



Annual Report for 2020

Vision Statement

Encountering God

Growing as Followers of Jesus

Participating in the Life of His Spirit

Prepared by the PCC and Coordinators

Fabian Wuyts

Vicar

8 March 2021

Registered Charity No: 1130757.

Full name of the charity: The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St. James, Taunton.

Short names: St James Church PCC; St James Church Taunton.

Address: St James Church Office, St James Street, Taunton, TA1 1JS.

This report covers calendar year 2020 and has been written to meet the requirements of the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practices (SORP FRS102).

Foreword by the Vicar

By the time you read the annual report, a year will have passed since the first lockdown took place and the reality of living through a pandemic hit us all. It is difficult to summarise all the emotions and struggles, the joys and pains, the gains and losses, the highs and lows of the past year. Maybe we should not try to summarise them too quickly, but learn to create space to hear, listen and learn from each other.

One of the questions that often comes to the fore in meetings that includes leaders is “what have you learned in the past months?” While the question is important and can inform future personal and church decisions, I have come to believe that a more fruitful question for us all is “how have I changed and how has the church changed?” On a personal level, this pandemic has brought to the surface my need to own up and be responsible for my Spiritual growth, to pray more and wait longer on his promptings, to recognise my tendency to do things in my own strength, to recognise how fragile and vulnerable I am, to be quick to forgive and quick to move on in trust.

On the church level, I think this pandemic has shown the church’s willingness to do things differently, the ability of each Christian to love and care in new and imaginative ways, the growing realisation that things can be stopped, reduced, pruned and changed.

Despite the many struggles and challenges we have all been facing in this pandemic we should get hold of God’s promises and expect to see his goodness at work in the ordinary activities of our life and in the life of his church. God’s faithfulness is without question. His generosity is perfect. His affection is tender and loving. His presence is permanent. His acceptance of us is unconditional. His communication is up-building and for our best interest. His authority is right and true. Yes! His plans are still to prosper, He has not forgotten us. He has been (and will continue to be) with us in the fire and the flood. He is faithful forever, perfect in love so let us embrace his sovereignty over us. Eugene Peterson once said “God cannot fit into our plans, we must fit into his. We can’t use God – God is not a tool or appliance or credit card. Holy is the word that sets God apart and above our attempts to enlist him in our wish-fulfilment fantasies or our utopian schemes for making our mark in the world. Holy mean that God is alive on God’s terms, alive in a way that exceeds our experience and imagination. Holy refers to life burning with an intense purity that transforms everything it touches into itself.” So let us pray together and say to God with sincere hearts: not our will Lord, but yours be done, in our lives, in our church, in our community and in our world.

Rev Fabian Wuyts

Prayer for Growth

Heavenly Father, increase in number your Church at St James as you deepen us as followers and learners of Christ.

Help us to show uninhibited reliance on your grace and power as we seek renewal of our lives, our church, our community and our world.

Give us courage, imagination and generosity in order that your kingdom may come and your abundant life be known by all.

We make this prayer in the name and to the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Introduction

St James Church, Taunton, is a parish church within the Diocese of Bath and Wells in the Church of England. Its parish includes the Roughmoor, North Town, Priory and Firepool areas of Taunton. The church's membership is drawn partly from within the parish, partly from across the rest of the town, and from nearby villages. Its services and activities are open to all, and the church works with other churches and local inter-church organisations in proclaiming and applying the good news of Jesus Christ.

Attendance at services, surveyed during October 2019, was 202 (compared to 207 in 2018, 197 in 2017, 202 in 2016, 194 in 2015, 187 in 2014 and 171 in 2013), this being the "number attending at least once during the period", excluding visitors. There were also 46 people under 18 attending at least once. Equivalent figures are not available for 2020 due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

At the 2020 Annual Meeting, there were 182 people on the Church Electoral Roll.

Objectives

The governing document is The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956. In common with other Anglican (Church of England) churches, this gives the objects of the church as to:

Promote in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC's registration with the Charity Commission (using headings provided by Church of England Guidance at the time of initial registration) expands the statement of objects as covering:

- *Regular public worship open to all.*
- *The provision of sacred space for personal prayer and contemplation.*
- *Pastoral work, including visiting the sick and the bereaved.*
- *Teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses and small groups*
- *Taking of religious assemblies in schools.*
- *The provision of a youth club with a Christian ethos.*
- *Promotion of Christianity through the staging of events and meetings, and the distribution of literature.*
- *Promoting the whole mission of the Church through provision of activities for senior citizens, parents and toddlers and other special need groups.*
- *Supporting other charities in the UK and overseas.*

Public Benefit

The PCC has noted the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit, including publication PB4 *The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit*.

