



# St James' Church

[www.stjamesexeter.org](http://www.stjamesexeter.org) Exeter



Review of the Year  
2020 – 2021

## Rector

We did well to get our APCM done in church on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent in 2020. That meeting was followed by an emergency meeting in the choir vestry with members of the standing committee, to contemplate the implications of the impending lockdown. To date, this was our last meeting in person. From then on, there were weekly meetings by Zoom – thanks to Fr Steve for hosting and to the extended standing committee.

Last March, Jim Weeks' expertise and the encouragement of Fr Steve ensured that our worship was quickly moved online. Much talent has emerged over the months, for example with the virtual choir singing us out in harmony at the end our Sunday services. There was also some wonderful creativity for VE Day and St James' Day as well as some lovely visual presentations for other one-off occasions, such as Saints' days. Many thanks to Joan, our Reader-in-Training, for her artistic flair, for preaching and organising a preaching rota, and for dealing with office matters and the internet. In 2021 she has been on placement at Sandford and Crediton but is still very involved at St James'.

Closing a church is one thing; opening it again and making it Covid-safe is quite another. Maintaining safety for Sunday services is an ongoing commitment. A big thank you to all who have made this happen. To help with planning ahead, the clergy and members of the standing committee attend webinar updates, which are hosted by the Archdeacons from time to time. In addition, the standing committee continues to review health and safety, pastoral concerns and online worship. We are very blessed in our lay leadership.

Mark, our Reader, had to step back from his regular commitment to the standing committee, for health reasons. We wish Mark well as his treatment continues – we miss him and his wordsmith's skills. Sue, our Administrator, has also had a challenging year with her health; it is good to see her resuming some office duties and back in church on Sundays.

My thanks also to clergy colleagues who covered my time off for hip surgery and who continue to share the presiding and preaching on Sundays in church (Fr Martin, Fr Steve, Fr Simon and Fr Nigel Mason – Bishop Robert's chaplain). Many thanks as well to Fr Brian for all his contributions to our online worship. While I was recuperating, I was grateful to be able to robe and lay hands on Fr Steve at his ordination to the priesthood at Exeter Cathedral and to be able to attend his First Mass at St James'.

On the second Sunday of Advent, the church opened again, with a booking system for services. I am grateful that we were able to keep two services going on Sundays, as long as we wrapped up well in the winter months. Thus, at Christmas, we welcomed 61 souls over two services, on a lovely bright day and with some live music too. It was a great comfort to have a hint of some normality at Christmas, as so much in our usual Church life had ceased – coffee after the service being just one obvious example. In some ways, the third lockdown was more challenging, with the darker days and the winter weather. What an extraordinarily beautiful spring we had in 2020! Somehow it held us through all the challenges we were facing.

Fellowship was another regular activity at St James' that came to a halt and I would like to pay tribute to its contribution to the Church over many years. It was with sadness and regret that St James' Fellowship made the decision to close, since the pandemic made it impossible to hold meetings and the outlook was not positive for the foreseeable future. The group was a lively and much valued part of the Church, offering company, entertainment and friendship to so many people over the past 60 years. Fellowship stalls at summer fêtes and Christmas bazaars have contributed substantial amounts to Church funds

and dozens of charities have benefitted from donations totalling many thousands of pounds. To mark their 60 years, Fellowship donated a new flower stand for the high altar, complete with a name and date plaque, which will be presented at a service sometime in the future, when everyone involved will hopefully be able to attend. 'Sometime in the future' reminds us that we cannot be certain how and when ordinary Church life will return but we will get there with baby steps, very carefully and cautiously for everyone's sake.

In this most challenging of years, I thank our two wardens, the treasurer, the safeguarding and health and safety officer, the PCC secretary, the office and distribution team and all at St James' for their support, sheer hard work and encouragement.

As always, we remember those who have been called into God's nearer presence since our meeting last year, among whom we remember: Maurice Kitt, Jean Heard, Betty Walters, Kevin King, Hilary Morley, Clarice Tyers, Sheila Privett, Mary Sim, Betty and Deryck Rawle and Mary Vinnicombe. May they rest in peace.

