

APCM Meeting

AGENDA

Meeting of Parishioners (Vestry Meeting)

1. Prayer
2. Minutes of Meeting (*from Previous year*)
3. Election of Churchwardens
4. Prayer for new Churchwardens

Annual General Meeting

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of Meeting (*from Previous year*)
3. Matters Arising
4. Reports -
 - Electoral Roll - (*written by the electoral roll officer, with a copy available for inspection at the meeting*)
 - Churchwardens – (*Report on the proceedings of the PCC and the parish in general*)
 - Fabric - (*on the good and ornaments of the Church written by the Church Wardens*)
 - Treasurer – (*this must be independently audited and published for at least 7 days - including a Sunday service before the mtg*)
 - SGPN Report
 - Governor's report
 - Deanery Synod (*Report on the proceedings of the Deanery synod written by the Deanery synod representative*)
 - Safeguarding Report
 - Rev'd Harriet's Report:
5. Elections:
 - Deanery Synod Rep – (*elected for a 3yr term, 1 if electoral roll is less than 50 2 if up to 100*)
 - Election of PCC Members – (*upto 6 if electoral roll is less than 50, 9 if 50-100, 12 if 100-200*)
 - Ex-officio Rev'd Harriet Orridge (Chair), Churchwardens, Deanery Synod Rep
6. Appointment of Independent Examiner
7. Safeguarding review of Policy,
8. Parishioners' Questions
9. Date of next APCM

PCC mtg following the APCM:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Election of PCC officers
 1. Lay-Vice Chair
 2. Treasurer
 3. Secretary
 4. Electoral Roll Officer
 5. Safeguarding officer (local independent person)
3. Signing of "Fit and Proper" declaration by all PCC members (including CW's, Deanery synod reps etc)
4. Dates of PCC mtgs for the coming year (please bring diaries)

Minutes of Foston 2020 APCM

St Peter's Church Foston

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Date: 19th October 2020, 7pm

Location: St Peter's Church, Foston or via Zoom

Present: Rev'd H Orridge, Mrs J Bullock, Mrs B Poucher, Mr A Blanchard, Mrs E Ross, Mrs L Bliss (via Zoom)

Also present: Mr J Munro, Mrs G Clayton, Mrs M Hare, Mr & Mrs S Bray (via Zoom)

Apologies: none

Meeting opened by a prayer from Harriet.

Meeting of Parishioners

Minutes of 2019 meeting were read, agreed and signed (Proposed by Mr J Munro and seconded by Mr. A Blanchard).

Matters arising: none

Election of Church Wardens

There were no nominations for the two Church Warden posts and no one present was prepared to take on the role. Parishioners were asked to consider who might be willing to take on this legal responsibility.

Mrs Bullock agreed to continue the role of Verger, for which she was thanked.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Present: as above

Apologies: as above

2. Minutes of 2019 meeting were read, agreed and signed.

3. Matters arising: none

4. Various Reports were presented:

Electoral Roll (presented by Mrs. L Bliss)

As at April 2020, the Church Electoral Roll stood at 25 names, a decrease of one compared to the previous year due to that individual moving away.

Church Wardens and Fabric Report (presented by Mrs. J Bullock)

During 2019 we have held the following services:

- 11 Communion (none in December)
- 11 Evensong (none in January)
- Harvest in October
- Remembrance in November
- Carols & Reading plus Christingle in December
- 3 weddings
- 2 christenings

Various fundraising events have been held throughout the year including monthly Coffee Mornings, the Summer Afternoon Tea and refreshments during the Heritage Weekend.

The Flower Rota and cleaning of the Church continue satisfactorily. The day-to-day Church maintenance has continued with excellent support. The Quinquennial Inspection is due in April 2021.

Congregations have been well-supported for the special Services but not for the usual monthly service – usually there are only six in the congregation which is not sustainable.

Treasurer's Report (presented by Mr. A Blanchard)

Once again, as per last year, we managed to hold our own. Weddings and funerals during the year helped our income. Regular Giving was once again well supported, which gave us a good tax rebate. As ever social events were well supported such as Coffee Mornings, Strawberry Afternoon Tea, Wine Tasting as well as additional income from Santa's Sleigh.

Although we managed to pay our way again this year, we still need support from the village as expenses are increasing. 2020 will be an exceptionally difficult year due to COVID 19 and the restrictions on holding fundraising events.

