



St James Bulkington

“A Church of the Community for the Community”

**St James Church Bulkington
Nuneaton Deanery, Diocese of Coventry**

**Annual Report of the Parochial Church
Council for the year ended 31st December
2020**

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Membership of St James PCC 2020-21

Rev Charles Higgins

Incumbent

Ken Sleeman

Lay Reader

Sue Turner

Lay Reader/Church Warden

Rachel Partridge

Church Warden

Iris Duggan

Deanery Synod – Representative

Vicky Buckley

Deanery Synod – Representative

Laity

Ian Corden

John May

Graham Nuttall

Sybil Randle

Rachel Partridge

Chris Catlin

Treasurer

Rachel Cooper

Co-opted

May Davis

Secretary

Vicar's Welcome

A very warm welcome to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) for this year. During this meeting we will look back on 2020, look forward to 2022, as well as fulfilling our legal duties to this parish that has been entrusted to our care.

Our meeting this year will focus on the question **“How do we tell the story of 2020?”** What follows is a number of answers to that question from many parts of the Church community and wider parish.

As I read through these reports, there is undoubtedly evidence of the pain that the pandemic has caused – 2020 has been a year totally unexpected and wide-reaching in its impact on our lives. At the same time, I am also profoundly moved by the creativity and determination on show here from everyone at St James who have found new and innovative ways to be a valued part of the Bulkington community and to keep on meeting together. Whether it is the Café Church team putting together video services to the Bell ringers continuing to meet, and everything in between. I shall present a fuller spoken report to the Annual Meeting on 23rd May 2021, which will explore 2020 using three key words: **lament, celebrate, hope.**

For all the twists and turns of this past year, we have journeyed together, for which I am so grateful. I would like to thank Sue and Rachel, Ken, the PCC, and each and every member of St James who serve God, noticed and unnoticed. As ever, I am especially grateful to Vicky Buckley and May Davis for preparing the electoral roll, and to May for her tireless efforts drawing up the paperwork for the APCM and preparing this report.

With every blessing,

Charles

Churchwardens' Report

Being very new to the role of Churchwarden, I am finding everything a learning curve at the moment. Thankfully Sue is always on hand and still shouldering the majority of the responsibility.

Having my contact details on the website and access to the churchwardens' email were some of the first steps and this began to open up some of the queries to be dealt with which range from funerals, baptisms, graves, replacement certificates, bins, church services and food parcels to name but a few.

This last year has been a learning curve for us all and we have had to adapt the in-person worship to satisfy the Covid 19 guidelines which involved reviewing risk assessments and cleaning rotas etc. At times the only services we could hold have been online services and the safety of all the Church family has been paramount when making these decisions.

We have enjoyed trying out different types of worship, such as the Carol Service in the church grounds and involving the church in the community with The Wreath Festival, prayer walk and Easter Trail. We have opened the church for Bulkington Volunteers to pack and distribute their food parcels to help families in need across the village. We have delivered daffodils to some of the Church family for Mother's day and an Easter Message too.

Supporting Charles to enable his paternity leave to spend precious time welcoming baby Rowan and supporting Emma was important, and we were able to continue with the day to day running of the church without too many hiccups. The support of other clergy was welcomed in taking the services for us.

As someone who likes an instruction book, I find this role doesn't really come with one but I see the job of Churchwarden as supporting Charles and the church congregation, and sometimes liaising between the two.

The biggest benefit to this role is the massive amount of support we receive from everyone at St James and we would like to thank you all. It really is a team effort and everyone is willing to take a part. There is a small army of volunteers who work behind the scenes to keep the church going on both a day-to-day basis and long term. I am not going to list everyone for fear of missing someone out but please be aware that your support is very much appreciated. One thing is very clear: that without these people the church would struggle to function. So 'Go team St James!!!!' you are awesome!!

As we now begin to take the first tentative steps out of the pandemic restrictions it gives us an opportunity to not only welcome more people back into the church building but also to build on the online links we have made within Bulkington Community as a whole. Last but not least, we thank Charles for his tireless support and guidance.