Fr Henry

### Assistant Curate

In last year's report I wrote about how 2019 had been a 'year of change and new beginnings for my family and me.' Clearly 2020 was also anything but normal for all of us. As well as the changes as a result of the pandemic, I experienced a wonderful and very definite change when I was priested on 26<sup>th</sup> September alongside others including the Rev Sarah Cumming and the Rev Julia Hocking. Because of the pandemic restrictions, only 30 people were able to attend my ordination but the service was streamed over the internet and Bishop Robert reassured everyone that, despite the small congregation present, the building was nevertheless filled with the Holy Spirit.

South West Ministry Training Course likens ordination to receiving an invisible, indelible mark: ordination is for life. All priests are first ordained deacon and remain deacons for life. When priested, one is also ordained priest for life. So, in every sense, 2020 for me was a year of experiencing change and being changed.

Thank you to Fr Henry for his patience, support and guidance and for trusting me during his absence. I would also like to thank wardens Nigel Ridgway and Nigel Williams, treasurer Rachel Martindill, and the standing committee. In a year of exceptional challenge, we have sought new ways of being accessible and relatable whilst continuing to live out the threefold vision of growing in prayer, making new disciples and serving the people of Devon with joy. For many, one of the great challenges of the past 12 months has been finding joy; it can be hard to express something that you are not feeling yourself.

One particular encouragement to me, which I hope will encourage you too, is someone who has been phoning me regularly since the first lockdown to check that I am well. It is wonderful that this person and others have been genuinely excited at the opportunities this pandemic has offered. A person who is ordinarily looked after is now benefitting from the opportunity to help others and is talking about once again feeling needed.

Many people have talked about the pandemic as a great leveller, through shared restrictions. Yet the person who calls me with such warmth, energy and cheer talks from a very different perspective, of being elevated to feeling useful again, carer rather than cared for. This precious feeling inspires me always to look for the best in difficult situations, always to seek joy through the challenges. I hope you too can find joy.

Fr Steve

## Churchwardens

We accept the government message: 'Stay safe, Protect the NHS, Save lives'. 2020 was therefore a strange year, with normal liberties suspended and no baptisms or weddings, as these were either discouraged or not permitted. Many of the usual modes of operation, refined over many years, had to be replaced at very short notice, although even new methods were often subsequently rejected when the guidance changed.

From 23<sup>rd</sup> March, all church buildings were temporarily closed, because of the coronavirus pandemic. From 29<sup>th</sup> March, St James' services and occasional reflections were broadcast online, together with aids to worshipping at home, such as home-grown videos for Morning and Evening Prayer. These provisions, also available on DVD for those who have no internet access, were and are a lifeline for many and they continue to hold the congregation together. From 1<sup>st</sup> July, weekday Morning Prayer resumed in the church. From 12<sup>th</sup> July, both the 8.00 am and 10.00 am Sunday Eucharist services resumed, with coronavirus precautions in place (social distancing, good ventilation, no heating, no singing, face masks etc). Attendance at the 10.00 am service was initially on a 3-weekly rota basis and chairs were stacked in the nave, so that around 40 people could attend at any one time with 2-metre distancing. Kneelers and hymn books were removed, in order to prevent contamination. Attendance was lower than expected, in part due to shielding but also probably because the Church experience was hugely altered, especially with no singing. Provision of online services continued throughout the year and remains ongoing.

From 2<sup>nd</sup> November, the church buildings were closed again. From 9<sup>th</sup> November, Morning Prayer was moved to the online platform Zoom; this still continues every weekday. From 6<sup>th</sup> December, the 8.00 am and 10.00 am Sunday services resumed once again and a booking system for the 10.00 am services replaced the 3-weekly rota. This system is still in place. As infection rates are very low in this parish and our precautions are of the highest standard, services have continued, albeit with modest numbers of regular worshippers.