Worship services are all open to the public. The church building is open as many days as possible for private prayer, and is available for weddings and funerals of parishioners as required. Baptisms of parishioners are normally conducted during Sunday morning services. The church building is also used for concerts and by some other groups, such as the NHS Blood Doning service.

Pastoral support is available to anyone who requests it. Church members also receive support through home groups.

The church runs a parent and toddler group, an after-school club, a school mentoring scheme and Make Lunch scheme and a parenting support group (Family Links Nurturing Programme). It also supports local Christian organisations including Street Pastors, Taunton Team Chaplaincy, Besom, Open Door and Taunton Area Debt Advice.

A church does not exist in isolation, but is part of one world-wide church of all denominations. St James supports the work of WEC (church planting), TEAR Fund and Samaritans Purse (emergency and relief work), and Barnabas Fund (support for the persecuted church worldwide).

The PCC also has maintenance responsibilities for St James' Church building (Grade 2* listed) and the church halls. The halls are available for hire by community groups.

From March 2020, the in-person activities had to be suspended, but support of individuals continued through a network of telephone and social media conversations, and worship services continued online.

Operating

The vicar and the churchwardens manage the day-to-day business of the church, assisted by a Church Administrator. In particular, the church administrator handles bookings for the church halls and supervises the work of the caretaker. All financial matters are handled by the Treasurer.

Various church members manage other church activities on a day-to-day basis, and there are rotas and teams in place to manage all activities which occur on a regular weekly or monthly basis.

The vicar and PCC have appointed coordinators to whom authority has been delegated to manage certain aspects of church life: Worship, Pastoral Care, Discipleship, Children & Young People's work, Outreach, Administration, and Facilities (premises and technical). The aim is to avoid overloading the vicar with too many decisions in a church which is steadily growing, and also to free his time so he can focus on where he can be most effective. This delegated leadership arrangement has continued with our new vicar.

The PCC meets monthly, except in April (Annual Church Meeting) and August (summer holidays). It approves all major non-recurring financial expenditure and decides proposals to undertake any major new activity. The agenda includes a strategic overview of the church's activities.

The Standing Committee is empowered by law to conduct PCC business in between meetings of the council. Its members are the church officers plus one ordinary member of the PCC. In practice, the Standing Committee operates primarily through email discussions.

Various provisions decided by legislation (enacted by General Synod) or decisions made by Diocesan Synod govern, for example, the type of formal public worship services that can be provided but allow a church to develop its own style. The appointment of clergy and readers is managed by the diocese, in consultation with the parish. Payment of clergy is carried out via the diocesan Common Fund, which scheme decouples clergy pay from a parish's financial circumstances. Maintenance work and alteration of the church building is overseen by a Diocesan Advisory Committee, through faculties granted by the diocesan chancellor; this process is in lieu of civil planning procedures. The parish is required to appoint an architect approved by the diocese to advise on and specify all works required.

Activities

Worship

Contributed by Richard Lucas, Worship Coordinator.

The worship in the Church that takes place within the services is coordinated by the worship coordinator alongside the Vicar and the Musical Director. There is a range of people within the Church who contribute to, lead and preach within the services. A greater range of members have been encouraged to take part and use their gifts and this had a positive effect with their ministries being used and this has contributed to a wide range of people being available and confident in their ministry, in particular with All-Age Worship and evening services where those available from the Ministry team is more limited.

The worship coordinator meets regularly with the Vicar to look at the overview of services. There will be meetings to look at song choices and themes with the Vicar and the Musical Director. The Vicar plans the themes and organises rotas for leading and officiating. The worship coordinator plans the singing and rotas when we are meeting in church in person. The worship Coordinator has an overview of the evening services and the direction of travel for these. He has met with the Vicar and Curate to plan the pattern and content. Over the past year of lockdown, a team has been grown within evening services. It has been a joy to see people flourish and have their gifts used and expanded despite the difficult and different circumstances.

Prior to the Corona Virus lockdown, the main worship service remained at 10.30am on a Sunday, alternating between Holy Communion and Morning Worship and an All-Age Service. Services run for around an hour and a quarter with the exception of the All Age Service, with a pre and after-service time of fellowship. During Morning Worship, an alternative Messy Church service, primarily for families, runs in the hall on one Sunday. On other Sundays, Sunday Club groups for 3-16 year-olds run in the halls. There is a

crèche for younger children every week, in the church alongside the service. with a large team of volunteers involved in each morning service. There may be gaps that need to be filled within this ministry when we return to enable the smooth set up and organising of services with the wide range of activities and equipment needed whatever church will look like on a Sunday.

