

ST. MARY'S CODDENHAM: ANNUAL REPORT 2020 to 2021

These reports were made to the APCM in April 2021. The previous APCM was in October 2020 (postponed from April) so some reports cover a six month rather than a twelve month period.

RECTOR'S REPORT – BENEFICE OF NORTH BOSMERE

When Jesus was asked 'what would be the signs of the end times', he replied 'As it was in the time of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man; people will be going about their normal business and they will see nothing untoward until it happens (Matt 24:37 and Lk 17:26, paraphrased). An exchange worth reflecting on as we look back over 2020. The annual 'Rector's Report' tends to be a cut-and-paste job; with the numbers revised and the odd one-off inserted for good measure. 2020 is different and as this report is more for posterity than for the immediate record, it strays from my usual format. The year began normally enough. The news from China and Italy, in particular, was disturbing but I think it would be fair to record that, except for medical and political specialists, most of us were blissfully unaware of what was coming. It was, as I began in my opening paragraph, business as normal in blissful ignorance. Parish life continued in this way for the first two months of the year. By late February/early March it was becoming clear that some sort of shut down was imminent. Mothering Sunday services planned for 22 March were cancelled at the last minute as large swathes of economic, social and spiritual life were deemed inessential and shut down by government decree. Churches were included in this inessential category; our buildings were closed and all public worship (unless on-line) was banned. At this stage most of us expected a short closure followed by a swift return to 'business as normal.' Life in the parishes continued.

Worship and Fellowship Thanks, in the first instance, to Rev Helen and to Ruth Dennigan (Reader), we were able to quickly establish a regular pattern of on-line worship using the facility ZOOM. What started as a short-term solution quickly settled into a weekly pattern of worship on Wednesday and Sunday mornings and Friday evening, other special services being added as required. Regular congregations settled long-term to around 6-12 for a week-day, 40 to 50 for Sundays (more for special occasions). The breakout facility in ZOOM also supported a welcome opportunity for social interaction around service and study-group meetings. By June we were able to reopen buildings for private prayer at least one day per week. In August we recommenced regular, physical services, albeit with limited numbers and no singing. Social distancing became a recurring mantra. The first service of Holy Communion (distribution in one kind only) in the Benefice since March was celebrated at Coddenham on Sunday 9 August. From then onward, weekly Sunday Eucharists, together with morning and evening prayer at least once each per month, continued until shut-down again in November. Remembrance Sunday saw small, private acts of Remembrance only, at those locations where War Memorials were positioned in the Churchyard or public space, not inside buildings. Physical services recommenced for December and included Christmas Eve/Christmas Day Eucharists at Stonham Aspal and Earl Stonham respectively. Throughout this period, ZOOM services continued. As we entered 2021, a worsening public health climate led to the voluntary cessation of all physical worship and meetings across the Benefice once more. Two other services worthy of note; in September Broughton Hall Farm

played host to a successful and well received Drive-In Harvest service and the formula was repeated for a drive-in Carol Sing at Gosbeck Village Hall carpark in December. In addition to the two Eucharists mentioned, Christmas also saw a number of church-yard services to overcome the constraints of indoor activities, particularly numbers and singing; the drive-ins enabled people to sing in their cars.

Occasional Offices Weddings were banned for much of the year (in all locations, not just church), then subject to severe constraint on numbers and singing. One wedding was celebrated in Earl Stonham in July, two in Crowfield in December. Funeral ministry continued, albeit under constraints on numbers and with no singing. For much of the spring and summer, funerals were either grave-side or crematorium only, not inside the church building. Whilst this placed additional constraints on all concerned at a particularly difficult time, there was something especially moving about many of these graveside ceremonies. Across all 8 parishes we conducted a total of 31 funerals and/or interments. All Baptisms were postponed due to pandemic constraints.

Social Welfare: it is important to record that, although no new social welfare/support ventures were initiated in the name of the parishes; in all 10 villages, church members played an active part in a variety of village community-based social support activities. From delivering food and medicines, to on-line social meets and much more beside. A weekly e-mail shot containing the Parish pew/notice sheet, a weekly Rectorial reflection and other relevant material is widely distributed.

GPO mail ministry: The internet provided vital connectivity for many, but not everyone is connected. Since April 2020 a weekly hard-copy mailing has distributed news, reflections and other material to around 24 individual addresses.

Haysel House: The Haysel House church community (Service & Soup) continued their network of communication and met in small groups as and when national restrictions allowed.