Saxonwell Group Parish News (presented by Rev'd Harriet)STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2019**INCOME**

OPENING BALANCE	£5,457.45
MAGAZINE ADVERTS FOR 2019	£6,996.25
DONATIONS	£1,029.75
TOTAL	£13,483.45

EXPENDITURE

PRINTER SERVICES	£6,425.00
REFUND J BOBY	£57.50
ADVANCE	£500.00
TOTAL	£6,982.50

TOTAL INCOME	£13,483.45
LESS TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£6,982.50
CLOSING BALANCE FOR YEAR	£6,500.95

**SAXONWELL GROUP PARISH NEWS BALANCE SHEET
JANUARY 1ST – DECEMBER 31ST 2019**

OPENING BALANCE	£5,457.45
INCOME	
MAGAZINE ADVERTS	£6,996.25
DONATIONS	£1,029.75
	<u>£13,483.45</u>
EXPENDITURE	
PRINTING	£6,425.00
REFUND	£57.50
ADVANCE (Also paid in Feb Invoice)	£500.0
	<u>£6,982.50</u>
BANK BALANCE AS AT 31/12/19	£7,107.95
LESS X2 2020 ADVERT PAYMENTS	-£400.00
LESS DEC PRINTING COSTS TAKEN 9/1/20	-£207.00
CLOSING BALANCE	£6,500.95
	<u>£13,483.45</u>

Foundation Governors' Report (presented by Mrs. L Bliss)

This report covers the period January to December 2019 for Long Bennington Church of England Academy. New terminology has now been introduced to governing bodies, with Governors now being formally known as Trustees.

The Trustee Body (TB) saw minor changes in 2019. A new Vice Chair and Clerk were appointed due to end of tenure as well as a new Trustee with a legal background being co-opted as the skills audit highlighted this a gap on the team. A further gap in accounting and finance experience has been identified, and future Parent Trustees will be sought with this skillset in early 2020.

Ofsted inspected the school in February 2019 which resulted in a 'GOOD' outcome, an inspection which was well overdue with the previous one happening in 2008. All staff should be commended on their contribution in achieving this result. One area of scrutiny was the progress of pupils as they moved from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 as their progress did not always follow a consistent trajectory. However, the report highlighted that the school has made excellent progress in the wider curriculum, a key focus in the education sector.

This period saw the departure of Mrs. Rebecca King as Headteacher and the arrival of Mr. David Nicholson into the post in April 2019. David has quickly got to know the school and the staff, and positive impacts have been quickly evidenced.

The Trustees spent a huge amount of time during this period exploring options for joining a multi-academy trust (MAT), as it has been apparent for some time that the school cannot continue long-term as a stand-alone academy. The options for Long Bennington are very limited. As a Church of England Academy, we must join a trust which is predominantly Church of England schools. Furthermore, the Diocese of Lincoln mandates that Lincolnshire C of E schools must join a MAT in Lincolnshire. Currently there is only one trust which meets these criteria: Lincoln Anglian Academy Trust (LAAT). However, the Trustees felt that the LAAT does not operate in a way that will benefit Long Bennington. It appears to be over-capacity already and does not have the resources to offer benefits to joining academies. Added to this, two schools in Grantham were being taken out of the LAAT and placed into another trust as the schools were failing and the LAAT has not been able to improve them. The Trustees explored this other trust, the Archway Learning Trust based in Nottinghamshire, and identified that its vision and values were closely aligned to ours. Their ambition to develop a hub in Grantham would benefit us, and likewise our school and staff would benefit them – a good partnership. Following many months of discussion however, the Diocese refused to allow Long Bennington to join a trust based in a different Diocese. A meeting was called by the Diocese in September 2019 calling all C of E schools in the diocese to outline their strategic plan for MATs in the area. To-date this has not progressed, and LB remains a stand-alone academy. Options continue to be discussed amongst schools as there are many academies in similar situations to ourselves.

Pupil numbers have remained high for the school which is crucial to keep income levels stable; this does include encouraging pupils from out-of-catchment areas. The academic year 2018/19 finished with 261 pupils and this increased to 264 in September 2019. Despite this, the budgeting process remains tight, and the Trustees have a strong focus on identifying how the school can be sustained in the current climate of financial squeeze. The joining of a MAT is becoming more urgent, not less.

The school continues to deliver excellent learning outputs, as well as excellent standards in positive behaviour and attendance. Areas identified through the Ofsted report have been acted on and are evident through all year groups. There is an environment which nurtures inclusivity and supportiveness, balanced with a healthy dose of competition and lots of fun!

