

The Parish of Acle
The Benefice of Acle and Bure to Yare

ACLE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

to be held at 3.00pm on Monday 17th May 2021 in the Church Hall, Acle

A G E N D A

1. The minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners 17/03/2019 and the parish meeting at the joint APCM 28/04/2019.
2. The minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners 15/03/2020 (APCM unable to take place in 2020).
3. The report on changes to the Electoral Roll in 2019 and 2020-21.
4. The Annual Report of the proceedings of the PCC and activities of the parish generally in 2019 and 2020.
5. The independently examined Financial Statements for 2019 and 2020, and appointment of the independent examiner for 2021.
6. The Fabric Officer's report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church 2019 and 2020.
7. The Rector's Benefice Report 2019 and 2020.
8. The Deanery Synod Report 2019 and 2020.
9. The election of 1 (one) representative of the laity to the Deanery Synod (as unable to take place in 2020).
10. The election of 6 (six) representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council of Acle.
11. The appointment of sidesmen (stewards).
12. Any other matter of parochial or general interest.

Time permitting, there will follow a short meeting of the newly elected Parochial Church Council to:

13. Appoint Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Electoral Roll officer and standing committee members.
14. Appoint 3 (three) representatives for Acle Churches Together.
15. Set the date of the next meeting of the PCC.

The Parish of Acle, St. Edmund's

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners, held at 12.15pm on Sunday 15th March 2020 in St. Edmund's church.

Members present: Rev'd Martin Greenland, Elsie Barber, Brian Bemment, Rosamund (Jean) Codling, Angela de Robillard, Joan Palfrey, Christine Tasker-Walsham and Vic Tasker-Walsham.

The Rector welcomed the parishioners to the meeting, again held prior to the joint benefice Annual Parochial Church Meeting, which is to take place on Sunday 17th May 2020. The meeting opened with a prayer.

- 1. Minutes.** The minutes of the last Annual Meeting of Parishioners, held on Sunday 17th March 2019, were read, approved and signed as a true record.
- 2. Election of Churchwardens.** Regrettably, there were again no nominations for Churchwarden, and the position remains vacant. The Rector urged any interested party/ies to contact him in this respect. The remaining annual business will be dealt with at the joint benefice APCM, which this year is to be held at Reedham Primary School (6pm, Sunday 17th May 2020). All results will be published in Outlook.

There being no other business, the meeting was declared closed at 12.25pm.

2020 Annual Report for the Parochial Church Council of St. Edmund's, Acle

St. Edmund's continues to aim to promote the whole mission of the Church, and provide a welcoming and safe environment for the regular congregation and visitors to the church, both local and from further afield. In this year of the SARS CoViD-19 pandemic, the church has opened its doors whenever possible, and arranged a rota system for Anglican and Roman Catholic services to safely take place whenever restrictions have been eased. The Church Hall, for which the PCC is responsible, was mostly closed this year, but was fortunate to benefit from the government's small business grant, though it is expected that hire of its facilities will experience slow uptake even as we return to some form of normality.

Electoral Roll and structure, governance and management of the PCC. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St. Edmund's the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (our rector), churchwarden (once again vacant in 2020), a vice-chair, the reader, members elected by churchgoers whose names are on the church electoral roll, and members appointed by the PCC (Treasurer in 2020). All those who come to our services are encouraged to register on the electoral roll and stand for election to the PCC, which comprises six members of the laity as dictated by our congregation size. The Electoral Roll was revised in 2020, and the number on the Roll remained static at 30, perhaps due to the static nature of all activity in 2020.

