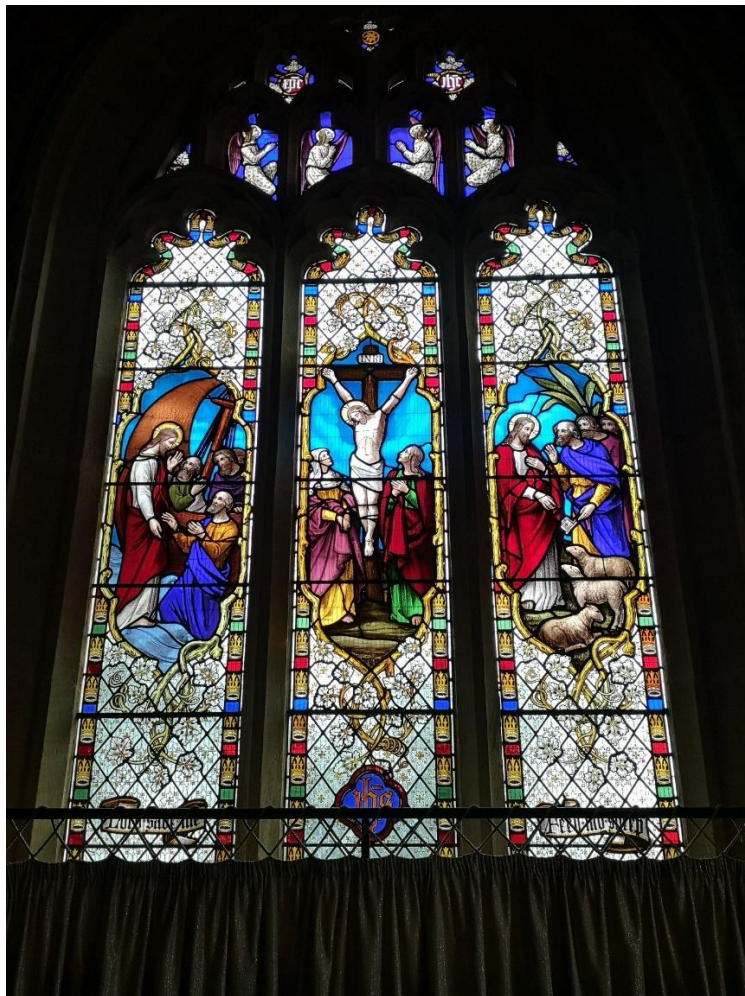


**The Parish of St. Peter, Staple Fitzpaine**

**Annual Report  
Year ended 31 December 2020**

# **St Peter's Church Staple Fitzpaine**



## Introduction

The Annual Report of St. Peter's church presents the opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved over the last twelve months and to thank people who have been involved in the life and work of the church. 2020 has been an unusual year with the Covid pandemic having a huge impact on normal life. St Peter's has been no different but with the help of the ministerial team and a plethora of volunteers has succeeded in continuing its important role within the community.

The financial review, included at the end of the report, gives details of the church receipts and expenditure. In 2020 receipts exceeded payments by £2,945.

## The Parish

The parish forms part of the Seven Sowers Benefice, comprising Beercrocombe, with Curry Mallet, Hatch Beauchamp, Orchard Portman, Staple Fitzpaine, Stoke St. Mary (with Thurlbear) and West Hatch. The parish is part of the Ilminster Deanery, in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, within the Church of England. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity exempted from registration with the Charity Commissioners. The Benefice is part of a Local Ministry Group (LMG) with the adjoining Blackdown Benefice.

## The Ministry Team

Rector	Interregnum
Associate minister (house for duty)	Revd Stephen Jones – appt August 2018
Associate Minister	Revd Christabel Ager
One Reader with PTO	Brian Crudge
Reader emeritus	Clive Hayward
Children's, schools and families worker	Holly Stevens
Reader in training	Sue McKen
Ordinand	Phil Albrow*

\* Phil was ordained in September 2020 and has been appointed as curate of Isle Valley benefice

In the light of the Diocesan strategy and our own Plan, the ministry team together with the church wardens have established, and continue to pursue the following priorities:

- To encourage authentic Christianity in our members' lives
- To encourage small groups within church
- To develop work amongst children
- To develop work amongst 13-40s
- To develop leaders within the church (every member ministry)
- To utilise ministerial gifts to the full
- To ensure the needs of older people are adequately addressed.

