



St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury

Annual Parochial Church Report

Presented at a meeting held on 27 September 2020

This combined report is presented in accordance with the Charity Commissioner's Statement of Recommended Practice commonly known as SORP 2005.

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- Detailed notes to the accounts;
- Independent Examiner's Report.

St Mary the Virgin, Church Road, Almondsbury, BS32 4DT

**Annual Report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council
and the activities of the parish generally for the year to 31 December 2019.**

Correspondence address: The Vicarage, 3 Sundays Hill, Almondsbury, BS32 4DS

PCC Members:

Rev Philip Rowe (Vicar)	Paul van Rossum (Associate Vicar)	
David Thomson (Churchwarden)	Mike Jenkinson (Chair & Lay Minister)	
Astrid Domingo Molyneux (Lay Minister)	Nick Roach (Treasurer)	Judi Thomson (PCC Secretary)
Alison Rowe (Deanery Synod)	Clare Jefferis (Deanery Synod)	Rosemary Griffiths
Jean Badman	Pam van Rossum	Dick Avery
Sandy Thompson	Liz Tierney (Safeguarding Officer & Data Protection Lead)	
Mike Tierney	Becky Painting	

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The Parish of St Mary's, Almondsbury, is part of the Benefice of Almondsbury and Pilning with Compton Greenfield, of which the Reverend Philip W Rowe is Incumbent.

The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure. The appointment of PCC members is governed by and set out in the Church Representation Rules and is from those on the Electoral Roll of the Parish. The PCC is registered with the Charity Commission (registration number 1131407).

VICAR'S REPORT

The role of the Vicar together with the PCC is defined as the promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, our purpose is to join in with the mission of God in building his kingdom. We have focused this in our Mission Statement of 'Connecting with God, each other and our community'.

Also, I look back over the past 12 months I thank all those who, often in unseen ways, have worked hard to enable us to follow this mission. I am humbled by all those who voluntarily invest so much time, energy and money in God's work through St Mary's. Thank you to each one of you. This year I particularly thank David Thomson for stepping up and serving three years as Churchwarden. When I consider all this which is so freely given, I release it is a privilege to be Vicar here.

The reordering of the Church building has been the observable happening of the past year. I thank all of you who have worshipped and lived through the inconvenience, dust and cold this has involved. Also, I am grateful for all those who have been involved in overseeing and organising this. The consensus is that the outcome of all this is good, making the building better fitted for purpose of our mission. It remains a building with the primary purpose of building relationship with God but is better for welcoming and building connections within the Church and community. Please join me in praying for God's wisdom in the use of this gift.

In particular we have been focusing on the three diocesan priorities of making disciples, growing leaders, reaching younger generations. We are encouraging each other to deepen our discipleship through varied Sunday worship, continuing sermon series and many small groups. We are engaging with younger generations through the children's and young people's groups on Sunday mornings. We are growing leaders by encouraging each other to use our gifts and two people has stated the Diocesan 'Exploring Christianity' course. The Messy Church and Oasis ministries continue to engage with families who for various reasons find Sunday mornings difficult. The weekly toddler's group and work in schools are making connections with families beyond these groups. I am grateful for all those who, particularly in an increasingly regulated environment, invest so much in this area of ministry.

Above all let us remember this is God's work. So please pray and do join me and others in praying on the last Saturday of each month at 9am in the Vicarage.

With my gratitude and prayers,

Philip Rowe

CHURCH WARDEN

2019 – 2020 has been another busy year St Mary's, we have seen the reordering start and complete. Wi-Fi put into the church and the Church Office moved into the vestry. The restored bells were put back in place this time last year.

Services

Numbers did dwindle slightly during the first part of the re-ordering. Since then our numbers have nearly returned to as they were.

Christmas was very encouraging with our largest numbers at both Christingles.

Other special services such as Remembrance went very well with large numbers attending.

Church Wardens

As you may know I am standing down from being Church Warden after 3 years of service, but I will continue as duty warden. During my time as church warden I have had so much help from others from Liz continuing with rotas to Graham sorting most of the DAC and church repairs and lots of others, thank you to all who took burden from my shoulders.

I have started the Exploring Christianity course ran by the diocese with a possible view to Lay Ministry within the church. I am excited to see where God leads me with this. I have completed the first block "Christianity and Prayer" which was a lot of work but enjoyable and I completed my first ever essay having left school at 16 and went straight into work. I am now part way through block 2 "Exploring the Bible – The New Testament" and starting to think about my next essay.

As part of my growth in the church I have been added to the list of servers and will be doing reading and some intersessions.

The PCC very kindly agreed to pay for the course, and I would like to thank the PCC and the wider church for supporting me. I have had lots of encouragement from everyone.

Lastly thank you to Philip, Paul and the ministry team as well as everyone who has supported me over the last 3 years, it has been a busy but very interesting time and I hope I can give support back to future Wardens.

David Thomson

WORSHIP AND MISSION

The Worship and Mission Team of the PCC acts as a focal point for consideration of how we, as individuals and as a church, can best grow as Christians and share the good news of Jesus Christ. Looking forward, in 2020 Worship and Mission will be considering how best we can use the newly reordered building towards this end.

This includes consideration of our regular Sunday Services at 8.00am, 9.15am and 10.45am as well as a wide range of special services, such as Mothering Sunday Parade Service, Outdoor Services, Harvest Parade Service, Remembrance Sunday, and Christingle Services. In addition, other specific opportunities are encouraged, such as the Alpha Course, Life Explored, Christianity Explored, Café Almondsbury, Lent Lunches, Home Groups, Lent Groups and Prayer Meetings.

