



St Philip's Kelsall

A Celebration of Church Life 2020 – 2021

Reports prepared for the
2021 Annual Parochial Church Meeting
To be held on Sunday
9 May 2021 at 11.00am

Electoral Officer's report

It will be remembered that at the start of the year, the new roll which had to be completed every 6 years, was well down on the old roll. The two main reasons for the drop were: -

Regular and irregular worshippers who were tardy filling in the enrolment forms
Non-attendees who had not re-enrolled.

I would normally start chasing people that should be on the roll in the months leading up to year end. However, this year it was not possible with the closing of the church, because of lockdown. I solved the problem by writing personal letters to eighteen people. Thirteen people replied with completed forms. There were explanations for the missing five.

During the year unfortunately two people on the roll died i.e., Reverend Susan's husband Allan Banks and Elizabeth Wye, one of our Readers.

Our Roll now stands at 116. I am conscious that we may be missing some people who attend church. When we start having normal services again. I will try to identify them and offer them the opportunity to be on the church electoral roll.

Dr Cliff Nixey

Electoral Roll Officer

Church Wardens' report

I want to begin my report by thanking Geoff Roberts for his help and support. He had planned to stand down from his role in April but due to COVID the Archdeacons visitation did not take place until November 2020 which meant that Geoff continued until this time. The visitation service which I attended was on Zoom with over 200 participants.

The church building was closed due the modernisation project from the start of the reporting year and remained closed until work was completed and all effects came back from storage in September 2020. COVID dictated our church service plans. Risk assessments were completed, social distancing rules followed, signs made, and sanitising products ordered to allow us to hold the first service on 4th October 2020 which was Reverend Karen's first service after her ordination. Thanks goes to sides persons for their help in the safe organisation of all services from then to the end of 2020.

Safety has been the main priority for church wardens, making sure that people entering the church building reported their presence to allow the correct time gaps in-between visits. A booking system was put in place so that correct seating plans could be made, and contact details kept within Government guidelines. Although rotas were set up for cleaning and brass cleaning, they were not put into operation due to COVID restrictions until the end of March 21. My thanks go to people who have volunteered for many years but have now decided to step down. Thanks to new people who have come forward to join our team of volunteers. The A Team have managed throughout most of the year to maintain their high standards in the church yard' but work did have to stop during the first lockdown and again at the start of 2021. Thanks goes to the A Team and to Ted Wilkinson who stood down after many years of devoted service. Health and safety checks have continued and my thanks to Mike Meaney for his involvement with this, checking the fire alarms weekly and checking the boiler and oil requirements. Mike pointed out a problem with the radiators in December which was quickly rectified. In January the fire hydrants were all tested and replaced as required. The church yard has been checked for safety of grave memorial stones. Two dead trees were removed during the reporting period. The closing of the church yard to new burials was finalised within this period and the appropriate notices were displayed. The organ which had been safely covered over during the modernisation work was serviced and retuned. The chancel floor in its improved state needed to be professionally cleaned but due to the cold damp weather in late 2020 this was put on hold and will be carried in warmer weather. In January a leak in the vestry came to light when we were having particularly bad weather. During the time of writing this report the work is being carried out to repair the roof. It is acknowledged that the vestry is in poor condition. The ceiling is needing attention and there are signs of damp in the walls. In February during very cold weather the pipe to the outside tap burst. This was very quickly repaired and new lagging put in place. The church

lounge has been unused since March 2020 and is storing many of the new chairs which will eventually go into the church building. There has been a repair to the lounge roof, four tiles have been replaced.

This has been a challenging year and my thanks goes to all the church members for their support and offers of help. For thinking about safety first and keeping me informed when going into the building and reporting any issues.

Jane Pearson

Church Warden

PCC Secretary's report

Since the start of our church year due to the Corona Virus pandemic no face-to-face PCCs could take place; however, we were able to continue holding regular PCC and Standing Committee meetings remotely via Jit-si or Zoom. Our APCM in October also had to take place remotely. It was encouraging and helpful to welcome representatives from Kelsall Methodist Church at most PCC meetings. It is hoped that it will not be too long before we are able to conduct PCC meetings face-to-face but in the meantime technology has ably enabled the PCC to continue its role in governing our church.

