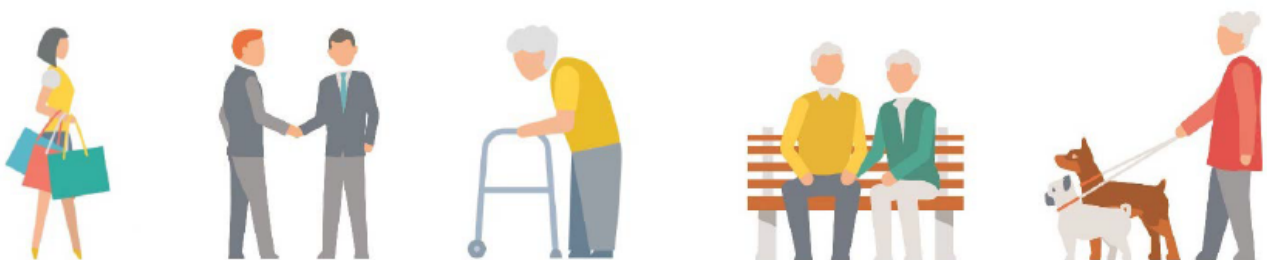




St James Hemingford Grey

Year in Review 2020 - 2021



Introduction

This year in pandemic has been one of joy and sorrow, much heart-longing and heart-ache. Our perspectives on what we thought indispensable and important have changed. There has been so much juggling, learning to do things differently - paying for things almost entirely by contactless payment, scanning documents, etc. what we found difficult to embrace has now become such an ordinary part of our everyday lives, that we hardly notice them.

Our life as St James' is so different and yet our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, remains the same. His love never fails; his promises certain and his faithfulness prevails. Perhaps you have also found that the faith you expressed in worship on a Sunday, in the church building, has now become more central to your home.

As you read this review I trust that thanksgiving will rise in your heart and you will find courage to offer back to God what he has entrusted to you.

Churchwardens

Since the October 2020 APCM we have had two churchwardens, Mike Pinnock being joined by Ian Sinkinson. This has helped greatly in carrying out the full range of CW duties – in particular Ian has given considerable energy to getting us more organised on planning and documentation as well as working on the normal range of duties. It is Ian who has borne the brunt of the duties required to keep the church open every day for private prayer. Mike, on the other hand, has been diligently managing the fabric of the church building, spending countless hours advancing so many projects, while providing support on the sound desk for our in-person services.

This has been a challenging year, not so much in extra work but in the need to respond many times to guidance from government and the bishops. It has felt very strange to be operating a seating plan and the need to request seats: we thank you for your forbearance with this and the other measures we had to take. Fortunately, we never had to turn people away: both Sunday and

Wednesday services seemed to settle to manageable numbers, with the Sunday service at near maximum capacity. We have had a core team of “stewards” helping at in-person services throughout and we are extremely grateful to Alison Craven, Ute Mokros and Steve Moller for helping us run services safely.

Challenged to discover new ways to worship God, we have discovered practices and patterns of service that have prompted discussion and prayer as to how this should inform our future services when pandemic restrictions are lifted.

We are profoundly grateful to Peter, Mark Enzer, Gair Matthews, Tom and Joe Latimer and Ben Pearson for providing the technical support to enable our virtual services.

Churchwardens are charged with representing the laity, and again this has been challenging in a period when even our face-to-face meetings are behind facemasks. Some have contacted us by email or phone to make their concerns known, and we have brought these to Peter and the PCC. We

do encourage this – see email contacts at end of this report.

Maintenance of the church fabric has continued throughout this period. New vestry steps were installed by Stephen Terrell and Don Wright. Not only are these much safer, but many have also commented on how they add to the church’s appearance. Swift nesting boxes have been installed on the east side of the tower, an initiative from Susan and Ian Cooke, with much construction work by Jamie Austin. These “des-res” for swifts is part of a national programme to utilise churches to support this endangered species and we hope to have occupants this summer.