Each month a different charity is the focus for the church's outward giving coordinated by Alison Rowe. For 2019 these were:

January: CMS - Rev Malcolm Pritchard (Gulu) – Alison Rowe

February: CMS – Phil and Sylvia Good (Beirut) – Pam van Rossum

March: Lent Lunches: Uganda Link for Ugandan Ordinand - Alison Rowe

April: Leprosy Mission - Astrid Domingo Molyneux

May: Plant Sale for St Peter's Hospice – Peter and Barbara Atkey

May: Christian Aid Week and Collection - Eunice Leicester - Christian Aid

June: Incredible Kids – Mo Pearson

July: St Peter's Hospice Coffee Morning - Jenny Garrigan

August: Tools with a Mission – David and Joy Laban

September: Harvest Service Collection - Tear Fund – David Thomson

October: Release International - Jan Cooper

November: Remembrance Sunday Service, Collection to The British Legion's Poppy Appeal

November: Operation Christmas Child – David and Joy Laban

December Christingle Services, Collection to Children's Society - Margaret Roberts

The church supports the Diocese's Creating Connections vision of Connecting with God, Connecting with each other, and Connecting with our communities. Within this vision there is a focus on the four priorities of Making Disciples, Growing Leaders, Engaging Younger generations and Encouraging Generosity.

Paul van Rossum, Chair, Worship and Mission Team

BUILDINGS

Re-Ordering:

This was by far the largest task that was undertaken in the building during 2019, with the work being substantially complete by the end of the year, having overrun by several months. The Revd Paul van Rossum will report in more detail. However, the following items remain outstanding and, it is hoped, will be completed during 2020:

- 1) improved lighting of the west front and the footpath has yet to be approved;
- 2) downlighting above the outer door of the north porch has yet to be approved;
- 3) lighting beneath the canopy of the new west door vestibule and beneath the repositioned portico at the north door has yet to be installed;
- 4) the painting and finishing of the west door has yet to be completed.

Audio-Visual System:

During the year, the Revd Paul van Rossum has been in protracted negotiation with the DAC for the installation of a projector screen above the arch between the nave and the choir. An application has recently been submitted to the DAC for the installation of the screen, together with two 'pop-up' TV screens. They have agreed to the installation of the screen and, in principle, are in favour of the 'pop-up' TVs. However, they require more details of the latter proposal. An application to the Diocesan Chancellor for the granting of a Further Order to permit the installation of the screen, but with the omission of the TVs, is to proceed.

Almondsbury Bells Restoration Project (ABRP):

The restoration work on the bells and associated work in the tower was completed in March 2019. In parallel with this, repair work on the tower clock timekeeping mechanism had already been completed at the end of 2018. However, during the year, the clock has again exhibited problems with its timekeeping. This was found to be caused by wear in the gears turning the hands, which had to be disconnected. Further repairs have been approved by the DAC, subject to the submission of a revised quotation for additional work to be carried out, as recommended by an independent report. The proposal can then go forward to the Diocesan Chancellor for the granting of a Further Order.

Central Heating Boiler:

The oil-fired boiler has become increasingly unreliable over recent years and the original intention was to replace it before the winter of 2019-20. However, this was not possible and an application to permit its replacement with a new oil-fired boiler has only recently been submitted to the DAC, by means of an online List B application for approval by the Archdeacon. However, General Synod has also recently promulgated a policy that the Church of England will become carbon neutral by 2030, which must be a cause for concern.

Move of Church Office into Vestry:

The move of the office from the former Church Rooms, which are now occupied by the village general practice, took place in April. To allow an internet connection, a cable was laid from The Bowl Inn, across the churchyard alongside the path. However, a connection was not actually made until October, because of administrative problems at BT.

Woodworm in the Rafters of the Vestry Ceiling:

Wood dust particles were noticed on the furniture following the move of the church office into the vestry. An online List B application for treatment of woodworm (and possibly death watch beetle) in the rafters is currently with the DAC, whose assessor has expressed some concerns and has requested that we take advice from our architect.

Quinquennial:

The Quinquennial (five-yearly) inspection of the church was carried out by our architect, Mr George Chedburn, at the end of July. We are awaiting the issue of his report, which will, no doubt, identify several areas in need of repair.

Removal of Trees at the North-East Corner of the Churchyard:

Approval for the removal, for safety reasons, of the large Leylandii and Lawson Cypress trees near the gate by The Bowl was granted early in the year. However, removal had to be delayed until September and the end of the birds' nesting season. There is now a greatly improved view of the church from Church Road.

Graham Jeffery

FINANCIAL REVIEW

At the end of 2019 we remain in an acceptable financial position – thanks to our considerable reserves but with heavily depleted savings. In effect we have used the moneys raised from the sale of the village shop for the re-ordering work on the church. Unfortunately, our routine expenditure exceeds our routine income by £6000 – a similar figure to last year and although we have the reserves to cover this for a few years we must get on top of this loss-making position over the course of the next year.

We raised a total of £184,126 in 2019 compared to £527,770 in 2018 and spent £393,372 compared to £162,929 in 2018.

Ignoring the sale of the shop last year and of the under lease on the Surgery this year, our income slightly reduced in 2019 relative to the previous year. We received £50,000 in the form of gift aid, nearly £13,000 from Parish magazine sales, almost £10,000 in loose plate collections and over £23,000 as donations towards our many good causes.

Our largest items of expenditure were £250,000 on the church re-ordering, £50,000 for the parish share and £31,000 on church running. Our support for mission and development agencies increased slightly by £500 from the 2018 figure of £4,800.