The music team comprises a range of instrumentalists and singers with the Music Director providing settings to match the available skills. New music is introduced on a regular basis in collaboration by the Musical Director, Worship Coordinator, and the Vicar. The style is based around the leading of corporate worship with a contemporary feel and with a range of songs and instrumentation that complement this. This has taken on a new form in the world of the pandemic . The Musical Director works with a team of singers, instrumentalists, and technicians , to arrange and present new songs that are new recordings for a Sunday and created during lockdown remotely.

The pattern of evening services, adopting a common time of 7pm and an informal praise format has run for several years and has a consistent attendance of between 20 and 40. Prior to lockdown this was a guitar led service with a band who are growing and learning as they worship. The monthly pattern included an emphasis on praise, communion, and teaching. The aim was to provide a substantive alternative to the morning service, for those who are either not able to attend in the morning or desire a different style and approach within a smaller setting. The first Sunday of the Month is Soul Space, a meeting for young people led by church members; this involves a range of worship and activities.

Services were also held during the week. The “Praise and Play” service a monthly Holy Communion Service for the Alzheimer’s group. Off-site, regular services are held at Calway House residential home. Communion services are held elsewhere such as Pegasus Court and home Communion is also provided for those unable to attend church. Readers, retired clergy and other church members also help to lead services at other churches in the area prior to Covid and lockdown

As in previous years we will continue to consider how we reach out to those outside the church and those without a church background and endeavour to make worship accessible and relevant within a changing landscape.

This landscape has changed greatly in the past year. At Easter last year we moved to a pre-recorded format online through Facebook and YouTube and through the new church website. It has been a challenge as new forms and formats are explored and as church we have been on a journey together. Initially the morning service moved online at 10.30, using songs extracted from previous service recordings; and with a Zoom social at 11.15. When the first lockdown was eased the Church was opened and there were Covid-secure 9.00 and 10.30 services, with live streaming introduced as soon as the technical details had been arranged. After the second lockdown, the 10.30 service stayed online, while the 9.00 resumed in church. When the lockdown returned again we reverted to the 10.30 pre-recorded pattern.

The evening service followed the style and content of the evening service pre lockdown with the same contributors, with a variety of styles and content and with reference to local events and to the seasons.

The evening service has been given the title Connect@7 after discussion and prayer with the Vicar, curate and team, with a link to what we are as church and what our vision is saying to us. The aim is to be different, though not for its own sake and to reach out to those who are not (maybe yet) within the church or in possession of a faith but are connected to us in lockdown and accessing our content. We followed the guide from the PCC that it should connect with people in lockdown, rather than follow a normal service format.

With the church delivering services in lockdown we have had to look at different formats and styles. As a church we have had to get used to worshipping from home and without personal interaction and face to face greeting. The lesson we will take from this is that we will not be returning to the church as it was but to a church as it will be. Some will have seen the content and look to attend others will find the return difficult and the fear of Covid will linger in the way that we interact. It is to be hoped and believed that we will learn from our period of forced isolation, able to worship God in all our circumstances and locations and lead others to him.

Lockdown prompted Morning Prayer to be taken online on Monday to Thursday using a combination of Zoom and Facebook. The monthly Church Prayer meeting has also moved online.

Finally, I would like it noted that there is a great commitment required both online and face to face and in ensuring that the technical side functions and my thanks go to all those who give their time to this ministry in particular during this past year.

Pastoral Care *Contributed by Annie Reid, Pastoral Coordinator.*

Pastoral visiting

It has been a challenging time for all because of Covid - with the official advice for many weeks being to "stay at home." Despite this restriction, the pastoral care function at St James church has continued – but in a different way.

At the start of lockdown, a small pastoral care team offered their services to contact members of the congregation by telephone for a chat from time to time. This continued throughout the times of lockdown and we know from our feedback that many members of the congregation have welcomed these calls and have felt well supported. Thanks to Jenny Wakefield, Roger Fenton, Annie Reid and Fabian Wuyts for undertaking this important work. The Email Prayer Chain continues to operate for the prayer needs of the church.

Flower rota

With the church building being closed for long periods, the flower group has had little opportunity to provide floral decorations; there was however a lovely display for Christmas and thanks are due to those who were able to help.

Thursday Fellowship

Vicky Dykes and Pam Anderson have done a wonderful job during this difficult period in keeping their fortnightly newsletter going. This has gone out to all members and has been a vital link for this group – publishing news, providing interesting stories, celebrating birthdays and sharing prayers. This has all been hugely appreciated by the members of the fellowship.

Welcoming

During lockdown, there have been further discussions looking at ways of improving the welcoming of newcomers to the church (when we eventually get back to live services) Details will follow in due course.