Rachel Partridge (on behalf of wardens Rachel Partridge and Sue Turner)

Safeguarding Report

2020 brought many changes to our lives most notably the use of online training.

Some people have responded well being able to study when they wanted, as it suited but others have missed the face-to-face company of other 'trainees' learning and interacting with each other. It's safe to say that like so many other subjects taught online, some form of online training is here to stay. Every one who needed to complete their training has done so during the last year and now it's time for a refresher for those people who first completed their training 3 years ago. I shall be running a couple of update sessions and will contact those people to need to be updated as soon as restrictions are lifted. If any member of the congregation would like safeguarding training please let me know as everyone is encouraged to take part in protecting vulnerable people and safeguarding relates to all walks of life, not only

here at church. The online training is easy to access and follow and there's a certificate at the end of completed. During last year there were a few changes in personnel at diocesan level, with staff retiring and new people appointed, we haven't met any of them yet because of lockdown restrictions but the contact numbers are the same and the team can be reached through the cathedral website if necessary. Thankfully we have had no issues to report, I and the members of the PCC regularly update the parish safeguarding dashboard. If any member of the congregation ever has any concerns regarding safeguarding of any individual young or old please do not hesitate in contacting me, Charles or Rachel we are always ready to help.

Sue Turner
Safeguarding Officer

Choir and Organ

As in all previous years, I have written a report for this year. As one might imagine, it's a bit like the magician trying to pull a non-existent rabbit out of a hat! Owing to this dreadful pandemic, our activities have been seriously curtailed. Apart from the odd piece of music I have been allowed to play at services the very small choir we have has sung only once at a service (Midnight Mass Christmas Eve). The organ, a lovely instrument and vastly underused, has been tuned once this last year. All we can hope for is a better year to come so that our lives can be a lot brighter.

Audrey Watkins

Worship Band Report

An unprecedented year has presented the worship band with the challenge of being creative in order to enable us to continue, and to be an active part of the church during the pandemic.

We thank God for the innovations in technology that have allowed us to record different forms of worship songs that have been shared on the church website and social media, which have had an amazing reach across the Bulkington community. This has been in the form of recorded online Café Church services, a Christmas music video as a gift to the village of 'Comfort and Joy' and more recently, as part of the very popular Easter Trail.

It has been a joy to watch God work through this time where potential limitation has led to perhaps a greater interaction with the wider community. Certainly, amongst the social media community, our different services and posts have been received extremely positively and have reached the homes of hundreds of people we might not usually reach.

It was a pleasure to have been involved in a rare "in person" worship opportunity in singing carols in the churchyard in the advent season. Again, this was very warmly received by those present.

The challenge for us as we start to enter what is hopefully a post-lockdown future, is how to harness the positive engagement we have had within the Bulkington community as measures are eased to allow us to begin in person worship again.

I would like to personally thank all those who have been involved in the worship band efforts over the past year. Your willingness and commitment to our endeavours has enabled us to continue to make a positive contribution to the life of the church and as a result, the wider community.

Ian Corden

Café Church Report

Since lockdown in March 2020, the team has had to adapt their ways of delivering worship, learning new skills including casting, film production, editing and scripts. Collectively using pre-recorded video footage set up online through Youtube and on the church's social media we have delivered a whole year of services.

Using our lounges, kitchens and gardens the backgrounds of the worship videos have been varied. The delivery of the services has included hymns led by members of the Worship Band. Revs Charles and Emma have led the service and prayers and there have been opportunities for our church community to make crafts and even bake. Young people from our congregation have done the Bible readings and have felt confident to be part of the video.

Café Church families contributed to the Christmas Wreaths Festival – Comfort and Joy, our wreath theme was The Birth of Jesus. The Christingle Service, with the support of the churchwardens and congregation, went ahead. The Co-op very kindly donated oranges plus other items and Christingle Bags were made for the Bulkington community to collect and join the service online.