Our uncommitted funds (those that the PCC has not earmarked for a specific project) currently stand at £43,650 and I would expect this figure to increase considerably once the PCC obtains the VAT return from the Government against that paid for the re-ordering work.

Nick Roach, Treasurer

CHURCH REORDERING

The principal aim of the reordering the church building is to ensure that it best meets our current and future needs. The main work was completed at the end of January 2020.

It has included:

1. Adding two high quality matching wooden pods at the South West and North West corners of the nave. The one in the South West corner houses a Disability Discrimination Act compliant toilet facility that can be used by everyone and includes nappy changing facilities. The other pod houses a kitchen and servery.
2. Levelling the floor of the rear half of the nave by removing the wooden platform and laying a new stone floor with provision for underfloor heating.
3. Providing improved social and circulation space across the back of the church and along the north aisle.
4. Buying 40 new chairs to provide replacement seating capacity, when needed. When not needed they will be stored in a new cupboard on the south wall of the nave next to the new toilet pod.
5. Moving the font to the South East corner of the nave.
6. Improving access into and within the building by:
 - a) levelling the entrance at the West Door and installing a glass inner porch.
 - b) moving the Portico from the West Door to the North Door.
 - c) adding handrails to the steps in the North Porch.
 - d) improving the previously temporary deep shallow steps between the choir stalls and the chancel.
7. Removing the old kitchen units and installing new cupboards.
8. Refurbishing the existing WCs.

All of the work has been completed to a high standard.

There will be a defects period of six months to the end of July 2020 to ensure that everything is as it should be. The final payment will then be made.

Plans to improve the AV facilities are now also progressing following lengthy discussions with the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC). It is hoped that in the summer a new screen and projector will be installed in the central part of the nave together with large pop-up TV screens in wooden enclosures at the front of the side aisles.

It is also planned to install a new boiler in April, which will include a connection to the underfloor heating.

I would like to express particular thanks to George Chedburn, the church's architect for all of his work, and to Philip Rowe, for his quiet personal support and encouragement.

Paul van Rossum, Associate Vicar

SAFEGUARDING – PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH

It is the aim of St Mary's Church to develop the spiritual and social life of the children and young people in church in a safe and secure environment and to protect them from harm whenever possible. St Mary's Church also aims to provide respectful, pastoral care for adults.

The church endeavours to follow the Safeguarding Principles of the Church of England which are:

- The care and nurture of and respectful pastoral ministry with all children, young people and adults.
- The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable.
- The establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

In terms of Safeguarding, it is the duty of the PCC, with the incumbent, to promote a safer church for all in the church community, and to ensure there is a plan in place to raise awareness of, promote training and ensure that safeguarding is taken seriously by all those in the church community.

Because St Mary's Church provides activities for children and young people and provides pastoral care for vulnerable adults the PCC is classed as a charity. Members of the PCC, as trustee of that charity, are eligible for DBS enhanced checks under the recommendation of the Church of England and Charity Commission. They are also expected to undergo the online Basic and taught Foundation Training as recommended by the Diocese of Bristol. All PCC members have completed the DBS clearance, and completed the required training.

St Mary's Church also continues with its requirement that all those wishing to work directly with children or to undertake pastoral visits on behalf of the church must go through our internal vetting procedure and obtain Enhanced DBS clearance.

We currently in total 39 volunteers who have DBS checks which includes all PCC members. We have 32 volunteers who have been cleared to work with children. 10 volunteers have also been cleared to do pastoral visiting. During the past year we have had 2 more people who have obtained DBS certificates and 4 people who have come off the list and 3 renewals,

The church office keeps an up to date record of all the DBS certificates, date of issue (renewal after 5 years), level of clearance, whether children's or adult work is undertaken and what safeguarding training has been done.

The Church of England now expects that all church paid staff and volunteers receive Safeguarding training appropriate to their level of involvement in church activities. The Diocese of Bristol have updated their Safeguarding Training Strategy which has some changes in the training paid staff and volunteers need to undertake. These changes will be implemented over the coming year,

The Church office will keep a record of all training undertaken so please notify the office and the Parish Safeguarding Officer of any C of E Safeguarding training undertaken.

New for 2020, the Diocese have introduced a new online Safeguarding Dashboard which will replace the yearly Safeguarding Audit – this will allow us to be able to track all the Safeguarding Policies and Processes. I have registered to use this Dashboard and have made a start on setting everything up for St Mary's. We need to be using the Dashboard by Easter.

The PSO will be responsible for the Dashboard and will have editor rights – and others will be able to view the dashboard which still to be decided but will include some PCC members as all PCC members are all responsible for Safeguarding.

The Safeguarding Policy and guidelines have been reviewed and updated and approved by the PCC in November 2019. A Lone Working Policy has been written and approved by the PCC in July 2019. Both of these policies can be found on the Church's website, under Safeguarding and Data Protection.

Thank you to those who have undergone the internal vetting and DBS clearance procedures or have renewed their DBS certificate this year, also those who have undergone Safeguarding training. Their commitment to Safeguarding in our church is greatly appreciated as is the support from Philip Rowe, the Ministry Team, Group Leaders and the Safeguarding Team at Diocese of Bristol. Thank you for everyone who have supported me in my role.

*Liz Tierney
Parish Safeguarding Officer
St Mary's Church Almondsbury*

DATA PROTECTION REPORT

It is 18 months since the new legislation for General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force. Though we have left the EU, these rules will still apply.

The following can be found on the Church's Website – The Data Privacy Policy, Data Consent Form and Data Protection Procedures Policy. There are copies of the Data Consent Form in Church.