In addition to the above major milestones in the history both of the nation and of St James' Church, the following milestones occurred in the life of St James':

- On 26<sup>th</sup> September, in a sparsely attended service at Exeter Cathedral, because of the pandemic restrictions, Assistant Curate Fr Steve Turner was ordained to the priesthood. On 1<sup>st</sup> October, he joyfully offered his first Mass, with 45 invited communicants at St James' Church.
- After a period of isolation, which began on 12<sup>th</sup> August, Fr Henry took sick leave until the beginning of Advent on 29<sup>th</sup> November. Throughout this period, we were deeply indebted to Fr Martin Poolton, Fr Steve Turner, the retired clergy and the standing committee for facilitating ongoing worship and support in the parish. We are blessed both with a high calibre of leadership and with an excellent support structure of congregation members, who are the bedrock of care and encouragement to one another.
- In the week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020, the infection rates in our statistical area (MSOA) were very high indeed. When the rate reached 1,977 per 100,000 for our parish, the churchwardens (as the incumbent was on sick leave) made the difficult and unprecedented decision to close the church building with immediate effect, owing to concerns about individual safety, especially since some congregation members were lax about wearing masks at all times and there was strong pressure to increase the attendance by moving from a 3-weekly to a 2-weekly rota. Nevertheless, as the Bishop

was unwilling to grant a dispensation for temporary closure of St James', a service was held only at 8.00 am on 11<sup>th</sup> October. With reluctance, owing to the very high risk of viral transmission, 10.00 am services were reinstated on 18<sup>th</sup> October. This was a very difficult period for us, as we felt that our concerns were not given proper consideration. By contrast, only a few months later, when infection rates were much lower, churches were permitted to close as they saw fit.

To all at St James': Thank you for your support and encouragement during this difficult year.

Nigel Ridgway and Nigel Williams

## Electoral Roll

The electoral roll is the Church's register of electors and it is the list of those qualified to attend and vote at the Annual Parish Meeting in the elections for the Parochial Church Council and for the parish's representatives on the deanery synod. Each parish has to compile a new electoral roll every six years and this was done in 2019, when a completely new roll was produced. There have been various additions and deletions since then.

As directed by diocesan rules, the roll was closed on 28<sup>th</sup> February and it has been available through the parish office since then. The list will be re-opened for new names after the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. There were 167 people listed on the Electoral Roll at the time of the APCM last year. Since then, nine names have been deleted (five people have moved away and four are deceased) and one added, meaning that there are now 159 names listed. This will be reported to the PCC at its first meeting and the PCC will receive updates on the numbers throughout the year.

Liz Holland

## Treasurer: Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

The financial results for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 were memorable. Total receipts in the year fell by nearly £24,000 (a drop of some 17.5%) and total payments had to follow suit, meaning a fall of nearly £23,000. Unrestricted funds (those that we can spend as we choose) decreased by just £12 – a spectacular feat.

With all normal hall activities suspended since 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, our income from that source dried up completely. Also, since Church gatherings were curtailed, there was no income from weddings, baptisms, refreshments after services or plate collections. In addition, there was neither a summer fête nor a Christmas bazaar. Income was therefore down by at least £2,500 per month (about 25%).

Cost savings were negotiated and our Parish Administrator, Sue Pinn, was furloughed for six months. Sue has since returned to work with reduced hours. We are grateful for other savings volunteered, such as costs for organists, cleaning and visiting clergy. Some small savings have, of course, occurred naturally, such as heating, lighting etc., although many costs are fixed and inescapable.

After we realised that, without further action, our bank balance would be zero by mid-2021, and conscious that our Common Fund payments now consumed 91% of our monthly income (compared with 65% previously), we asked for help from the diocese. A discount of some £11,000 on our 2020 Common Fund payments was therefore kindly allowed.

In line with Biblical principles and our ongoing commitment, St James' once again gave away over 5% of its income to charitable causes, many of which were overseas.