Andrea Edwards

Mission Partnership

St Philip's APCM Report for 2020

In 2020, we continued to support a limited number of mission partners with prayer, with personal contact where feasible, and with funding. St Philip's gives 10% of its offertory income plus associated gift aid each year to organisations, or individuals, approved by the PCC on recommendations from a small group, most of whom are 'champions' (main contacts) with our partners. We try to maintain a relationship, and to learn from, and be changed by, them as well as giving realistic funding amounts. In 2020 we continued to support:-



Through **CMS (Nepal), Andrew & Andrea Young**, an experienced couple who in normal times support many front-line Christian missionaries; and lead services; and who have created, in a room below their flat, a space for

individuals for prayer, quiet study, Bible study and in so doing have created a Christian community growing in number and spirituality. Since March 2020 they have been 'marooned' in the UK awaiting the lifting of travel restrictions and work permits before returning. Meanwhile they have continued some of their work on-line.



Through **MAF** we support pilot **Israel Neale and his family, Charlene and Miles**, who are stationed in **Papua New Guinea**, a dispersed

country of many remote communities for which an aircraft link is a literal lifeline. Israel became familiar with the often hazardous flying conditions, whilst the family settled in local routine. The work of MAF has been restricted largely to emergencies, in order to minimise the risk of the aeroplanes or passengers becoming the spreader of virus to otherwise isolated communities.



Through **Compassion UK**, we support 11-year-old **Anik Das** in Bangladesh with relatively small amounts of money. The children's group have over the years been

communicating with them. The pandemic has restricted the work of Compassion's operating partner organisation, but Anik continues to get direct support through the local Methodist mission school.



Open Doors is a well-known international organisation which supports persecuted Christians and refugees, with encouraging contact, Bibles, and essential supplies. During the pandemic this has extended to the supply of food and hand washing materials. Open Doors also performs an advocacy role on behalf of persecuted Christians at UK Government level.



Save the Family at Cotton Edmonds, continues to provide a safe haven for families at risk, and somewhere where parents are helped to develop life skills and the abilities to resume their lives in wider society. Activities during Covid have been curtailed but continued with fewer volunteers and families.



CSCW provides Christian education in Chester area schools by visiting and leading assemblies, and also by the provision of material to help young people face the challenges of adolescence. During the pandemic, CSCW has had to find ways of reaching young people on-line and needed to develop new materials. They have, obviously, missed personal contact but report that they have connected with more young people than before.



We newly sent funds to **Tearfund**, specifically the Covid-19 appeal. Nearly 2m people have been directly supported through the provision of hand-washing stations, supply of soap and sanitiser products, and cash vouchers provided for struggling families. 10 million people are reached through radio contact – important because Tearfund is trusted more than politicians in dissemination of information about Covid-19.

We gave in 2020 small contributions (£100/150) to Save the Family, Children's Society and Christian Aid because we had no church services at which, in a normal year, collections would be made for them.

John Diggle 31/3/21

A Team

Throughout this last year, when permitted, the A-team has continued to maintain the Churchyard and some aspects of the Church building. In normal times five of us (Ron, Mike, Geoff L, Tony and Dave with occasional help from Geoff R and Roger) meet to mow, strim and do any other jobs that are needed. Mike does the weekly checks of the Fire alarm, the Central Heating system and oil level. We were very fortunate that it was dry during the first lockdown as the grass grew more slowly and was not too difficult to cut when we were allowed back in. A big job in the year is the cutting of the hedges which is done over a number of weeks. Ron ably assisted by Geoff L ferried many large bags of trimmings to the tip. This year we started to clear the debris, brambles and weeds from behind the lounge. We also had a big clear out of the shed giving us more room for storing the mowers. We helped with the removal and re-instatement of some of the Church wall furnishings before and after the modernisation. The machinery we use has been showing its age and in due course some of it stopped working altogether. Thanks to Ron for organising the purchase of our new mower and strimmer and a new head for the other strimmer. Thanks also go to Ted Wilkinson who is still there behind the scenes helping us maintain the machines.

Dave Shakspeare

Deanery Synod

Due to the pandemic, Deanery Synod meetings had to be suspended from March 2020, and resumed using Zoom in December 2020. Two meetings were held on 1st December 2020 and February 9th 2021, chaired by the Rural Dean Revd. Hennie Johnston.