The PCC met physically four times in 2020, but the APCM scheduled for 17th May 2020 could not take place due to the pandemic lockdown. One remote meeting was also held via telephone and email. PCC members serving during 2020 were: *ex officio* members: the incumbent, Revd Martin Greenland, the reader, Mr Vic Tasker-Walsham; elected members: Dr Rodney Edrich (vice-chair and fabric officer), Mrs Angela de Robillard (secretary), Mrs Ann Mackie; appointed member: Mr George Nicholls (treasurer). The PCC is responsible for making all decisions on matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding how the funds of the PCC are spent. Please see the exhaustive Finance Report attached to the Financial Statements 2020 for detail of income and expenditure.

Please see the separate Rector's Benefice Report 2020 and Deanery Synod Report 2020 for information regarding **Worship and Prayer** and **Ecumenical Relationships**. The election of one member of the laity to the Deanery Synod will take place in 2021, deferred from 2020. Unfortunately, the post of Associate Priest at Reedham has been suspended, and seems unlikely to be resumed.

Safeguarding. The PCC continues to comply with its legal duty under Section 5 of the *Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016* to have due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The Acle parish safeguarding policy was reviewed and agreed, and Mrs Kate Ashcroft continued as the Parish Safeguarding Officer in 2020. The PCC duly noted the Serious Incident Reporting guidance for future submission in an online format of any serious incident reports to the Charity Commission.

Fabric of the Church and Churchyard. Much of the effort in 2020 was devoted to the thatch project for the re-thatching of the north side of the nave roof. The Covid-19 pandemic severely limited the raising of funds for the thatch; in fact, after February it became impossible to hold any fundraising initiatives at all. Fortunately, and thanks to the sterling efforts of our vice-chair and fabric officer, Dr Edrich, a number of local and national charitable institutions stepped in, and by October the

thatching had been completed and paid for. It was a great relief to all concerned that the roof timbers were sound and the thatching itself could go ahead unhindered. The opportunity was taken to replace a number of slates which had slipped on the north side of the chancel roof, a matter also mentioned in the Quinquennial report. In March 2020 "Norfolk Archaeology" submitted a report on their findings in the churchyard following the excavations necessitated by the boiler project. A report on the successful project is to appear in an edition of *PCC News* to be published in early 2021. While it is pleasing that the congregation is now warm and dry, other work needs to be done. The whole church needs to lose its cobwebs, where affected areas have become very unsightly. Once that has been accomplished the entire church needs repainting. This would make it much lighter and more welcoming for visitors. It is also hoped to have the 'Berry' monument in the chancel repaired and cleaned. A parishioner has kindly provided funds for some improvements to the north drive of the church to aid drainage and this will be done during the summer in 2021. Work to improve the state of the concrete path near the Church Hall which is a trip hazard has also been put in train.