Even though the team has faced a different way of working combining creativity and 'a can do attitude' the Café Church monthly services have still been delivered and have been welcomed by our local community.

Teresa Bird

Sacristan's Report

From the Vicar:

The team is Mary Gordon, Rachel Partridge, Chris May, and Anita Anthony, at least one of whom is available at every Communion service. The sacristy team is one that works behind the scenes, but make a vital contribution to our worshipping life as we gather around the Lord's table week by week. The dedication of the whole team is a blessing to me and to the whole of St James and I'm sure they have our thanks as they continue to "set the table" and much more besides.

While the sacristan role over the last 12 months has been restricted due to Covid-19, the team were still active and take it in turns to fill the role at services.

Chris May

Ringling Master's Report 2020-21

Due to Covid-19 virus there has been no ringing at St. James this year. But some of the ringers have taken part in other activities. In normal times, after ringing some of the ringers would go to the Old Chequers for a social evening. We have tried to continue this activity.

Throughout the summer when people were allowed to meet in gardens, and the evenings were warm, we would meet in either Joy's or Gerald/ Sue's garden for a drink and a light supper kindly provided by Joy or Sue. We would also have some other activity such as Bowls, darts etc. When the evenings got cooler we changed to having zoom meeting with some easy quizzes. Now we have come out of 'lock down', and the evenings are lighter, we have just resumed our outdoor meetings. It was a real pleasure to meet people in the flesh once again. There has also been some alternative ringing activity. There is a computer programme called 'Ringing Room' which shows pictures of bell rope, which move in response to the appropriate keys being pressed. Some of us have joined in with a group of Coventry ringers to

keep up our expertise in ringing for when the ban is lifted on tower bell ringing. When weather and the virus has permitted some of us have learnt how to ring changes on handbells.

The Tower

During the year I noticed that one of the Pinnacles at the top of the tower was leaning and could have been dangerous. This has been investigated and a small part removed to make it safe. A builder has been to have a look and has recommended that the lead where the flagpole was fixed needed repairing. The bottom of the door at to top of the stairs needs to be repaired or the door replaced. The lead flashing on the roof of the stairs is leaking and needs repairing. The window on the west wall of the clock chamber has broken and is being held in place with an iron rod. The walkway round the top of the tower is covered in guano and in this day and age must be considered a health hazard. When people go to the top of the tower they trample this dirt down the stairs and into the ringing room and the church. It can also cause a problem with tower drainage.

Whilst the above inspection was carried out it was noted that the ringing chamber was in a filthy state with hundreds of dead flies in the window area. It was agreed that a small party be allowed to go into the tower and clear up the mess and inspect the area for other deteriorations. Chris, Sue, Bruno, and myself went into the tower and cleared the mess in the ringing room and the clock chamber. In the clock chamber I found there was a black deposit on a large area of the floor. I initially thought that this had come from the bell chamber above, but I could not find any leaks or other problems. We cleared up the mess and left further investigation for another day.

Restoration of the Bells

We were very disappointed that the PCC unanimously rejected our proposal to lower the bells in the tower and reduce the weight of the bells so that there is less strain on the tower and the bells will be a lot easier to ring. The reasons given for the rejection from an outsider's point of view did not seem to make much sense. Surely during the

lockdown there was far less activity in the church, and the PCC would not have been over loaded with other commitments. It is accepted that the church financial resources would be difficult at this time but the ringers were not expecting any financial assistance from the church. The Ringers have a considerable 'Memorial Fund' put aside especially for this project and Charities such as the Coventry Guild were not overly burdened because other projects were being held up due to the pandemic.

The Coventry Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers, at their AGM, expressed concern and disappointment at this decision as it was hoped this project would receive the main grant from their Bell Repair Fund for 2021.

When can we expect that the PCC will be able to reconsider the plan? I fear if it does not get started very soon I fear it will never get done.

Return to Ringing

Our permission to ring again is governed by The Church of England Authorities and the Central Council for Church Bell Ringers. The guidelines are: from May 17th:

We can ring in groups of six providing there is a 2m distancing between ringers, that there is outside ventilation to the tower, masks are worn, and lateral flow tests are completed twice a week.