Discipleship *Contributed by Roger Fenton, Discipleship Coordinator.*

Lockdown in compliance with Covid 19 restrictions have severely limited what has been possible for Discipleship ministry. Most of the year the church was unable to physically meet together for worship or any other purpose, which curtailed most normal channels and conduits for this vital ministry. Meeting remotely via the internet has proved the best substitute and of real benefit for many but not all, making any summary of discipleship over the past year difficult to access.

Of the eleven home groups, seven have been meeting regularly via Zoom (although not all members are able to attend) and four groups are not meeting, either lacking the necessary electronic equipment or the desire to meet via this

method. Home group leaders continue to meet regularly (via Zoom) and all leaders are actively in contact with all their members to offer support and encouragement in these strange times. I would normally report any changes in attendance of home groups but this year changes are difficult to assess. I am aware of both increases and decreases in membership of some groups and believe the total number attending a home group would be similar to last year, namely around 114. Study notes for home groups continue to be produced 'in house' but we now have a rota of four authors – our Curate Dave Wilkie has been added to the existing team of Fabian, Richard Carpenter, and myself.

An exciting new development has been our offering of our first 'Alpha on-line', which ran in the September – November period, using Zoom technology and the prepared Alpha videos. With the undoubted help of a small group of prayer warriors and other church members the course proved successful and has already started again in 2021 with new attendees.

As I write it appears that the Government is likely to be lifting meeting restrictions sometime this summer, when I will be eager to continue encouragement of growth in Discipleship.

Children's & Youth Work

Contributed by Vashti Smit, Children and Young People's Coordinator.

Pre-Covid, regular activities continued as in 2019. Sunday groups comprised crèche and two age groups in Sunday Club each week, monthly Soul Space for teens and Messy Church on the first Sunday of each month. The usual weekday groups also continued, including Toddler Group, Praise and Play, and the Voice project run with St Mary Magdalene to support our young people in their faith journey.

All these activities had to stop, being replaced by various online groups that have been developed over the course of the year.

Children and Youth and their Families

Lego Church happens at 4pm on a Sunday afternoon. This is going well. Our team consists of Vashti Smit, Dave Wilkie, and Rachel Haddell. We take turns leading the group. The format is as follows: a quick welcome, a Bible story from a children's Bible, children are then encouraged to 'build' the story with lego, duplo, mega blocks. They are then given an opportunity to show their creations and we finish off by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

We have also established a support zoom for the mums, called Wednesday Whlne, which happens every other week. It is an occasion to have a chat and I hope to develop it into a prayer time with possibly looking at it becoming a homegroup of sorts. Mainly, at the moment, we just chat and support each other. The mums are enjoying this group and drop in when they can. They are keen to continue post Covid.

Currently we are planning the Easter activities which Dave is heading up for us. There will be an Easter Trail available for the wider community. There will be an Easter zoom available for St. James families and a special Easter trail for the school.

Youth Zoom – Liz, Dave and Fabian are meeting with our Young People on Zoom every Sundays at 7pm, using material from Alpha and Urban Saints. The evening is a mixture of games, bible reflection, sharing of news and prayers. We also have dedicated social/game zoom sessions.

Online groups

A WhatsApp group for the St. James Families has become a space for staying in touch and prayer

There are various Facebook pages:

- TLG Make Lunch has its own page
- St. James families has 1 open page and one private group

- Praise and Play still has their group.
- The page - an info page for family type events that happen at St. James Church.
- The group - a private way of communicating with the families' particular events that are happening.

Others are under review pending how Covid pans out.

TLG Make Lunch

Most of the wide range of links with St James Church School also had to close at the start of the pandemic. The TLG Mentoring Programme continued on a reduced basis for most of the year, and there are plans with the school to restart it after Easter2021.

TLG (Transforming Lives for Good) Make Lunch has continued well. We have successfully delivered food boxes over the Christmas holidays, the February half term and we are now planning the Easter TLG. Each delivery consists of a recipe with the necessary ingredients, a Boredom Buster Bag and family size appropriate food parcels for each family. With every delivery we include a scripture verse in the form of a prayer. We currently cover 5 schools and are in direct communication with each school's PFSO: St. James School, Northtown, Parkfield, Nerrols School and Blackbrook School.

We continue our good relations with FoodBank. We have recently been introduced to Morisson's Charity Champion which has expressed a desire to help TLG. We continue to get funding from various grants (£100 more recently through a TLG affiliate). Somerset West and Taunton Council keep us abreast of further available funds should the need arise.

Outreach

Contributed by Jenny Wakefield, Outreach Coordinator.