Through our teaching, worship and activities, the ministry team seeks to put mission and evangelism at the heart of everything.

Messy Church is an important element of this mission and it continues to flourish in Hatch Beauchamp and Curry Mallet as a way of reaching those families who will not be touched by our other activities. The changing constraints of the Covid pandemic has seen the innovation of this activity moving online from time to time.

Only one benefice wide service for all age groups could be held at St Peter's this year, in March. Devised and planned by one of the lay leaders, the service draws in a number of families who otherwise have very little contact with the church. The attendance at the March service was 30, significantly down on previous years. The imminent lockdown restrictions may well have affected attendance. The service was characteristically innovative and fun with a variety of activities gently introducing the very accessible message.



The Lent series of talks had to be curtailed after two meetings due to the constraints of the Covid pandemic.

The Ministry Team is committed to providing forms of worship and events that engage those who currently have little contact with the church.

## **Ministry Team Changes**

The ministry team has remained largely unchanged in 2020 as the benefice continued to seek a new Rector following Paul Reynold's retirement in 2018. With the assistance of the Archdeacon for Taunton, the Ven. Simon Hill, the churchwardens of the churches in Seven Sowers Benefice, chaired by John Pugh, the prospectus for the incumbency has been updated. Advertisements have been periodically run in the Church Times and informal networks within the Diocese to identify and encourage possible candidates.

In 2020 a suitable candidate came forward. The candidate has visited the Benefice and following an interview process conducted online the candidate was offered the position and has accepted. Joanna Porter thus has been appointed as the new rector of the Seven Sowers benefice. It is anticipated that she will start in post in April 2021.

During this interregnum the Parish has continued to be particularly fortunate to have Revd Christabel Ager and Revd Stephen Jones, who with the wider ministerial team have worked enthusiastically and unstintingly to lead us in our spiritual lives in this difficult year.

## **PCC Membership**

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation rules. Members are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll. The PCC met, via Zoom, on three occasions during 2020 and conducted other pressing business by email correspondence.

PCC members who served in 2020 were:

Chair:	Alison Brown
Churchwardens:	Alison Brown Mark Porter
Secretary	Sheila Green
	Chris Dunn Tami Boden Ellis Julie Pope Mike Nicholls Nicky Baxter
Ex Officio	Revd Christabel Ager Revd Stephen Jones
Treasurer	Mary Bell

Members of the PCC bring a wealth of different knowledge and experience and it is often the challenge from committee members that makes for clearer and more objective decision making. PCC members also support the ministry team across the benefice.

## **The Electoral Roll**

In 2020 twenty-three people were registered on the church electoral roll.

## **Regular Worship**

The current service rota is as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday 10.00 am	Parish Communion
3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday 6.30pm	Reflective worship

In a very difficult year, as the Covid epidemic has placed a range of constraints on worship in Church, the team has managed to maintain a full programme of services. Complying with Covid lockdown requirements St. Peter's was able to carry out six of the twelve monthly morning worship services in the church. These services had an average attendance of 15. From March these services could not incorporate communion. A simple system of seating restrictions was adopted to ensure social distancing could be safely maintained. The sides people have been particularly important in making sure that these services could be run safely.

A significant constraint of Covid, for a musical church such as ours, has been the restriction on singing. Julie Pope's innovation of introducing violinists Emma McDaid and Rebecca George to accompany her in the playing of hymns has gone a long way to alleviate the disappointment of not being able to sing.

The introduction, in March of the Benefice wide 10 am Zoom service on Sundays has been a huge success. Revd Christabel Ager has introduced, organised and managed this welcome innovation. Christabel's rapid mastery of the technology and the offering of an engaging and involving service and online social gathering has become a staple of the Benefice's spiritual life. Attendances often exceed 50 worshippers.

In normal times the church is unlocked and available during the day. From March, to comply with lockdown requirements it was decided that the church should be open on Wednesday afternoon and all-day on Sunday for private prayer.

### Wednesday Reflective Service

This service has continued this year when Covid restrictions have permitted. This worship continues to place the emphasis on reflection and is characterised by the direct involvement of all who attend. This year more members of the church community have come forward to lead this service, and we are very grateful to them.