Mike has been liaising with the church architect on drawing up specifications to repoint the external walls of the church and repair the boundary walls. The repointing work will be done this summer; the boundary wall work is likely to be spread over several years and requires funding above the normal church budget.

At the start of lockdown we accelerated efforts to get a broadband link into the church – with a view to being able to have

services in church that could be streamed to the wider congregation in their homes. A working system was established, relaying the Parish Centre broadband link to the church via a microwave link. Unfortunately installing the system permanently has become mired in planning permission (Parish Centre end) and diocesan approval (Church end) but it will be completed this year.

The next big project to be tackled is replacement of the church heating system and a working group will commence work on initial specification. This is quite demanding, as we want to, and will have to show, that we are meeting the C of E's target for net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. This will require significant fund raising activity to realise.

In conclusion, a difficult year but one that has sustained us through prayer and the appreciation you have shown. An inspiration to us has been the faithfulness shown by the seniors who regularly attend in-person services and the growing strength of Family Church. God is for all ages. 2 Timothy 3: 14-15.

Mike Pinnock
(mike.pinnock@talktalk.net)

Ian Sinkinson
(ian.sinkinson038@gmail.com)

Families, Children & Youth

The youth, children's and families ministry at St James' has one aim; to proclaim the good news of Jesus so that all who hear, will come to put their hope in him.

Over the last 12 months this aim has not wavered. More than ever before in our life time it has never been so important to bring to bear the truth of who Jesus is, why he came and what it means to trust and believe in him.

Whatever we have been through this year we can come to Jesus who went to the depths and back to take our sin, our punishment, so that we could stand before God and be pronounced: "not guilty."

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.
Isaiah 53:5

The list of needs of my life, the endless to - do list continues to grow. But this is my greatest need and yours: to know God, delight in God and make much of God.

For each of us:

He was pierced - for our transgressions

He was crushed - for our iniquities

The punishment - that brought us peace, was on him

and by his wounds - we are healed.

Our prayer for all of our children and young people is that they see how God has loved them, all of us. He died for us. And the only response to the one with all power who was crushed in our place, is to echo that chorus we sing each Christmas: *O come let us adore him.*

Ben Pearson, Youth & Children's Minister

Family Church

Family Church has, for the time being, taken the place of 'Jnr. Church'. This has brought families together on Sunday morning to learn from God's word through the memory verse, crafts,

worksheets and songs. Initially on zoom we are thrilled to be meeting in person in the Parish Centre each week.

Over the course of this year we have looked at the story of Moses in Exodus, Parables and stories Jesus told, the story of David, and recently Luke's account of the first easter.

We are grateful for the support of Steve Moller who has welcomed and supported families each week, both on Zoom and in person.

Thank you to everyone who has joined us each week. It has been encouraging to see each other and learn together about God who loves us and praise his name.

The Keswick Kids watch party in the summer was a great way of coming back together in person after the first lockdown had begun to ease.

Outdoor events including the Light trail, Hunt the nativity and more recently the Easter Mystery Trail have been a great way to engage with our local community and bring the truths of the bible to bear in a fun and accessible way.

A huge thank you to everyone who has taken part and helped make these events happen.

As we move into another time of change we ask that you would partner with us in prayer. Please pray for our families who have had to balance a great deal over the last year. We are looking forward to a time when we can meet without restrictions, but in the mean time pray that we would all continue to grow in love and knowledge of our wonderful saviour.

Ben Pearson, Youth & Children's Minister

Y[i]oS (Youth)

Like all things youth moved online during the pandemic, however despite this, it has been wonderful to meet each week, play some games, hear and share life together, pray for each other and learn from God's word.

During a brief window in the autumn term we came together in the Parish Centre. We took on Dave's escape rooms, played table tennis and the new games console and continued our studies in God's word. However, since the

New Year we have been restricted to meeting as a group online.

In recent months we have begun meeting the older young people on a 1-2-1 basis. This has been a great way to meet informally outside for a walk and provides a natural opportunity for them to ask questions or apply further what we have been looking at on Sunday.