What a year it has been! Any plans that might have been formed at the beginning of the year were overwhelmed by the changes brought about by the pandemic. It also halted our rethinking the very wide remit of the Outreach Coordinator, possibly in favour of a team approach to the many strands involved. We also recognised the need to integrate activities with a growing social media framework. So, aided by the pandemic the coordinator role has been in abeyance since June, although some aspects of it are still being actively pursued. How we move forward beyond the pandemic to reach out is a work in progress and is part of the challenge for change that we as a church will be engaged with under God's direction.

Our core approach to outreach - Scattered Lives

Over the past five or so years we have continued to encourage each church member to share the gospel in their everyday lives, using the "Life on the Frontline" and "Living the Story Telling the story" approach to share the life changing message of Jesus.

The pandemic has not diminished this, if anything there have been new opportunities to interact with the communities in which we live. Many church members joined in locally organised community initiatives organised on Facebook, which sought to ensure vulnerable people in the community were looked after; prescriptions collected, shopping done and phone calls made. We talked more to neighbours, clapped for the NHS, donated to the foodbank and other charities, volunteered, supported our families and tried to do what we could to ensure people were looked after. St. David talks about "performing the small things" which mean so much and bring blessing and this has been much in evidence. Let me share a few examples of our reaching out:

- From March to September a small team lead by Nic Tall and Susie Peeler delivered food parcels on behalf of St James School to families for whom the pandemic had brought hardship. (More of that in the C&YP report where the TLG partnership with the school will be talked about).

- Throughout the pandemic Vicky and Pam have kept in touch by e mail and phone calls with the 50-plus Thursday Fellowship.
- Individuals have made phone calls to family, friends and neighbours.
- People have volunteered in a host of different community organisations stacking shelves, delivering supplies and more recently helping out at the vaccination centres using previous professional skills.

Communications

How we communicate is an essential part of our outreach. Before the pandemic Nic Tall had been experimenting with Beccy and few others about how Social Media could be used. In the early days of the pandemic, churches were closed and we suddenly found ourselves going to church online. This would not have been possible a few years earlier but we owe a debt of gratitude to those who quickly assimilated skills enabling the church to still be visible, to worship and to meet together. The small team of technical people were working flat out, learning new skills fast and as ever operating in the background. While we need to maintain a balance for those young and not so young who struggle with a surfeit of media, these skills are here to stay.

Facebook has now become our front window and while many are still grappling with how to use it, it has been an important tool in helping us worship, communicate encourage and keep in touch.

The Church Suite database has enabled us to send out the weekly bulletin, vicar's letter, etc, by email.

The Parish Magazine is being produced in an online format with printed copies available from the office.

Events – or Non-events

The pandemic has inevitably called a halt to opportunities for meeting for social and outreach purposes. The art group's hopes of restarting were dashed by the second lockdown, but has been meeting via Zoom. Also affected were the groups that meet in our halls, with whom we had developed good links. The one exception is that Blood Donors continued as it is a necessary service.

St. James Players started the year normally: In February they were able to produce a murder mystery which raised funds for Rail Responders and went on tour to Wilton to help raise funds for the church there. Since March, although panto was ruled out they too have risen to the performing on line and with a lot of help from the techies have produced three radio/YouTube plays.

The Easter Experience was looking uncertain as schools faced the prospects of whether they would close early for Easter. The EE team presented the Experience to three classes but the rest of the week was cancelled as uncertainty in school increased much to everyone's disappointment.

At Christmas Dave Wilkie, Hannah Buckman and the young people's group produced an in-church Christmas event which enabled family groups to experience the Christmas Story. It was the only event that the catering team had been able to support since lockdown.

By and large it's been an "uneventful" year as we have kept our distance, exchanged our smiles for masks and largely stayed at home. What it has shown however is that people have recognised a need for social interaction, for meeting, sharing and support. Although we have to be cautious about the future we must learn the lessons as to how we engage with and serve our community. Our online armchair prayer walks have shown the size and diversity of our parish, the number of schools, organisations, businesses, house, flats, charities, public buildings etc that are contained therein. It's a God-sized challenge.

Local and International Mission

It has been a great privilege during the past year to speak to representatives of the local organisations that we have a link with and to find out what they are doing despite the pandemic. None of them are static and if anything their need for support is as great as it ever was. One organisation is the Mission Focus each month, with the interview being put on our YouTube channel.

- Street Pastors (ministry to young people visiting the town's night clubs): Currently with nightclubs and pubs closed their role has been reduced but as the town opens up they will be needed more than ever
- Taunton Team Chaplaincy: although in some areas has been reduced (e.g., County Hall) in other areas it has increased: the homeless at Canonsgrove, support for business in redundancy, retail outlets and there are plans in embryo for developing a court chaplaincy
- Besom: although unable to go into people's homes to decorate they have continued to be very busy with referrals from keyworkers for furniture and crisis food packs.
- Open Door have been working with the Homeless project at Canonsgrove.
- Taunton Youth for Christ have continued to work with schools and detached youth where possible and their work with young people has developed a greater urgency.
- Taunton Area Debt Advice are poised to help people as the issues of dept emerge from the Covid period where there has been some protection.