The December meeting was the first since every parish's APCM, so there were several new representatives present. The re-election of the existing standing committee and Lay Chair Dr Alan Downen (St John's, Ashton) took place. Dr Downen gave a wide-ranging and informative presentation entitled 'What is the Purpose of the Deanery Synod', but no proposals made for further action at this time were made. Revd. Hennie Johnston concluded the meeting by referring everyone to the CofE report and resources 'Living in Love and Faith', which will become a topic for discussion at Deanery Synod and PCC's in the next 18 months.

The February meeting was largely a farewell event for Bishop Keith (the farewell service from Chester Cathedral on March 7th at 3pm was live streamed). Bishop Keith spoke of his move to Openshaw in South Manchester. He will be doing some work with the Church of England Evangelical Council and also as an Assistant Bishop in the Manchester Diocese.

Kath Roberts and John Diggle

Junior Church

What a difficult year it has been for everyone. We have not been able to worship in church and therefore there has been no Junior Church. To keep in touch with all the children I have produced and distributed 32 packs for Harvest and Remembrance Sunday, Christmas and an Easter/Mother's Day pack plus an Easter egg for each child. Each pack contained a story, 2 or 3 different crafts, activities and colouring sheets. From the response we have had they have been really enjoyed. The children (and parents) also produced two zoom links, one at Christmas and the other for Mothers' Day. It was lovely to see them all and see how much they have grown. Hopefully we will be able to meet again in church soon. We have missed them all and it will be lovely to see their smiling faces again. Take care.

Angela Harrop

Whatever Group

At the start of 2020, "Whatever?", our group for young people of 11 years and up, continued to meet during 10.30 am Sunday services in school term time (excluding Family/All-age service weeks), in the Prayer Room at KMC. We continue to base meetings on the *Roots* material, which ties in with the lectionary, and always provides a wide selection of ideas of how to bring the teachings of the bible passages alive for our group. Cake features heavily in all our sessions(!) with activities ranging from discussion, music, role play and games to walks, artwork, prayer and video. The group typically ranges in size from 3 to 7 attendees.

Then COVID-19 struck and due to Daniel and I being Zoomed-out at work and our young people having a similar online and screen overload experience at school, we opted not to move sessions online and so we haven't met over the past 12 months. However, as lockdown eases, we are looking to the future. Reverend Susan and I had a really useful meeting with the Diocesan Mission lead for Youth, Jonathan Masters, in mid-March and he made some great suggestions about getting started again when we can, pointing us to a number of useful resources and courses too. Easter cards, village trails and eggs were delivered to existing and potential future members of the Whatever group outlining our plans to meet a couple of times for outdoor activities in June/July and expressing our hope that we can resume meetings during the Sunday morning services from September 2021.

If you know of young people who may be interested in joining us – and it does not need to be a commitment to come every week – do let me have contact details so I can be in touch or feel free to pass on mine (marydawson26@hotmail.com; 07866 231617). We run a What's App group to keep in touch with our group and their parents so it's very easy for us to add new people.

As you may be aware, Keren and Paul Coney and family have decided to worship at Audacious church in Chester for the foreseeable future, that church community being currently more appropriate to meet the needs of their teenage children. Paul and Keren have served alongside us as *Whatever?* group leaders for more than 10 years now, so I would like to take this opportunity to offer them a huge thank you on behalf of the Kelsall church community and all the young people

they've encouraged and entertained over the years. We will miss you all terribly, but of course wish you every happiness on the next steps of your own faith journey at Audacious.

Daniel and I are happy to continue as *Whatever?* group leaders, running the group on a Sunday morning from September as often as we can. If there are others out there who would be interested in becoming a leader with this amazing group of young people do get in touch and we'll be happy to tell you what's involved. The preparation time each week is not extensive as the *Roots* material we use is an inspiring resource of multiple ideas.

