

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF
ST. MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH, GREAT BRICKHILL**

Annual Report and Accounts

For the year ended 31st December, 2019

**St. Mary the Virgin Church,
Lower Way
Great Brickhill
Bucks.
MK17 9AE**

Bankers:

**Barclays Bank PLC
Leighton Buzzard Branch
The Aylesbury Group
34 Market Square
Aylesbury
Bucks.
HP20 1TT**

Independent Examiner:

**Mr. D. Beatty
Roxburgh House
Pound Hill
Great Brickhill
Milton Keynes
MK17 9AS**

Church Architect:

**Adrian Ringrose Dip Arch BA Arch RIBA AABC
Stimpson Walton Bond
Chartered Architects
59 York Road
Northampton
NN1 5QL**

Report Of The Parochial Church Council (PCC) Year ended 31st December, 2019

MEMBERS OF THE PCC

The following persons served as members of the PCC from the date of the Annual Meeting, 30th April 2019:-

The Reverend John Waller (Chairman)

Julia Turner (Church Warden)

Deanery Synod Representative:-

Jeremy Hopkinson (Licensed Lay Minister; PCC Vice-Chairman)

Phillipa Cook (Secretary)

Mary Maley

Angela Northen

Margretta Smith

Joy Wilson

Neil Cook continued in the role of Treasurer, co-opted to the PCC, 6/6/19

N.B. The maximum number of lay representatives on the PCC is 6, as per the prescribed formula for Electoral Rolls up to 50.

OBJECTS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE PCC

The object of the P.C.C. of St. Mary the Virgin Church, Great Brickhill, is to further the work of the Church of England in the parish of Great Brickhill. The Council is constituted under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 and as amended by the 1969 Measure, and is required to co-operate with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in 2004 provision was made for the annual appointment of representatives on the PCC. All members of the church electoral roll are entitled to vote and stand for election. There is also provision for the co-option of members of the PCC, and the incumbent is ex-officio a member and the Chairman. The Wardens and Deanery Synod Representatives are also ex-officio members of the PCC.

ELECTORAL ROLL AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Membership of the electoral roll is open to any lay person who is baptised, over sixteen years of age and has signed a declaration that he or she is a member of the Church of England and is either (a). resident in the parish, or (b). has habitually attended worship in the parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment.

At the start of the year there were 51 people on the Electoral Roll. There was a revision of the Electoral Roll prepared for the Annual Meeting in April, at which time there were 44 people on the Revised Roll. Between April and the end of the year there were no additions, two deaths and no one moved away. Hence the number of Electors at the end of the year was 42, six of whom are not resident within the parish.

The “usual Sunday attendance for Normal Services” during the year to 31/12/19 was 17 (in 2018 the attendance was 19). There were several special services held throughout the year and these normally attract a larger congregation than for a normal Sunday, e.g. Songs of Praise, Family Service with Baptism, plus services held at venues away from the church – these figures are not included in the calculation for the “usual Sunday attendance for Normal Services”.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Reverend John Waller continues as Rector. There has been no change to the general pattern of services – the Rector takes a Holy Communion Service and a Family Service across the Benefice on each Sunday. Jeremy Hopkinson and Valerie Kerr are Licensed Lay Ministers who take services in each of the four parishes. During the year we welcomed Sister Hazel, Revd Norman Thorp and Revd Robert Wright for some of our Holy Communion services. Revd Norman Thorp retired in the summer and he was presented with a hamper as a thank you gift at the Harvest Festival.

The Rector has been granted a three-month sabbatical from April to July next year. Marian Ridgway who had been giving admin assistance to the Rector on a benefice basis for many years would be stepping down from the role at the start of next year.

Services:

The service on the third Sunday service every month is generally lay led. This gives the opportunity to hold a variety of different services. These include Mattins, Morning Worship, a Charity Songs of Praise (chosen charity was the RNLI) and in the summer months Evensong. The service sheet and hymns are projected onto a screen for some Family Services.

Two services were held away from the church. The Family Service in May was again held in one of the marquees at the cricket field immediately before the opening of the Brickstock music festival. The Nativity on 22nd December was held at the Cricket Club.

Four funerals were held during the year but there were no weddings. We were very sad to hear of the death of Marion Ralph and Frank Kinsey, two long standing and much-loved members of our community. There were two services of baptism, both of which were held within the normal Family Service.

Lent Course:

A three-week Lent Course was held on Tuesday afternoons at Stoke Hammond and an evening course was held after Lent at venues across the Benefice. “ALIVE IN CHRIST” was based on Paul's letter to Colossians, three inspirational group Bible studies produced by Bishop Steven and intended as a resource for small groups to explore more deeply what it means to be a Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world.

