

Vicar's Report for APCM 2021

Last year I wrote that we had been experiencing unprecedented consequences of the pandemic – little did we know that this year's report could echo the same sentiment, albeit a flicker of hope is shining through following the amazing vaccination programme and our venturing out, slowly and hopefully, surely into some semblance of communal life again.

Once again, that spirit of solidarity and communal caring and concern for one another, for St Peter's Church and for the way we can continue to be an outpouring of God's love through Christ in Wrecclesham, has played out in the way we have managed to keep going for another season – and so here we are, April 2021, with the promise of Easter-hope new beginnings and the promise of returning to some sort of familiar pattern of church life and life in general.

Last year I took on the mantle of writing as the Vicar and Churchwarden. This year I am delighted to have Rob Durrant now firmly placed in the role of Churchwarden, and I thank him for committing to serve the Lord – and St Peter's – in this way, and look forward to having Rob make his mark and to working with him. Thank you, Rob, for your personal 'critical friend' support thus far and for the way you are embracing what the job entails and finding your way to support us well...

I know we have recently held the back-dated APCM for 2020 which has spilled over into this reporting time, but I want to thank the PCC of 2019/2020 especially for stepping up during the churchwarden vacancy as we looked for ways to become smarter, more efficient and more effective at getting the day-to-day tasks done, and to have more people share the load. Thank you to Sally and Ian especially for creating a workable schedule to make that happen.

The livestream continues to be sustainable and flourishes – and this year particularly it has been lovely to see people who came to St Peter's via St Beale's now attending services at St Peter's. This is so inspiring and thank you to the front team of St Beale's – Roger, Paul and Teresa especially, for their meeting and greeting and for making people feel part of the St Peter's community wherever and however they are participating.

And thank you to Paul and the techy team who are pivotal in enabling us to be as slick as we can be with the resources we have – and to everyone who graciously accepts the ups and downs of livestreaming on a shoestring. I personally think we do a wonderful job – and once again the 'Wrecclesham-way' prevails! 😊

One of our recent highlights was when we hosted the Farnham World Day of Prayer Service in March – our ambassadors, Wendy Coxell and Roz Forsyth led the service beautifully and we have over 400 people look in on the service!

We are still finding online ways of expressing our church life – Zoom coffee, small groups and meetings. This year's Alpha Online was led by Lizzy Ambrose and Vanda Bolton, and was hugely nourishing in many ways. We find Alpha Online works really well on many levels. If you haven't tried Alpha, or only know the 'old version', then perhaps treat yourself to a 'spiritual make-over' and come to the next one in the Autumn, and explore and deepen your faith journey with a few laughs along the way!

Administrative and operational support remains an amazing blessing, and along with Chris, Sally and Naomi leading the way, and Sue for the Leverton Hall, others come along and fulfil their part as we quietly keep the show on the road. Since October there have been new additions to the Magazine team, for whom we are thankful, including Sue who has taken over the role ably fulfilled for many years by Harriet and Christopher, Jacqui Arthur who helps me in the commissioning of content, and Elizabeth Bagnall who produces the artwork for the covers – and very often her own work of art. The magazine, now printed externally, continues to be a welcome communication for many: continuing thank you to Editor Roger, Advertising Gerald Blues, delivery team led by June Paine and Beverley Fabian, and all who support the magazine by subscribing and contributing material.

Appreciation and thanksgiving are offered by us all to those who continue to faithfully serve year on year in what they do for our common church-life. I have attached an Appendix to reiterate the thank-you call I wrote last time. I would like to mention the following:

A huge thank you to Jack Crawford who recently stepped down from many years of faithful service in stewarding the 8am Holy Communion Service. This follows on from his 'gradual' retirement from being Christian Aid representative. We thank you for your incredible service and stoic commitment in these positions, and for your continuing service to the Isabella Schroder Trust as Chairman. Jack, you are a shining example as a servant of the Lord and community – thank you so much.

One thank-you I would also like to highlight is to Kathryn Beesley who stood down after six years' service on the PCC. I think our appreciation should be heartily noted and offered to Kathryn, who continues to be a special part of our worship and prayer life in helping to facilitate ways for us to engage with both spiritual practices.

