

REPORT TO PARISH ASSEMBLY FROM THE CHURCH WARDENS APRIL 2021

2020 was a difficult year for all of us, and a very sad year for many of us. When covid restrictions allowed, the Church was used for services on Sundays, for school services on Fridays in term time and for private prayer and reflection on Wednesday mornings. There were a few small weddings and, sadly, several funerals. Our twice weekly livestream services, on Sundays and Wednesdays, have proved really popular as people can watch them at home. When possible, we have continued to hold the monthly Little Ones Service for pre-school children and their carers, in the churchyard or broadcast online. There are many new babies currently in the Parish!

The church has also had an active team of volunteers throughout the Covid crisis, who have had their own lists of people to maintain telephone contact with, providing them with an opportunity to talk, or make other requests for more practical assistance.

We were, after some delay due to covid restrictions, able to complete the refurbishment and regilding of the clock faces and replacement of the oak louvres above. This work was funded by the Friends of St Mary Magdalene and a grant from the Parish Council. The comments received at the time from many people let it be known that this was a worthwhile and most welcome project.

Also, in 2020 we had the news that our vicar, the Reverend Paul Cudby, would be leaving our church after 14 years of service and moving to a bigger Parish in the Oxford Diocese. For the many people who have loved his ministry at weddings, baptisms, at our school services and other events in our church, through his sermons and his counselling, his leaving is a great sadness.

When a vicar retires or leaves the Parish for another post, it is usual for there to be an "interregnum" which normally lasts for a year or more. This is a period for the Parish to reflect on the direction in which its Church should move forward, the nature and extent of ministry and pastoral support it is likely to need and how to develop its outreach to the community in the years to come.

Together with the five members of our lay ministry team and with the Archdeacon we are striving to sustain and develop the richness of the ministry, through livestream services on Wednesdays and Sundays, and to develop the extent of our pastoral support. Three of our lay readers are licensed to officiate at funerals and, with the help of visiting priests, we are also holding monthly communion services in our church and arranging baptisms and weddings. There is a service in church for the school every week in term time. All services in church are subject to current covid restrictions, so classes take turns to attend the church, which is then livestreamed to each school classroom, so that all the pupils can watch the service and participate in it. Current information may be found on our church noticeboard, Facebook page and website.

We are moving ever closer to being ready to begin the construction work to transform the west end of the interior of our church building so that we can provide a range of opportunities for services, for musical events, and for community uses which are accessible to everyone. This may take place in the Autumn 2021.

Because the vicarage is currently empty, the Birmingham Church of England Diocese is proposing to let it on a short lease during the interregnum. All the rental income will go to the Diocese, not to our Church. Any letters to the Church during the interregnum should be posted or delivered by hand to one of us as Church Wardens.

If you have any problems or know someone who is in need of help, please do not hesitate to talk to us.

All good wishes Pat Saunders Tel. 01564 742406 and Phil Terry Tel. 01564 742049