Various other data consent forms are available for other areas where personal data may be displayed in the public domain – like Noticeboards, the website or the Lich Gate. These include the Cleaning Rota, Sides Rota and the Lich Gate.

All data, apart from the Lich Gate, is kept in the Church Office. The Incumbent Data Protection Lead and Parish Administrator have access to the data. The Lich Gate data is kept by the Data Protection Lead and passed onto the Lich Gate Editor for inclusion in the Lich Gate.

I attended the session on GDPR and your Parish – Good Data Management at the Parish Training Day in October. They provided a useful list of steps which the church should carry out – some of these things we have already done or are doing, but others will require further investigation which will be done during 2020.

However the main thing that we as a Church should be encouraged to do is to ensure that all emails relating to Church business **MUST** be sent using the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) option –

many of us already do use this as not everyone wants their email address in the public domain.. This includes PCC lists, All Age Service Information lists, Sides Rota list etc...

*Liz Tierney
Data Protection Lead
St Mary's Church, Almondsbury*

ALMONDSBURY CHOIR REPORT

This report covers the activities of the choir over the last twelve months, my third year as organist and choirmaster.

Attendance at choir practices has again been satisfactory and the choir has given good performances of the standard repertoire. My aim continues to be to widen our musical horizons and to introduce more new hymns, anthems and psalms. The choir currently numbers 12; five sopranos, four altos, one tenor and two basses. Grateful thanks go to the supernumerary members of the choir, Mike Jenkinson, Astrid Domingo Molyneux and Susan Bridgewater for their readiness to reinforce the choir for big services. I would also like to thank Garnet Pritchard's daughters for their kind donation to the choir, following their father's funeral. And a big thank you to Judi for her tireless work preparing the service sheets.

The high spot of 2019 was the performance of the Faure Requiem, at St. Mary's on Palm Sunday and at St. Peter's Church, Pilning the following day. About thirty singers, drawn from our choir and the Pilning Festival Choir, performed the work under the baton of the latter's Director, Jonathan Edwardes; I fulfilled a longstanding ambition by singing the baritone solo. Our thanks go to Jonathan for his good-humoured direction, and also to Mark Weaver, formerly the St. Mary's organist, whom we welcomed back as the keyboard player. We have not been able to collaborate with the St. Peter's choir this year. but hope to stage another joint performance before too long.

It is my pleasant duty to choose the hymns, anthems and psalms; without sticking rigidly to the lectionary, they are chosen as far as possible to be in keeping with the liturgy as the church year proceeds. The choir has continued to sing an anthem at the 9.15 service every Sunday and a psalm at Morning Prayer, on the first Sunday of the month. On the later Sundays the choir sings the choral setting of the Eucharist, including Common Prayer once a month. The choir has continued to be available for weddings, and the choir members are happy to volunteer their services for funerals and thanksgiving services.

The choir still needs more members, particularly basses and tenors, so I shall be addressing the issue of recruitment again over the coming months. In the autumn we shall be launching the St. Mary's Special Choir. This will be an enlarged choir which will sing at the festivals; we hope to attract people who are unable or unwilling to commit to attending rehearsals on a weekly basis.

My warmest thanks once again go to the choir for their hard work and readiness to attend in all weathers.

Matthew Thomas, Organist and Choir Master

PRAISE GROUP REPORT

The past year has seen the Praise Group develop, in terms of both style and members.

We have gently evolved our style of leading worship to encompass more than simply accompanying songs. From the occasional use of quiet music over prayer, the prominence of particular instruments at certain times and generally trying to provide an appropriate backdrop of sound and context, we hope to enable people to worship God more effectively. We have received positive feedback to date, so will continue to try and evolve in this area, with sensitivity and humility.

The group varies from week to week, according to who is available, and currently consists of Sandy, Astrid, Sue, Susan and Jean (Vocalists), Lyn (Drums), Astrid (Saxophone), Steve (Trumpet), Simon (Guitar), Susan (Base Ukulele) and me (Keyboard). We also gratefully acknowledge the role of those who manage the sound and projector each week, which makes such a difference to worship.

Finally, we thank God for the blessing of having a congregation which loves to sing and responds so well to the leading we attempt to give. We seek to encourage anyone who wants to develop in this area, so if anyone is minded to explore their gifts further, we would encourage them to make contact with either me or Sandy Thompson.

Mike Jenkinson

REPORT ON BRISTOL WEST DEANERY SYNOD

Introduction Deanery Synod met three times since the last round of APCMs. During this time the Area Dean changed due to the move of Revd Mat Inneson to the Diocese of Carlisle. The new Area Dean is the Revd Charles Sutton, Vicar of All Saints Clifton. The Lay Chair remained with Ms Helen Clifton. Additionally, the Deanery Leadership Team met four times. This year (2020) marks the start of another Triennial, consequently Deanery Representatives will need to be elected at APCMs and Deanery Officers at the next Synod.

This report reflects the whole of 2019 and the most recent Climate Based Synod in 2020.

Deanery Synod Themes

Opportunities to Explore the Christian Faith

The Synod in February 2019 focused on our opportunities to Explore the Christian Faith. It built upon the thinking of the previous Synod that discussed 'Small Groups for Whole-Life Discipleship'. The observation of the previous Synod was that the notion of 'Small Groups' was diverse (covering Bible study to Flower rota, prayer group to group running); that Whole-Life discipleship needed to recognize the ebb and flow of life as well as growth in faith. This synod built upon this.

