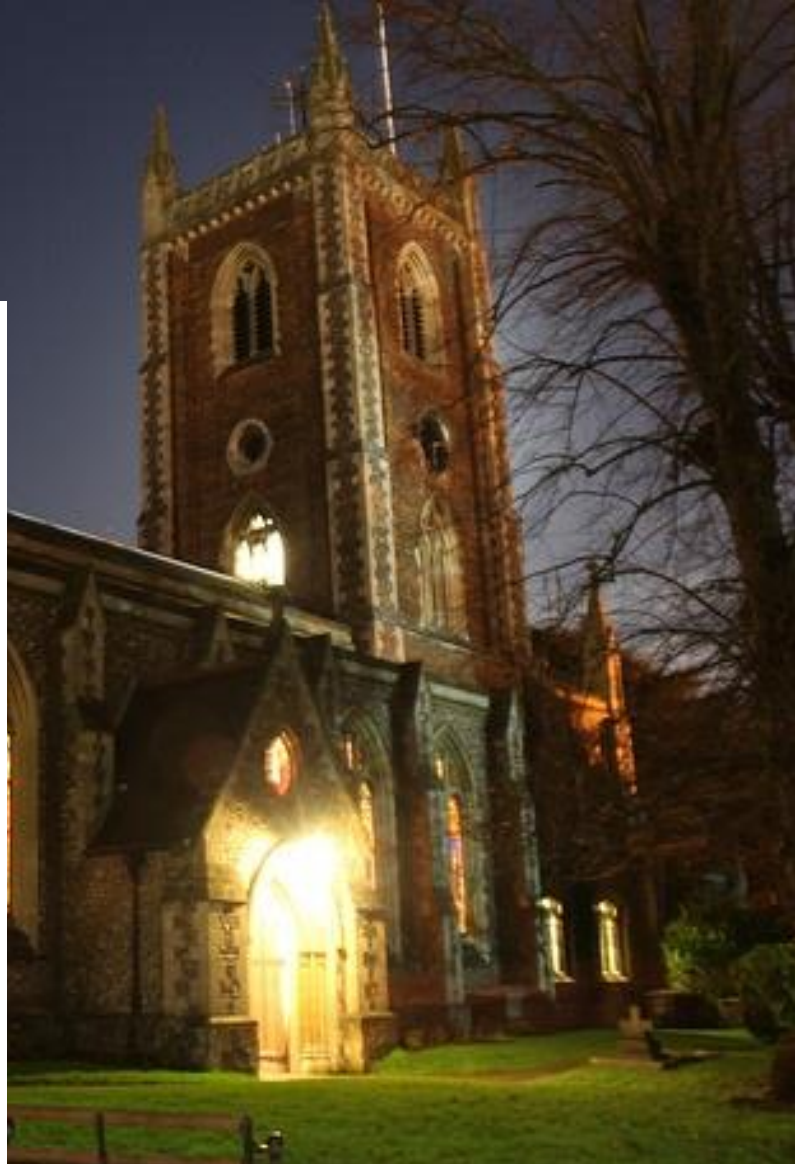
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ST PETER'S CHURCH ST ALBANS

Our values

- Everyone is included
- Loving and generous service is celebrated
- Faith is nurtured and developed
- Everyone is inspired to reach their God-given potential.



Trustees' Annual Report

For year ending 31 December 2020

Background

2020 was a very unusual year due to the outbreak of Coronavirus in Spring. As the virus started to spread churches were instructed to reduce activities including suspending giving communion and this was followed by public worship stopping altogether in March. The last services held at St Peter's prior to this were on Sunday 15th March 2020 after which our worship moved online.

The Mission Action Plan was adopted by the PCC in February 2019 and outlines future plans and priorities for developing activities that express our Vision for Mission and Ministry strategy for the next 5 years. Many of our strategic tasks for 2020 continued to move forward and are recorded in our annual review of church life, the 2020 Yearbook. The Mission Action Plan annual update was presented at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 11 October 2020.

A summary of key achievements and news follows.

Ministry and Worship

St Peter's had to evolve quickly to move our worship online in March 2020. This involved a rapid learning curve for the ministry team and office staff and also an investment in hardware and software to enable streamed and recorded services to take place effectively. Our main Sunday service moved to 10am and was followed by a Zoom call and a chance for the congregation to catch up with each other. We also held a weekly Sunday service of evening prayer at 6.30pm including music. Morning prayer has continued every weekday morning on Zoom and provides companionship as well as worship.