Mary Gaskarth

Youth Club

The trajectory of the Youth Club has been a similar one during the uncertainty of the past 18 months. To March 2020, they continued to meet at 7.30pm on Friday evenings approximately every 3 weeks in the Community Centre. The group consists mainly of young people from Years 7 and 8 although there are a number of regulars from older years and numbers can be anything from 10 upwards (depending on what else is going on Youth Club nights!) The format is free time for the young people to catch up, chat and use of the games' equipment (table football, badminton, snooker, indoor curling etc), an activity and a tuck shop. Bethany Spray, who is the group's co-ordinator, tells me that early last year activities tended to be wide games and quizzes due to it being a particularly energetic group.

Youth Club has not been able to meet during the past 12 months for obvious reasons but looking to the future hope to be able to start up again in September 2021, if lockdown restrictions are lifted as anticipated. So, if you know of young people currently in Years 6 and 7 who won't yet have had the opportunity to take part do watch this space for further news.

A huge thank you to all those who contributed to making Youth Club a reality up to lockdown – particularly Bethany Spray, but also Keren Coney, Lorna Hunt and Paul Weaver. Again, more leaders and helpers always needed and welcome so do let us know if you can help – even if it's only on occasion. Here's to 2021 and beyond being a more live and active one for youth activities in Kelsall.

Mary Gaskarth

Duke of Edinburgh

As well as going on Expeditions, the young people who participate in the D of E Award Scheme have to complete several months of volunteering, plus take part regularly in a Physical activity and learn and develop a new Skill. They are 'assessed' for each section, which has to be passed in order to succeed! Many of these 'activities' have had to change this last year, eg. to 'jogging' (instead of a team sport) or 'keep fit with the neighbours' and 'online' Instrumental lessons etc. This means that some of these sections have been able to continue.

However, this current year has had its obstacles! We managed to train our 21 new Bronzes from the start of January to mid-March 2020, but then had to stop meeting due to 'lock-down' and all expeditions for Bronze and Silver last summer had to be cancelled.

We resumed some training on Kelsall green in September, with tents and stove practice, and a 'socially distanced' indoor session on map-reading and 'expedition menus' at the Community Centre but were unable to take them away for their Expedition experience.

However, we did get permission for a Gold 'Assessed' Expedition in Derbyshire in August 2020. The 5 participants had a very successful four days which was 'enjoyed' with mixed weather and a quite challenging route. It was fabulous to be able to do it!

This January, we have started another group of 15 new Bronzes with 'training' meetings so far being held on 'Zoom' and a local walking route set for them to try out in family groups.

We are hoping to re-start group walks and weekend expeditions from June 2021, guidance permitting. It has been a strange time for all!

Thanks, of course, to Peter Moore who set up 'Kelsall D of E' back in Autumn 2008 and to all the leadership-team and thank-you for the ongoing support from St Philip's which is very much appreciated.

Elaine Shakspeare

Fundraising

Unfortunately, 2021 was a rather quiet year on the fundraising front. We started the year with a total raised of £197,000 and we end the year at £202,000. The small increase is thanks to donations continuing to come in, including continued sponsorship for chairs, and gift aid on said donations. There was a new Christmas card design for 2021, thanks to the donation of a very unusual and beautiful photograph by Barry Mills, which, along with sales of some of last year's cards, raised £243. The £197,000 raised during 2020 included a number of promises of grants to be awarded once work was begun or completed (depending on the terms of the individual grants). These grant payments have now all been received.

We have an outstanding balance of £4,000 to raise. Given that we are starting to see a relaxation of the lockdown rules and a slow return to some sort of 'normal' we are starting to plan some new fundraising events for later this year and hope to be able to reinstate the postponed events from 2020 in the first half of 2022.

Sue Clifton.

Choir and Music Group

Sadly, the music at St Philip's has been difficult this year. Most of us didn't know what Zoom was before March 2020. It would have been inconceivable before then for most of us that there might be circumstances in which congregational singing would not be permitted, and that even choir singing would be so restricted, when allowed. And, that this would continue for over a year! Singing and music and the social aspects of choir rehearsals and congregational singing are so important to many to maintain mental health quite apart from enhancing worship.