Acle - St. Edmund

**Financial Statements
of the
Parochial Church Council**

For the year ending

31 December 2020

Acle – St. Edmund PCC
Receipts and Payments Account

For the period from 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	Unrestricted funds	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
Receipts						
Receipts from generated funds						
Voluntary income	15,438.75	11,367.61	35,127.66	—	61,934.02	69,451.42
Activities for generating funds	70.00	—	2,309.20	—	2,379.20	1,135.20
Investment income	1,288.35	—	188.11	—	1,476.46	1,675.39
Receipts from charitable activities						
Statutory Fees retained by PCC	1,442.00	—	—	—	1,442.00	1,636.00
Bookstall, Lettings, Magazine etc	2,640.60	3,750.00	—	—	6,390.60	11,338.60
Other receipts	1,068.67	—	—	—	1,068.67	1,249.69
Total receipts	21,948.37	15,117.61	37,624.97	—	74,690.95	86,486.30
Payments						
Cost of generating funds	107.04	—	—	—	107.04	157.08
Charitable activities						
Parish Share	16,861.00	—	—	—	16,861.00	24,750.00
Salaries, Honoraria	70.00	—	—	—	70.00	—
Expenses of Clergy etc.	1,009.27	—	—	—	1,009.27	1,437.17
Mission and Evangelism Costs	—	—	—	—	—	100.00
Regular Church Running Expenses	3,830.30	228.82	85.99	—	4,145.11	3,335.87
Church Utility Bills	1,420.76	—	—	—	1,420.76	1,458.56
Cost of Trading, Magazine Hall and Bookstall	605.00	6,518.75	—	—	7,123.75	3,864.06
Governance costs	—	—	—	—	—	87.00
Other payments	—	—	54,739.07	—	54,739.07	34,316.70
Mission Giving and Charitable Donations	20.00	—	30.00	—	50.00	20.00
Total payments	23,923.37	6,747.57	54,855.06	—	85,526.00	69,526.44
Excess of receipts over payments before transfer	(1,975.00)	8,370.04	(17,230.09)	—	(10,835.05)	16,959.86
Transfers						
Gross transfers between funds - in	1,791.00	500.00	8,410.48	—	10,701.48	22,574.00
Gross transfers between funds - out	(500.00)	(2,791.00)	(7,410.48)	—	(10,701.48)	(22,574.00)
Net receipts/payments before other gains/losses	(684.00)	6,079.04	(16,230.09)	—	(10,835.05)	16,959.86
Other recognised gains/losses						
Gains/losses on investment assets	2,681.49	—	—	236.41	2,917.90	7,420.57
Gains on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use	—	—	—	—	—	—
Net movement in funds	1,997.49	6,079.04	(16,230.09)	236.41	(7,917.15)	24,380.43
Reconciliation of funds						
Bank current and deposit accounts at 01 January	17,821.23	33,301.95	28,830.13	3,423.55	83,376.86	58,996.43
Bank current and deposit accounts at 31 December	19,818.72	39,380.99	12,600.04	3,659.96	75,459.71	83,376.86

Acle – St. Edmund PCC

Balance sheet (Separate funds)

As of: 31 December 2020

	General Fund	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	This Year Total	Last Year Total
Current assets						
Investments	11,432.61	38,510.05	10,650.18	3,659.96	64,252.80	71,544.98
Cash at bank and in hand	8,386.11	870.94	3,035.36	—	12,292.41	11,831.88
Current assets	19,818.72	39,380.99	13,685.54	3,659.96	76,545.21	83,376.66
Liabilities						
Creditors: Amounts falling due in one year	—	—	1,085.50	—	1,085.50	—
Net current assets less current liabilities	19,818.72	39,380.99	12,600.04	3,659.96	75,459.71	83,376.86
Total assets less current liabilities	19,818.72	39,380.99	12,600.04	3,659.96	75,459.71	83,376.86
Total net assets less liabilities	19,818.72	39,380.99	12,600.04	3,659.96	75,459.71	83,376.86
Represented by						
Unrestricted - General fund	19,818.72	—	—	—	19,818.72	17,821.23
Designated - Church Building Preservation Projects	—	20,029.85	—	—	20,029.85	20,500.00
Designated - Parish Hall	—	16,540.13	—	—	16,540.13	9,791.88
Designated - Acle Bells	—	2,183.21	—	—	2,183.21	2,179.45
Designated - Farmers Mkt Fund	—	400.27	—	—	400.27	400.69
Designated - Acle Organ	—	—	—	—	—	202.40
Designated - Copier and Computer	—	227.53	—	—	227.53	227.53
Restricted - Agency collection	—	—	(108.00)	—	(108.00)	(108.00)
Restricted - Acle Church Fabric	—	—	8,721.53	—	8,721.53	7,522.75
Restricted - Acle Heating Boiler Replacement	—	—	—	—	—	16,403.24
Restricted - Acle Roof	—	—	—	—	—	2,620.02
Restricted - Organ Restoration/Replacement	—	—	2,100.00	—	2,100.00	2,100.00
Restricted - Religious Education	—	—	128.65	—	128.65	128.65
Restricted - Acle Flower Fund	—	—	77.86	—	77.86	163.47
Restricted - Acle Churchyard	—	—	1,680.00	—	1,680.00	—
Endowment - Fletcher Acle	—	—	—	3,659.96	3,659.96	3,423.55
Funds of the church	19,818.72	39,380.99	12,600.04	3,659.96	75,459.71	83,376.86
Current assets						
Barclays Deposit Account					935.18	1,221.38
Barclays Current Account					11,357.23	10,610.50
CBF Deposit Fund (Short Term)					18,842.31	30,202.99
CBF Church of England Investment Fund (Diocese)					3,659.96	3,423.55
CBF Church of England Investment Fund (Shares)					41,750.53	37,918.44
Agencies money in transit					(1,085.50)	—
Current assets of the church					75,459.71	83,376.86