All our Easter service were held online and we were able to offer a range of different services including reflections, stations of the cross, children's services and music. From 19 December our Christmas services were moved online following a sharp rise in COVID infections. Over the Christmas period we offered over 20 services online with a mix of different styles of worship to appeal to as many people as possible. Plans to run a Live Nativity Trail in conjunction with the Cathedral at Christmas had to be postponed until Christmas 2021.

High quality music in our worship is part of St Peter's tradition and we were able to continue offering musical input in our services thanks to the support of our musicians, choir and also members of the congregation. Alongside our services we created a support network led by the ministry team to ensure that members of our community were looked after and did not become isolated during lockdown. As well as pastoral support, practical tasks like delivering food and medicines were offered. Our children and youth activities continued within the constraints of covid. Youth café met regularly either online or in person when possible and one of their biggest achievements was creating a cookbook which raised funds for Youth Talk. In September we held an outside All Age Service and we also started offering monthly family time services aimed at primary aged children

and their carers. Weekly Family Time resources have been provided by Margaret Blake and the Junior Church team.

Many weddings and baptisms were postponed during 2020 however we conducted 13 Baptisms, celebrated 3 weddings and had pastoral contact with a further 18 families through conducting funerals or burials of ashes.

St Peter's Community

Natalie Liley stepped down as church warden in June 2020 and we are very grateful to the energy and commitment that she brought to the role at St Peter's.

The Friends of St Peter's held a drinks reception at the vicarage in January. The remainder of their planned events for 2020 had to be cancelled. Tea on Tuesday was held twice once in January and a second time on Shrove Tuesday. Margaret Tinsley held some Tea on Tuesday meetings on Zoom but these were difficult for many of our regular attendees to access. Our Wednesday lunchtime concerts had to stop in the middle of March although we did offer some music online during the summer through our YouTube channel.

We have kept the church open twice a week as much as possible to allow people to come in for private prayer, reflection or to talk to a member of the ministry team.

Wider church links

St Peter's maintains its civic links with the city and the District Council. We continue our ecumenical partnerships with the 6 city centre churches group – St Peter's, Marlborough Road Methodist, Dagnall Street Baptist, the Salvation Army, Trinity United Reform and SS Alban and Stephen Roman Catholic. During 2020 we have continued our close relationship with Marlborough Road Methodist Church and have shared worship and resources. We also support several local good causes, both financially and through members of our congregation volunteering, including Open Door, The Living Room, Youth Talk, The Winter Beds Project, Rennie Gove Hospice Care, the Food and Hygiene Banks and the Children's Society. As well as international charities such as Christian Aid, UNHCR and Stop the Traffik.

Financial results

The principal sources of income and expenditure are set out in the financial statements for the year. Despite a reduction in income during 2020, as a result of Covid restrictions and the direct impact this had on our various income streams, the general financial position of the church remains secure. Our reserves are adequate, our investments continued to perform well and despite a decrease in overall income generated we received sufficient to cover our annual expenditure including our Parish Share contribution. Our approach to expenditure remains cautious in general and we continue to maintain appropriate levels of reserves. The financial support of the SPRING building project through 2020 was a particular highlight and our ongoing support of this project will continue to be a financial priority in the year(s) ahead.

Next Phase for St Peter's

In March 2020 we held a presentation in church to share the Building Committee's plans for SPRING (St Peter's reworked: inspiring new growth). In May work started to refurbish the vestries and create a mezzanine floor. This project was almost completed by the end of the year and we are looking forward to making use of the new spaces. In November work to increase the available space in the Octagon and fit a new kitchen commenced. The building committee are continuing to work with our architects on the next stages of the SPRING project. We aim to develop St Peter's so that we can better serve our church family as well as the local community and city of St Albans.

2020 has been a year unlike any other and I am very grateful for the prayer and work many put in to supporting and developing the life, ministry and mission of St Peter's especially during this unusual and challenging time. We will endeavour to take the learnings and experiences from this year and use these to evaluate what we do at St Peter's as we move forward in 2021. Thank you.



Revd Mark Dearnley
Vicar of St Peter's

Ministry and Worship

In a year where much we had to make many changes in order to respond to the Covid pandemic it is remarkable to note just how well everyone did.

I'm truly grateful for the ingenuity that enabled us to care for one another effectively, and for the ways in which we were able to continue to offer meaningful worship online and in church which so many have accessed. The creativity and willingness for many to participate has been humbling and a blessing for us all.

