

*(Registered Charity Number 1134614)*

**APPENDIX TO PCC Annual Report**

***Reports from PCC Sub Committees and review of Church activities***

***Year ending 31st December 2020***

***Activity Page***

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**CHILDREN’S WORK**

The Children’s work at St Paul’s stopped in March 2020 as a result of the global pandemic. At this point all churches were closed for three months.

**Weekly Mailings**

As we have the email contacts of thirteen families on file we decided to maintain contact with weekly mailings. ‘Roots’ adapted their material on line to make it available to mail out. ‘Roots’ is based on the gospel of the day and offers different levels of lesson for each age group.

The team took it in turns to collect the material from the website and we mailed out, a reading, activities, prayers and occasionally a song.

James Beauchamp put together material for our Young People. This group of over 10 year olds do not come out during the Sunday service in normal times and we felt encouraged that we had found a way to connect with the three or four Young People who had out grown Young Gospellers. We have been concerned for some time about the gap in the provision at St Paul’s for this age group.

**Children’s Clip Boards in Church**

Once the church reopened for services one or two families joined us on a Sunday. The spaces available in the Anderson room or Alexander room were not appropriate to hold a separate session for the children. Cliff very cleverly made material available to these children in church. He makes a print out of the weekly activity sheet from the ‘Roots’ session of that week and attaches it to 4 clip boards with a pack of crayons. He places them in church well before the Sunday service thus avoiding any risk to the users. These print outs have been well used and families have expressed their appreciation. This enables children to attend and remain occupied and connected to the theme of the day.

**Contacted Families for Feedback**

We took a break during the summer holidays as we always do. Before restarting in September we emailed and phoned families for their thoughts on what we were providing.

Feedback from a few of the families was encouraging but they asked us to modify the amount of material we were providing. Children had returned to school, parents were working and their time was under pressure. Some families asked to be removed from the list.

We have simplified the material and during Advent we had the opportunity to mail live streaming links of the Children’s Society Christingle service and St Albans Abbey Children’s dramatization of the Nativity.

**Currently**

We are mailing out to nine families and send the gospel reading with an activity sheet.

**The All Age Service**

This had not been reintroduced at the time of writing. We look forward to a fresh start of all areas of working with children once the virus is under control.

**Rainbow Festival**

included a Teddy Bear trail around the church. This trail is still in place and provides children an opportunity to engage with the church building and create a child friendly environment. Families who visit midweek are drawn around the church by their children’s enthusiasm to find each bear.

**Changes to the Young Gospeller Team**

Over the last year. Veronica Gerig stepped down. We are very grateful to Veronica for her creative and lively involvement with the children. Her skill at teaching will be much missed.

At the last APCM it was reported that Margaret Dickinson had stepped down from helping with Young Gospellers. Sadly Margaret died and she is greatly missed at St Paul’s.

Then earlier last year we were shocked to hear of the passing of Kitty Bradley. It was very sudden. She was a very kindly, supportive, and capable helper with the children.

**Current Team**

Young Gospeller Leaders: Ann Collett-White, Cliff Harris, James Beauchamp and Sue Gray

Young Gospeller Helpers: Barbro Eklund, Pat Slade and Susan Groom

We would like to thank Father Kevin for all his support of the children’s’ work. We look forward to working more closely with Father Luke and thank him for his contribution at YG planning meetings.

YG Leaders Jan. 2021

**MUSIC DEPARTMENT**

Looking back to March last year, little did I know that on 15th March 2020 my playing of Bach’s Passacaglia and Fugue as the voluntary would mark the final occasion at which St Paul’s Choir could fully sing together. For the record, the Mass was sung to Watson in G, and the two anthems were Woolley’s ‘Jesu, word of God incarnate’, and Hare’s ‘O God, thou art my God’. Indeed, a year on, it has not been possible for us to return to the choir stalls in number, but we have had the opportunity to contribute on a smaller scale in more recent times.

I was furloughed initially and returned to St Paul’s in October. We had discussed the possibility of a choir of up to 12 singers (6 on Cantoris and 6 on Decani) providing music for the Sunday Eucharist, and indeed we were able to sing for a few weeks, albeit with no opportunity to rehearse on a Friday evening. This ceased shortly afterwards, but we were able to re-group just in time to hastily prepare a shortened Town Carol Service with 18 singers, sat in three ‘bubbles’ of 6. With just two Friday rehearsals, we produced an excellent standard at the Saturday service, with all singers rising to the challenge. I’d like to thank everyone who made this possible. We also pre-recorded the Midnight Mass on one evening around this time, robed for the first time since March 2020. Alas, the very next day, Bedford moved into Tier 4 and that was it – no more singing on even a medium scale. Since then, we have managed to provide a single soloist or family bubble to sing an anthem and two hymns at each service, including Christmas Day. This looks set to continue to Easter at least.