Schools: The challenges faced by schools during this pandemic are well documented elsewhere and our two primary schools are no exception. Physical access to the schools has not been possible but I have maintained regular contact through my work on the governing bodies of both schools; through occasional video inputs, and through a short appearance at Stonham Aspal School for a leavers event, and a short, pre-term time of prayer for the staff of Creeting St Mary School.

Rev'd Philip Payne

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

In our October 2020 report we wrote:

After our last pre-Covid 19 service in March 2020 the community of St Mary's ceased communal worship while services were no longer permitted. After making the church Covid-compliant we were pleased to host socially distanced benefice communion services in August and to have an evening service in September but the loss of the weekly pattern of

worship followed by coffee and biscuits has had a profound dispersal effect at the parish level. Members of the congregation may as individuals have found spiritual fulfilment with the benefice via Zoom, by attending other churches or by watching streamed services on Facebook or YouTube, but the parish has ceased to be the focus of worship. We will need to consider carefully what its role will be, in worship and in responding to the needs of our community, when we eventually establish a 'new-normal'.

We would like to thank the many individuals who have continued to support the parish both spiritually and materially, with a special mention for Roy Groom's sterling work in the lower churchyard, following the cancellation of the working party. Only a few services and events have been held at St Mary's since our last report, particular highlights being the Christmas tree competition in the churchyard, the outside performance by the Co-op band and the very memorable Christmas Eve service in the churchyard. The latter was a good example of innovation in response to the pandemic which may well be something we retain in the future.

Margaret Baker and Ian Galbraith

FABRIC REPORT

Work completed since the last APCM:

Tower Clock Mechanism: Following a number of failures the church clock mechanism is now finally replaced and operational with the bell also working.

External Drainage: A section of concrete channel has been removed however monitoring over the summer has been somewhat hampered by COVID restrictions and should continue for a further period.

Future Work

Quinquennial Inspection: The Architect has commenced the quinquennial inspection. We do not have the report yet but it is likely to include:

- Identification of grease leaking from the bell bearings. Whilst this should be checked it is not thought to be a serious problem.
- The louvres and surrounding stonework in the bell chamber are unstable and let birds into the tower. There are likely to be a number of options for repairs from the very costly including reinstating stone tracery to possibly something more affordable. If external scaffold access is required then then the cost of scaffold alone will be many thousands of pounds.
- Some areas of stonework repairs that are to be expected, nothing particularly serious and mostly to prevent big problems in the future.
- A proposal to reintroduce opening vents in the clerestory to allow cross ventilation and reduce dampness in the walls. This would work in tandem with proposed drainage works.

In summary there does not appear to be any significant problems at present.

External Drainage Works: The Architect prepared a specification for external drainage works which could be undertaken with removing the brickwork structure to the old boiler room and construction a ground level access hatch. Given the likely cost and complexity of the works proposed by the architect we have asked if we can be granted an Archdeacons Certificate to remove the concrete channel on the north side of the church and use temporary pipes to see if this solves the problem. It is believed that the concrete channel is actually directing water down the outside of the external wall and then preventing it from drying out. During the quinquennial inspection a lower cost solution was identified that would make use of the existing soakaways that appear to operate effectively.

The PCC has not paid the Architect for the design work he carried and whilst he has not sent an invoice he enquired about payment in 2019 but then didn't contact us again. This matter has not been progressed but we should conclude it.

Forward of the Chancel Steps: There was a previous plan to create a flatter area in front of the chancel steps. Now that the old heating pipes are redundant we could potentially progress this work. There are no plans to progress this work at present.

Old Heating Pipework: We could look to remove this pipework and fit matching tiles, where electric cables run the length of the aisle they could be concealed in a conduit buried in the floor. There are no plans to progress this work at present.

Routine Maintenance

Lightning Protection: The lightning protection has been tested and passed the test.

Electrical Testing: This is not due to be carried out in the next year.

Gutter Cleaning: This should be carried out in the near future along with a few tile repairs.

Gavin Hailes

SAFEGUARDING

The PCC has adopted the diocesan and national C of E policies regarding Safeguarding. We should all remain vigilant and appropriate report potential safeguarding issues.

There have been no reported safeguarding incidents in the year.

A check is required to ensure all training is up to date most people undertook training in the first half of 2018 and training is required to be refreshed every three years so training needs to be planned for 2021. Only online training is available for the time being. The requirements are:

C0 Basic Awareness – PCC Members (Every three years)

C1 Foundation - Churchwardens and Safeguarding Lead (but you don't have to repeat it)

C2 Leadership – Churchwardens and Safeguarding Lead (Every three years)

The required notices are displayed in the church to allow those with concerns to report them to be appropriate person.