Another thank-you is to Ian Lapworth. Ian has served for six years on the PCC and has chaired the Fabric and Finance Sub-committee admirably and super-efficiently, always going the extra mile. Along with Pat as Treasurer and the Fab and Fin team, he has kept that aspect of care running like clockwork. But that aside, Ian is also Stewardship secretary and, more especially, Ian has conscientiously been part of all the other 'behind-the-scenes' reflecting and thinking and praying – and action – that takes place before things happen 'on the ground' so to

speak. For my part, Ian has been such a huge font of wisdom and knowledge with regards to the fabric and liturgical side of things here at St Peter's, and also a personal guide, comforter, 'critical friend' and companion, as I have learned and developed in this role as Vicar and 'curer of souls' for Wrecclesham. Thank you so much Ian – you are a shining example of what it means to live out faith on the ground. Have a well-earned break and rest, and we trust that while you will be stepping back on a full-on practical level, we can still look forward to your spiritual and social presence as ever.

We have a few vacancies on the PCC to date, and we would encourage you to pray about whether you might be able to come on board and join our really friendly group, who meet bi-monthly to discuss and think about the more practical aspects of our church life, as well as seeking to get a sense of the spiritual direction the Holy Spirit is wanting us to travel in and how we might make that happen.

On a more personal level, I am also aware that this year has been incredibly difficult for some of us in terms of enduring serious illness, bereavement, and personal struggles.

From St Peter's, we were especially sad to say goodbye to dear Pat Fisher and George and Pat Colbran in 2020, and to lovely Sascha Lockett this year – we miss them and continue to pray for their peace and for comfort for their families.

I have been really moved by the way people have been praying for each other, looking out for each other, and quietly finding ways to support each other along this sometimes rocky road of life. We have a pastoral heart here at St Peter's, and thank you to all who quietly offer pastoral support to those who need an arm of friendship and compassion to help them along. Thank you to all who have extended that arm of friendship to me along the way – it has been really appreciated during this difficult time. Let us all continue to pray and look out for one another.

Going Forward:

It is hard to get a sense of the 'how' things will work out in these uncertain times, but in terms of 'what' will work out, we should take time to let things unfold and continue to pray for God to show us how we can best serve in the name of Jesus in our place in this time.

I encourage us all to pray for the life of St Peter's Church.

We have a huge task ahead to remain sustainable financially and this will underpin the ability to be a spiritual presence in our community in the way we know it. On that note, thank you to everyone who entered into the Stewardship Campaign in practical and prayerful expression. The financial support has helped ease the burden of the loss of income due to unforeseen circumstances and given us a little prop-up in terms of trying to meet our financial commitments. The Parish Share, as we know, is a tough one, but I continue to trust that God is the source and if we do our best, then the rest will follow. We trust and leave the outcome in God's hands – whatever that may be. But I do believe we can still, with commitment and effort, play a significant part in the way the future of St Peter's might shape-out. With this in mind, here are the main ideas for how a vision for flourishing might play out in this time ahead:

Vision wish-list

- To deepen and become consciously more prayerful about seeking God's will for St Peter's as a presence and place of witness of God's love – and how each and every one of us might be able to play a part in that
- To set up a Sunday afternoon Worship Service that will fulfil the spiritual needs of those seeking a more relaxed way of worship – to run alongside the Messy Church space
- To continue to pray about how we can offer spiritual nourishment to younger people – and to be given the resources to make that happen
- To set up a 'Friends of St Peter's' scheme, whereby people can support the upkeep of their village church building even if they would rather not support the spiritual work and life of the church itself.

Please pray into these longings and hopes – and if you have any ideas or thoughts about the life of our church, or ways in which the above might happen, then please do share them with me or with anyone. Every impulse, idea or vision is as important and worthy as the next – I hope to hear from you!

And to close – all I will say is that I believe we are truly doing our best. I also believe that our God is truly full of surprises and doesn't always show up in ways that we are expecting, so pray, do your best, and watch this space!

We pray:

Lord, help our St Peter's church and church family as we seek to be a sustainable presence in your name.

Guide us, inspire us, strengthen us and encourage us as we seek to honour your will for our parish.

Show us all that you would have us be so that we can continue to offer a warm welcome, faithful witness, and loving service in this place in this time.

We thank you for all the positive expressions of service that have been and are to come, and for all who walk in your light to make them happen.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Sustainer and Guide. Amen.