Rachel Martindill

# Financial Statements for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

## Cash Flow Statement

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
	£	£
<b>Total Receipts in year (page 9)</b>	112,795	136,629
<b>Total Payments in year (page 11)</b>	109,500	132,213
<b>Excess of Receipts over Payments</b>	<u>3,295</u>	<u>4,415</u>
 NatWest Bank account at 1 <sup>st</sup> January	 38,077	 33,662
 NatWest Bank account at 31 <sup>st</sup> December	 48,073	 48,135
Cheques not presented	-6,700	-10,058
	<u>41,373</u>	<u>38,077</u>
<b><u>Cash at bank and in hand</u></b>	<b><u>41,373</u></b>	<b><u>38,077</u></b>

## Breakdown of Funds

<i>Unrestricted Funds</i>		
<b>Including Designated Funds (see page 7)</b>	<b>33,854</b>	<b>33,866</b>
<b>Restricted Funds (see page 7)</b>	<b>7,518</b>	<b>4,212</b>
<b><u>Cash at bank and in hand</u></b>	<b><u>41,373</u></b>	<b><u>38,077</u></b>



	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
	£	£
<b><u>Unrestricted Funds</u></b>		
General: Unrestricted funds	33,354	33,366
Designated funds:		
Bequests and memorial donations	500	500
<b><u>Total Unrestricted Funds</u></b>	<b><u>33,854</u></b>	<b><u>33,866</u></b>

### **Restricted Funds**

Common Fund Provision	4,000	0
Rector's Discretionary Fund	1,315	1,315
Flower Fund	629	543
Hall Refurbishment	279	279
Organ and Fabric Fund	566	1344
Celebrate Together	730	730
<b><u>Total Restricted Funds</u></b>	<b><u>7,518</u></b>	<b><u>4,212</u></b>

### **Income-Generating Investments** **Including Endowment Funds**

	<u>Shares</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
	£	£	£
CBF Investment Fund Shares	18,452	<u>377,287</u>	<u>352,917</u>

***Endowment Funds*** (held for the PCC by Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance)

	<u>Shares</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
25p Ordinary Shares, Astra Zeneca Group plc	360	26,366	27,385
CBF Investment Fund Shares	3,667	74,974	70,131
M & G Charifund Units (flower fund)	224	3,075	3,720
		<u>104,415</u>	<u>101,236</u>



## Incoming Resources

	<u>Unrestricted</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>Restricted</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
<b><u>Receipts: Unrestricted</u></b>	£	£	£	£	£
<i>Incoming Resources from Donors</i>					
Stewardship and collections	65,089				74,861
Income tax recovered	13,782				16,500
Sundry donations (gen. purposes)	2,168				2,653
Sundry donations (spec. purposes)	0				510
Designated funds:					
Bequests and memorial donations	0				0
	81,039			81,039	94,524
<i>Other Voluntary Incoming Resources</i>					
Fundraising and social events	0			0	2,873
<i>Income from Investments</i>					
Dividends/interest on investments	13,472			13,472	13,112
<i>Income from Activities</i>					
Hall receipts	8,722				15,997
Parochial fees (funerals, marriages et al.)	1,424				1,828
Retreats	0				222
Magazine	995				1,020
Luncheon Club	428				2,798
Church hire, coffee etc.	524				1,460
	12,094			12,094	23,325
<b><u>Total Receipts: Unrestricted</u></b>	<b><u>106,604</u></b>			<b><u>133,834</u></b>	<b><u>133,834</u></b>

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	
	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Restricted</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>Restricted</u>	£	£	£
Common Fund Discount		4,000	4,000
			<u>0</u>

### Receipts: Restricted

#### *Incoming Resources from Donors*

Donations: Equipment/vestments	1,966	2,204
Celebrate Together	0	250
	1,966	1,966
		2,454
<b>Total Receipts: Restricted</b>	<b>2,191</b>	<b>2,191</b>
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>106,604</b>	<b>6,191</b>
		<b>112,795</b>
		<b>136,629</b>



## Outgoings: Resources Expended

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	
	<u>Unrestricted</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>Restricted</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
<b>Payments: Unrestricted</b>	£	£	£
<i>Activities Relating Directly to the Work of the Church</i>			
Ministry: Common Fund, Diocese of Exeter			
Clergy expenses (incl. visiting priests)	68,046		80,298
Secretarial and parish office	2,947		4,454
Church running expenses (incl. insurance)	5,384		9,324
Church and office fabric costs (incl. quinquennial inspection)	5,896		5,786
Maintenance of church buildings	720		1,637
Organist and music	3,682		2,066
Altar requisites	1,156		3,145
Retreats	548		1,902
Magazine expenses	0		212
Luncheon Club and others	1,215		1,140
Children & Messy Church	0		953
Insurance claims	0		241
	100		0
	89,693	89,693	111,159
<b>Hall Running Expenses</b>	5,591	5,591	6,905
<b>Hall: Emergency lights et al.</b>	0	0	3,312
<b>Fundraising expenses</b>	26	26	452
<b>Giving to charities, missions etc. (see page 12)</b>	7,305	7,305	7,530
<b>Total Payments: Unrestricted</b>	<b>102,615</b>	<b>102,615</b>	<b>129,357</b>