Unfortunately we cannot meet the distancing and ventilation criteria at Bulkington, and I am not sure how many ringers would want to be self-testing each week. New guidelines should be available on June 21st.

Geoff Pratt

Men's Prayer Breakfast

Men's Prayer Breakfast had been gaining in strength with 8 members enjoying companionship and worship once a month. It's been a year since we last met and, hopefully, we will meet again in the not too distant future. We will all have to be happy to meet again and feel safe in doing so. It will need to be a joint decision from everyone involved, once we do start meeting again we will look to recruit others to join us in fellowship and prayer.

Brian Choules

Coffee Morning

From the vicar:

I am so grateful for the amazing dedication and leadership shown by Joy, Ginny and Pam, along with all the team who made coffee morning a highlight in our life together. Our hope is to bring coffee morning back in the near future.

St James CofE Academy Report

This year's report is driven by COVID-19 as has the whole of society during this period of time. The positives are that Charles and the Church have continued to support us by the use of prayers and online visits. We have shared the online services and the children have enjoyed seeing Charles from the doorways of their classrooms. Between the lockdowns we had managed to fit in two visits to Church following strict COVID rules – the children enjoyed this opportunity. We have also been blessed with the fact that the Church has worked closely with a very active group in our community called The Bulkington Volunteers. They have ensured that the families we nominated have received high quality food parcels which have included some lovely and greatly appreciated 'little extras.' Our children made personalised cards to go out with all of the Christmas packages, so

this was another way that the church, the community and the school entwined for the good.

The Year 3 children have finally be welcomed officially into our Church family as Charles has presented the Bibles that he secured from the Nicholas Chamberlaine Trust. During this visit he was 'interviewed' and asked questions about his job!

I am finishing my report with the same statement as last year as it is still so relevant. "I cannot wait for the normality to return so that we can continue to grow together and share many more positive experiences."

Jane Cook
Head Teacher

Gift Aid Secretary's Report

Income Tax reclaimed through Gift Aid, including repayment interest,for the year ended 5th April 2021 totalled £3756.50.

This includes £448.48 refunded through the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS).

This scheme allows us to claim a tax refund on small cash donations up to a total of £5000 per tax year.

Please note that the overall total above does not include any donations made through the new 'Parish Giving Scheme'.

To date there are 35 members of the congregation enrolled on our Gift Aid Scheme.

Vic Brindley

St James 100 Club

The 100 Club has proceeded during 2020, despite the difficulties that we have all experienced. Draws have taken place (socially distanced) and winners' names posted as usual on the porch notice board and in the weekly news sheets.

The committee is so grateful to all members for their continued support. The yearly donation made to St James is becoming increasingly valuable, as the church experiences difficulty in meeting its expenses with reduced congregations, caused by the pandemic restrictions.

We have vacant numbers now and new members are always welcome. Please speak to any member of the 100 Club Committee if you wish to join, or you know of any family member or friend who would like to participate.

100 Club Committee

From Deanery Synod...

Deanery Synod met three times in 2020, in February, June and November. The last two meetings were held on Zoom. This past year was the first of a new cohort elected to Deanery Synod. Over the past year synod has been an important way in which clergy and laity from around Nuneaton Deanery have been able to work together and regularly “check in” with one another to share together and care for one another during a difficult year. Synod meetings have looked at the impact of the pandemic on Church life and has been an important source of creative ideas and information on financial assistance for parishes, among other things. Our thanks as a parish go to our Synod representatives Iris Duggan and Vicky Buckley.

Rev Charles Higgins

Papers for today's meetings...

