

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT 2020/21

Churchwardens: Steve McCann and Philippa Rooke were re-elected as Churchwardens at the last APCM.

Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus pandemic dominated people's lives and national economies in virtually all parts of the world. In response to the enormous threat to our health the UK Government implemented unprecedented curbs on the movement of the population, severely impacting daily life. No reader of this report will have been anything other than materially affected by the restrictions placed upon us.

From the middle of March 2020 various restrictions and requirements were placed on us for the rest of the year and into 2021. These necessitated a robust risk management framework to be put in place to handle such aspects as distancing, one way systems and deep cleaning. Those restrictions included, at various times:

- A total ban on anyone entering the Church
- Spacing requirements (the 2 metre rule)
- Additional cleaning of the Church if the gap between services was less than 72 hours (later revised to 48 hours)
- Caps on the number of people permitted to attend Occasional Services.

For our community the principal effects were

- No services in Church for parts of the year.
- When the Church was open (generally one service each Sunday and Wednesday) numbers were restricted and a booking system was implemented at Christmas.
- None of our groups were able to meet at the Church, notably Choir, Bellringers, Toddlers and Memory Cafe.
- Even at the time of writing singing in Church is forbidden.

In response to this a number of initiatives were undertaken

- Services were delivered over the internet, principally via YouTube, Zoom and Facebook – sometimes pre-recorded and others live.
- Twice weekly prayer sessions were delivered on Facebook

Deanery Development Plan:

Pursuant to the plan, Rev. Susan Atkinson-Jones was licensed to St Mary's in December 2019, and as associate priest at St Martin's, with a view to leading the combined benefice from the Rector's planned retirement in the summer of 2020.

The pandemic made the Rector's retirement plans impractical and he kindly agreed to stay until May 2021. Therefore the combination will come into effect in June 2021.

Choir: The Choir performed its usual function until the pandemic commenced. From March no singing was allowed in Church.

Fete and other social activities: The pandemic led to the cancellation of all activities, including both the Fete and Village Fair. This deprived the Church of much needed income as well as the enjoyment of those activities.

Church Fabric:

The lockdowns due to the pandemic, allied to a period of poor health for our Church Architect, Edward Sargent, led to a situation that no major work to the church was able to take place in 2020. This was regrettable as several areas need attention and it would have been good to progress at least some of them.

Routine servicing of the organ, boiler and fire extinguishers took place in order to meet our statutory Health and Safety obligations.

Parish Room:

The parish room is being used on a regular basis by the charity 'Living On', albeit with gaps due to the pandemic.

Services

Weddings, funerals and interments: the numerical restrictions imposed by Government severely impacted weddings, with most being cancelled and only one taking place. Perhaps surprisingly during a health pandemic, there were also fewer funerals at Church, again probably due to the restriction on numbers able to attend.

Sidesmen: The Sidesman rota operated smoothly during the early part of the year. A revised stewarding regime was implemented when the church reopened, to ensure 'social distancing' and compliance with Government's 'track and trace' requirements.

Servers and Assistants: The 'normal' serving and assisting took place until the March lockdown. Thereafter, when Communion was allowed, it has only been given 'in one kind' and all has been done by the Rector.

Rector: Our thanks go to John for his diligence, leadership and not retiring! 2020 was a very difficult year, but his response to those difficulties was excellent. A wonderful program of recorded and streamed services allowed both the regular congregation and many others (around the world) to see St Martin's in worshipping action. As always, we also offer our gratitude to 'Mrs Rector', Janet, who does so much behind the scenes both for the life of the Church and in supporting John.

Finally: as always, St Martin's is only as good as it is due to the tireless work of people who give so much of their time to make things happen. During this strangest of years many have effectively been 'on hold' (since March there has been no singing, limited bell ringing, no sidesman, servers and assistants). We are confident that they are waiting for some level of normality to resume so that they can resume their service to God and the Church.

Steve McCann + Philippa Rooke