Acle – St. Edmund PCC

Description of Funds 2020

Pre-2009 information is an understanding gained from inspecting previous annual reports.

Unrestricted Funds

General Fund [General] General unrestricted funds for most day-to-day transactions.

Designated Funds (Unrestricted)

Acle Bells [Acbells] Balance derives from £2000 set aside in 2006; receives donations from visiting bellringers and a fee if bells are rung at a wedding.

Acle Organ & Piano [Acorg] Used for maintenance (including tuning) of both organ and piano at St. Edmund's.

Church Building Preservation Projects Created in 2019 by earmarking unrestricted legacies received in previous years; funds set aside for potential significant maintenance works.

Copier & Computer [Copcomp] Created 1991; funds set aside to replace the parish photocopier (replaced 2012) and computer.

Farmers Mkt Fund [FMF] New fund 2013: created to hold the funds of the Farmers Market.

Parish Hall [PH] Income from hall lettings; used to pay the hall expenses.

Restricted Funds

Acle Church Fabric [ACF] Created 1997 for maintaining the fabric of St. Edmund's Church.

Acle Flower Fund [AFF] Created 2011: for flowers for St. Edmund's Church. The small cash element was expended during 2012.

Acle Heating Boiler Replacement [AcHeat] Created 2011: holds money raised for the replacement of St. Edmund's Church boiler.

Acle Roof Fund [Acroof] Created 1994: residue of money raised for rethatching and roof maintenance.

Organ Restoration/Replacement [Orgbuild] New fund 2011: created to hold funds raised for future restoration or replacement of the organ in St. Edmund's.

Religious Education [RE] Created 2010 to hold a grant received from the Acle C.of E. Religious Education Fund to support religious educational activities with children.

Endowment Funds (Restricted)

Fletcher Acle [Fletacle] Dr. Fletcher's legacy of 1989. Held by the Diocese in a separate CCLA CBF CofE Investment Fund; income to **Acle Church Fabric Fund**.

Independent Examiners Certificate

Report to the trustees/ members of:	THE PCC OF ACLE ST. EDMUND
On accounts for the year ended:	31 DECEMBER 2020
Charity no (if any):	249318

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 / 12 / 20 .

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement


~~[The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of []]. Delete [] if not applicable.~~

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:		Date:	22 APRIL 2021
Name:	STEPHEN PEASE		

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any)

Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)

Address:

5 School Lane
DELEHAM
N219 1LR

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose

Finance Report

Introduction

The financial reports are based solely on receipts and payments during 2020 (i.e. not adjusted for any amounts owed to us, or by us). This is the simplest form of accounting, and is allowed by the Charities Act 2011 for PCC's with gross annual income less than £250,000.

There are three major factors that have led to the figures shown in these accounts being not those of a typical year:-

- A) Expenditure was inflated by final payments in respect of the boiler project, which was funded by income received in 2019.
- B) Work to re-thatch the north side of the nave roof has boosted both expenditure and income.
- C) The pandemic led to a sizeable suppression of voluntary income. Running costs were also affected but less so.

Items A) and B) accounted for extra expenditure totalling £12,150 and £33,807 respectively (via restricted funds). The third factor is addressed in I.1 below.