I have no doubt that the future is uncertain – what we have taken for granted will probably not return exactly as before. When we begin to move out of lockdown, we can begin to assess the situation. I hope that our dedicated singers will wish to return to St Paul’s week by week, and we will of course need to reinstate a Friday (or another evening) rehearsal. But a year has passed, and I cannot assume anything. I can but hope.

Claire Price has decided to step down from the choir after several years of very loyal service. Graham Bentley, who has done so much in leading the choir, taking rehearsals and conducting countless evensongs and Eucharists will shortly be retiring to Suffolk. Likewise, John Alley, who has provided much help playing the organ, not least for many special events and each Remembrance Sunday, has moved to the south of France. We wish them all the very best and hope to see them from time to time. They will all be sorely missed.

Finally, we managed one Saturday organ recital in October, for which a sizeable audience gathered! What a shame it all finished before it really got going again. The work to move the organ blower out of the church to its ‘new’ old home (where it had lived since 1939) is now complete. As you will know, the promise 10 years ago of a silent-running machine never really materialised, the obtrusive noise being ever-present when the organ was switched on. Now, we can hear it again without any background rumblings, adding a certain peace and quiet to services, noticeable in those most intimate of moments.

Ian Runnells Director of Music

**BEDFORD DEANERY SYNOD**

The Deanery Synod comprises the Area Dean, Lay Chair, the licensed clergy in the Deanery and lay representatives elected by each parish. The Deanery Synod discusses issues with the intention of informing and encouraging ministry and mission and receives reports from the Diocesan Synod and General Synod. Four meetings were convened in 2020.  
  
The first meeting, on 13th February, was at St Peter De Merton and was the only face-to-face meeting of the year. Rev Kelvin Woolmer spoke about ‘Modern Day Slavery’ a phenomenon which can literally be taking place in front of our noses: some car washes, nail bars, restaurants, casual labourers have been identified as places where employees have been subjected to conditions of modern slavery. The Clewer Initiative is a Church of England project to raise awareness and help victims. We were all asked to note the Modern Slavery Helpline number **08000 121 700** for reporting suspicions and/or getting advice.

On 14th May we met by Zoom when Rev Canon Tim Bull and Luke Larner spoke about new developments in the training of Lay people in the Diocese. Specifically: Foundations Course (1 year), which covers pastoral matters, Mission and Discipleship. CMS Lay Pioneers (1 year) which Luke was participating in, and helps participant discern where the Holy Spirit is work and to engage with those on the fringes of church. Reader training (2 years after foundation training). The starting point for all these ministries is a discussion with the Incumbent. We were encouraged to look out for people who might be candidates.

On 10th September we heard (on Zoom) from Karen Jones of ‘Festive’ (www.festive.org.uk), a national charity which works to inspire and support Christians in F.E colleges and sixth forms live and share their faith through their words and actions. Karen asked that we pray for F.E college students as well as school students, as Colleges have specific issues and needs. Festive in Bedford have a heart to have a College chaplaincy with chaplains going in of all ages. She said that grandparents can make great chaplains – they have the time and skills to listen, which teenage college students , despite any contrary appearances, do appreciate. - Karen@festive.org.uk.

On December 3rd Rev Canon Tim Bull spoke about the developments and questions around artificial intelligence (AI). When your internet shopping, Facebook, or browser suggests purchases, or articles, that is AI. Satellite navigation route planners, image recognition at the airport or on our phones, voice recognition, language translation programs, all utilise AI, as do weather predictions, chess programs which can learn to beat a grand master, and biological modelling software which can help us understand a virus. Tim outlined some of the issues. Where do we put our trust- in a human doctor or a symptom searcher, an experienced teacher or an internet search. Does the decision making remain ‘objective’ (say when finding articles on a subject) or does it learn to reflect the bias of the user? Relationships- can we end up treating computers more like people or people more like computers. Computers, he argued, don’t have have a genuine sense of relationship, morality, or a spiritual life- so unlike us are not completely ‘made in the image of God’.

Reps were James Beauchamp, Wendy Jones, Ben Haddock (until Autumn 2020) and Tom Otley (from Autumn 2020). Do ask us any questions.

**CATERING**

2020 began a bit like most years for those of us involved in catering, but with some warning signs becoming more evident as the weeks progressed. Despite the increasing anxieties, we started the year with our usual events, Saturday teas and coffees; fellowship lunches; Sunday coffees; PB Fairs and plans for future markets and a Christmas Tree Festival. Then came March and the whole world changed.

With lock down and a closed church all of our catering events had to close. Given the limited space we have for our cafe area we have only been able to offer a couple of “take away” sessions for coffees as well as selling a few cakes at two PB Fairs. As a result, like most areas of our finance within the church, our takings have dropped dramatically. We have not been able to add our usual contribution of about £8,000 to church funds, as well as supporting our list of charities supported through our Saturday coffee takings.

At the time of writing, although the church is open for socially distanced worship and private prayer, just when or how we will be able to get back to our previous level of catering activities is not clear, neither is it clear how our customers or our helpers feel about returning to our tasks.