In a conversation between Imogen Ball (Trinity Ordinand) and Charles Sutton the richness of the breadth of our tradition, the many and varied opportunities to explore and grow, and the willingness

to learn and share were touched upon. This led to very productive Small Group discussions and recommendations. These recommendations included:

- Being open to God and Others
- Engage beyond church
- Explore faith together
- Open to new ideas and build relationships
- Take time Out (space, silence, retreat)
- Take Discipleship of the young seriously
- Listen to new voices in wider context
- Visit different churches (and different traditions)

Developing the Gifts of God's People

In our partnership within the *missio Dei* (the Mission of God) we are challenged to find the gifts in ourselves and in others, to invest in these gifts and find opportunities to use them in a real and living way.

The 2019 May Deanery Synod explored this topic and, in particular, how our broad church (in contexts and tradition) can respond in meaningful ways. The Revd Becky Waring introduced the discussion reminding us that God's gifts are usually to grow the Kingdom and that we have tendencies to be overprotective or defensive about our gifts. Her message was 'share, enable, encourage and equip'.

Three discussion groups took place. SHAPE (discover your gifts); LICC Frontline; and Encourage Gifts.

Home Bank Avonmouth. This Synod also contained a presentation on the Avonmouth Food bank. This recognized a 25% increase in need directly attributable to Universal Credit! And an individual population of more than 6,000 reaching out for food because of necessity!

Meet the new Archdeacon

The Venerable Neil Warwick The October Synod coincided with the appointment of the new Archdeacon of Bristol, the Venerable Neil Warwick, and the appointment of the new Area Dean of Bristol West, Revd Charles Sutton. This Synod focused on 'getting to know' the new Archdeacon and also exploring what a 'good Archdeacon looks like'. Clearly not limited to appearance (!) but to relationship. Expectations were very much concerned with collaboration, enabling, engagement, listening, linking and being valued (both ways). An excellent foundation for a future and growing ministry amongst us.

Climate Emergency

February 2020, a world caught with attention on the Australian fires and a country focused on storms and rainfall. Indicators of massive climate change. Two speakers joined us for the evening, Carla Denyer, Councillor Bristol City (and Proposer of first City Council Climate Emergency Motion) and Clare Fussell, the Diocesan Environmental Adviser. Both speakers, in slightly different ways, worked from a foundation of our responsibility (especially noting The Fifth Mark of Mission: "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth") and developed practical and real responses that we as a church and as individuals can respond to this hugely significant topic.

The Uganda Link

This year recognized the 50th Anniversary of the Uganda Link. The essential platform for this is 'building relationships of wholeness across culture with Christ at the centre'. In short this is about

'relationship'; between Christians, across cultures, over geography and with, sometimes, differing views of this world. It is about learning from each other and providing mutual support. The Uganda Link is a feature of every Synod and the working life of our parishes in the Deanery.

Up-Dates and Notices

Deanery Synods also provide an opportunity to share ideas, let people know what's happening, share joys, lament together, plan for the future and recognize that there's a great deal more that holds us together than separates us. We are one deanery, in one diocese, in one Church.

Alison Rowe, Deanery Synod member

DIOCESE OF BRISTOL REPORT

Diocesan Report has not yet been received.

Oliver Home, Diocesan Secretary

THANKS

The PCC employs Matthew Thomas as Organist and Choirmaster and Judi Thomson as Church Administrator. All other routine activities are undertaken by volunteers and the Council places on record its appreciation of these volunteers who give their time and skills to the church and community.

ADOPTION

This report was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 17th March 2020 for presentation to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 27th September 2020.



St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury

Reports from Organisations

Distributed with the Annual Parochial Church Report

Presented at a meeting held on 27 September 2020

MOTHERS UNION

2019 has been a year during which we have had to recognise the changing circumstances of our MU branch. Sadly, some of our members are no longer able to attend meetings, nevertheless, our 20 members have been faithful in looking after & supporting each other & our branch.

Philip kindly took the chair for our AGM in January, when all officers & committee members were re-elected.

Clare Stephens gave a pottery demonstration at our February meeting, which was much enjoyed by all.

Helen Little was the speaker at our March meeting. She told us of her work with the Langley House Trust, for the rehabilitation of prisoners following their release.

Our April meeting was the Bring & Buy & coffee evening at Judith's, a fun way of fund raising for our MU projects.

The May outing was lunch at Leyhill prison, where we were welcomed & enjoyed a delicious meal prepared & served by the inmates.

The Deanery Festival in June was held at St. Mary's, Shirehampton . Our June meeting, Communion led by John Poarch, was held in the round in the OSH as the church building was out of action on weekdays.

The summer supper in July was blessed with lovely, sunny weather so we were able to be in the garden for the evening.

Astrid led our Wave of Prayer meeting in September & in October we enjoyed our annual visit to St. Chad's fellowship. We welcomed Aurea Hart as the speaker at our October meeting.

The annual dinner in November had to be cancelled as numbers weren't viable for the caterers, so as a quick fix, we revisited Leyhill for our Christmas lunch.

In December, members joined with other MU groups for an Advent Service at St. Peter's Henleaze. Our own December meeting, led by Margaret Hewitt with Ros at the piano, was our Christmas Carols & Readings, a great favourite with all our members.

Members continue to be involved in many activities within the church, the village and the wider community. We hope to be back in school listening to readers again in the near future.

Our thanks must go to Philip, John Poarch, Astrid & Barry for their support during the year and to Judith for her leadership.