At the same time we note that some aspects of our regular church life such as the work of the Sanctuary Guild, the bell ringers, and some of those on the stewarding and welcoming team have had to curtail their activities. We look forward to reinstating these as we journey through this year.

My thanks to all who have worked so hard over this year to adapt and to keep our church life active and growing.

Mark Dearnley

Pastoral Ministry

In March 2020 we felt very fortunate in that we already had a pastoral system set up, with each person on the team having a list of parishioners with whom he/she would liaise, with that list revised just before lockdown. That meant that, when the church had to close, contact could easily be maintained with all who normally attended services, as well as those who were housebound. We were also able to offer help with essentials like shopping or collecting a prescription, thanks to a number of willing volunteers. The Pastoral Team also took on the role of passing on information, sometimes the sad

news about illness and death of members of the congregation well known to so many. The year placed a huge demand on the team and I am immensely grateful for all their continuing efforts. Sadly, visits and home communion services were forced to cease in March, likewise regular services at Strathmore, Beaumonds and Davis Court. I hope these will be able to resume soon.

Like the Pastoral Team, the Bereavement Team has continued to meet on Zoom. Members have contacted the bereaved, especially at Christmas and on the anniversary of a death, and attended the Requiem Service in November.

Tea on Tuesday took place in January and February, the latter on Shrove Tuesday, when thanks largely to a very generous donation, we were able to send over £800 to the Church Urban Fund's effort to help with food poverty. Since then we have met twice on Zoom but, sadly, few of our 'regulars' were able to access these meetings. It is planned to re-start later in 2021. Over the year, the Prayer Chain was well-used and much appreciation was expressed for its work.

Margaret Tinsley

Homegroups

Although the St Peter's home groups stopped meeting in person in the first lockdown, a growing number of people have continued to meet remotely throughout the last year. The Lent Groups held in 2020 morphed into a new remote group which has met fortnightly by Zoom ever since. Typically this group has combined a lively period of general chat with a close study of the Gospel reading for the following Sunday and a closing period of prayer. Another long standing home group switched to Zoom meetings at the same time and has followed a similar pattern through out the year.

A number of people who attended the 2021 Lent Groups have joined or are about to join a home group, and it is likely that a third remote group will begin soon. Hopefully Zoom meetings will be able to change to garden meet-ups and we will be able to resume meeting in person in the course of the year.

These meetings complement our communal worship with fellowship and learning and prayer and are a reminder of the early church. If you would like to talk about joining a group, please contact *Richard Butler*

Music

Having begun the year in customary fashion with a full programme of sung services each week including those celebrating Epiphany, Candlemas and Ash Wednesday in January and February, events took a dramatic turn after the third Sunday of Lent (15 March). During the ensuing few months I am most grateful for the contributions of so many people who pulled together in such inimitable fashion to ensure that we were able to produce as effective a programme as we could.

Alex Flood used both his considerable musical and technical skills to enable us to hear wonderful organ music each week and indeed to learn about each work and/or composer through his inspirational use of text, accessible to all, to accompany each performance. Many singers (and sometimes players), at times as just one voice and at other times within small groups of four or five during those wonderful times when restrictions eased a little, gave readily of their time and

contributed to services both live and recorded in order to help us deliver what we could to keep things going.

Much of this would not have been possible, of course, without the technical help of Alex Huzzey whose generosity of time and unflappable nature enabled recordings to take place with efficiency and a minimum of fuss. Alex Flood and Tim Herbert, too, provided invaluable expertise regularly on a technical level without which we would have been severely hampered.

Between us, Carolyn Alexander, Chip Evans, Mike Johnson, Margaret Tinsley and I, again with the help of Alex Huzzey, combined to try to make a success of the Wednesday Lunchtime Concert slot each week, hitting the ground running and often calling in favours from friends, colleagues and acquaintances who in turn willingly provided recordings and performances for us to use. I am most grateful to all who contributed to producing these concerts, a process which was not in any way as simple as it might sound.

We look forward to a sense of normality sooner rather than later but, until then, a huge thank-you to all who have contributed to the music at St Peter's in such adverse times.

Nick Robinson

Children and Youth

It'll be a well-worn phrase which we will be used to hearing 'What an extraordinary year this has been'.

Quite right. And whilst we could never have anticipated all that this pandemic has meant in terms of loss, change and opportunity, I am amazed and grateful for the ways in which St Peter's has adapted so well.

