

Annual Report

October 2020 to May 2021

APCM – 23rd May 2021

Electoral Roll

There are 165 adults on the electoral roll, including 21 new participants, one young person who is now eligible and the remainder from baptism families. We have sadly lost members due to death and the continuing trend of growing families moving out of the parish.

Worship

St Peter's reopened for public worship at the end of July 2020, and closed again in January 2021. Epiphany was our last service as a congregation before Revd Julia Porter-Pryce's retirement, and one baptism was held in January 2021.

Julia celebrated her final service to an empty church at the end of January. This was filmed, edited and streamed on Vimeo and remains available for viewing on the website.

Services recommenced on Mothering Sunday (14.3.21), when Bishop Joanne, Bishop of Stepney, presided and celebrated the Eucharist.

Since that time, Revd Irena Edgecumbe led our Holy Week and Easter services and continues to preach and celebrate the Eucharist on the first Sunday of the month. She will also assist with a 'catch-up' programme of baptismal services, commencing in June.

We are blessed to count ordinand Matthew Bull and LLM Sarah Dallas among our family, supporting Eckart Marchand in leading the service of the word and preparing sermons for audio recording and live worship. The worship team, especially Eckart and Sarah, have worked very hard to deliver inspiring variety in our liturgy. Sarah prepares and sends out the weekly E-News, with news about services and events, to over 240 sign-ups.

We are especially grateful to Revd Andy Rider, who has presided on several occasions, and Rev Andrew Wilson, who serves the PCC in an advisory capacity. Other visiting clergy - Revd Stephanie Warner, Revd Daniel Gerrans, Revd Shana Mahoney - enrich our worship, celebrate the Eucharist on a regular basis, and ensure that St Peter's is able to minister to the wider needs of the community through baptism, weddings and funerals.

Since returning to public worship in March 2021, we have seen an increasing number of adults each week, up to 55 adults and 6 young people. We encourage parishioners of all ages to participate in worship and many continue to offer their services on various church rotas.

Our head of operations, Julie Talbot, has been central to the smooth continuation of life ceremonies and works closely with PCC team leaders to ensure clear procedures are followed in organising and delivering these ceremonies.

We have taken care to ensure that Church has been a Covid-safe space throughout the period since our first full re-opening in July 2020.

Open Church

In early 2020, we agreed to keep the porch doors open every day and ensure that the church was staffed for quiet prayer twice weekly, Wednesdays (9-11am) and Sundays (3-5pm). Sunday afternoons regularly see 10 to 14 people coming into the space and spending time there. Wednesday morning take-up is far lower, ranging from one to five people. Special occasion openings over Christmas and most recently the Spring Trail bring in many more, with 86 adults and 17 children and young people visiting on 16th May 2021.

Save the Music Fund

We have dearly missed singing together over the successive lockdowns. This lack in our Sunday worship, combined with the fact that freelance professional musicians were particularly vulnerable to loss of income during the pandemic, led us to create a fund to 'Save the Music'. Instrumentalists and vocalists from the congregation, the local parish and beyond have enriched our worship consistently, both in church and even sometimes at home, through recordings made available online.

Many of us have found listening again to live music a very emotional and privileged experience. We hope that these bonds that we have formed lead to more developments in establishing the church as a home for music.

Pastoral Care

Ever since the first lock-down in March 2020, we have maintained contact with almost everyone on the congregation database. Sixteen households continue to shield at home. Weekly recordings of readings, intercessions and sermons are published on the website. A printed copy of the service sheet, including sermon and intercessions, is posted to those without Internet access.

Vivette Ferguson continues to circulate the monthly prayer cycle to the Pastoral Network and prayer cards to the congregation. In addition, a book of memory is circulated to those leading intercessions to ensure that we continue to hold the souls of the departed and those who mourn their loss in our prayers.

Home visits/communion have not been possible but some socially distanced visits to the frail and elderly housebound have been made as needed.

Boachie Dankwah continues with his Pastoral Assistant training. Amanda Bart-Plange was recommissioned Sunday 18 April 2021, via Zoom.