A particular highlight was coming together in the summer for the Keswick convention youth watch party. We came together each evening for a week and watched live with the convention's youth stream and joined thousands of other young people across the UK.

A huge thank you must go to Ruth and Dave Barber who have helped lead this group. Ruth and Dave have been part of the youth team for the last 3 years and are taking a break. Ruth has helped with the Monday night group and Dave joined us on a Friday for the Friday youth café. Together they have brought a great deal of experience, enthusiasm and encouragement to all the groups they have been part of.

This term we have taken a thorough look at the prayer Jesus taught us in Matthew 6. It has been of great comfort in these difficult times, to know we can come to our heavenly father, ask for his help, and the grace to persevere and trust in the forgiveness we have been given so that we can glorify and praise him even in the darkest and hardest of times.

Please pray for our young people. The pandemic has brought so much disruption for them to deal with. Ask God that they would call on him, and they will know God to be their rock in times of trouble, their rest, hope and salvation in Jesus Christ.

If you would like to join the youth team please get in touch with Ben, we would love to hear from anyone who has a passion for sharing life and God's word with young people.

Ben Pearson, Youth & Children's Minister

Lay Ministers

This year has seen the retirement from licensed ministry of both Trish Latimer and Ruth Terrell. Trish's gifts of teaching and

preaching and Ruth's of facilitating prayer, leading worship and preaching will be greatly missed. Each should know God's, 'well done good and faithful servant' as well as our appreciation.

In the exceptional circumstances of this year, the Lay Ministers have adapted in various ways. The Ely Cathedral Maundy Thursday 'Christm Service', at which we recommit ourselves to ministry, alongside Clergy, was live-streamed on YouTube this year thus ensuring we could participate to rededicate ourselves to serve and be encouraged by one another. We have not disappeared in Lockdown and continue to find ways to minister among the people of St James' as you will see from the following.

The Diocese has continued to provide essential safeguarding training throughout so that everyone is up-to-date and has provided a number of online Study Days. The Ministry Team has only met once this year but look forward to more collaboration as restrictions ease.

Authorised Lay Ministers (ALM)

Judith Hall

Judith very much misses her regular involvement with Field Lodge. She has done what she can to encourage the staff she collaborates with and has provided a couple of DIY services when asked. In December she produced a Carol Service for Field Lodge recording prayers and readings by regular St James' visitors and adding traditional carols via YouTube for residents to enjoy. She is very grateful to David and Ruth Barber and others for their assistance.

Leading up to Remembrance, Judith had an insistent picture of the churchyard, 'God's Acre,' becoming a place for 'inside-out Church'.

She produced an 'An Act of Remembrance' on posts along the river wall, inviting people to reflect both on Remembrance and on all the difficult months that had passed. This received some positive feedback from local people and Stephen Terrell met the 'display challenge'. We did not realise then how prolonged

our isolation would become.

Christmas was treated in the same way and this Lent Judith produced a display of painted Stations of the Cross by Jenny Hawke (daughter of Eddie Askew) as a walk along the path leading to the church. The same images were in the church with the accompanying Bible readings, the resurrection narratives added after Good Friday. Forty Easter posters were, amazingly, produced at short notice courtesy of Ute Mokros and the Pinnocks. Cynthia Reed, June Humphrey and Penny Foster arranged for people to display these outside their homes so St James' was able to offer a greeting and some encouragement around the village. Judith has worked extremely hard to ensure we mark the times and seasons and offer these to the community.

Stephen Terrell

Is a key member of the Strategy Implementation Team who have been far from idle in the last year. In terms of involvement in leading Worship, Stephen has led the band at one 'in-person' service and led a session at the Monthly Prayer Meeting. He too has

stepped down formally as an ALM but will continue to use his God-given gifts alongside others.

Licensed Lay Ministers (LLM)

Gerald Barrett writes:

During the summer and early autumn of this extraordinary year it was a privilege and a joy to share with others in the leading of "In-person" worship at St Margaret's on Sunday mornings and at St James' during the week.