Chris Coltham (Branch Secretary)

FLOWER ARRANGERS

As with other Church organisations, this last year has not been the easiest for the flower arrangers, but somehow, we have got through, doing flowers for weddings and on the whole, being sure there have been flowers in Church for the Sunday morning services. When there have been Friday weddings the builders have kindly moved their building implements and generally tidied up in good time so we could do our flower arrangements. I think we have accommodated the wedding couples and their families and friends. We are now nearing the end of the building works and I think the Church looks good in spite of our wondering what it **would** look like! I gather there is a new flower cupboard and loo with larger handbasin for the flower arrangers at the back of the Church with shelf space under the sink for jugs, vases etc. It may be possible to keep oasis boxes in our old cupboard in the Choir Vestry and also, we shall need to keep the two flower pedestals not in use, bigger jugs, watering can, etc. somewhere.

Last October (2019) there was a wedding for one of our flower arranger's sons, when the flowers looked beautiful, done by family and following this Barbara Halliwell's new daughter-in-law has asked to come on our rota. She loves flowers and is keen to join our group, so we are very pleased to have Nicola Halliwell with us. I believe there is one other lady who is interested in joining us so that is also good news.

One of our long-time group, Joan Haskins, regrets that she is unable to continue doing flowers at Church festivals due to being the carer for her husband, Don, now in poor health. Don was in charge of the bellringers for many years and was always the first to submit his report for the Annual Church Meeting in those days. We thank Joan for all she has done in flower arranging and wish her and Don well.

Thank you to all our flower arrangers for their beautiful arrangements through the years and after the quieter season of Lent without flowers we look forward to Easter Day with a peaceful and happy Easter to all.

Margaret Hewitt, Flower Organizer

THE LICH GATE

Introduction

The March 2020 magazine will be my eleventh issue as editor – the first being March 2019.

I would like to express my grateful thanks to all who have helped me in the past year – a large number of people but particularly Mike Lewis, the previous editor (who still manages the website), Philip and Alison Rowe for their help and encouragement, Ray Daniels who organises and manages the volunteers who deliver the magazine, Liz Tierney for the Data Protection Act support, Astrid Domingo Molineux for the monthly Church diary and Pam Van Rossum who until recently managed the advertising. Pam has now stepped down and this role has been taken on by John and Lucy Ingle who came in just as the new advertising year began with the March edition – so, supported by Pam, they were in the thick of it from day one.

All issues during 2019 / 2020 were produced on time – Motion Printers of Severn beach who print it are reliable and flexible and provide a very good service. Personally, I am very happy

with them and I see no reason for any change in this area. Mike Lewis selected and implemented them – a great choice!

I avoid wherever possible actually editing submissions – I much prefer to have contributors produce something I can use without amendment so as not to “mess” with the work that someone has taken the time and made the effort to produce. I did write a short guide to assist potential contributors in this.

Aims and Objectives

The Lich Gate is a village magazine and is “owned” by the Parochial Church Council. It should be informative and entertaining, but also be thought provoking (in a light-hearted way) and be a means for the residents to voice concerns over any issues that affect them. It should be focused on local events that are not covered elsewhere and should have a significant local church content.

It should also be self-funding – which is currently the case.

The Magazine has a number of elements

- **Advertisers**

These actually pay for the magazine, so it is important they are content with their advert and the overall quality of the magazine. There are inevitably always some minor issues but generally I believe the majority of advertisers are very happy.

- **Regular Contributors (Monthly / Periodically)**

Predominantly Clubs & Societies, the Community Shop and the local school: the “usual suspects” who give of their time and make the effort to contribute and whose efforts and inputs are essential.

- **Free Advertising – Not for Profit Organisations**

There are many requests for this. I accommodate them wherever possible and where choices have to be made and priorities set, will give the priority to local village events. I always ask for a brief report for any event (Panto and Quiz Nights etc) that helps to add to the variety of the magazine content.

- **Reference Materials**

Who’s Who, What’s What and What’s On. Whilst this remains the same format from month to month, it does need to be kept updated and current – It clearly much used as I have had several requests for information contained in it, including a telephone call from a resident holidaying in Spain (!)

- **One-Off features and articles.**

This is an area that needs improvement! To avoid the magazine becoming an advertising and services directory I believe we do need more one-off articles and features. Local resident Julia Smith did provide several features – based on interviews with local individuals who had an interesting story to relate – but for personal reasons she can no longer do this.

We are very fortunate to have Madeline Bird who is studying Media & Journalism, and she provides an article on a different topic each month. She also brings a very welcome younger element to the magazine contents.

Despite a number of entreaties in the magazine for individuals to supply articles on topics and subjects of particular interest to them, and number of approaches to the local secondary school for students to supply content - practically none have been forthcoming. This remains a priority for 2020

- **Website**

As stated, this is currently managed by Mike Lewis. There are a number of Almondsbury websites – and I believe there is a potential to expand the one for the magazine to have a broader coverage and have links to the others (as well as more content of its own) to become the “Go-To” site for all things Almondsbury. This is something I would like to explore more during 2020.

Edward Ranger, Editor

CHILDREN’S WORK

The weekly All Age Service has continued to be a focal point for our children and young adult’s ministry.

The All Age Service continues to seek to be a congregation of adults and children who worship God together through an informal mix of music, prayer and teaching as we grow in our faith as Christians.’

We split into age related groups for the middle part of the service to receive age appropriate teaching on the theme for the week.

Normally three groups meet each week: a combine crèche and Key Stage 1 group (led by Celia Jenkinson), a Key Stage 2 group (led by Pam van Rossum and Annalisa Wood) and a Young Adults group ‘Ignite’ (led by Corné Human and Sue Channon).

A number of special services and activities have particularly involved the children including: Mothering Sunday Parade Service, Palm Sunday Service (which included a procession around the village with a donkey), Good Friday Activities Morning/Service in the Old School Hall, Harvest Parade Service, Remembrance Parade Service, Toy and Gift Service incorporating a pop-up Nativity with a donkey, and two very well attended Christingle Services on Christmas Eve.