For the future we need to think about how we are going to staff our future events. During lock down we have all become older and not everyone of our previous caterers will necessarily be able or willing to come back to the team. So, please think about what you might be willing to do to help with this important piece of witness to the love of God.

For further information or to discuss what our needs for help might be please contact me or any of the other catering team.

Wendy Jones Committee Chair

**FLOWER GUILD**

In common with so many groups, and organisations, we have experienced a very quiet but still most distressing year.

The church has been closed for so many weeks and restrictions mean that even if we could find volunteers, flower arranging was virtually impossible.

When the building did finally reopen there was sadly confusion over what floral arrangements were required and what was expected of us, meaning that for a number of weeks we were “seemingly absent”

We did manage to provide limited flowers for the service of Lighting the Easter Candle and for Remembrance Sunday, but sadly not up to our normal high standards.

There were no floral decorations for Harvest but at Christmas we were able to produce a small pedestal and two candle rings for the lectern.

The Guild lost one of its longest serving members early in 2020 with the sad death of Margaret Dickinson and have also received three resignations including Veronica Gerig who has been a loyal and very hard working arranger and organiser for a number of years. Our membership is now perilously low: only four active members and with such reduced numbers it will be difficult for us to continue-to provide the high quality of floral arrangement that perhaps the church has come to expect. We desperately need new recruits or volunteers for when things get back to some form of normality.

We always welcome new arrangers and you do not need to be experienced, just willing to have a go. More practised members are available to assist and we may be able to organise in house training sessions if enough volunteers come forward.

Rest assured that we will continue to do the absolute best to beautify our magnificent church but there is only so much that four pairs of hands can do!

Susan A Stewart Guild Lead

**SERVERS**

Without wanting to repeat what other reports will say, this has been a very strange year for the serving team. As we work so closely with the team and clergy before during and after services, our way of working has been hit particularly hard by the various restrictions. During the first lockdown we tried to maintain our team spirit by each following a service prepared by Anne Harris in our own homes. Later when services restarted we were allowed one server around the altar (in a modified role) and then 2 and by Christmas a third……and now only able to help before and after service. There are so many things to look forward to when we get to better times but for me a highlight will be getting a full serving team back round the altar with all the “bells and whistles”.

One thing I am not looking forward to when restrictions are eased is that Anne Harris will nominate final Sunday to serve. She says she will be available for emergencies, so I have to try very hard not to create an emergency every week! But seriously, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anne for everything she has done as a server. Anne has been a server at St Paul’s for over 20 years and has carried out every role in the team with loyalty and diligence week in week out, enhancing the dignity of the liturgy. I will miss her friendship and support. Her depth and breadth of knowledge of serving will be very difficult to replace but with prayer I am sure that God will provide me with a miracle or two to fill Anne’s shoes.

If you think you or someone you know may be able help the serving team, even once a month, then please come and talk to me, you will be warmly welcomed. Full training and support will be given and the team is always very friendly.

**Robin Harris Head Server**

**TUESDAY LUNCHTIME CONCERT REPORT**

The Autumn Term 2019 concerts started on 10th September with 12 outstanding young musicians. The standard of musicianship seems to get higher every term!

On Saturday 9th November, Christ’s College, Cambridge Chapel Choir gave an evening concert which was very well attended, despite the downpour that evening! This was the third concert that Christ’s had performed at St. Paul’s and it was a great pleasure to hear this outstanding choir, though of course there are different voices every year as it is an under-graduate choir.

The Spring 2020 concerts started on 14th January and should have continued until 31st March, but due to Lock-down the concerts on 17th, 24th and 31st March had to be postponed. The Band of the Coldstream Guards were due to give a concert on 24th March to coincide with their concert at the Corn Exchange on St. George’s Day, so we were all very disappointed that this concert could not go ahead. It had been months in the planning! At that stage no one realised that the whole of the Summer Term would have to be cancelled - concerts due to be held from 21st April until 2nd June.

It was of course a huge disappointment for the musicians, most of whom are thousands of miles away from their families and with very limited practice resources at the Royal Academy and the Royal College. In fact, the practice rooms were out of bounds for most of the Lock-down which forced students to hire a piano for their own accommodation.

It was therefore a joy to start the concerts on 8th September 2020 ‘Live’ music was just what everyone had missed and needed! It was so good to meet new people who were working from home and who had not previously had the opportunity to come to these concerts, as many of them were commuters. There were also several people from London, Harpenden, St. Albans and Northampton who came for the first time. All the audience wore face masks and the chairs were positioned in accordance with Government Regulations.

The Autumn 2020 term was going along very smoothly until the Pandemic news became far more serious and the final three concerts of the term - 10th, 17th and 24th November had to be cancelled.

Since I took over these concerts in 2007, there have been 515 concerts. They are a lifeline to musicians to perform to a ‘live’ audience. People who come to these concerts tell me it is the highlight of their week.

I have missed the concerts very much and look forward to the day when we can all meet again.

*Heather J. Turnham* Concert Director