I hope this report provides an appropriate balance of information for the PCCs - please do contact me if there is anything specific you would like to understand.

Loveden Deanery Synod Report for St Peter's Church, Foston (presented by Mrs. L Bliss)

The Deanery Synod met three times during 2019, in March, June and October. There were with further collective training and consultation sessions through the year:

- Safer Recruitment (including DBS checking, finance, buildings and governance) led by the diocesan Head of Safeguarding, Head of Finance and Archdeacon, held in June 2019.
- Financial Roadshow held in October 2020, which focussed on the Diocesan budget requirements, particularly the necessity to increase the Parish Share.

Once again discussions at this year's Deanery Synod meetings focused very much on the financial requirements of the Diocese. Through the discussions, it has become apparent that the current structure and resources throughout the Diocese is no longer viable – it is operating at a £3m deficit per annum. We were informed by the Director of Finance that the amount of Parish Share paid by the Loveden Deanery would cover the cost of 75 clergy; however, at that time (October 2019), the Deanery had 129 clergy, so adding to the Diocese deficit. A working party has been set up in the Deanery, comprising of a representative from each Parish, to assess the options the Deanery has for revising its structure, and ultimately serving its parishes but with less cost.

The calculation for increases to the Parish Share, the amount of money that each parish is asked to contribute to support the mission and ministry of the Church in the Diocese of Lincoln (typically the cost of the stipendiary clergy), was announced this year, highlighting a significant increase for each Parish over the next few years.

St Peter's Church, Foston has continued to pay its Parish Share in full for the year 2019. The small reserve our Church has can go towards the Parish Share increases, however the PCC flagged to the Deanery that without increased monies going into the overall funds, the Church will be insolvent within the next 5 years. A fundraising campaign was undertaken in 2018 and yielded only a small increase; the next campaign is due in 2021.

The Rural Dean incumbent changed in July 2019 when Revd Sonia Barron moved to a new post. Revd Tony Tucker was coopted into the post as her replacement, initially on a one-year basis. He is increasing the amount of administrative support to the post to ensure that he can better care for colleagues and lay people, rather than all his time being taken up with admin. The post has been made even busier by the vacancies and sick leave throughout the Deanery.

It is clear that there need to be significant changes to the shape of the Loveden Deanery over the next few years, and it is very likely that St Peter Foston will be impacted.

Group Safeguarding Report (presented by Mrs. E Ross)

I have not been made aware of any Safeguarding concerns during 2019/2020.

- I have attended level 3 Safeguarding Training in the previous 2 years.
- Other PCC members have completed level 1.
- We have all completed our DBS Checks.
- We have all looked at The Safeguarding documents that are available in Foston Church.

Rev'd Harriet's Report

My thanks must first go to everyone who kept the churches going whilst I was on sick leave, whether you led services, carried out pastoral visits, or just helped keep things ticking along. Thank you.

This report of course is for the APCM that should have been held in April 2020, and as such will focus on 2019. So let us cast our minds back to 2019 and begin by thinking about what happened.

Foston had another steady year. Their monthly coffee morning continued to be well attended and much appreciated within the village. As was the Remembrance Sunday evening service with the uniformed groups. Sadly the proposed other uniformed group services didn't happen. This is something we are looking at revisiting. Possibly with a Christingle around Christmas?

The Saxonwell group:

The group decided not to continue the iKnow subscription, as the uptake hadn't been very good, which is a huge shame as it would have helped our ability to communicate with people about what is going on within the group. However the new website is much easier to operate and Davina continues to work behind the scenes, keeping it up to date with important news and articles. Should you have anything you would like to add to the website please do contact her. She continues to be a wonderful asset to the group looking after lots of the paperwork.

Safeguarding:

This continues to be a massive area of importance, and we all need to continue to play our part ensuring that everyone is kept safe. Thankfully our four local independent people have not notified me of any issues in the last year. However, we must not be complacent. Recently I attended training regarding Domestic abuse, and was shocked at its prevalence and hiddenness. Consequently, I'd encourage everyone to educate themselves however they can. For information regarding training and how to spot the signs of domestic abuse, please follow these links: <https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/News/spaces-available-on-three-domestic-abuse-training-courses>.