### Festival Services

Attendances

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Good Friday	*	18	-	14	14	14	21	15	-
Easter Sunday	*	50	56	61	46	64	58	39	51
Harvest Festival	28	49	31	37	40	38	70	33	38
Remembrance Sunday	50**	65	72	64	48	64	64	50	41
Carol Service	50**	86	94	106	128	99	67	85	84
Christmas Day	38	67	66*	54	55	79	60	66	78*

- No service due to lockdown
- \*\* Service held in the churchyard

In 2020 no baptisms or weddings were conducted at St. Peter's. There were three funeral/remembrance services. These services were conducted within the restrictions of lockdown, with attendances limited to 30.

Donald Denham and Di Grabham who have both contributed so much to the life of St. Peter's will be very sadly missed. It is to be hoped that in the future there will be an opportunity for the wider community to participate in an event to give thanks for their service to the church and the parish as a whole.

## **The Carol Service**

The Carol Service was held on 16<sup>th</sup> December. With the church unavailable due to Covid constraints the service was held outside. All arrangements to ensure the safe execution of the service were carefully considered. Service sheets including the words to the carols were distributed and hand cleansing facilities provided. Careful arrangements were made to ensure social distancing for all participants.

A hybrid abbreviated service of lessons and carols was agreed with the ministry team and on a lovely evening Stephen Jones did us proud in leading a service that retained the magic of previous years in celebrating the coming of Christ into the world.



Alison Brown and a team of candle lighters lit the paths to the service. The choir had recorded a number of carols which were played through the PA as attendees arrived.

The service included 5 lessons and 6 carols. The lesson readers did a fantastic job in the gloom and it was lovely to welcome new readers including Andrew Lister to the fold. The carols were wonderfully led by Julie Pope on the keyboard and Rebecca on the violin.

Even though the service had to be held outdoors the Church Flower Guild had made a wonderful job of decorating the church, with beautiful floral displays cascading from windowsills, pulpit and pedestals. The church was very grateful to Staple Farm for a wonderful Christmas tree, safely installed by Harry Dunn. Jackie Kolkowski organised children within the parish to produce the wonderful decorations that dressed the tree.

Sadly, missing from this years' service were the hand bell ringers. It can only be hoped that the restrictions place on us by the Covid pandemic will have been removed by the 2021 service and the hand bell ringers will return.

## **Rebecca George OBE**

### **Carols around the Neroche Villages**

In view of the constraints placed upon this sort of activity by Covid it was decided that the carolling around the Neroche villages could not take place this year.

### **People who help**

St Peter's is very fortunate in that it has the support of the wider community with many volunteering their time to undertake the variety of duties necessary to keep the church at

the heart of the community. There are volunteers who clean the church, maintain the churchyard, wind the clock, provide and serve refreshments after services and celebrations, maintain the building, act as sides people, ring the bells, arrange the flowers (the Flower Guild), read the lessons, lead prayers and sing. Many individuals support St. Peter's by volunteering for multiples of these tasks.

This support is essential to St. Peter's and we are very grateful for it. There is always room for more members of the community to be involved and all help would be greatly appreciated.

## **Sidespeople**

The sidespeople are a dedicated group who perform their duties of greeting members of the congregation, reading and taking collection with quiet dignity. This task has been particularly important this year with the importance of maintaining social distancing. The churchwardens appreciate the support the sides people provide; in particular thanks are given to Mary Bell, Henry Heath, Mike Nicholls, Rebecca George, Sheila Green and Alison Brown.

## **Flower Guild**

Jaqueline Kolkowski continues to lead her volunteers - Alison Brown, Karen Morgan, Carol Wensley-Dodd, Kath Michaels and Candy Janes - in dressing the church with beautiful and uplifting arrangements of flowers and local produce.

The work of the volunteers has continued throughout the year, Covid notwithstanding. Volunteers work on a rota basis to provide beautiful floral arrangements every month. The work for the Flower Guild includes lifting, carrying, daily watering and a lot of tidying up, it is a work of love and others who are interested are very welcome to come and join in.



St Peter's is recognised locally for the quality of the floral tributes that are prepared for the Festival Services of Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Greenery and fruit and vegetable contributions for these services are provided from members of the local community who will often help with decorating the windows.

Di Grabham's many years of dedication to St. Peter's and particularly the Flower Guild, were suitably commemorated at her remembrance service. Additional displays augmented the standing decorations and each member of the Guild made a personal posy to dress the top of Di's coffin.

The plant sale for church funds that in non-Covid times takes place at the pop-up café had to be an outdoor event, held outside Jackie's house in Curland.