Gavin Hailes

FINANCE - Year ended 31 December 2020

With the Church in lockdown most of the year, General Fund income is down almost £5,000 compared with last year, with a significant reduction in both collections and statutory fees. Expenses have reduced by only £1,500, turning a surplus of £2,068 last year into a shortfall of £1,220 to be covered from reserves. The Diocesan Parish Share and insurance premium accounted for 92% of expenses in the General Fund.

Because of the lockdown, the only fund-raising event held was the band concert – held this year in the open air. Many thanks to the Co-op Band for putting on a really uplifting event. So fund-raising events raised only £434, compared with £4,472 last year. Fabric Fund expenses amounted to £3,480, mainly on repairs to the guttering. There is a balance carried forward of 8,500 towards future work.

The Haysel House fund continues to make significant charitable donations, as well as contributing to the benefice parish share. Once again, income is significantly down

The magazine fund ran a small surplus during the year, largely due to the cancellation of two print issues during lockdown.

Tim Thomas

HAYSEL HOUSE - Worship and Soup Lunch

We celebrated with a Birthday lunch on February 11th 2020 followed by the usual Soup Lunch and Service for four weeks but then the Tuesday meetings were cancelled due to Covid and lockdown. When able we met in groups of six for afternoon tea in Margaret's, Judy's and Mary's garden with those who lived at Haysel House remaining there.

Contact was kept with all through Ann visiting members and Haysel House, helping with shopping and the team making phone calls for a chat. Encouragement was given to begin ringing each other. Cards have been sent to everyone at birthdays.

No birthday lunch was possible in February 2021 but a gathering of six met in the bandstand at Haysel House on Easter Sunday for recordings of Easter hymns and prayers. A recording of Charlotte singing and Ian playing the organ was played of her singing the same as at the Easter Day service at Stonham Aspal which brought us together. Coffee was enjoyed in a garden after.

I know everyone has appreciated the generosity and kindness in the pastoral care given by the team during the last year, especially by Ann Goad.

Judy Hailes

STONHAM ASPAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

This year has been dominated by COVID and long periods where children and staff have been working remotely. The ability of the school to operate virtually has increased as the epidemic has gone on to the point that the school took the latest lockdown in its stride as almost business as usual (not that it was!).

In all lockdowns children of key workers have been in school with numbers rising in each subsequent lockdown. In addition families have been supported with loan computers where they do not have any or sufficient devices at home.

Thankfully there have only been a few occasions when the school has been directly impacted by a confirmed COVID case. The very robust risk assessment and procedures put in place have been effective and developed with evidence and experience.

The impact on everyone of COVID should not be underestimated. Staff have had to cope with delivering online learning in parallel with having key worker children in school and an ongoing concern at catching COVID. Parents clearly felt the pressure of working and looking after children at home particularly through extended periods.

The school is now close to full with over 200 children and only the odd space in a few classes. Attendance is excellent and the most recent return has clearly been received very positively. Some children have found home school and online learning easier than others and various plans have been put in place to promote catching up.

The Governors and Headteacher have looked at various plans to support the wellbeing of staff and children.

Whilst the children are kept in “bubbles” planned worship continues in smaller groups and by using computer systems.

It is likely that in the next year the school will be subject to a SIAMS inspection (church schools inspection). The requirements for this are more onerous than they used to be and this has been a positive challenge to the school’s ethos. The exact timing of the inspection is not known and likely to be impacted by COVID. The school ethos is being refreshed following the Easter return.

The school continues to work closely with the Diocesan Education Team and is thankful for the support the diocese provides. Regular meetings with other voluntary aided schools through the diocese Heart of Suffolk Schools group have continued via Zoom.

Gavin Hailes

DEANERY SYNOD MEETINGS

There has only been one meeting, held via Zoom, of the Gipping Valley Deanery Synod since October. At this meeting discussions were held around the theme of 'exploring our future'. There was an informative and thought provoking talk by Matt Levett (youth and young adults officer). A new strategic Deanery plan is currently being worked on.

Frances Collins

ELECTORAL ROLL

The electoral roll was updated on 06.04.21 and is displayed on the church notice board. There are 26 names on the roll, which includes 2 new members, who have recently moved into the village. 1 name was removed as person deceased.

Angela Thompson