Martin and Jill kept in touch with the choir on Zoom from June through to December 2020. For a brief time between St Philip's reopening in mid-October through to the end of December the choir were very pleased to sing, socially-distance, in the newly renovated chancel, in a group of 3. The regular singers all contributed, taking their turn on a rota. Martin prepared the choir, on Zoom and face to face, for two sessions of the Carol Service led by Revd Karen, with the choir of 6/7 doing all the singing and all readings to limit movement around the church. It was extremely sad and no doubt frustrating that the congregation could not join in the singing for this time when the church was open. On the plus side the choir were told that it was good to practice singing at a distance from one another, developing the ability to listen more acutely to each other.

The choir also did an evening of Carol singing around the village which was appreciated by those who heard them. In 2021 through the third lockdown, Martin, Jill and Elaine contributed to the music for the Zoom services, however, Zoom has its limitations for music. We await news on exactly how we will return safely to "normal" singing in church, and whenever that is, we will never again take singing and playing for granted. We hope for a very different report for the coming year.

Jill and Martin.

GROWTH GROUPS

Number Ten Homegroup (former Beckett's Croft)

A new house group, 'number ten homegroup', was formed during late 2020, to meet on-line for the time being. The group is new, comprising 13 people, some of whom were formerly in the former 'Vicarage' and 'Becketts Croft' groups, with some others joining from both churches. In January 2021 we began a 5-part study of Ruth in some detail. Conversations were enabled through the use of

Zoom in plenary, and also in breakout groups of 3 or 4 'screens' which allowed freer chat and discussion – and humour.

We continue after Easter with an in-depth study of 1 Peter. Anyone/everyone is welcome to join because with this format on-line we can operate with a larger group. We meet for about 60 -70 minutes on a Monday evening.

John Diggle

No.1 Ladies

Whilst we haven't been able to meet or study together, we have continued to keep in touch via our WhatsApp group, emails, and for some a walk and talk. Zoom meetings have become the norm for many of us, but a number of our group are working, and so evening screen time is not something that I have encouraged too often. In January we began a fortnightly zoom chat and a few also enjoyed joining in with the Lent Evening Prayer sessions. If all goes to plan, the road map suggests that we may be able to meet up again in the summer.....but we will wait to see what actually happens, and plan accordingly. When we do return to meeting again in each other's homes, we will pick up on the study that we started back before lockdown on 'Twelve Women of the Bible'. Until then we continue to pray and support each other in every way we can.

Andrea Gray

Former Vicarage

This has now disbanded, and several members have joined Number Ten's online homegroup run by John Diggle.

Heather Leather

Church Bank

The group met for a while by Skype during 'Lockdown 1', studying the book 'God's Big Picture' by Vaughan Roberts, and taking part in an online course from the Bible Society – 'The Bible Course'. The Group hasn't met since summer 2020, several different options for meeting in a socially distanced way (such as Prayer Walking) were discussed but did not come to fruition due to the resurgence of the pandemic in autumn 2020.

Kath Roberts

Care Group

It has been a strange year. Although we have had no meetings, as a group we have tried to stay in contact with as many people as possible by telephone and we have provided meals for a new mum and a couple of people who have been in hospital.

I am grateful to Val who continues to send all the bereavement and bereavement anniversary cards and to everyone who shows concern and Jesus's love to friends and neighbours. Thank you for everything that has been done during this very difficult time.

Norma Nixey

Communication and Outreach Group report

Formal outreach activities (such as welcoming newcomers to the village, in which a small team visit with a copy of the Parish News, Welcome leaflet and a lavender plant gift) had to be suspended because of the pandemic. However, the restrictions caused a change in how we communicated. One key change was an increase in the use of email to church members, initially for conveying the weekly notice sheet, but also other documents and notices. As comprehensive a list as possible was put together (observing GDPR protocols) of people willing to accept communications by email. The bi-monthly Parish News (see separate report) continued to be collated and was published on-line on the website as before. It was also sent to the entire email population. On-line publishing enabled the use of colour and more pages, with a substantial cost saving. The weekly notice sheet

was much expanded, primarily to include a Reflection every week, and prayers, and links to other church and related websites; in addition to weekly 'news'. It is assembled by a small ecumenical team; and results in a substantial saving of paper required for the traditional notice sheets (but fails to reach people without computers; or those who decline to receive it). The Facebook page was updated daily with both Anglican and Methodist content, and with the weekly notice sheet, is "branded" as Churches Together. During first lockdown, the churches played a role in assisting the set-up of the Kelsall Foodbank, and with identifying persons/families in need and delivering to them; and were available as contacts if assistance was needed by anyone in the village (parishioners). An informal network has grown of individuals periodically keeping contact by telephone with elderly, single or more vulnerable parishioners. Post lockdown, there is much to be decided about how the two churches together communicate using e-mail, the website, Parish News, Facebook, and social media – in addition to proactive initiatives to reach out to the village.