If you believe that you are in an abusive situation, please know that you are not alone, and you can find support here: <https://edanlincs.org.uk/drop-ins-and-service-user-groups/>

House Groups:

House groups have continued to across the group by a variety of leaders, my thanks to all of them especially to Sylvia and Helen who took over whilst I was poorly. During the course of the year they covered a wider range of topics including looking at the upcoming lectionary readings.

Going Forward:

As church we are called to be the Good News, to share the love of God with the world. We have the greatest gift ever given to mankind, and it is too precious not to share. The Gospel is life changing so let us reach out and share it with others.

2020 has been dominated by the CoVid 19 global pandemic, and as a group of churches we have had to learn to adapt, with services going online. I am looking forward to when we can return to singing in church and sharing the Peace without having to be socially distanced. However as the media has repeatedly said, going forward there will be a "new normal". As we look forward towards 2021 what would we as a Christian community like that "new normal" to be? I would like a world where we all work together for the good of the whole world, rather than just looking after ourselves. A world free from poverty, both here in the UK and across the world, a world where there is justice for all not just those who can afford it. A world where nature is respected and enjoyed rather than abused for our own needs.

The question then becomes what things can we do as individuals and together to build that vision, because the time to start building is now, as the world recovers.

Heavenly Father we thank you for all the gifts you have given us, help us to use them to build your kingdom of Love, Justice and Peace. Amen

5. Elections

- Deanery Synod Rep – Mrs. L Bliss agreed to remain in place until next year’s APCM and will then step down.
- Election of PCC members – the Parish can have up to 6 elected PCC members (in addition to Rev’d Harriet and Mrs L Bliss as the Deanery Synod rep). The following agreed to remain on the PCC:
 - Mr A Blanchard
 - Mrs B Poucher
 - Mrs J Bullock
 - Mrs E RossTwo spaces therefore remain on the PCC – if anyone suitable comes to mind, please do talk them.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Mr P Traynor agrees to continue to be the Independent Examiner for St Peter’s Church.

7. Review of Safeguarding Policy

The Policy, which follows the guidelines set out by the Diocese and the National Church, was read aloud. It was accepted and adopted unanimously. A copy of the Policy will be displayed on the porch notice board as required.

8. Parishioners’ Questions

Mrs J Bray raised the point that the Church, as an icon of the village and of historical importance, could perhaps be used to offer other community services, such as book lending. Mrs E Ross outlined how the Church had offered a limited book swap facility prior to COVID. She explained that since the start of COVID, members of the Church had been very active with the village neighbourhood scheme, supporting people as required. Additionally, if the Church were to be used for a wider range of services, say concerts, social gatherings, etc, then the facilities require improvement. Grants are available for such improvements (eg toilets, servery, etc) however it needs a group of people with time and energy to work through that process. Support from others to achieve this would be gratefully received. It was agreed that offering a broader range of community services would be an excellent idea.

Mr J Munro indicated that the village might receive funds from the solar farm currently in planning, although it is all subject to negotiation. He suggested the PCC keep in touch with the Parish Council.

9. Date of next APCM

The date of the 2020 APCM was scheduled for 22/04/2021, to take place in the Church, starting at 7pm.

The meeting closed with a prayer.

REPORTS 2021

Electoral Role

As at April 2021, the Church Electoral Roll stood at 23 names, a decrease of two compared to the previous year due to that couple moving away.

Churchwardens & Fabric Report

Due to the COVID pandemic, services held physically in the Church have been irregular. When physical services have not been allowed, Group services were held over Zoom and Facebook for those who could access them. When we were able to hold our monthly service in Church, attendance was low, with only four or five in the congregation.

In addition to the regular monthly services, the following Special Services were held in the Church:

- Harvest
- Midnight Mass

It was pleasing to see a few more people in attendance at Midnight Mass, but it is clear that the pandemic has impacted on people participating in services.

It was disappointing that we could not hold our usual Carol Service or Christingle Service, but the restrictions on singing and numbers, together with social distancing measures, would not have made these services feasible. One of our usual Special Services is Remembrance Sunday which we hold with the various uniformed youth groups from the village. Again, this could not take place due to restrictions, however the Explorers' Poppy Cross was relocated to the porch and the event was marked with an impromptu socially distanced group outside the Church, with local resident James Diamond (aged 13) playing *The Last Post* on his trumpet.

We were able to hold the following Celebratory Services during the year:

- Two Christenings
- One Wedding
- Two funerals.