Outside of Sunday mornings, a variety of other groups meet including Oasis, Babies and Toddlers, and Messy Church which are reported on elsewhere.

Finally, on behalf of us all, I would like to express our deep appreciation to everyone who works to ensure that all our children and young adults so that they have the opportunity to grow and develop in their walk with Christ.

Paul van Rossum, Associate Vicar

BABIES AND TODDLERS GROUP

St Mary's toddler group is very popular with new mums and grandparents alike! It's a very valuable meeting point for parents and many new friendships have been made this year we all had a lovely Christmas party with Santa arriving with books for all the children at the end! This year we started buying fruit as a snack while listening to a story read by Pam followed by action nursery rhymes and finishing our group with more singing and musical instruments we now have 4 people regularly helping each week and Emma Roach prepares the fruit and washes up for us.

Sandy Thompson, Leader

OASIS GROUP

OASIS continues to enjoy a happy team atmosphere with 8 regular families and a faithful team of 4 helpers. The past year focussed on **JESUS AND THE PSALMS** as our topic. We seek to worship in songs, prayer, craft and drama/Bible stories.

- Psalm 121:6 *"The Lord is my KEEPER ... He never slumbers or sleeps"*. Linked with NICODEMUS who came to Jesus at night, so we don't have to fear the dark either.
- Psalm 139:7-12 *"The Lord is EVERYWHERE so "Where can I go from His presence?"* Linked with Zacchaeus who liked climbing trees and Jesus saw him there!
- Psalm 18:1-3 *"The Lord is my ROCK"* so we can always rely/lean on Him. Linked with Peter who knew many storms and with Jesus' help overcame them all.
- Psalm 91:1 ff *"He gives His ANGELS charge of us to GUARD us in all our ways"* at Christmas God sent angels to shepherds and each child also has a guardian angel.
- Psalm 42:1 He cares for our thirsty SOULS and refreshes us with His HOLY SPIRIT. He gives us HOPE for the future. Linked with a woman at the well who was weary.
- Psalm 40:1-2 *"David waited patiently for the Lord Who heard his cry."* He lifts us out of difficulties too and teaches us patience. Bartimaeus didn't stop crying out to Jesus for healing of his blindness and was not disappointed. JESUS HEARS US.
- Psalm 8:2 *"Out of the mouths of infants and babes He has ordained PRAISE."* The first call for all ages is to WORSHIP JESUS and give Him glory. Palm Sunday praise.
- Psalm 16:11 *"He will show us the PATH OF LIFE."* Jesus has a plan for each child .
- Psalm 24:3 *"He gives us a clean HEART"* Jesus washes away our sins on the cross.
- Psalm 104:5 *"He establishes the FOUNDATIONS of the earth."* The world is like HIS TENT HOME and we are HIS HOLY TEMPLE when He enters our hearts.
- Psalm 1:1-2 God teaches us the difference between RIGHT and WRONG. When Jesus LIVES in our hearts, He HELPS us do what is right.

We would value prayer for this years' theme, **JESUS AND THE JUDGES**. We take a nugget from the life of a judge/leader of Israel (so far Joshua, Samson and Gideon) and alternate with a NT characters with life parallels. (Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and Peter)

PRAISE GOD:

For His faithfulness to each family and help in their growth of faith, love and service.
For inspiring teaching, crafts, prayer and worship and a united team

PRAY FOR:

Children/parents to take hold of daily prayer/ Bible reading and to pray for each other.
For new families to want to know Jesus personally
For a happy time and growing friendships to prosper

Thank you for all support and prayer,

“Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.”
Proverbs 22:6

Jan Cooper and team (Sandy, Sue, Ro and Michael)

MESSY CHURCH

Because of the church reordering which has taken most of the last 12 months ,we haven't been able to hold Messy Church in the building .We were able to meet in the vicarage garden last summer where we had 3 memorable occasions. For example , our Trinity student dressed as Moses leading the children through the red sea will stick in our memory for some time .The plagues were brilliantly portrayed by our expert craft team ,i.e. Sandy Thompson ,Mo Pearson , Jeannie and Grace .Sarah Redmond always manages to produce something edible for her craft. We had a wonderful trip to cattle country in August which helps us all to get to know each other better.

We have constantly been asked ,*"When are you starting again"* ,so we are excited to be up and running on March 18th 2020 in our new reordered building .The theme will be Palm Sunday and will end with a meal cooked in our new kitchen, of sausages ,chips and beans .Thanks must go to our wonderful catering team ,Mary ,Joy ,David and Rosemary .

Please do encourage any children and parents /carers you know to join us .

Alison Rowe

CATERING COMMITTEE

This report must firstly acknowledge the hard work and patience of our catering team during the last 12 months .This also includes coffee makers each Sunday ,ably headed up by Barry and Chris Coltham .

We have all had to exercise patience during the reordering, but we are now being rewarded with our beautiful functioning kitchen .

Teams of people have catered for messy church ,marriage prep ,the lent lunches and bring and share lunches .

The weekly café Almondsbury is popular with mums and others ,as well as the local pilates group who come in after their class in the OSH .

Our new styled community café was launched in February 2020 ,inviting all in the village to come and meet each other on Monday mornings in term time .

Four of the catering team have just attended a level 2 food safety awareness course paid for by the church .

Our new catering facilities will be used to provide soup lunches ,messy church meals as well as the weekly café .

Thanks, must also go to the team who made many cream teas for the village fete last July .

We hope to repeat it this year .