The final payments on the boiler project have seen our overall reserves fall to £75,459 (see Net Movement in Funds on the Receipts and Payments Account). They are therefore no longer distorted by the unspent part of 2019's large donation to this project (see Balance Sheet [Separate Funds]). The reasons why we still managed to see increases in our Unrestricted and Designated funds are more complex and will be dealt with later (see the notes in the Balance Sheet section below).

Receipts and Payments Account

I. RECEIPTS

Overall Picture. The total 2020 income of £74,691 is more than in an average year but includes all the donations and grants directed to the thatching project (£27,030), and some grants relating to the boiler project (£8,726). Other factors mentioned in the following analysis have also contributed to this being a very unusual year.

1. **Voluntary Income.** This heading contains 83% of our total receipts but it includes the large afore-mentioned thatching/boiler funding. Any comparison with last year, or any average year, is therefore complicated, not just by these projects (including 2019's exceptional £50k donation), but also a support grant we received from the government (£10,000) to compensate for the pandemic-enforced closure of the Parish Hall and consequent loss of commercial income. If we exclude these items our core income from donations and collections amounted to £16,178 in 2020. The equivalent figure for 2019 was £19,451, thus revealing the severity of the pandemic's impact on church activity. In spite of these restrictions we did manage to press on with the annual Gift Day which contributed £1,113 to the total.
2. Of the PCC's remaining receipts those from **Bookstall, Lettings, Magazine etc.** comprise the second largest item with 9% of the total (£6,391), and within this:-
 - a Parish Hall lettings still comprise the bulk of receipts (51%), the hall being open for part of the year. However, the £3,265 we received was obviously greatly down on last year's £8,105. The support grant mentioned in 1 above is a flat-rate amount that more than compensates for the loss.
 - b The income provided by St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church for the use of St Edmunds church building is the next most significant item (41%) but we returned some of this in

recognition of the church's closure under pandemic restrictions (See II.3 below). A fully agreed basis for dealing with this is still being negotiated.

- c Income from the Farmers' Market, at £485, has also been affected by the restrictions (see also Cost of Trading II.3 below).
3. **Activities for Generating Funds.** The increased amount of £2,379 might look surprising, given the restrictions on activity, but most came from a single pre-Covid event held in the church hall, a beer festival, of which half the proceeds went towards the roof-thatching.
4. **Investments Income.** The £1,476 represents interest and dividends received, and, though down by 12% on 2019, is still a useful contribution to church income especially given the turbulent state of the financial markets in 2020.
5. **Statutory Fees.** Only one wedding was held at Acle church in 2020, which probably underlies the drop in income from 2019.
6. **Remaining Receipts.** The 'Other Incoming Resources' (£1,069) are reimbursements from other parishes regarding benefice-wide expenditure incurred by Acle PCC.

II. PAYMENTS

Overall Picture. As indicated earlier payments in respect of the boiler and thatching works are the reason why the 2020 total (£85,526) is up on last year (by 23%), and is more than double the £35k to £40k that we would expect in a 'normal' year. Costs for these projects fall under the Other Payments heading.

1. **Other Payments.** The total final cost of the thatching work was £35,007, but the Parish Council paid £1,200 of this, hence the PCC cost of £33,807 mentioned in the Introduction. The £12,150 we paid in respect of the boiler works was less than anticipated in last year's accounts since, when final assessments were done, not all contingency sums built into the contracts were required.
2. **Parish Share.** Apart from 1 above, parish share, the parish's contribution to the overall cost of providing clergy, is the largest item of expenditure. In the light of pandemic restrictions and reduced donations (see I.1 above), and given the uncertain future, the PCC felt able to pay only two-thirds (£16,861) of the parish share request in 2020.
3. **Cost of Trading, etc.** This £7,124 mainly comprises the running costs of the church hall. The enforced closure meant that it was an opportune time to do some refurbishment, mainly to the hall floor. The cost of this, and some smaller maintenance jobs, comprised over half this total.
Also under this heading is the reimbursement to St Mary's mentioned in I.2.b above (£605).
4. **Regular Church Running Expenses** –Whilst 24% up on 2019's unusually low figure, £4145 is still below, unsurprisingly, the average of recent years.
5. The slightly lower expenditure on the remaining headings is a reflection of the reduced activity this year.