John Diggle and Kath Roberts

Church Flowers

Owing to the works happening in St Philip's and the prolonged lockdowns, we have not needed the usual rota for Altar Flowers. However, the flower team did manage to decorate the Church for Christmas and received a generous donation towards the cost of the flowers and plants, thank you. We shall do the same for Easter, hopefully, after which I look forward to renewing the rota to provide fresh flowers each week to adorn the new space.

Mary Diggle

Parish News

As in previous years, six issues of the Parish News were published annually. In early 2020, once the pandemic hit, it was decided not to produce printed copies to ensure the safety of the distributors and recipients, but to rely on the online version on the church website at the following link <http://www.kelsallparishchurch.org.uk/styled-22/index.html> The format enables you to turn the pages with a click of the mouse, making it much easier to read online. Thank you to anyone who has thoughtfully printed out copies for people who don't have the internet access.

Grateful thanks are due to all who make contributions. We are indebted to Jane Pearson who deals with advertisers for us and to Chris Spray for uploading to the website and village Facebook pages. We have enjoyed reading Revd. Susan's Vicar's letters and also John Diggle provides regular Mission Partnership updates. We've also heard from members of the church community on what they have been doing during the lockdowns and have popped in winter and spring photographs from around our village.

If you know of anyone who would like to advertise in the Parish News please contact Jane or myself for the costs and please could items including dates to go in the diary be emailed direct to the editors at kroberts18@talktalk.net. When the pandemic is over, and we are back to producing printed copies again, and if you know of any houses that have had new occupants, please take a Parish News (for free) from church and pop it through the door (or even better, call in and introduce St Philip's to them!).

Kath and Geoff Roberts

news@kelsallparishchurch.org.uk

01829 752209

Walking Group

Due to Covid19 problems and restrictions no walks were held in 2020. The walkers' weekend in Dovedale was also cancelled because of this, and again this year's (2021) away weekend will not take place. It is hoped that walks may recommence in May or June depending on the Covid situation.

Brian Rischmiller

Safeguarding Report

TRAINING

Although church activities have been suspended now for over a year, we are constantly keeping abreast of any new training requirements our volunteers need. Whilst we begin cautiously thinking and planning on which of our children's/young peoples and adult activities may open up again over the coming months, it is too soon for some to make any commitment to their previous roles. Those who have confirmed that they intend to continue as volunteers are now in the process of completing up to date training certificates.

As and when we begin to look at new activities, we will address the training requirements needed. All the packages are currently on-line and can be completed in a volunteer's own time, and over a period of time if necessary.

DBS

Again, there are a few volunteers who will need to apply for new DBS certificates this year if they continue in role and we are in the process of sorting this out.

NEWSLETTER

In January 2020 we launched our first parish newsletter and I said in my previous report that I hoped to continue this on an annual, or possibly bi-annual basis.

Obviously there has been little information to share over the past year so this is currently on hold, but I am hopeful we can produce another copy in the near future.

PCR2 – Past Case Review

This has now been completed on behalf of the Parish by Revd. Susan, Andrea Edwards and myself. We can report that there were no historic issues recorded.

The Church and the Community

As said above, we are now cautiously taking steps to prepare for some of our activities to open up again over the coming months. With a new 'space' available to us we are also looking at how this may be used in the future by ourselves, and also by the community.

What we must be aware of, and be vigilant about, is that safeguarding is a priority when considering all activity that takes place under the umbrella of St Philips, and or within its buildings.

Chester Diocese continue to take the responsibilities of safeguarding very seriously, and this cascades down to each and every parish.

Andrea Gray

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Church Modernisation

Work on the modernisation project was originally planned to start in January 2020, but the main contractor delayed this until 24th February 2020. Work was then interrupted by the first national lockdown for Covid-19 and our main contractors being withdrawn from site on 22nd March. They returned to site on 11th May but were restricted in the work they could do as the subcontractors and supply depots did not open until later.