	<u>2020</u>		<u>2019</u>
	<u>Unrestricted</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>Restricted</u> <u>Funds</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
<b>Non-Cash Movement:</b>			
<b>Unrestricted</b>	£	£	£
Common Fund Discount	<u>4,000</u>		<u>4,000</u>
			<u>0</u>

**Payments: Restricted**

Church: Equipment and cleaning funded by appeal	1,845		1,166
Donations: Vestments	900		0
Celebrate Together	0		212
	2,745	2,745	1,378
Flower Fund		140	1,478
<b>Total Payments: Restricted</b>	<b>2,885</b>	<b>2,885</b>	<b>2,856</b>
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>106,615</b>	<b>2,885</b>	<b>109,500</b>
			<b>132,213</b>



## Giving to Charities, Missions etc.

	<u>Special Appeals &amp; Donations</u>	<u>PCC Donations</u>
<b><u>Giving Through St James'</u></b>	£	£
<b><u>Overseas</u></b>		
Melanesian Mission UK		1,000
St Peter's Malawi Education Trust		1,000
Tearfund		1,000
USPG	450	1,000
<b><u>UK-Based</u></b>		
Balloons		540
Hospiscare		540
ICE (Initiative in Christian Education)		540
Mothers' Union		540
The Compassionate Friends		540
Traidcraft		100
Christians Together		35
Devon Historic Churches		20
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>6,855</b>
(Figures for 2019)	510	7,020
		<b>7,530</b>



# Independent Examiner's Certificate for the PCC Accounts

Report to the trustees of:

St James', Exeter

Parochial Church Council

On accounts for the year ended:

31/12/2020

Charity Number (if applicable):

1128877

**Respective responsibilities  
of trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent  
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent examiner's  
statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention (other than that disclosed below\*):

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
 have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn 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: D. E. Bird

Date: 18 February 2021

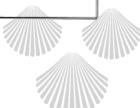
Name: DAWN BIRD

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

Member Institute of Mathematics and its Applications  
Chartered Mathematician

Address:

The Vicarage  
Exwick Hill  
Exeter, Devon



# **Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

## **I. Accounting Policies**

The Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Statement of Recommended Practice, on the Receipts and Payments basis.

## **2. Analysis of Fund Movements for the Year**

- i. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS may be used by the PCC for any of its ordinary purposes. The PCC has chosen to set aside bequests and memorial donations to be used for fitting future projects or commitments. There is therefore a DESIGNATED fund that remains part of the unrestricted funds of the charity. Movements in the funds are shown in the Cash Flow Statement, on page 6
- ii. RESTRICTED FUNDS represent income which may be spent only on the specific purpose for which they were given or for which they were invited. Any balance remaining unspent must be carried forward as a balance on that fund and may not be absorbed into general funds.
- iii. ENDOWMENT FUNDS are funds whose capital must be maintained; only income arising from the investment of the endowment may be used, either as restricted or as unrestricted funds depending upon the purpose for which the endowment was established.

## **3. Investments**

Quoted investments are valued at bid-market prices at 31<sup>st</sup> December. Apart from bank balances, there are no other investment assets.

## **4. Assets and Liabilities**

- i. The church and grounds as well as the Rectory and the curate's house are vested in the Representative Body of the Church of England and are not parish assets.
- ii. Moveable church contents (plate, furniture etc.) are inalienable property and require a faculty for disposal. They are recorded in the Church Terrier log. Many are historic and no reliable cost basis exists for them; they are neither recognised nor listed in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.
- iii. Other assets and property, which are retained for or occupied for Church purposes and which are not investment assets, are listed below in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities as non-monetary assets.

