

Minister's Report/ General Report on the Life of the Church

This has been a challenging year for all churches and faith communities. At SAPLC, we have sought to face these challenges in a positive spirit. Looking back over the last year, it's remarkable to see how many aspects of church life have continued in some form, and many people (not just those specifically named below) have played a part in this. Here are some of the main elements.

- We have offered pre-recorded worship via YouTube every Sunday and on other significant occasions, thanks in large part to the wonderful production work and musical gifts of Simon Dumbleton, aided by Catherine Rooker-Brown in creating the service slides. The services, which have clearly been greatly valued, have been led by (in the order in which they appeared beginning last April): Imogen Clout, Bishop Richard and Helen Blackburn, Jenny Carpenter, Judith Roberts, Anthony Ashwell, Chris Sissons, John Harding and Iain Cloke, together with myself. Many others have taken part through leading prayers, reading and singing.
- Worship via Zoom has taken place at other times as well: for example, there has been a weekly Wednesday morning service, hosted by Imogen, and Judith has led Taizé prayer during Advent and Lent.
- When possible, we have held in-person afternoon services in church, led by several of our leaders of worship, which have been much appreciated.
- A detailed and informative newsletter has been produced every week through the dedication of Janet Loughridge, with welcome contributions from a number of church members. We have continued to have full and stimulating editions of Nexus, curated as always by Anne Hollows. At a time when communication is so vital, our website and social media presence have been regularly maintained and updated by Clare Loughridge.
- The Leadership Team and Ecumenical Church Council, chaired by David Body, have met regularly with full agendas and wisely guided the life of the church.
- Our property has been overseen with thoroughness by John Cripps as Property Steward, not least in the hard work involved in the creation of detailed Risk Assessments for the use of the church and Shirley House during the pandemic. Clare and Janet Loughridge have also played a major part in arrangements for opening the church for afternoon services and private prayer during certain periods of the year, together with all those on the rotas for those occasions.
- The finances of the church have been expertly overseen by Joe Dey, with regular updates, and the giving of our members and friends has been coordinated by Rodney Godber. We value the wide knowledge and experience brought to this and other areas by Chris Heald, our Church Administrator. We have been extremely grateful for the generosity of our church members and friends in these challenging times.
- Pastoral care of, and contact with, church members and friends has been very important during this time. The primary network of support has been Judith Roberts and the Church Links team, and there have been many hidden and quiet ways in which people have supported one another, offered encouragement and helped to maintain the sense of church community.

- Debbie Thirtle, our Caretaker, has worked hard throughout this time to keep both Shirley House and the church ready for use and Covid-secure. The church grounds have been kept in very good order thanks to the dedication of Anthony Ashwell and others, and the working parties have continued to be busy.
- Our various commitments and emphases as a church have continued during the year. The Eco Group has met regularly and, among other things, has contributed to our online worship, while the Shirley House Interfaith Centre has held several Zoom events, hosted by Caroline Cripps. Our House Groups have been able to meet by Zoom, and several members of Knit and Natter have met, socially distanced, in person when regulations permitted.
- As we do each year, we have continued to give financial support to other charitable organisations and causes. Our regular support for the Fir Vale foodbank, via Joe and Elizabeth Dey and Chris and Pat Rogers, and Baby Basics, via Pat Flowerdew, has also been maintained.
- On a different note: in a year when good news stories have been especially welcome, we were delighted when Muriel Roberts was chosen to receive the Royal Maundy Money as a very well-deserved acknowledgement of her service within the church and community over many years!

Gareth Jones