An informal WhatsApp group for spiritual guidance and support in daily life remains a valued means of communication for some. The group has moved from weekly gatherings on Zoom to meeting once a month to reflect on Christian themes and scriptural passages.

PCC & Interregnum

The full PCC of 17 members, plus three recently appointed parish representatives - Amanda Bart-Plange, Stephen King, Rosie Wesemann - met on Zoom with the Bishop Joanna Grenfell and Revd Andrew Wilson in January 2021, to understand our task in recruiting and appointing a new vicar. We have been meeting monthly since then via Zoom with near full attendance.

The process began in February with a consultation period, including a questionnaire for the whole community (42 individuals/households responded) and workshops with the whole PCC, plus guided drafting and editing sessions with our parish reps, wardens and MAP team leaders. The resulting parish profile is available via the website.

The advertisement has been posted on our own website and via the Church Times website and weekly newsletter. Short-listing will take place at the end of June, with visits and interviews at the end of July.

Finance

During the pandemic, voluntary contributions by standing order have been largely maintained, which is heartening. Crypt hire income has fallen dramatically due to Covid but is now beginning to recover and we again have a tenant in the curate's house.

Full accounts for 2020 are available but the following table shows some trends over the last three calendar years:

Income	2018	2019	2020
	£	£	£
Voluntary giving receipts	75,363	60,344	51,320
Gift aid recovered	12,371	8,502	10,490
Income from crypt and church hire	53,181	64,208	24,434
Income from rental of curate's house	20,400	20,800	12,700
Income from investments	14,369	15,182	14,225
Other income or accruals	3,174	6,041	4,738
Total	178,858	175,077	117,907

Expenditure	2018	2019	2020
	£	£	£
Common fund contribution	80,600	80,600	40,600
All other expenses (including crypt, church, curate's house & governance)	135,051	121,875	114,207
Total	215,651	202,475	154,807

To protect our remaining cash in the bank, our contribution to the common fund during 2021 has been reduced further. This should be increased again as soon as we can, although probably not to the ambitious levels of 2018 & 2019.

In each of the last three years, we have spent more than our income, which is unsustainable. We shall need to apply careful budgeting and approval of spending in advance to control costs and also look closely at ways of boosting our income in the future.

Building

We last reported on works to St Peter's building and grounds in October 2020, when we had a lot to tell of new work successfully progressed.

Sadly we have been on Covid hold for the last six months - but not entirely. The broken pier head on the west boundary wall has been beautifully restored and all paths and ramps cleaned almost beyond recognition.

St Peter's is a Grade II listed building and we need permissions from both church and council to do almost anything to it which might affect its appearance or alter its historic story. Perhaps surprisingly so listed are its boundary walls! They are not falling down but after 180 years, they need some care and attention - the right mortar, some new bricks, removing much moss and ivy and agreeing ideas on how to cope with our beautiful lime and plane trees (protected against removal) whose roots push against the wall... and cause cracks!

Our main objective for 2021 is to agree a realistic and affordable work programme to address this matter.

Hackney Deanery Synod

The deanery synod has started to explore how the London Diocese hopes to implement new strategies as expressed in 'Capital Vision 2030' - 'for every Londoner to encounter the love of God in Christ' - <https://www.london.anglican.org/our-2030-vision>. The three ambitions of this vision are for confident disciples, compassionate communities and creative growth.

At the last meeting in March 2021, we heard from four parishes about how they have been reacting to the challenges of the pandemic with a focus on discipleship. Recent meetings have also included reports from General Synod and Diocesan Synod. The next meetings are at 7pm on 20th July and 7th December.

Safeguarding

We have audited our safeguarding procedures and updated our Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Lay leaders and PCC members have refreshed and updated their training through diocesan and other professional resources.

We continue to work towards the 2030 Vision for safer churches. We take seriously the diocesan priorities of responding to incidents of domestic violence. We are conscious of the wider issues relating to the risks of social media and scams designed by cyber criminals to defraud. We see a role in warning members of our community who may be at risk of these and other threats.

This responsibility to communicate and safeguard against potential risk, alongside care and support for the vulnerable in our community, is shared across all aspects of our Mission Action Plan (MAP).