## **5. Statement of Assets and Liabilities**

### **ASSETS**

- Hall: Building, chairs, cooker, copper piping and heaters, cupboards, fire guards, fridge freezer, kitchen equipment, stage curtains, tables, water heater
- Grounds: Cycle rack, lawnmower, noticeboards, shed
- Parish Office: Office equipment, PC and software, photocopier
- Church: Altar frontals, CCTV equipment, Clavinova, copper piping and heaters, fire guards, loop system, Optoma projector and screens, organ, silverware, PA equipment, statues and pictures, vestments

### **DEBTORS**

- HMRC December 2020 claim received in January 2021: £983.99  
(December 2019 claim received in January 2020: £1,886.74)

### **LIABILITIES**

There were no liabilities at the year end.

## Reader in Training

The two-year reader training course, which I began in September 2019, normally includes seven weekends away in Plymouth as well as fourteen seminar evenings in Exeter each year. Since March 2020, all of these lectures and meetings have taken place online, which really is not the same as meeting in person. The classroom atmosphere, which had always been such a dynamic and interactive environment, is very different on a screen. Also, there is no longer any opportunity for those more informal chats during coffee and lunch breaks or at the bar in the evening. I am very grateful for the months that I was able to enjoy before the pandemic restrictions began, because the friendships I made have continued on WhatsApp groups and are a great support. Of course, the many essays and reflections still need to be researched and written up. Although these are hard work, they are often immensely rewarding and I have learnt so much more about the Bible, Church tradition and ministry.

During my training I had expected to take a more active role at St James', because I knew I would be asked both to preach and to lead services such as Morning and Evening Prayer. However, this last year has surpassed any expectations I had in that respect. I have also been included in all the Zoom meetings (such as PCC and standing committee), where all sorts of decisions about our church had to be made in these difficult times, and I have learnt so much about being part of a supportive leadership team.

Whilst such a big part of our worship and services has taken place online, I have also had the opportunity to put together videos for services, as well as preaching, praying, reading and singing online. Although I miss corporate worship, when we are all together in the church, I am thankful that we have been able to carry on in some fashion, both in the church and in recorded worship. Other congregations have managed in a similar way, as I discovered during my recent placement in Sandford and Crediton. This offered the opportunity to learn about the Church in a more rural setting, where I was made very welcome and encouraged to take part as much as possible.

God willing, I hope to be licensed in September. I also hope that, by then, we will be able to gather in Exeter Cathedral to celebrate with friends and family.

Joan Ridgway

## House Groups

As for everyone else, it has been a difficult year for the two house groups. Once lockdown started, the Wednesday group was unable to meet, as not all members have access to the internet.

However, the Thursday group has continued to meet via Zoom and we are grateful to Tim Bayton for hosting the meeting each month. Our half-hour coffee and catch-up has sadly gone by the board, although we do manage a brief chat before beginning the meetings, at which we have continued our study of St John's gospel. John is always interesting and well worth studying; we often find ourselves asking questions we might not have considered previously. When Jesus said 'I appointed you to bear fruit, fruit that will last,' what exactly did He mean? What are the fruits that we should be bearing as Christians in 2021? This question provoked a long and animated discussion at one recent meeting.

We intend to continue our monthly meetings on Zoom for now, but I look forward to the time when both groups can meet again face to face.

Fr Brian Tubbs



## Fabric

The buildings and grounds still require attention even when the buildings are not in use and final work on the tall beech trees alongside the allotments was completed in February 2020. To alleviate overcrowding, two trees were felled in the northeast corner by Prince Charles Road, so that the two remaining trees can stand unhindered.

In June, when lockdown prevented occupation, some of the large hall windows overlooking the garden were vandalised and subsequently replaced under an insurance claim. At the same time, when the church building was not being used for normal services, the back door of the church was removed for several weeks and repaired. Simon Tucker also erected scaffolding in the church to redecorate the wall and ceiling near the high altar after water ingress that had been caused by a roof leak on the south side.