This is evident across the board from our worship to pastoral care, and particularly so in the ministry among children and young people. Margaret and Ruth's reports helpfully remind us of all that has been achieved despite so many restrictions and unexpected changes. My thanks to them and the teams that support this work and significant aspect of our church life. Well done all, and thank you.

Mark

Children's activities

During 2020 the pandemic resulted in us adapting our children's activities and trying new things. Since Junior Church and Family Fridays stopped meeting in March everything for children has been at home or involving the whole family so we have been calling the activities 'Family Time'. We have prepared weekly children's sheets with a story, activities and prayers, often with a link to a video, which has also been shared with Marlborough Road Methodist Church. About once a month we've had a family time live or online. This started with Good Friday. Since then topics have included the story of Noah, a celebration of VE Day, St Peter, Jesus calling his disciples and light in the darkness. We are very grateful to all the families who have taken part by making videos, showing

us how to do activities and reading prayers. At our patronal festival we had a social distanced scavenger hunt in the churchyard.

At Christmas Messy Church went home and 75 messy church bags with crafts and a Christmas eve gift were delivered to families around St Albans. Each craft linked to one of the bedtime stories which were available online telling the Christmas story from the journey to Bethlehem to the visit of the Magi.

We did manage to meet a few times in person in 2020, including during the all-age service in September just as children went back to school and we thought life was returning to normal! Em read the story of the pearl and we all took an oyster shell home after Mark blessed children's school bags.

Thank you to all those who have been involved in our activities with children. We are hoping that a children and youth leader will join us in 2021 and that we will be able to meet in person more often than in 2020. If anyone would like to keep in touch and hear about activities for children send your contact details to Margaret.blake@ntlworld.com

Margaret Blake

Youth activities

Over the past year the youth group has been very busy doing things differently.

Our meetings went onto zoom when we couldn't meet together and we spent time sharing our news, adapting to the new circumstance, supporting each other and our journey of faith and planning projects together. Initially we were meeting twice a week as we all adjusted and during the summer when lockdown was eased we met up socially distanced in the churchyard.

In the Spring we created the "Lockdown, Cook up" cookbook. This grew out of the sharing of recipes and the experimental cooking that everyone had begun to do. Members of the group skillfully put it together and we launched it on line. We know many people enjoyed using it and alongside the cooking, we raised almost £1000 for Youth Talk, a local charity that supports young people's mental health.

We recorded ourselves singing together in church and the song was played as part of one of the Sunday services on line. All of this prepared us for our Christmas extravaganza.

As part of St Peters Christmas services, St Peters Youth (SPY) created "Searchlight" which was a different telling of the nativity story drawing connections to our experiences during the pandemic. The group wrote the script over a few weeks and then everyone was involved in some way and we recorded it working together from our homes using the power of technology to put it all together. We recorded a Christmas song in church which was the culmination of the service. We were so encouraged that so many people enjoyed it, whether they were part of the church family or the wider community which was our hope from the beginning.

I am grateful for the team of youth leaders that work alongside me and who support in so many different ways. It is a real gift to have grown the leadership over the year and spread the load.

And finally we are grateful to the young people themselves.

We have journeyed with some of the group who have traveled away from home for study or those who have found work locally and to those who have been negotiating home schooling, exams or not exams, and doing life as a teenager in a very different world.

Although it is my role to lead the group, the young people give to us leaders as much as we to them. We have been together over the past year, laughing together, being honest about our struggles and reminding each other of our hopes and dreams and God's love for us in the midst of the journey.

We are looking forward to being able to meet together soon.

Ruth

Church Building

The re-ordering progresses

In my report for the last Yearbook, I explained that the Building Committee had decided to begin the latest phase of re-ordering by focusing upon the refurbishment of the south vestries (i.e. the so-called Clergy and Flower Vestries) and the replacement of the blue upholstered, interlocking chairs that occupy the Chancel, the choir stalls and the Lady Chapel. Unfortunately, for a major part of 2020, the Covid-19 emergency meant that we had to follow the Church of England's instructions not to undertake building works. Fortunately, these restrictions were relaxed towards the end of the summer and, at last, the refurbishment work was able to commence. I am delighted to report that the refurbishment of the vestries was completed over a roughly four-to-five month period and the refurbished area has now been handed back to us by the contractors. The vestries have been completely modernised to a high standard and a mezzanine floor and staircase installed in the Flower Vestry to create more storage space and a place where small meetings might take place on occasions. Hopefully, this refurbishment has now dealt successfully with the problems previously faced by the members of our Sanctuary Guild. It also allows space to stack chairs and other items in the future when they are not needed in the nave or chancel.