A treasured memory is that of a faithful member of the St James' church family who was so thrilled to be in church among others, enjoying the ministry of the music group and the liturgy that she declared herself reluctant to leave the church and go home.

With the introduction of on-line services there has been the opportunity of taking part in the worship of both churches on Sunday mornings and also of leading the short service of Night Prayer every Friday evening. Written contributions have also been made to "Thought 4 St James" and the newly introduced "Thought for St Margaret's.

The restricted opening of Ely Cathedral to visitors led to a reduction in the need for Day Chaplains with shorter shifts being more suitable for those living locally. In consequence I have not been on duty at the Cathedral this year. However, it was good to meet other Chaplains on-line via the ubiquitous Zoom.

Zoom was also the means by which training was delivered. The highlight was the Oak Hill School of Theology Day in July facilitated by Ben. This comprised a series of four lectures under the general theme of "The Image of God" and included "The Image of God in Scripture and Theology", "The Image of God in Tech", (a rather frightening appraisal of how artificial intelligence could take over our lives), "The Image of God and Life" and "The Image of God and Power". By way of contrast, more recent training has been around the subject of Safeguarding and has covered recognising and responding to domestic violence and the role of church leaders in maintaining a safe and secure environment for all with whom the church comes into contact.

Liz Pinnock writes:

I have been living with Long Covid from March 2020 to the present. This has been debilitating but has particularly affected my breathing and voice so I have been unable to lead, preach and sing. However, I was elected to serve on the PCC where I can make a contribution. I have attended some creative Quiet Days and evenings facilitated online by *Under the Thinking Tree* and received some pastoral support from this organisation. I have also engaged in some Contemplative Photography with the *Soulful Vision* group. I attended the online Bishops' Study Day considering the 'Living in Love and Faith' course. In addition I joined a webinar by Pilgrims' Friend Society on Brain & Soul Boosting for Senior's and how this might help older people gain the ability to re-engage post-lockdown.

I have been able to contribute some prayers at our Zoom services, have written two Diocesan Sunday Resources and a couple of Thought4StJames' as well assisting with some editorial

activity. I have attempted to offer some pastoral support to individuals, as my voice has allowed, but am sorry that I could not do more for many of you. I am particularly grateful to Peter and the Team for their kindness and patience, allowing me to step back whilst very ill and begin to re-emerge as I continue to heal.

Tim Wetherfield

Having been licensed as a Lay Reader in October 2018, I really appreciate the opportunities given to me over the last year to continue to grow in my ministry. Over the last six months, this has included preaching a number of times at 11.00am Zoom services and both preaching and leading at a couple of in-person services at St James'. In addition, I have led 9.00pm Night Prayer via Zoom every Monday night since May last year.

I also joined the PCC this year and have led the Communications stream of the Strategy Implementation Group.

It's great to be part of a team of different speakers with a range of complementary styles and approaches. The most striking

feature of the sermons over the last three months of following the Lectionary, as we have 'paused and reset' are the recurring messages about "God's plan for our lives - to transform us and to restore us into a right relationship with Him: He is all we need and we just need to trust in Him."

Hope into Action

In Summer 2021, in partnership with Hope into Action, St James will open a church-owned house to provide a home for a homeless family.

Hope into Action is a Christian charity based in Peterborough. They have over a decade's experience of enabling churches like ours to lovingly provide a home for the homeless. Tenants in Hope into Action homes are supported by a local partner church and a Hope into Action Empowerment Worker.

A group of volunteers from St James will work closely with Hope into Action to select a family, prepare the house, move the family in and walk alongside them in their journey out of their current difficulties.

Please keep this work in your prayers.

If you are interested to know more about this project, please contact Ranjini Joseph at ranjinimathew@gmail.com

The Strategy Implementation Team

Under a mandate from the PCC to develop a culture within St James's church which would see all members recognising and exercising their God-given role as disciple-making disciples, work on the strategy for St James's moved from strategy development to implementation, with the formation of an implementation team, the SIT. It comprises:

- The Communications Stream, headed by Tim Wetherfield
- The Events Stream, headed by Ben Pearson
- The Enabling Stream, headed by Aline Henning
- The Prayer Stream, headed by Rev Peter Cunliffe
- The Structure Stream, headed by Stephen Terrell

Stephen Terrell and Ian Sinkinson form the “programme management office”, responsible for coordination, and Rev Peter Cunliffe and Mark Enzer bring wisdom, experience and spiritual insight to our deliberations.