The five-yearly electrical installation condition report of the church was completed in August. Unlike the previous survey, which required numerous costly improvements, no problems were found this time.

During annual servicing in October, corrosion was found in the committee room heater, which was therefore condemned. We were also warned that the vestry heater has similar problems and may soon need replacement. All the heaters are over 12 years old and we may need to assess the future of the heating in the hall and the church. In the pandemic, the guidance has also been to turn off the heaters when the building is occupied, because they operate by taking air from inside the building, heating it and then convecting it using fans.

In December, BT installed fast broadband to the church, so that services can be streamed online. Also, during the last few months of 2020, the quinquennial inspection was performed by the same surveyor who worked on the hall roof project. Lockdown restrictions have so far prevented Savills Exeter partner Mark Ledgard from presenting his report but he has already explained that the roofs are the main area of concern. Some of the flat roofs and gullies are in poor shape and although Simon Tucker regularly patches leaks, especially near the pulpit and in the bell tower, he may be fighting a losing battle. We await the report with Mark Ledgard's recommendations but anticipate that they may be costly.

On a positive note, despite bad weather early in the year, lockdown restrictions later and then further COVID-19 precautions, the gardening team created a place of tranquillity and beauty in the church grounds. Many people were able to find peace here during the lonely, fearful days of 2020. Many thanks to the gardeners for their efforts.

Nigel Ridgway

## Book Group

Although members have missed Christa's homemade biscuits this year, the book group has gone from strength to strength during the pandemic, since it moved to Zoom. We have had more time to read, new members have joined us and friends who had moved away have been able to re-join our discussions. As well as a session when we talked about books that have been influential to us in the past, we have discussed the following novels: *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, which is set in wartime Germany; Tracey Chevalier's *New Boy*, a story based on *Othello*; William Trevor's Irish tale of *The Story of Lucy Gault*; *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell. In Lent, we chose to read *Unapologetic* by Francis Spufford, a personal view of faith, which declares on its front cover: 'Why, despite everything, Christianity can still make surprising emotional sense.'

Jill Mather

## Children's and Young People's Groups

The young people at St James' have been unable to gather physically this year, although some new ways of meeting have emerged. Messy Church went online in 2020 in a pre-recorded format and JAM (Jesus and Me) resources were uploaded to the website and e-mailed to families. In Advent, the 11-Ups met on Zoom to plan the nativity play, which was filmed partly in their homes and partly in a socially-distanced church hall with the use of a green screen. St James' Nativity Play was then uploaded to the Church Facebook page just before Christmas. The Christingle service moved to Zoom and in 2021 the children have joined an online pizza party, a Shrove Tuesday pancake party and a Fairtrade Fortnight quiz.

When things return to 'normal', we look forward to welcoming back the young people of the parish at our regular activities: Messy Church on the first Wednesday of each month for families with young children; JAM for children aged 5 – 10 and 11-Ups for older children, who meet in the hall on Sunday mornings.

Caroline Adams, Jill Mather and Jim Weeks

## Communications Group

The Communications Group now includes Tim Bayton, Barbara and Jim Jackson, Andrew and Joanna Mimmack, John Venmore and Nigel Williams. Liz Howell recently stood down from the group.

The group took the view that the pandemic, with its consequent curtailment and partial suspension of most Church activities, made the production and distribution of *Contact* magazine more important than ever. Together with the website, it provides the only line of regular communication between the Church and the wider parish. To review and plan the magazine, the group therefore continued its established pattern of meeting three times a year, albeit latterly via Zoom.

*Contact* magazine was produced under Tim Bayton's editorship at Easter, in the autumn and at Christmas. Susan Coombs kindly volunteered to collate the printed copies at her home and Tim ensured that enough volunteers were available to deliver the magazines to every address in the parish. Many thanks to all who continue to help with the task of distribution. Repeated lockdowns prevented some deliveries in time for our target dates but this was not as crucial as it would have been when publicising the normal round of services and other events.

The magazine continues to strike a balance between Church-related items and articles of more general interest. Louise Spencer and Anne Killingback have respectively provided a puzzle page and children's activities, for which we are grateful. In addition, we thank John Venmore for his efforts with the advertising brief; persuading advertisers to book a regular space has been made even more challenging by the current situation and we remain on the lookout for businesses who would like to use this opportunity.