The church continues to support the following overseas missions, financially and in prayer:

- David and Margie Whitehorn, the leaders for WEC's church planting work in Africa; while confined to the UK they support their workers on line.
- TEAR Fund (emergency and relief work).
- Traidcraft, Freda has continue to process orders for their products.
- Samaritans Purse (an international relief organization); and
- Barnabas Fund (which supports the persecuted church worldwide).
- Home for Good is an agency that encourages churches to support the work of adoption and fostering.

All these organisations have been profoundly affected by the global nature of the crisis.

The mission review group has met once during the pandemic. There is no change in the above list of organisations.

Publicity

Publicity has taken a different form during the pandemic with most of our communication being online.

Facilities

Contributed by Martin Wakefield, Facilities Coordinator.

Most facilities projects went on the back-burner during 2020.

The year began with the fitting of seven new bell clappers, the construction of a storage rack in the loft for large boxes (of equipment, costumes, etc), the usual variety of minor repairs, and the completion of the project to transfer the church membership database to Church Suite.

The first lockdown saw everything halted, but by June the glaziers were able to repair the two windows in the North Aisle which had been vandalised in 2019. It was also possible to attend to minor repairs as the need arose.

The project to refurbish the church office took a small step forward with the first phase of electrical work being undertaken, but hopes of further progress were thwarted by volunteer effort being directed at supporting the church's online services. While carrying out the electrical work, the opportunity was taken to install emergency lighting in the corridor, thus completing the

programme to install these lights in the halls, kitchen, toilets, office and corridor. Emergency lighting in the church will be undertaken in conjunction with the identified need to adapt doors as proper fire exits.

The first lockdown in March 2020 catapulted the church's activities online, and a tremendous effort ensued. In the first week, a volunteer assisted the vicar in preparing an online service for the first Sunday, supported by another extracting a first batch of songs from archived service recordings. The first home groups went online using Zoom two days after the start of lockdown. The administrator overhauled the list of church members' email addresses so that the weekly bulletin could be issued via email, and our IT support person repurposed the incomplete new website as a resource website, subsequently continuing to develop the site further. After this first week, the evening service team took their services online, the ministry team began morning prayer using Zoom, weekly DVD production began for church members without internet, and a method was developed to enable the music team to record new songs from their homes (with over 30 being produced by the end of the year). After socially-distanced services in church resumed, a number of these were streamed live online, before lockdowns once more intervened.

A Quinquennial Inspection of the church was carried out mid-year: the building is in good condition, and only minor repairs due to weathering were identified.

The usual summer working parties did not take place, but a one-day "drains and gutters" (socially-distanced) working party was very productive, and may form a model for reorganising these events in following years.

Administration Administrative matters are covered in various places elsewhere in this report, so a separate report has not been prepared.

Our Administrator / Administration Coordinator is Beccy Fox, who took over from Alex Dickinson mid-year.

Financial Review

The majority of the PCC's income is from direct giving by church members (including tax reclaimed under Gift Aid), with a smaller proportion deriving from hire of premises. No funds are raised from the general public.

2020 Significant events. The Covid-19 Pandemic had an effect on 2020's finances, though Stewardship giving remained strong throughout the year. Over 90% of donors continued to support the ministry faithfully during 2020. The biggest impact felt was the reduction by over nearly 60% of lettings owing to government restrictions.

Income from stewardship and collections was slightly down in 2020 compared with 2019. Expenditure, other than expenditure on maintenance and repairs and extra activities, was up compared to that in 2019. This was mainly due to an increase in the Parish Share, owing to a change of category.

The General Fund ended the year with a balance of £231,129, of which £7,080 were restricted funds. This was £78,471 more than at the end of 2019, due mainly to legacies totalling £97,510 during the year and Grants received of £5,930.

The major expense of the year was for the repair and replacement to the Church Bell Clappers at a cost of £5,155.

Investment Policy: it is our strategy to invest our funds balances in the Church of England's Central Board of Finance deposit funds.

No funds are held as custodian trustee on behalf of others.

Reserves policy: within the General Fund, the PCC has designated the following reserve funds:

Projects Fund – for capital projects being planned by the church and as a place to hold legacies when first received. There is no set level for this fund, monies being assigned to it as needs arise and funding allows.