III. TRANSFERS

1. The larger transfers involved the 'tidying up' of restricted funds, specifically:-
 - a the unspent balance of the fund used for the boiler project was transferred, with agreement from the main donor, to Acle Church Fabric Fund (£4254).
 - b a transfer from the Church Fabric Fund To Acle Roof Fund to contribute to the cost of the re-thatching (£3,157).
 - c we also took £1,000 from the Church Building Preservation Projects (CBPP) designated fund as a contribution to the thatching project.
2. The remaining transfers were the regular annual ones – Parish Hall > General (£1,500); Farmers' Market > General (£291); General > CBPP (£500).

IV. OTHER RECOGNISED GAINS/LOSSES

In the light of the economic turbulence caused by the pandemic we might have expected the value of our investments to fall, as they did in the first part of the year. However, share values rallied and the surprising £2,681 net gain is very welcome.

Balance Sheet

The overall size of the balance sheet was expected to fall from 2019's unusually high value as the final spending on the boiler project used the resources earmarked for it. A more fruitful comparison with 2018 reveals a £16k improvement over that period (£75k vs £59k). The main factors behind this are as follows:-

1. The General Fund balance (our only **Unrestricted** fund) has improved by more than £5k (NB. comparisons with recent years should take account of the fact that the 2018 balance of £34k includes the £20.5k that was transferred to CBPP designated fund in 2019). The main factor is the PCC's prudent approach to the parish share payments (see II.2 above) in anticipation of pandemic difficulties continuing into 2021.
2. The Parish Hall fund (the main **Designated** fund) shows a £10k rise over the 2 year period. However the situation as regards enforced closure and compensation grants (see also I.1 & I.2.a) is complex and ongoing. Given the uncertainty and the likelihood of only a slow recovery in bookings, it was felt that this balance would be a valuable buffer for future hall finances.
3. As far as **Restricted** funds are concerned, although the ins and outs connected with the two church fabric projects have now been dealt with (through Acle Heating Boiler Replacement fund and Acle Roof fund) there was one other fund that received an early donation for work that is due to be carried out in 2021 – the £1,680 balance on Acle Churchyard fund.

Future

Looking forward to 2021 we can but hope for a return to a more stable environment. With some major building maintenance work behind us we may be able to consolidate our finances.

The Rector's Benefice Report 2020

2020 will be remembered as the (first?) year of the Coronavirus pandemic. A stop/start year dominated by the ebb and flow of restrictions: they could tighten with little or no notice; while any promise of easing was generally followed by a period of uncertainty, waiting for detailed guidance from the Government, which often arrived at the last minute. Planning became simultaneously essential (because of the legal requirement to assess and manage the risks) and impossible – because one didn't know quite what would be permitted when the time came! Remembrance Sunday was a case in point: initially it wasn't clear whether any gatherings would be allowed. When it was established that they would, churches and Parish Councils started planning commemorations, with restricted attendance and obligatory precautions. But then we were struck by the November lockdown: services in churches could no longer take place; and only the barest minimum of people could gather outside – but with the unexpected element that it would be permissible to sing!

The year began conventionally enough, with Covenant Services with the Methodists; Plough Sunday at Wickhampton; a couple of baptisms at Freethorpe; the Prayer Walk and the start of a Lent Group at Acle. Freethorpe sadly lost Nicky Edelsten in February. At her funeral, mourners, many travelling from outside Norfolk, gathered in Halvergate Church; some wanted me to shake hands with them at the door, others definitely didn't – it was then that I started to wonder, in the light of the news from elsewhere, if this was something we should still be doing. All too soon it would become clear that, unlike previous epidemics, this wasn't going to be something we could weather simply by not sharing the common cup at Communion and not shaking hands at the Peace.