BULKINGTON PARISH CHURCH
ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
and
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

**ANNUAL MEETING OF The Vestry Meeting
To be held on Sunday 23rd May 2021 at 11:15 am**

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|----|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Apologies: |
| 2. | Election of two Churchwardens: |
| | |

Agenda for THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

To be held on Sunday 23rd May 2021 at 11:15 am

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|----|---|
| 1. | Apologies |
| 2. | Minutes of previous meeting 11/10/2020 |
| 3. | Matters arising |
| 4. | Vicar's Report |
| 5. | Reports of the Parochial Church Council, 5.1 A report of changes in the Electoral Roll 5.2 Annual report of the Proceedings of the PCC and the parish generally 5.3 The Financial Statements of the Council for the year ended 31 December 2020 5.4. A Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod. 5.5 A report on the fabric, goods, and ornaments of the Church 5.6 Reports of other committees and organisations – for information |
| 6. | Elections and Appointments 6.1 Laity to the Parochial Church Council for a term of 3 years 12-15 members req'd 6.2 Appointment of Deputy Churchwardens 6.3 Appointment of Independent Examiner |

| | |
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| | <p>The following sub-committees report to the PCC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finance Committee</i> • <i>Worship Committee</i> • <i>Church Buildings Development Committee</i> • <i>Pastoral Care Team</i> • <i>Neighbourhood Group</i> |
| 7 | Any other business |
| | |

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING

Held on Sunday 11th October 2020, in St James Church

Present:

Rev Charles Higgins - Chair

See attendance register – 26 parishioners attended.

1. Apologies

Barbara Mobbs

2. Appointment of Church Wardens:

Sue Turner and Rachel Partridge were nominated and seconded as churchwardens for the forthcoming year and were unanimously elected.

Rev Charles thanked Anne McCreath for the sterling service she had undertaken as Churchwarden during her time in office.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

**Held on Sunday 11th October 2020, in St James
Church**

Present:

Rev Charles Higgins - Chair

See attendance register – 26 parishioners attended.

1. Apologies

Barbara Mobbs

2. Minutes of meeting held on 14 04 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 04 2019 were unanimously accepted as a true record of proceedings.

3. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising

4. Vicar's Report

See attached

5. Reports of Parochial Church Council

5.2.

Annual report of the proceedings of the PCC – Minutes are available from each PCC meeting for parishioners to read. The electoral roll currently has 156 members.

5.3.

The audited Financial statements of the Council for the year ended December 2019 are available in the annual report booklet.

5.4.

Report of the Deanery Synod – this is included in the booklet.

5.5

Report of other committees and organisations – these are included in the booklet.

6.Elections and Appointments

6.1.

Laity to Parochial Church Council

Chris Catlin and Rachel Cooper were proposed and seconded.

Both nominees were unanimously elected.

May Davis will continue as secretary

Chris Catlin will continue as treasurer.

Rev Charles thanked the retiring members – Julian Gutteridge and Barbara Mobbs for their service to the PCC.

Kay and Michael Whitehead are also standing down after many years of valuable and unstinting support to St James Church and the PCC – they will be greatly missed but are continuing to serve on the Finance Subcommittee. Rev Charles thanked them for their invaluable contribution and was pleased to present them with a gift in appreciation.

6.2.

Appointment of Deanery Synod Reps: Vicky Buckley and Iris Duggan were proposed, seconded, and unanimously approved by those present.

6.3.

Appointment of Deputy Church Wardens:

John May and Chris Worley were proposed, seconded, and unanimously approved by those present.

Bishop Simmons was nominated by Anne McCreath, seconded by Sue Turner and unanimously approved to undertake this role.

Letter of thanks to Bishop Simmons - this work is undertaken free of charge.

6.4

Appointment of Independent Examiner:

Bishop Simmons was nominated, seconded and unanimously approved to undertake this role.

A letter of thanks has already been sent to Mr Simmons.

7.Any other business:

There was no other business.

The meeting closed by saying the Grace.

MD/12 10 2020

Finance Report

In what was a very different and indeed very difficult year it is encouraging to note that income was down only by 5%. With reduced running costs and by continually reviewing our overheads, expenses on the other hand were down by more than 50%.

An application for a reduction in the Parish Share of £51610 was agreed at an amount of £30,000. By the end of the year we were able to pay £34,600.

Chris Catlin, Treasurer