Andrew Mimmack



## Music

Thanks to Jim Weeks, who quickly set up Sunday services online when we were no longer able to meet in the church, 2020 was a busy year for the St James' Singers. Since April, the singers have recorded a new hymn in four-part harmony every week as well as multiple carols for the recorded services at Christmas. Music for our online services has also been augmented variously by St James' Brass quartet, by our very own flautist and occasionally by a horn quartet. The carol service even featured an ad hoc handbell sextet.

Tom Salmon and Pam Miller have continued to play the organ for the 10.00 am Parish Eucharist on Sundays, when it has been held in the church; we are grateful to them for their loyal service. In addition, a small number of passers by stopped for two minutes on Remembrance Day, when Richard Hammond played the Last Post and Rouse by the garden of remembrance. At Christmas and during the season of Epiphany, a violinist, pianist and solo singers offered further variety, in particular with music during Communion.

Singing, playing and listening to music have brought light to many during some dark days in recent months. For all the singers and musicians, it has been a great privilege to offer our talents to bring comfort and peace at this time.

Tim Bayton

## Safeguarding

The PCC reviews its safeguarding policy annually. A safeguarding report is submitted to every PCC meeting and includes updates on safeguarding training, information from the diocesan safeguarding team and details of those who have completed the appropriate recruitment processes. This year, we signed up to the online Safeguarding Dashboard, an audit system operated by the diocese, which produces an action plan of areas that need to be addressed. I am pleased to report that we have no red flags (areas that require immediate attention).

The Safeguarding Statement is signed by Fr Henry and the churchwardens and displayed at the back of the church. However, everybody has a role to play in safeguarding. If you have any concerns or if something of concern is disclosed to you, please do not investigate for yourself but rather report it to and leave the matter with one of the safeguarding representatives (Pat Cockman or me), a churchwarden or a member of the clergy within 24 hours.

Telephone numbers for our church safeguarding representatives and the diocesan safeguarding contacts can be found on posters in the church porch and in the hall. Links are also available both on our own website and on the diocesan website at <https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/safeguarding/safeguarding-team>. If you would like further safeguarding information or a pocket card with information and contact numbers, please let me know. For immediate reference, here are some useful contacts:

- Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser: Charlie Pitman 01392 435909
- For concerns about children: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub 0345 155 1071
- For concerns about adults: Care Direct 0345 155 1007
- For concerns about domestic abuse: Domestic Abuse Service 0345 155 1074

Caroline Adams



## Health and Safety

The year since the APCM in 2020 was very different for all of us. From a health and safety perspective, it was dominated by the introduction of COVID-safe procedures, so that activities could take place in the church building and church hall when permitted. Risk assessments were undertaken, following guidance issued by the Church of England. These were reported at PCC meetings, where health and safety is a permanent agenda item.

Numerous measures were introduced both in the church and in the church hall to reduce the possibility of transmission of COVID-19. The key principle in all cases is to reduce contact. Some of the main measures implemented to minimise contact and time in the building whilst promoting safety are listed below:

- Keeping numbers to an appropriate level to allow social distancing
- Reorganisation of the seating
- Removal of hymn books and kneelers
- Wearing of face masks (in place before entering the building)
- Implementation of good hand hygiene with the use of hand sanitiser
- Regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces
- Good ventilation
- Reduction of visits to the church building to essential tasks and services only
- Keeping a list of people who enter the church (for track and trace purposes)
- Appropriate use of microphones
- Introduction of a Perspex screen on the pulpit
- Provision of recorded services
- Deactivation of the heating system, which blows warm air, when people are in the buildings
- Addition of safety and warning signage on walls and floors

Church hall users are required to abide by our specified COVID-19 guidance. Since 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, the main user was Devon and Cornwall Police, which hired the hall for training purposes.

My thanks to the churchwardens, Rachel and Andy Martindill, Jim Weeks and all the service monitors who have helped with introducing new measures, building screens and monitoring procedures in the church and hall.

Caroline Adams



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