The issuing of the *Stay at Home* instruction in March put a stop to normal parish life. Gathering in church on a Sunday is so fundamental to us; but in finding ways to manage without it we were severely hampered by the guidance not to distribute material to people's homes – Mothering Sunday flowers were to be the last items to be taken around for a while. Everything was moving on-line; but given the age-group of most of our church members, a significant number didn't have access or weren't comfortable with the technology – and there was no time to put anything else in place. Many people would have to make do with phone calls and increased provision on radio and television. Practical support was available to those who needed it from Parish Councils and local volunteers – some of them church members. Support was also offered through local foodbanks. Most of us set about acquiring new computer skills. Initially services were posted on the benefice website; which also pointed people to other provision, such as the Diocese of Norwich podcast, or Norwich Cathedral's *You-tube* channel. But in May, Simon Ash prompted and enabled us to start worshipping by the video meeting platform *Zoom*. This recommended itself because worship could still be live and participative. We may not have got the large number of hits from outsiders reported by some parishes who posted recorded worship, but we benefitted from seeing each other, even if only on screen – indeed the services helpfully brought together people from different churches, with attendance peaking at about 40. We continued *Zoom* services throughout the year, even when it was possible to hold limited services in churches: this continuity was helpful for those shielding and when later lockdowns were imposed. We also recorded videos for Remembrance Sunday and for our Primary Schools and families at Christmas – thank you, again, to Simon, Kati Cowen, Diana Gilder and all who supported these productions.

We also need to express gratitude to our churchwardens (and those assisting them) who were delegated with the responsibility for making our buildings "Covid secure" for those coming privately during the week, or when physical service were permitted. It was often easiest in the smaller parishes, where the required gatherings could readily be accommodated in over-large parish churches. It was more difficult at Freethorpe; and at Acle, where the pews are too close together and three different congregations (including Roman Catholics) were accustomed to using St. Edmund's within a 24-hour period. Use had to be rationed on an alternate-week basis; seating plans prepared safely to maximise use of the available space; and funerals scheduled away from weekends. In the absence of churchwardens, the Rector became what the regulations call a "venue manager"; I'm grateful to Vic Walsham, Rodney Edrich and verger Tracey Caston for their support; and also to Acle's rejuvenated team of cleaning volunteers: essential for virus control and since dedicated volunteers Maureen and Peter Kingsley stepped down at the year's end.

For much of the time it felt as though we were having to respond to something that was mostly happening elsewhere, as infection rates in rural Norfolk remained relatively low (it would be 2021 before they really escalated): the restrictions were having a more serious effect than the virus. But we did have a very early taste of what the virus could do, as Mike Brook, who had returned from his annual trip to the USA, contracted Covid 19, was hospitalised and tragically died. Mike had been the key office holder in the Parish of Limpenhoe, Southwood and Cantley and, as Chair of the Benefice Council, an influential figure in bringing and keeping our Benefice together. He was also a friend to many; and, of course, a husband and father. His funeral had to be held at the time when, although services in crematoria chapels were permitted, those in church were not – it was graveside only, with very limited mourners – a somewhat stark, if intimate experience. But people responded, as people often did, by doing the best they could in the circumstances: lining the route in a way that was deeply appreciated by the family. Credit also to Limpenhoe, Southwood & Cantley PCC, which quickly and effectively regrouped.

At other times people's desire to find ways around the restrictions presented a challenge: a well-managed gathering in church was not to be accompanied by an unmanaged (and illegal) congregation outside the churchyard! As might be expected, numbers of funerals held up – with the restrictions on attendance it was an extra-difficult year to lose someone. Strangely, many of the earlier funerals were at Cantley, sadly including church members Mary and (daughter) Rosemary Hanton. Rosie Bedding's flowers will be missed at Reedham; while Freethorpe lost Dorothy Grint and Acle, stalwart Evelyn Elliott. Weddings were mostly postponed, although I did still celebrate two: a summer one at Acle Church; another, after gaining the required licence, in a Reedham home.