Partway through the year, when it became apparent that the usual service structure would not resume promptly, we opened the Church twice weekly for private prayer and quiet contemplation. Thanks should go to all those involved in the opening, closing and necessary protocols to make this happen.

Many of the usual additional events were unable to take place this year. We were able to hold three monthly Coffee Mornings in a socially distanced manner at the Village Hall. The Flower Rota continued and was supported when we were able to decorate the Church, for example for Midnight Mass. Likewise, the cleaning of church took place when required, following the pandemic protocols. Thanks goes to all those who volunteered their time to support these necessary activities.

Fabric Report

The upkeep of the Churchyard continues to be well maintained.

There are concerns about several leaks from the roof which have appeared worse at times due to the weather experienced. The roof will be thoroughly inspected in the Quinquennial, scheduled in 2021. Other inspections have shown the Church to be in good order.

The role of Church Warden remains open.

***Jenny Bullock. February 2021
Verger***

Treasurers Report (accounts attached separately)

2020 has been a tough year from a financial perspective.

The year started off well, helped by collections from a large funeral with a packed church, one wedding and two baptisms. However, the onset of the pandemic March 2020 then meant that the church had to be closed due to government guidelines and we could not hold our normal services. The other weddings scheduled for 2020 have all been postponed until 2021 or beyond.

The small tax rebate which we receive from regular giving has helped our funds.

We had to transfer money out of our Fabric Fund Account to help us get through the year. This supported the purchase of a new ride-on mower, to replace the old one and we also had pruning work undertaken on some of the trees in the Churchyard.

The pandemic also meant that we could not hold any fundraising events this year which is a key source of funding for the Church each year. Income over and above regular giving only came from Church fees for interment of cremated remains and memorials.

We hope for a better time in 2021 but it is clear that we need more support from the people in the village in the form of regular giving and as well as more practical support, particularly when we are able to start fundraising again.

***Andrew Blanchard March 2021
Treasurer***

SGPN Report

On March 23rd we went into the first lockdown, so although the April magazine was finished, it had to be rewritten as everyone wanted to change their articles and there was also an urgent requirement to add all the things that each village were doing to assist vulnerable and shielding people.

The magazine was uploaded to ISSU and linked from the Saxonwell facebook page; it was also linked from the Long Bennington Residents facebook page, Allington facebook page and Allington Store facebook page alongside our own website. It was emailed to all those we had an email address for and it was added to all the local WhatsApp groups. In addition to this, we printed 200 copies that were split between the villages. This happened for the April and May issues as many of our distributors were shielding.

During the second lockdown, we were able to produce hard copies throughout. Many thanks to our distributors and a big thank you to Joy Jordan, who has taken over from Shirley Dalton as central distribution centre. Also, thank you to Shirley for allowing us to use her home for this in previous years.

We have had an offer of help with distribution from the Rotary Club, which is very welcome and may allow smaller rounds.

Please refer to the accounts for our financial position. Getting enough advertising to cover printing, editor and publication costs is a continuing battle each year. Many advertisers are choosing to use social media and other digital forms of advertising. We have dwindling donations, as we still have the problem of where donations can be made. We did get a £500 donation from LB parish council and smaller donations from two of the three other villages, which were a huge help. However, if we hadn't had two months with no printing costs due to the lockdown, our outgoings would be higher than our income and if this trend continues, we will need to look at alternative ways to finance the magazine to keep it going.

Jill Froggatt
SGPN Treasurer

SAXONWELL GROUP PARISH NEWS

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2020

INCOME

OPENING BALANCE	£6,500.95
MAGAZINE ADVERTS FOR 2020	£5282.00
DONATIONS	£1411.50
TOTAL	£13,194.45

EXPENDITURE

PRINTER/EDITOR/PUBLICATION SERVICES	£5,224.00
ADVANCE FOR FEB	£500.00
TOTAL	£5,724.00

TOTAL INCOME	£13,194.45
LESS TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£5,724.00
CLOSING BALANCE FOR YEAR	£7,470.45

SAXONWELL GROUP PARISH NEWS BALANCE SHEET

JANUARY 1ST – DECEMBER 31ST 2020

OPENING BALANCE	£6,500.95	
INCOME		
MAGAZINE ADVERTS	£5,282.00	
DONATIONS	£1,411.50	_____
		£13,194.45
EXPENDITURE		
PRINTING	£5,224.00	
ADVANCE (paid in Feb)	£500.00	

	£5,724.00	
BANK BALANCE AS AT 31/12/20	£8,164.45	
(LESS 2021 PAYMENTS)	(£694.00)	

CLOSING BALANCE	£7,470.45	

		£13,194.45

Governor's Report

Foundation Trustee Report to Foston/Long Bennington APCM 2021

This report covers the period January to December 2020 for Long Bennington Church of England Academy, possibly one of the strangest 12 month periods for schools in their history due to the Coronavirus global pandemic. The impact of the pandemic resulted in many of the school initiatives being put on hold to cope with the requirement for online and distant learning.