Fabric Fund – for major fabric repairs that will occur from time to time but cannot be met out of annual income (for example, gas boiler replacement, re-roofing, repairs to stonework). The intention is to maintain this fund at £30,000, but that level will fluctuate according to demand.

Opportunity Fund – for short-notice opportunities that may arise, for example a piece of land adjoining the church being put on the market, leaving no time to raise the required funds for a deposit through an appeal. The intention is to maintain this fund at £20,000.

Risks Fund - for maintaining essential church activities for a period of up to around one year should there be a loss of income for any reason. This fund is set at 10% of Stewardship giving (and Gift-aid), which allows, for example, for members moving away; plus 30% of non-giving income (i.e. hall hire and car park charges, over which church members do not have control).

The Reserves Policy is reviewed annually.

At the end of 2020, the designated reserve funds stood as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Projects Fund: | £154,891 |
| Fabric Fund: | £30,000 |
| Opportunity Fund: | £20,000 |
| Risks Fund: | £15,856 (10% of giving = £11,245, plus 30% of other income = £4,611) |
| Total: | £220,747 |

The total exceeds the £86,575 needed to cover the recommended accounting practice of holding in reserve 6 months' budgeted expenditure.

The £154,891 held at the end of the year in the designated Projects Fund was not assigned to specific projects. The church maintains a Capital Expenditure Plan detailing future projects which may in due course draw on this Fund. The PCC has decided that some of the funds can be used to pay for the proposed Children and Families Worker, but the exact amount has not been determined, pending a further appeal. A further unassigned £3,302 is held as surplus on the General Fund (after allowing for designated reserves and restricted funds) Each year, the PCC considers how to spend or designate any surplus assets.

Grant-making policy: the PCC has a policy of donating a minimum of 10% of stewardship giving (including cash collections and income tax recovered) to other Christian organisations. This is because an individual church such as St James is part of the one worldwide Christian church, with different parts of the church undertaking different responsibilities, and also being dependent on each other. Local organisations supported have aims which overlap with those of St James church. Organisations outside the local area are largely ones with which the church has had a relationship for some time. From time to time, the PCC also supports church members undergoing Christian training, and undertaking full-time work with Christian organisations.

Staff and Volunteer Support

Approximately three full-time equivalent posts are paid. One of these is the vicar, and another is made up of two part time posts: the Church Administrator and the Caretaker. A curate joined the church mid-year; this is a training post, funded by the diocese.

The majority of effort spent on preparing for and running church activities comes from volunteers. It is difficult to gauge the total effort put in by voluntary workers, but (in a normal year) a conservative estimate would be more than 12 full-time equivalent posts, probably more. In total, around 130 members carry out various roles within the church on a voluntary basis.

The contributions of all volunteers are much appreciated and are essential for the running of services, children's and other groups, maintenance, pastoral care and every other aspect of church life. In particular, the churchwardens, treasurer, and Music Director all carry heavy loads.

Appointment of volunteers: where a post involves working with children or vulnerable adults, appointments are made using the Safer Recruitment process set out in the Church of England's safeguarding guidance. This includes having a formal job description, being interviewed with references taken up, and the completion of DBS checks. Other appointments do not usually warrant such a formal process.

Supporting volunteers: everyone who volunteers has a right to be able to discuss their roles with the relevant coordinator in order to agree expectations, receive support, be reasonably resourced, discuss training needs and, as far as practicable, have these met.

Safeguarding

As a church we adhere to the Church of England Policy – *Promoting a Safer Church* – and have been working to the policy and practice guidance as set out on their website.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/policy-practice-guidance>

The Role of the Parish Safeguarding Officer is to:

- Carry out safer recruitment procedures
- Respond to any disclosures or concerns
- Work with the DSA on any matters connected with parish Safeguarding
- Raise the profile of safeguarding in the parish and ensure PCC is kept up to date with developments
- Advise regarding training.

Safer recruitment procedures are carried out for all appointments involving working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults, which all require DBS clearance. During the year there has been a need to safely recruit a small number of people in relation to our community activities.

For other voluntary posts there is a recruitment procedure in place operated by those in charge of different volunteers. There is a recommendation from the Church of England that anyone who acts as a volunteer should have Safeguarding Awareness Training, at least at basic awareness level (C0) and for many roles working with children or vulnerable adults a higher level of training is required or recommended. In a church as large as St. James maintaining this level of requirement is not easy and is a matter of ongoing chasing.

Safeguarding Training is obligatory for all clergy, PTO clergy and licensed readers, and this has been undertaken for those in these roles. There has been a backlog in training for other volunteers, partly due to the lack of availability of courses for non-clergy volunteers. The leadership (C3) course is no longer required for the majority of non-clergy parish officers.