It is always a delight to see the beauty of St Peter's Church enhanced with the wonders of God's world. Many thanks to the members of the Flower Guild for their dedication, hard work and artistry.

## St. Peter's Singers

St Peter's Singers has been meeting weekly now for over ten years. The principal focus is the singing of anthems at the festival services. This year has been particularly challenging with the advent of the Covid pandemic and the various ensuing restrictions to our activities, most significantly the prohibition of singing in church.

The Singers have risen to the challenge, continuing to meet weekly on Thursday evenings using the medium of Zoom. Whilst not a substitute for singing together, the choir quickly settled to the new constraints and have enjoyed the social coming together and even doing some singing. Zoom, with the limitations of differing internet speeds endured by participants, does not lend itself to singing unmuted together.

I can be sure, however, that all members were singing beautifully whilst muted. The proof is in Emma McDaid's collation of individual members recordings into a wonderfully presented master recording. Many of the choir's most cherished anthems were recorded along with a set of carols for the Carol Service.



The recordings have been used to provide a personal input to services, particularly funerals of those with some association with St Peters'.

One very happy but unforeseen consequence of moving choir practice online has been that members of the choir who have moved away from the area have been able to return to us. It has been wonderful to welcome back Rosie Storey and Kate Reynolds. With Rosie came our newest recruit, Daniel, born in December.

Particular thanks must go to Emma who even though starting in a new high-powered job has found the time to learn and master the mixing of recordings to produce a beautifully blended sound.

We are all looking forward to the time when we can sing together again but have taken great pleasure in the new direction that has been forced upon us in 2020.

If you enjoy singing, join us on Zoom on Thursday evenings or in the church once the restrictions are lifted.

## Julie Pope



## **Community Pop-up Cafe**

Pauline Phelps and Tricia Dryden lead their volunteers; Candy Janes, Frances Alford, Carole Wensley-Dodd, Jacqueline Kolkowski; Wyn Ballance, Sheila Green, Marianne Bray, Tina Warren, Peta Trott and Joy Larkman; in providing a very valuable service to the community, the Friday Pop-Up Cafe. This has very quickly established itself as a key day in people's diaries.

Working on a rota basis two volunteers each week run the cafe. The volunteers provide one home prepared savoury offering and four choices of fabulous home baked cakes. These are served with tea or coffee.

Within the constraints of the Covid pandemic the café had to close after the first two Fridays in March and was unable to re-open for the remainder of the year. The café provides an important community amenity with the opportunity for fun and diverse social interaction. Its significance has been highlighted by its absence.

Donations are collected and these are shared evenly by the church and the WI. Even with the limited opening the café raised £238.52 for the church.

## **Bell Ringers' Report**

The Belfry of St Peters continues to operate satisfactorily and is in good mechanical order. The Bells are inspected occasionally, and all nuts checked for tightness.

The tower has sadly been off limits to multiple bell ringers since March. Bell ringing does not lend itself to social distancing and all churches have been advised not to ring.

Paul Hart has been the solitary ringer, ringing for Di Grabham's funeral, Remembrance Day, the Carol Service and Christmas Day. Paul also tolled a hundred chimes in honour of Captain Tom Moore.

The clock continued to work faultlessly until December 1<sup>st</sup>. Unfortunately, the clock winding wire parted. New wire has been acquired and will be installed in early 2021. An inspection of the clock was arranged with view to a professional service of the mechanism and an assessment of its suitability for an electric automatic winding system. The clock will have its 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2022.

There are at the moment 12 ringers at Staple Fitzpaine. All can ring without supervision and are capable of good quality call change ringing. Good progress has been made in the teaching of Method Ringing.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the ringers for their hard work, good humour and stalwart attendance.

## **Paul Hart**

## **Neroche Thursday Lunches 2020**

Three community lunches, located at Neroche Hall, took place in January, February and March 2020. Then Coronavirus arrived and all indoor hospitality activity was curtailed until September.

The usual team of helpers, whose skills are legendary, in normal times run these community events under the auspices of Friends of St Peter's. Grateful thanks are extended to all the cooks, layer-ups, servers and washers-up, without whom there would be no meal, and the co-ordinators, who make order out of chaos!

When Covid restrictions eased towards the end of the summer, and the hall had established the necessary protocols, community teas were successfully run in September and October and enjoyed by the permitted number of guests. However no sooner had the organisers got the routine in place, when sadly lockdown came again at the beginning of November. A Christmas meal or tea was decided against, due to the increasing risk to helpers and guests.