Despite the pandemic there were some significant building works during the year. It was good to see Wickhampton's composting toilet completed before lockdown, in February. Meanwhile at Acle, the thatch appeal was only just getting underway, with a generous donation from the *Winter Beer Festival* hosted in the church hall. It was a very difficult year to be fundraising: all the more impressive that Rodney Edrich oversaw both securing the funds and completing the work before another winter struck. Beighton's rethatching and improvements were already in progress at the beginning of the year; work was able to continue, although there were delays and revisions. We were able to celebrate completion at a special service with Bishop Alan in October – although restrictions regrettably prevented use of the new kitchen facilities. Fabric Officer and Treasurer Kate Ashcroft is to be congratulated for steering and securing the funding for what turned out to be a £350K, 6-year project, resulting in a much more attractive, watertight and useable church building. Halvergate Church is also looking much better, following its replastering. Thank you to all who looked after our church buildings during the year; including Michael Turner, who stepped down at Acle – but not before he'd seen completion of the final aspects of the much-delayed boiler project.

As well as the difficulty of fundraising, the reduced number of church services affected parish income. Thanks to the efforts of PCC Treasurers and those who took steps to continue their giving, whether by bank transfer or other means, the situation was not as bad as it might have been. We paid two-thirds of our Parish Share, which, given the conditions, sounds like quite an achievement – Reedham (almost) and Limpenhoe, Southwood & Cantley paid in full. Across the Diocese the figure was slightly higher, at 72%; but the anticipated deficit of some £650K sounds more serious. This prompted a programme to reduce central costs and clergy deployment, suspending our house for duty post at Reedham, pending a likely decision to remove it.

At the end of the year (and still as I write) we are far from out of the woods; but we can thank God for bringing us through 2020: not without loss, but not without gain either; and in good humour and good heart. Thank you to everyone who made that possible. Not as much happened as in a normal year; but (rather like the length of this report!) a lot more went into anything which did.

Martin Greenland

Report on Deanery Synod 2020

An extraordinary year in the life of the synod. After a meeting in January, the Coronavirus epidemic meant that there were no further meetings either physically or by Zoom for the rest of the year. However, in December came important developments:

- (i) Rev'd Martin Greenland, joint Rural Dean, announced that Rev'd Peter Leech, his fellow, would not renew his role at the end of their term of office; that Peta Cunnane, Deanery Synod Secretary, would step down at the end of December; and that Keith Gerrard, Lay Chair, would not seek re-election in 2021. The Synod will need to find a new Secretary & Lay Chair.
- (ii) Bishop Graham Ussher has initiated the development of a new Vision for the Diocese – “Transformed by Christ: Prayerfully – Pastorally – Prophetically” and of nine priorities that flow from it. The Vision is under discussion by Diocesan Synod.
- (iii) The pattern of deployment of stipendiary clergy is under review. Seven principles have been put forward. They will affect us, so I list them:
 - (a) Deprivation – financial support for our lowest income benefices;
 - (b) Population - seek to focus resources in areas of greatest opportunity, measured by the population of a benefice;
 - (c) Reduce stipendiary clergy numbers to 90% of current [October 2020] levels;
 - (d) Review central support costs to make substantial savings;
 - (e) Ministry – identify, develop & resource ‘a wider range of ministry possibilities’;
 - (f) Buildings – reduce the number of church buildings that remain in regular use for worship;
 - (g) Local consultation – local conversations at deanery & archdeaconry level to work out how best to apply these principles.

Some synod members had an informal conversation on Zoom on these matters in January 2021, but the new synod will have to grapple with them in much more depth.