Regular Meetings:

The Bible Group continued to meet on the first Wednesday evening of the month. The prayer board is available by the entrance to the church for people to add a note of anyone for whom they would like to offer their prayers.

The Happy Cup Coffee Club, the child-friendly drop-in coffee morning for parents and carers met on Monday mornings during term time. The end of these sessions coincided with the Prayer Group, which met on the second and fourth Mondays of the month in the church at 11.00am for coffee and then an opportunity for quiet, private and open prayer. An e-mail Prayer Chain was set up for those who meet together.

The Village Drop-In was held on Monday afternoons at the Parish Hall, from 1.30 - 3.30pm, for people to call in for a cup of tea, slice of cake and a chat. The Post Office was open on Mondays, from 1pm to 3pm in the small meeting room at the Parish Hall.

A Men's Monthly Breakfast was held on the first Saturday of every month. Based in the village, it is a gathering of local Christian menfolk meeting over breakfast at various locations for topical discussion.

Events:

The first of the year's fund-raising activities was the February Snowdrop Walks, which broke records in every respect, with the largest ever number of attendees and a record amount of money raised. The Plant Fayre in April was equally successful.

Tea and cakes were served in the Parish Hall on the afternoon of Brickstock in May and an Art Exhibition was held in the church over a weekend in June with cream teas served on both days. A Ladies Fashion Show was held on an evening in May in the Parish Hall and the rearranged "Sweet Music" concert in October was a sell-out, a wonderful musical occasion of local talent.

Ladies Who Lunch was well supported throughout the year. In December an Advent Fair was held in the church, for the first time on a Sunday afternoon. A post-Christmas Candles & Canapes evening was held in the church on 27th December.

David Marlow takes photographs at most of the special events and services. A presentation of his photos was shown at the Annual Meeting. David again produced a St Mary's Year Book which is on display in the church. The photos can be seen on David's website:- www.davidmarlowphotography.com.

Work on the Fabric of the Church:

Very little work was required in the church this year. The wall safe was tampered with and repaired, only to be damaged again; it is not being used for the time being. The architect carried out the Quinquennial Inspection but the report had not been received by the year end. Urgent work that was noted was verbally reported and those jobs have been completed:- broken/missing roof slates; weeds cleared from the downpipes and drainage areas.

Policy Documents:

The Health and Safety Policy and Safeguarding Policy are reviewed on an annual basis and the signed policies are on display in the church porch. An annual safeguarding report was prepared for the November PCC meeting. For the year to 31st October the report is a nil report – no safeguarding incidents had been reported in the last twelve months.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Review took place in June. At the June PCC meeting there were no GDPR issues to report and no change was required to the Data Privacy notice.

Deanery Synod:

Jeremy Hopkinson served the third of his three-year term as the Deanery Synod representative for Great Brickhill. The Deanery Synod met on three occasions through the year.

At the March meeting the work by each parish on the Deanery Mission Plan (MAP) had been consolidated with the end result a very brief three-point action plan, just three bullet points. A presentation was given by Liz Kitch (DAC) about the system for Faculties.

At the June meeting the speaker was Bishop Alan Wilson. A survey had been sent out by the Diocese as part of a consultation process to consider limiting parochial lay representatives on deanery synods to two consecutive terms of three years. A new Development Fund giving grants for Mission and Outreach projects was launched by the Diocese.

At the October meeting there was also a presentation on the Parish Planning Tool, which covers similar territory to the Mission Action Plan; it is not compulsory but being encouraged.

From 1st November Revd Val Plumb took over as Acting Rural Dean for two years. It is a small Deanery with only five posts and there are currently two vacancies.

Music and Choir:

Jerry Breslin holds weekly Benefice Choir practices on Monday evenings at Great Brickhill – the highlight of the year for the choir was the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve. Jerry plays regularly at the Sunday services and generally at any special services. Susan Noon plays the organ on the second Sunday of the month and Andrew and Margretta Smith provide most of the music for the Family Services.

Bell ringing practice takes place on a Wednesday evening and the bells are rung before most services. David Middleton continues in the role of Tower Captain and organizes a team of ringers for weddings and funerals as required. New ringers are always welcome.

There were several visits from outside bell ringers. In March a full peal was rung to celebrate the tenth anniversary since the start of the bell restoration project, the first full peal since 1992. In May the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers held the final of their eight-bell ringing competition on our bells.