The socialising that usually takes place at these get-togethers is of primary importance to those who may spend a lot of time on their own. The effects of the pandemic on social life for the elderly or solitary have been horrendous, and we pray to God that the current vaccination program will give us the chance to entertain and feed our guests again soon.

**Alison Brown**

## **Church Fabric, Churchyard and an Update on Re-ordering**

The church has fallen foul to the odd rain leak from above the servery and from the southeast corner of the flat roof. These are both likely to have resulted from inadequate clearance of dead leaves and other debris that collects on the flatter rooves. The leaves have been cleared and the church has subsequently stayed dry.

The paths to the church have become slippery in recent years. A thorough clean has taken place, hopefully providing safer access to the church.

The churchyard did not receive its customary clear up as Covid constraints made it difficult to carry out such a communal activity safely. However, various volunteers have stepped up to clear leaves etc throughout the year.

The contractor for the cutting the grass has proved a little unreliable this year. In light of this and the cost (against falling income due to Covid) it has been decided that a group of volunteers, including Paul Hart and Chris Newis will cut the grass and keep it tidy in 2021.

The churchyard wall to the west has collapsed in parts to the extent that it will be necessary to undertake significant repairs both to make it safe and aesthetically pleasing.

The process of the re-ordering of the church has essentially been suspended this year as reacting to the restrictions of Covid has tended to take precedence. As the threat of the virus is reduced it is hoped that in 2021 a new plan, acceptable to Historic England, can be

devised and submitted for civil planning approval and for the final determination of the Faculty application by the Diocese.

Fortunately, the church continues to benefit from the generosity of one of our parishioners in providing a portable toilet installed by the Mission Hut. This is cleaned and serviced weekly by the hire company.

### **Church Fete**

Chris and Heather Dunn have very generously organised and hosted the tri-annual church fete over many years. Sadly, this year the decision had to be taken to cancel the fete due to the constraints of the Covid pandemic.

Going forward Chris and Heather no longer feel that they can continue with this considerable undertaking. The church and wider community are hugely grateful for all their efforts over the years in providing such an enjoyable event that has generated so much money for St. Peters'.

### **2020 Financial Review**

At 31 December 2020 PCC Funds totalled £24,148

**2020 Receipts** - totalled £19,360, of which:

£15,611 was unrestricted for General fund purposes,

£2,730 towards the Church Reordering fund,

£1,019 for the restricted Fabric fund for church maintenance.

Regular bank Giving from parishioners totalled £6,450 in 2020. This constitutes the church's major source of income, providing financial stability, essential to enable the smooth running and maintenance of our church.

From March onwards receipts from church Service Collections were greatly reduced. Many services were cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, permitted services with limited congregations saw a significant reduction in giving.

Fund Raising opportunities were limited this year. From March onwards Covid-19 Government guidelines restricted gatherings, many fund-raising events were cancelled including the Manor Fete. However the Pancake supper, Scarecrow festival and individual fundraising ventures contributed £1,813 to church funds.

Donations and Donated expenses from members of the community contributed an additional £4,631 to church funds.

In 2020 HMRC refunded £2,249 income tax from Gift Aided donations and other donations eligible for the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme made in 2019. Donations given in 2020 (plus shortfall of £89 from 2018/2019 claims) will bring an anticipated £2,787 tax rebate in next year's accounts.

**2020 Payments** - lower than in previous years, totalled £16,415

The Largest expenditure was £9,284 for the Parish Share of DBF Bath & Wells, for enabling and supporting the local ministry. The second largest expenditure was £1,641 for annual Ecclesiastical church insurance.

No major building costs were incurred in 2020.

A reduction in church activities throughout the year resulted in lower electricity costs and reduced clergy expenses.

Fewer commercial grass cuts were required in 2020.

The benefice Youth Worker salary was paid by the government's national furlough scheme this year, therefore financial contribution from PCCs were not required.

During 2020 Staple PCC donated £400 of funds to charitable giving, including payments to The Royal British Legion, The Open Door and YOU Trust - Women's Aid.

The PCC continues to repay the Diocesan Board of Finance loan taken out in 2014. Interest payments of £49 paid in 2020 plus £1,000 capital repaid annually. £4,000 remains outstanding.

During 2020 Receipts exceeded Payments by £2,945

**Mary Bell**

(if you would like the full church accounts for 2020 the churchwardens can supply them)