Alison Rowe

BELLRINGERS

The bellringers had another active year in 2019 ringing for Sunday services, every wedding that requested bells, and for special services. Attendance at practices was good and it was very rare that we did not ring all eight bells. We rang on 42 of 52 Sundays. All of the missing Sundays were due to the bells being out of service for restoration. We have 18 resident ringers, the same as last year including two juniors.

We rang 2 quarter peals in 2019 as against 4 in the previous year, though did have a number of ringing highlights, including ringing 21 different methods. We rang for ten weddings and one funeral, managing to ring all eight bells on each occasion.

Outside the tower we continued to monitor the clock and Church floodlighting and to tend our adopted flower beds either side of the West door.

In 2018 after almost 120 years the bells needed extensive renovation which cost around £100,000. The bells were finally removed on 8th October 2018 and shipped to Taylors in Loughborough for refurbishment and were returned on 27th February 2019, with a short service and celebration planned accordingly.

<https://almondsburychurch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ABRP-Bells-Return-Progress-Reports.pdf>

A huge vote of thanks goes in particular to Gerry Anniss, our steeple keeper who has been tireless in his efforts on fundraising as well as a huge amount of the practicalities of removing the bells, getting painting and maintenance work done and generally being there for every stage of the restoration project. It is also fair to mention Nigel Waters, who has worked on the fundraising and grant applications and also Claire and Tim Jefferis for their advertising of the project, including a very special opera performance <http://englishtouringopera.org.uk/productions/the-almondsbury-bells> as well as selling jigsaws to raise money. Lots of people have also supported the project with time, money and effort and we are truly grateful.

More information on the project can be found via the link below.

<https://almondsburychurch.org.uk/bell-ringers/bell-restoration-project/>

The first ring on the new bells was undertaken by a local band and supporters on 15th March. (Thanks to Deborah Waters for all these photos)



On 6th April 2019 we were presented with The Bliss Tower, the award for the Tower of the Year Competition in the Gloucester & Bristol Branch for our achievements in hanging the bells. The trophy sits proudly in our ringing chamber until we present it to the new winner in 2020.



We made the front page of The Ringing World in its 3rd May 2019 edition also.

THE RINGING WORLD

The Weekly Journal for Church Bell Ringers since 1911 May 3, 2019 No. 5636 Editor: Robert Lewis Only £1.56 to subscribers £2.70

At last I'm hearing things!
Thursday, 14th March, 10.50am, and history is made
by Deborah Waters

I just heard a church bell ring. And now another and another! A quintessentially English village sound that hasn't been heard in Almondsbury since the end of September 2018.

These are the first, tentative test rings. This is an exciting moment for the small dedicated team behind this historic project and will be the culmination of two years planning and hard work by the people involved. It is 125 years since the last time the bells were taken out and six months since they fell silent last year and were driven away.

Tower Keeper Gerry Ammiss has masterminded the project for the village from inception to completion, ably assisted by a small dedicated team. Thousands of hours have been given by these fabulous people, all volunteers. For Gerry, it has been an almost full-time job project managing this major and complex engineering undertaking with irreplaceable (and somewhat hefty) historic artefacts.

Nigel Waters and family moved to the village in 2015, swiftly finding himself Head of Fundraising, having only taken up bell ringing in 2016. He secured over £100,000 in record time with the help of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other sources and donations. Claire Jeffries commissioned and sold Wentworth Jigsaws featuring views of the church and locale, leading the village initiative. The project ticked all the boxes and was given the green light to proceed.

Removal was delayed by the previous customer over-training, but as that was St Paul's Cathedral no one decided to kick up a fuss! The BBC was there to record our eight bells effortlessly looking descent from the tower and being driven off to the foundry in Loughborough. In January eighteen of us visited them 'on the shop floor' in a day trip organised by Deborah Waters and learnt about the many processes involved. Then the patient wait for their return.

On 27th February, at short notice, our eight newly refurbished bells were lined up down the nave of the church ready for hoisting back up into the tower the following morning. In that small window of opportunity, that evening Phillip our vicar, lead prayers in the church, and Alison and helpers organised a social and celebration with refreshments to mark the occasion. It gave everyone attending a last chance to view the bells at close quarters.

Teams of men from Taylor's of Loughborough have been working ever since to bring the bells to full, safe, operational

St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury, Glouc. & 29.2.19 in D. (Photo by William Avery from Geograph)

The bells arrive home

Celebrating the return of the bells

Almost finally, though technically sitting in next years' report, it is worth mentioning that a band of ringers from the Bristol Rural Branch scored the first peal on the new bells on 4th January 2020, including the present and previous tower captain in its ranks. This is the first peal on the bells since 1993 and was excellently struck. Details as follows.

5040 Grandsire Triples in 3 hours and 4 minutes

1. Sue Haslam
2. Thomas Moller
3. Alison Holliday
4. Marcus Booth
5. Steve Crane
6. Simon Percy
7. Russell Scudamore (C)

8. Jon Storey

And absolutely finally, my many thanks to all the members and supporters of the tower, who have made this the most successful year for a long time. Especially Adam for his support as wedding organiser and secretary, Adrian as deputy tower captain, Mike as treasurer, Nigel as project treasurer and main host and David as our technology guru. And thank you to our vicar, Philip, who is very supportive of what we do and aim to do and is a real friend of the ringers,

Particular thanks to Gerry for putting his whole life on hold to oversee the installation project and the finishing touches, including our lovely new carpet, and spending more hours in the tower than at home sometimes!

Lots of people have asked to ring on our lovely new bells and I expect the 2020 report to contain many more exciting events and “firsts”.

Marcus Booth
Tower Captain – Almondsbury