The Trustee Body (TB) saw only minor changes in 2020 with the addition of two new Parent Governors. One of these is an accountant, so filling the skills gap in accounting and finance experience previously identified. Structures within the Trustee Body changed slightly to achieve more full Trustee Meetings over the course of the year, with the introduction of an annual cycle of curriculum monitoring meetings and an Audit Committee who have the accountability for internal scrutiny. These replace the previous committees of Curriculum & Pupils and Finance & Personnel.

David Nicholson reached his one-year tenure as Head Teacher in April 2020, and it is clear that he has embedded a collaborative and motivated team ethic in the staff he has developed over his time at the school. He has achieved a strong leadership structure in the school, ensuring that the staff step up their level of accountability. There has been a focus on long term plans to deliver the level of pupil progress required from the 2019 Ofsted report. However much of 2020 was devoted to developing distant learning techniques due to the pandemic lockdown and children having to be educated from home.

The Head Teacher and his staff provided an excellent level of support and learning to the pupils during their online learning, as well as supporting vulnerable children and children of key workers in school during the lockdown period (up to a maximum of 20 on a daily basis). As schools returned in May 2020, Long Bennington staff enabled all children to return for a limited period before the summer holidays, not just the years recommended by the Government (Reception, Yr1 and Yr6).

It is clear that there are longer lasting impacts on the progress of pupils with the disruptive year. Whilst children were able to attend school for the remainder of 2020, their bubbles were disrupted at times with positive tests. The staff have identified key groups requiring additional support and this is very much in hand. Our huge thanks and appreciation goes to all the staff for their unwavering commitment and contribution to keeping the school running to such a high standard through this very strange year.

Pupil numbers have remained stable for the school which is crucial to keep income levels constant. Numbers on roll in September 2020 were 263, comparable with the previous year. Despite this, the budgeting process remains tight, and the Trustees have a strong focus on identifying how the school can be sustained in the current climate of financial squeeze. The joining of a MAT continues to be a high priority, although little progress has been made this year with the interruption of the pandemic.

My term of Foundation Governor is due to end in March 2021, when I will step down from the Trustee Body. It has been a pleasure and an honour to support this fabulous school in its development and achievements over the past six years, and I am confident that the structures and people put in place over that period will continue delivering excellent learning results for all children who attend the school going forward.

I hope this report provides an appropriate balance of information for the PCCs - please do contact me if there is anything specific you would like to understand.

Lucy Bliss
Foundation Governor

February 2021

Deanery Synod Report

Due to the constraints of Government Covid Regulations Deanery Synod Meetings have been conducted on Zoom since the last APCM.

The main focus of discussion over the period has been on the future organisation of the Diocese of Lincoln, and the affect that any changes would have on our Deanery and its parishes. Indeed, Deanery Synod members agreed that whilst there has been significant higher-level debate and consultation on the way-ahead for the Diocese, there had been little liaison with the Deanery or its PCCs. Further, it was noted the Diocese has yet to provide any clear information or proposals for re-organisation.

In general Synod members did not think that, at this stage, more discussion would lead to progress; rather it was felt that it would merely delay the inevitable changes to come. At the most recent Deanery meeting last December, Synod members unanimously agreed that what is needed to permit further discussion on the future is a firm set of options/proposals from the Diocese; these should detail Lincoln's vision of the future and must provide answers to 4 key questions:

- How many stipendiary clergy will the Diocese have in the future?
- How will the clergy deliver their ministry in the future: by a modified version of the current Parish Priest System, or through new Area Ministry Teams?
- How will the Diocese be organised: retention of the current Deanery system, or the creation of enlarged Deanery-type areas with 3 levels of Churches (Principle Church/Designated Support Churches/Other Churches, many of these semi-closed)?
- What is the Covenant System, and how will it work?

Only with answers to these questions will our Deanery and its PCC's be able to plan for the future.