Much of 2020 was devoted to writing the various Faculty Applications which are required by the Diocese and Church of England to undertake re-ordering works in a church. Given that St Peter's is a Grade II* listed church, we have to follow the equivalent legal processes for gaining approval for alterations that are followed in the civic arena for all listed buildings. We have had five of these Faculty Applications being written and lodged during 2020. The work involved in putting one of these applications together can be considerable. For example, we constructed an application to replace the blue, interlocking chairs with more suitable, award-winning chairs. The blue, interlocking chairs have been deteriorating and have become too heavy and cumbersome to move. This application took seven months to be approved after twenty different documents had to be submitted in order to successfully argue our case. Our proposals were contested by the Victorian Society, the Church Buildings Council and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, largely because our

proposal was to replace the existing chairs with upholstered ones. In the end the case and the various arguments go before The Chancellor, Lindsey de Mestre, QC for decision. I am pleased to say that our proposals gained approval despite being contested. The chairs were ordered from Trinity church furniture on 22 February 2021 at a cost of £21,000. They are due for delivery and installation week beginning 04 May 2021. The 70 chairs are a mixture of plain 20, 4 of which are armed, 50 upholstered/fabric of which 6 are armed. Together with one two seated and one three-seater 'pew'. Plus, a small circular table. A member of the congregation has very kindly made a significant donation for the cost of some of these items. The church's management team has been asked for arrangements to be put in hand for disposal of the blue, interlocking chairs.

During the course of the year, a case for improving the church's car park was submitted for planning approval by our architects to St Albans District Council. The proposals were turned down and so a modified proposal is now being explored. We also successfully submitted proposals to the Diocese to enlarge and upgrade the kitchen and to compensate for the space lost in so doing in the Octagon by removing the existing corner cupboards and storage space. Smaller cupboards are being fitted and the staging which has been stored in one corner space in the Octagon may now be more conveniently stored in the south vestries given the almost doubling there of storage space. The works on the kitchen and Octagon are currently ongoing. A Faculty Application has also been submitted by our architects concerning improving the north transept and Octagon at some point in the future. The submission is an outline, concept proposal in order to explore options with external stakeholders. Altering and improving the north transept is a medium-term goal and the proposals are purely aspirational at this stage.

In the process of submitting Faculty Applications to the Diocese we learned of new requirements brought forward by the Church Buildings Council which is part of the Church of England. In future proposals to re-order a 'major church' will require a Conservation Management Plan for the church to guarantee success. St Peter's is categorised as a major church because of its size and its listed status and so we need to create this plan during 2021 if possible. This is because we aim to submit further Faculty Applications for the next steps in the re-ordering process although works on these are unlikely to take place until 2022 or 2023. The proposals regarding the works involve replacing the existing concrete floor in the church with a York Stone floor and replacing the pews with similar seating to that being acquired for the Chancel. Various ancillary works are also envisaged in time.

Den Parker

St Peter's Community

Communications

Our communication strategy evolved significantly during 2020. Some of these changes were planned and others arose due to COVID and the need to move our services online during periods of lockdown.

We started work during early 2020 to design a new logo for St Peter's. The new logo features the Rose window at the West end of church and is modern, recognizable, and relevant. We were able to start using the new logo on our printed material, communications and website from Autumn.

Alongside this piece of work we redesigned our website. The end result is a more appealing site which makes it easier for users to find the information they are looking for and for us to communicate services and events. It is hosted by Wix which is an easier platform for our office staff to edit and update. We are very grateful to Alex Huzzey for all his work creating the new website and St Peter's logo.

When our services moved online in March 2020 due to COVID we had to rapidly acquire the skills and technology to enable our services to be recorded and shared through our YouTube channel. Our first recorded service was on Mothering Sunday and this was followed a few weeks later by a range of different service for Easter. We are so grateful to Alex Huzzey and Dave Warren for their technical input and to all the members of our Ministry Team, congregation and musicians who contributed to our online services.

As we could no longer distribute our printed notice sheet we created a weekly email which is sent to over 400 people every Friday and contains details of the Sunday services as well as other future services and events. We also send a weekly Reflection email each Monday which contains a prayerful thought from a member of our ministry team.