Appendix A - Thanksgiving list for APCM 2020/21

- Firstly, for everyone who prays for the wellbeing and flourishing of church and parish communities, and for everyone who continues to support St Peter's as a church building and church family at the centre of its community, seeking to bring hospitality, welcome and love to all.
- Rev Sandy Cavalier who blesses us continually with her steadfast, reverent and faithful ministry and prayers – and Sandy also acts as link for our charity partnership with Seeds for Development.
- Musical Director Brian Bailey and St Peter's Choir for upholding our choral tradition when we are able.
- Jonathan and Naomi for providing us with beautiful music along the way of lockdown and beyond – we have quite a wonderful repertoire of hymns thus far! Also to Alex Forsyth for lovely flute accompaniments.
- For Lizzy Hendry who faithfully signed for Clive Davis (who is sadly unable to attend regularly in these times) and for others who were in need of signing at other times.
- Members of the PCC for their wise and trusting stewardship of the church business.
- To Naomi Parkin-Tyrie, for all her hard work as PCC Secretary – and for her technical support (who gives Paul a run for his money! 😊)
- Pat and Ian Lapworth – for their incredibly efficient, faithful and steadfast commitment to the treasury and fabric business of St Peter's.
- Sally Woods as our diligent Safeguarding Officer, and Paul Smith and Sally for Health and Safety.
- Fabric and Finance Team – Ian, Philip, Steven, Mike, Jonathan, Pat, Sally.
- Members of the Worship and Spirituality group for pondering and planning of things worship, nurturing and spiritual, trying to find creative ways especially recently – Liz A, Vanda, Rob, Ian, Gerald Martin, Kathryn, Paul, Naomi, Brian Bailey.
- Social and Fundraising Team – Rob Durrant, Pat Lapworth, Wendy Coxell, Vanda Bolton and Andrew Jones – for working to find ways to fundraise and to offer social gatherings and fun along the way.
- Helen Adam and Tiffany Rabjohns-Smith for the start-up of Junior Church once again.
- Steven Knowles for 'St Peter's Tramps' rambling group.
- Messy Church Team – Jonathan, Shirley, Nicola and Sheila Covey, Liz Ambrose, Nicky Hill, Vanda Bolton, Kathryn Beesley, and Jacqui and Malcolm Arthur, and all who help at these gatherings of fun, faith and fellowship that build up a sense of community and belonging of locals to their parish church.
- Chris Wilkes for her huge admin support and encouragement – and to Frank for photocopying and stapling of our service and news sheets!
- Flower Guild – Chris Gray, Beryl Tate, Jill Yates, Jenny Emberson, Wendy Coxell – and new member Hazel Sharples – for the lovely flowers, festival and throughout the year.
- Sue Davies for, amongst numerous other things, leading the Baptism Team and looking after the bookings and users of Leverton Hall, and the administration for the Parish magazine.
- Grass-cutters and grounds people – Ian and Pat, Hugh, Sue and Tim Davies, Stuart Martin, Simon Rossiter, Rob Durrant, Neil Ambrose, Andrew Jones, Deborah Ling.
- Also, to Jim and Margaret Jeffery for their caretaking of the Memorial and surrounding grounds.
- Cleaning team – for all who are part of the brass team, Margaret Jeffery for linen, and all the busy 'church-mice' who help as and when, and for Beryl who takes care of Leverton Hall – we are really grateful.
- Deborah Ling – for coordinating the Foodbank Donations.
- Magazine team – Roger Jefferyes, June Paine and Beverley Fabian, and all the magazine deliverers and contributors – thank you for keeping this going month by month. And to Elizabeth Bagnall for cover art-work and to Jacqui Arthur for helping Jacqueline to commission articles.
- Magazine again – to Gerald Blues who deals with the magazine advertising, which is an onerous task and generates significant income.
- Gerald Martin and the team of faithful Stewards and Servers and Readers and Intercessors who continue to do a wonderful job for us all year round, and especially at this time for taking on-board new safety guidelines and entering into the spirit of keeping us all safe as we do what we can to find some sort of 'normality' in our Sunday services.

And more recently:

- Paul again for the way he stepped up and put St Peter's 'on the map' as an innovative livestream church, and how he has, along with Vanda, kept us all abreast of the latest opportunities online for worship and for local and wider information via our jam-packed Website.
- Sally Woods who continues to uphold our safeguarding and health and safety processes – and to the 'Opening Doors' team – Sally and Hugh, Chris Wilkes, Pat and Ian, Kathryn Beesley (who devised the Track and Trace procedure), and Sue Davies, who will, once again, be gradually and diligently welcoming groups back to Leverton Hall.
- The Techy Team – Liz Ambrose, Nicky Hill, Hugh Woods, Vanda Bolton and Steven Knowles with Roger and Paul on the side-lines – for making it possible to keep our online and church building worshipping communities connected Sunday by Sunday – and for Roger Jefferyes for online 'meeting and greeting', and Teresa Deeson and Roger for pre-testing for livestream services!

If I have missed anyone out from this list – you know that it wouldn't have been intentional – please let me know