The December meeting concluded with an agreement that it was pointless for the Deanery Synod to meet again until the Rural Dean has received answers to the above questions.

Safeguarding Report

This year has been a very unusual and difficult year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PCC Safeguarding Officer has not been aware of any concerns reference safeguarding in the village church community. Safeguarding procedures are available in the church and have been reviewed by all PCC members.

I am aware of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. Level 1 has been completed and checked by Rev'd Harriet. Level 2 is almost complete. Dashboard will be reviewed at each PCC meeting.

As Safeguarding Officer, I have completed Basic Awareness Safeguarding and Foundation Training. C2 Safeguarding, previously known as Level 3, has been applied for. Other PCC members will need to update their Safeguarding Awareness during 2021. This is now an annual e-learning requirement for PCC members. DBS checks are also required each three-year period.

St Peter's Church, Foston, like all other religious buildings was closed during the early weeks of the pandemic situation. The doors were closed, and no access was permitted. The church yard remained accessible with social distancing.

When infection rates stabilised in the summer months, the church was allowed to be accessed again from mid-July, following the Government and Churches' rigid COVID-19 regulations and protocols. A full risk assessment was completed 12 July 2020. All books and soft furnishing were stored away. A one-way entry system was developed, and full hand sanitisation processes were put in place. Due to the two-metre social distancing requirement, numbers in the church were reduced to twenty-five and seating clearly marked. Masks are to be worn on all occasions in church.

Services resumed with said communion once a month on the second Sunday in August 2020. The church was opened twice a week on Sunday morning and Wednesday afternoon for Private Prayer. We are grateful to volunteers for facilitating this, particularly during the winter months. No access is allowed to the Church during the 72 hours between these times. A track and trace system is in place for all those entering the church.

Live services continued monthly until early January 2021 when a further lockdown for COVID-19 came into place. The PCC decided the risk to congregations was too great so ceased live services but kept the church open twice weekly for private prayer until Government restrictions are reduced. The COVID-19 risk assessment was reassessed and submitted again.

Live services hope to be resumed 1 April 2021, for Maundy Thursday.

Eileen Ross
Safeguarding Officer

Vicar's Report

Firstly thank you for all your help and support over the last eight years. As I look back over our time together I am struck by the amount of things we have done together.

Establishing a pastoral care group, 3 Stewardship campaigns (the pandemic has shown the importance of encouraging people to give by direct debit), laying a new church path at Long Bennington and the major repair work to the chancel roof and north wall, along with Messy Easter and Messy Church in Allington.

This last year has been an interesting one! 2020 saw life in the UK shut down under CoVid 19 restrictions. We were locked out of our churches for several months, however we simply moved to worshipping online, via zoom and on Facebook. Every weekday morning a group gathers for morning prayer, praying for the world, our country, and local communities. We have rallied round and cared for one another, phoning each other regularly for a chat, and learning other ways to keep in touch. Individuals have reached out with love getting involved in the number of community groups which have sprung up.

Equally looking forward, as the CoVid pandemic eases, life will be different, not least because Tony as rural dean will be overseeing 9 villages on 3 days a week, plus the proposed diocesan changes reducing clergy numbers from nearly 150 down to 100 across the whole diocese. This will mean looking at how as a group, we join with Claypole in sharing resources and worship.

There will be a real opportunity to serve our communities, to help bring people back together, to help people rebuild their lives. This summer as we return to normality, many of us will want to visit friends and family and places that we haven't seen possibly in over a year. We all need to take time to pause and recover.

As a church we are called to share God's love with the world, and this involves seeing people, listening to their stories, and helping them, beginning with where they are. Re-establishing our coffee mornings and afternoon teas, providing spaces where people can meet and share their stories will be important. Listening will help us support them, and to discern a way forward.

Come September, hopefully, we will be significantly on the way back to normal life. However that for most people won't look like life in 2019, life has changed dramatically, some working from home, whilst others initially furloughed and now unemployed. How do we help and support them? Can we increase our support of the local food banks, or set up a local branch of Christians Against Poverty, helping people out of debt. Throughout the summer we should be asking the question "how CoVid has affected our communities?" Both in the short term, and it's longer lasting affects in terms of our economy. This will allow us come September, as people rebuild their lives, to be there to support them, thereby embodying our mission statement:

"Together we exist to share Christ's love in our community with joyful hope, compassion and service to all"