High Ash School:

High Ash is a Church of England school. Reverend John Waller is one of two Foundation Governors at the school, appointed by the Oxford Diocese. Sandra Maher who has been a non-Foundation Governor for a number of years took over as the second Foundation Governor following the retirement of Mrs. Joy Wilson.

The School gathers four times throughout the year for worship in the church. Due to the large numbers, there is a separate service for the younger children and one for the older children.

Valerie Kerr with a team of helpers has organized the weekly “Open the Book” sessions at High Ash and Bow Brickhill School, a three-year program of dramatized readings from the Storyteller Bible.

Charitable Giving:

Support continues for the “Link for Hope” Shoe Box appeal. This year there were two swap shop opportunities held during Drop-In sessions. “Feed the Hungry” charity was again supported by a number of ladies who knit garments to send to Africa for new born babies to wear when they leave hospital.

The Harvest gifts were taken to the MK Food Bank. From 1st December a Food Box was in the church porch to help anyone who is in need of food either in an emergency or longer term.

The charities supported by our year end Outside Giving are:- National Churches Trust and Bucks. Historic Churches Trust. The chosen annual charity was the RNLI, receiving donations made primarily at the July Charity Songs of Praise.

Support for other charities include the Poppy Appeal from the Remembrance Sunday collection in Church and Christian Aid. The House-to-House Collection was done differently – the envelopes were delivered as normal but no one called to collect the envelope. Donations were requested by returning the envelope to The Rectory, making an on-line donation or making a request for someone to call to collect the envelope.

The total of disbursements to charitable causes during the year was in excess of £1,619. This represents approximately 6.2% of the Income Received (excluding Assignables) for the year.

Church Rota and Communications:

Information is sent out where possible by e-mail and the website is continually updated to provide all the up to date information regarding services and activities. E-Newsletters giving a

summary of recent events and details of forthcoming events are distributed to around 100 people on an occasional basis whenever there are items to report.

The weekly Pew Sheet is produced for all services and the schedule of Services and other items of news are sent each month for inclusion in the Parish Newsletter. There are over 80 people who take a turn on the various rotas – the PCC is very grateful to all those who support the church in this way.

The monthly Diocesan paper “The Door” ceased publication and a new quarterly magazine, “Pathways”, was launched in January, available in printed form and on-line.

Children and Youth:

The Family Services remain the best attended services. The Lady Chapel is used to hold activities for the children during services. The Happy Cup Coffee Club, the child-friendly weekly drop-in, continued to be held in the church every Monday morning during term time.

REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS

The Accounts have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, falling in line with most other churches and thus avoiding the onerous regulations that apply to accruals accounts.

The Church had a deficit of £1,444 for the year giving a balance in Unrestricted Funds of £22,625. Total Receipts for the year decreased by £1,134 but the total for Collections and Donations increased by £1,867. The decrease was mainly due to the fall in PCC Surplus Fees due to fewer funerals and no weddings.

The total general Expenditure for the year is very similar to 2018. The amount of Outside Giving was £200, the same as last year).

Payment of the Parish Share:

The amount of Parish Share due for the year was £25,243, a slight reduction of 1.5% from 2018. Due to the projected deficit for the year the amount paid to the Diocese was £17,000 (67% of the amount due). With the current level of income, it will not be possible to pay the Parish Share in full in future unless the Share is reduced from the present level.

Restricted Items:

As well as general income the PCC has received donations which are restricted as to their use, the money having been given for specific purposes. Under the Charities Act accounting regulations, the restricted funds have to be identified separately in the main accounts. The PCC is able to confirm that it holds sufficient and appropriate assets to meet the conditions of expenditure of all restricted funds. Details of the balances of funds and the assets which are held to represent those funds are contained in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

The total for St Mary’s Restricted Fund at the end of the year was £96,466 (£55k New Facilities and £41k General Fabric).

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES IN THE CHURCH

The planning application was submitted to AVDC in November 2018. Following a meeting with the architect, AVDC, Historic England and the DAC, planning permission with conditions was granted on 4th June. Approval was then sought from other national authorities and formal approval was received on 28th August by the DAC to submit the application to the Registrar for the full faculty. After the lengthy public notice period the faculty was granted on 4th November.

The architect did the necessary work for the tender process and six builders were approached, all of which submitted a tender by the return date 30th August. SC Builders were the chosen contractor and a meeting was held on site with them and the architect on 3rd October.

The groundwork for the grant applications was carried out in the initial stages by Angela Northen. However, the applications could not be submitted until the full faculty had been received. Most charities do not consider applications from religious/faith groups but a list of possible charities was identified and applications were being sent near to the closing date for each individual charity.