A new Diocesan trainer has been appointed and will be addressing the needs of the Diocese. The pandemic period has involved the suspension of face-to-face courses, but we were fortunate to be able to have two courses for Foundation and one for Leadership level in February 2020.

Risks

Finance: the main risk to the operation of the church is financial support. Most funding comes from church members, supplemented by income from hiring the church hall and car park. The church is not in receipt of any regular funding from other sources, either from within the Church of England, or the government. Grants may be obtainable to cover partial costs of some projects, and legacies may occasionally be received, but such sources do not impact on routine planning.

The church's finances are thus vulnerable to:

- Fluctuations in income from hall hire;
- Church members moving away;
- Gradual changes from one generation to another of members' understanding of their financial responsibility;
- Unexpected large costs for repairing the church building;
- Increases in the Parish Share contribution to the diocese which can be well above inflation.

In 2020, one of these risks materialised, in that the majority of income from hall hire ceased.

The PCC keeps a proactive watch on these matters through reports from the Treasurer to alternate meetings of the council. An annual stewardship campaign, led by the Planned Giving Officer, aims to refresh church members' awareness of the principles of giving.

Communications: as the church grows in numbers, there is a risk of fragmentation due to the inability of all members to know every other member and what the various groups and teams are doing. Part of the PCC's strategy for growth is that the coordinators will facilitate communications within their respective functional areas.

Disaster Recovery Planning: The loss of the use of the church building is not considered to be a major risk. In 2001, the church moved its activities temporarily to the local church school, while the floor in the church building was replaced. It is considered that similar arrangements could be made again. The PCC does not consider that any disaster recovery plans need to be maintained for

specific activities; the scale of operations is such that contingency plans are best drawn up in response to the nature of any issue that may occur.

Health & Safety: physical risks are managed through the church's *Health and Safety Policy*, which is reviewed annually by the PCC. The policy includes a schedule of risks using a checklist provided by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Company. The Schedule sets out the procedures for mitigating and managing each risk. Equipment safety checks (gas appliances, security alarms, lightning conductor, fire extinguishers and electrical PAT testing) are undertaken annually.

Trustees

The members of the Parochial Church Council are the trustees of the charity. PCC members who have served from 1st January 2020 until the date this report was approved were:

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Vicar: | Rev Fabian Wuyts | Chairman | * |
| Curate: | Rev David Wilkie | | * (from July 2020) |
| Churchwardens: | Mr Steve Bradford | Vice chairman | * |
| | Mrs Joycey Kirk | | * |
| | Mrs Ruth Stevens | | * (until October 2020) |
| Deanery Synod: | Mr Richard Carpenter | | |
| | Ms Chris Rickard | | |
| | Mr Martin Wakefield | Secretary | * |
| Elected members: | Mrs Ruth Dunn | Minutes Secretary | * |
| | Mr Roger Fenton | | |
| | Mr Jamie Fox | | * (until October 2020) |
| | Mrs Marilyn Gibson | | (from October 2020) |
| | Mr James Haddell | | (until October 2020) |
| | Miss Lizzie Haddell | Associate Warden | * |
| | Mr David Jordan | | (from October 2020) |
| | Mrs Sue Lucas | | |
| | Mrs Sheila Marlow | | |
| | Mrs Ruth Preater-Gillard | | |
| Mr Richard Sainsbury | Treasurer | * | (co-opted) |
| Mrs Liz Sykes | | | |
| Miss Emily Tall | | | (from October 2020) |
| Mrs Jenny Wakefield | | | |
| Ex-officio | Mr Nic Tall | Diocesan Synod | |

* Asterisks indicate members of the Standing Committee: the Church Officers plus one ordinary member of the PCC.

Appointment of trustees: The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church of England's *Church Representation Rules*. The number of elected members is 12, with a minimum of four places to come up for election each year.

Ex-officio members of the PCC are:

- Clergy licensed to the parish.
- Two churchwardens, separately elected annually.
- Three representatives of the parish to Deanery Synod, elected every three years.
- Any members of Diocesan Synod and General Synod who are members of the church.

Recruitment of trustees: all Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and consider standing for election to the PCC. Active recruitment may occur when one sector of the church appears to be under-represented on the PCC.

Training of trustees: New members are provided with a copy of the *PCC Standing Orders*, which sets out how the PCC works, and a copy of the booklet *Trusteeship – an introduction for PCC members*. They are encouraged to obtain a copy of *A Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors* and to attend any training events run by the diocese. PCC members also receive safeguarding awareness training.

Custodian Trustees: The Diocese of Bath and Wells is the custodian trustee for property owned by the church, i.e. the church hall and associated buildings and land.