Most of the work for the main contract was completed by September and the completion certificate issued on 25th September. After this, items in storage were retrieved and new chairs delivered. The new audio-visual system was fitted in December after a delay, in obtaining equipment from Germany. By this time the country was in another lockdown and commissioning on the new system was not done until March 2021.

The church was closed from the beginning of January to remove all furnishings etc. and prepare for the contractors. During this time services were shared with the local Methodist church in their building. As a result, the church was closed from January through till 4th October when a first service of morning worship was held. This was a service held in accordance with Church of England Covid guidelines and Covid-19 restrictions meaning that only a very limited number of people were able to attend, with seating well-spaced out. Similar services continued until December after which the

church was again closed because of COVID-19 restrictions and the large number of elderly and vulnerable people in the congregation.

Therefore, although all the work for the project has now been completed, we have not had the opportunity to benefit from the changes. These will come later when the restrictions are lifted. However, we have had many complementary remarks on the new layout, the new floor and chairs and the new liturgical furniture, some of which was not delivered until after Christmas.

No serious unforeseen problems were encountered during the modernisation work, but we were surprised by the poor state of the old wooden floor supports when the flooring was lifted. These had suffered from serious damp and wet rot on the north side of the nave and all the joists had to be replaced and a new damp proof layer installed. The wooden floor now sits on new joists with insulation material between them, as opposed to a large air space above earth as before. This alone should make the church building feel much warmer.

Brian Rischmiller

Ecumenical Minister's Report

It seems only a short time since we had our last APCM delayed to October 2020; this year we return to the more traditional time of spring to look back on the past year. The ongoing pandemic has yet again dominated most of what we have been able to accomplish in terms of services, events and activities as can be seen in the preceding reports. However, our use of technology has meant that even when unable to meet in person we have used platforms online including Zoom and Jit.si for both worship, meetings and fellowship.

Our zoom worship began in November 2020 initially for a few weeks and then continued from January 2021 through to the present time. It soon proved to be a great asset in uniting both churches together in ecumenical worship week by week while our buildings have been closed. An online Advent course together with Lent prayer, Holy week and Easter services were also well received by everyone. A particular highlight was the Mothering Sunday service with contributions from young people and families together with a thanksgiving for Emily Bunting.

The majority of Advent and Christmas 2020 services were held in church and my thanks to both Martin and Jill for organising the choir to sing at two carol services as well as providing music and hymns both on Zoom and as we returned to church on Easter Sunday.

As restrictions ease and our buildings reopen there will be an increase in services times to offer more opportunities to worship in church whilst complying with all post Covid risk assessments. My thanks to Jane Pearson as Churchwarden for all her help in organising service administration, access into church plus the many other tasks that she has taken on in the past year. We shall hopefully be able to appoint two churchwardens this year to share the load.

Of course, leadership is not mine alone and I have been grateful for the many people who keep the church running throughout the year. Thanks as well to Reader John Diggle and Curate Revd Karen Andrews who have often taken on tasks at short notice in order to facilitate not only worship but outreach and mission in our community. Revd Karen was priested in October 2020 and it was very moving to stand beside Karen in the Cathedral and for her to subsequently preside at Holy Communion in St Philips. I have appreciated Karen's support and friendship as well as sharing in services together over the past year. We will all miss her greatly as she has taken up interim leadership at a benefice in Malpas Deanery from Easter for a period of temporary secondment. Looking to the future, the newly refurbished and modernised space at St Philips allows us to consider worship, outreach and mission in the context of our covenant relationship with Kelsall Methodist Church. Our partnership enabling group has met frequently and we continue to discuss

how we can offer our buildings to resource and restart activities as well as seeking new opportunities to serve the community together.

The impact of Covid has changed many people's views and aspirations, so there are still challenges ahead, and probably always will be if we are to be a church that is relevant in our ever-changing world. I have always been greatly encouraged by the last lines of the hymn "Be thou my vision"...

Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

These words assure us that we are given strength through the Holy Spirit to serve our community in prayer and loving service, as we honour our commitment of "Connecting our community with God".

With every blessing,

Revd Susan J Banks