Our followers on Facebook have increased and we use this to communicate what is happening at St Peter's and other local events. If you are not already following us please do so on www.facebook.com/StPeters.StAlbans

We continued to create posters for the noticeboards outside church to inform people walking past about our online services. At Christmas we also lit up the church with Christmas lights along the south side roof line and top of the tower as well as some of the trees lining the south path. The lights could be seen by people walking up St Peter's street and we received some very positive feedback. In addition we produced large banners which were displayed outside church and next to the road. These communicated our Christmas theme 'Light in the darkness' and directed people to our new website and details of our Christmas services.

Carolyn Alexander

Events

In a year when we had more theatre trips already booked than ever before, we actually managed two of them: *Leopoldstadt* and *The Visit*. After that it was a matter of persuading theatre managements that a credit voucher was not a satisfactory way of refunding a group booking!

The Book Group showed a similar pattern: we had one meeting in January, to discuss *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn then another in a member's garden in September when we shared ideas for reading. Wednesday concerts, which were having such a successful run, had to cease in the church in March, although Nick put together an online programme for several weeks; these were always followed by a Zoom get-together and it was particularly enjoyable when the musicians of the day were able to join us.

The one Themed Evensong in church was, very appropriately for the year, on the life and works of William Wordsworth. Since then, Themed Evening services have taken place on YouTube with, again, a chance to celebrate major anniversaries: Florence Nightingale, in the 200th year since her birth and P D James who was born 100 years ago. In addition, an opportunity was made to mark the commemoration of Evelyn Underhill and John Keble and Alan Sharp preached on John and Charles Wesley for Wesley Day; all these part of our online evening services.

Margaret Tinsley

The Friends of St Peter's

In January members of The Friends enjoyed their regular social event hosted by Mark and Ruth at the vicarage. Nearly 40 guests tucked into drinks, canapes and a quiz compiled by Peter Court. By this time Peter had stood down as Friends Treasurer having been in the post since its rebirth in 2010 and at the end of the evening he received a souvenir tankard in recognition of all his hard work.

Next on the calendar was to have been our Spring visit in the form of a conducted tour of The British Museum which regrettably fell victim of the first Covid lockdown.

Fast forward one whole year sees the organising group emerging from its enforced hibernation, keen to get back on track with Friends activities.

We look forward to your ongoing and much valued support. New members are of course always welcome.

Robin Farrar

Mission and Outreach

In 2020 St Peter's continued to make financial donations to a range of charities and causes alongside being involved in other ways with the charities. Our giving was adapted in the light of the pandemic, needs which arose and changes to our usual activities.

In 2020 we gave £8,258.75. This comprised £6,167.11 from the budget and £2091.64 of congregational giving. In addition, nearly £1,000 was raised through the Youth Café cookbook and food and hygiene items were given in kind by the congregation at harvest time. Giving in 2020 was affected by limited opportunities for congregational fundraising, many fewer concerts, and reduced income for the church. The largest donations were to The Living Room (£4,000), Rennie Grove Hospice Care (£1,894.61 from concerts) and Food and Hygiene banks (£599.61). Donations were also given to Youth Talk, Stop the Traffik, Christian Aid and the Bishop's Harvest Appeal. A donation was made to the Church Urban Fund (from the Tea on a Tuesday pancake party).

We did not give to the Anna Chaplain post (for ministry among older people) at Marlborough Road Methodist Church as there was no one in post but someone has now been appointed and so we are supporting this from 2021 instead, with Margaret Tinsley being an Anna Friend.

We had planned to change the charities we support in 2021 but given the circumstances we have delayed this review to 2022, in order to provide consistency during an uncertain time. So we are looking for suggestions for charities to support from 2022 onwards from people who would like to be the champion and link with the charity. Please get in touch with Margaret Blake or Peter Court with any suggestions.

Margaret Blake

PCC Secretary's Report for APCM 2020

The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 states that:

“It shall be the duty of the Minister and the Parochial Church Council to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish.”

The PCC met in person in January 2020 but, because of the coronavirus pandemic, all subsequent meetings were held via Zoom. This meant the Parochial Church Council (PCC) was able to continue it's work for St Peter's. The use of technology also meant that the PCC sub-committees were able to continue to meet.

The (PCC) held five meetings in 2020. At meetings the PCC received updates on work at St Peter's including, when relevant, children and youth work, finance, re-ordering and safeguarding.

The coronavirus pandemic forced us to examine the way we work and to think about what St Peter's will be like/look like once the pandemic is over.

The work of the PCC is supported by the Church Office and the administrative team. Without them we would not be as effective as we are and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

Lynn Cherrill-Teesdale