The year got off to a good start with the leaflet published in February, which reminded us of our four strategic Es

- o Engaging
- o Evangelising
- o Establishing
- o Enabling

And encouraged us to grow as disciple-making disciples in “2020, Year of Opportunity”!

Unfortunately, this was shortly followed by Covid 19, which presented us with opportunities, and challenges which we had not anticipated!!

Covid has, unsurprisingly, impacted the work of the SIT and progress has not been all we could have wished for. The Light 2020 event had to be cancelled and the possibilities for other events have been severely curtailed. Nonetheless throughout the Covid months the SIT has continued to meet monthly. In line

with the strategy, prayer has continued, by individuals, in small groups, in night prayer, in the prayer meetings hosted by Ben through the summer and in our now monthly church prayer meetings on Zoom.

Our communications about disciple-making disciples has continued through teaching and preaching. Ben arranged a number of very successful family and community events at Halloween, Christmas and Easter and these events enhanced our presence in the community and made positive contact with many non-church families.

A major plank of the strategy has been to enable St James’s people to be confident in telling their own ‘Faith Story’, to communicate in a personal way what God has done in their lives. We have been fortunate enough to have an amazing Enabling Stream Team, comprising Aline Hanning, Zoe Ryall and Liz Booker, who have developed a comprehensive plan to enable the St James’s church community to become more effective disciple-making disciples. Their work has identified a number of “tools” to increase our confidence on sharing our

stories and witnessing to God's work in our lives. These tools comprise the *#Live Lent series* which many of us enjoyed over recent months, the *Talking Jesus* course which it is hoped will be taken up by our small groups during the coming year, and *Life Maps*, which helps us take a deeper look into how God has worked and moved in our individual lives.

Going forward, we have a *Christianity Explored* course starting in early May, to which we are all encouraged to sign up and bring a friend. The SIT will continue to meet and will be considering

- How to follow up on the non-church contacts made during the Halloween, Christmas and Easter events.
- How to safely run other events to which to invite people to take them further in their faith, both in the context of Covid-19 and beyond.
- How to continue to communicate effectively to the church family about disciple making disciples.

- How to encourage the church family in individual and corporate prayer.

Matthew 28 v 19 – 20

Ian Sinkinson

Deaf Church

In July, Jan Smith was officially appointed as the Chaplain working with Deaf people, and she was ordained Deacon in September. Since then, we have been exploring the proposal of a Bishop's Mission Order for Cambs Deaf Church, which would see it recognised officially by Ely Diocese as a church, enabling Deaf people take their place in the wider body of Christ. Our ecumenical Morning Prayer meetings in BSL, set up in response to the Pandemic, continued on Zoom twice weekly, these are attended usually by around 12 Deaf People, and have been valuable for many in developing a habit of daily prayer, as well as being a support and solace to those who are struggling with isolation. Our monthly Bible study, became weekly, on Zoom, with only a short break in the summer, attended regularly by about 14 people. Through meeting more regularly to study the Bible in BSL, we have been able to look at God's Salvation plan through Genesis and Exodus, making connections to the New

Testament, the Christian Festivals, and everyday life today, living through the Pandemic, deepening people's faith and understanding.

We have also been holding monthly Sunday Worship on Zoom in BSL. In addition, we have been very grateful to be welcomed by St James' and St Margaret's congregations, joining Sunday Worship regularly on Zoom, with BSL interpreting.

In the summer, we held short times of prayer and worship outside, enabling us to connect with those more isolated and unable to use technology.

Between September and December 2020, we were able to meet monthly, for services in person at All Saints, Huntingdon and live-stream these BSL services via Zoom, for those unable to join us in person. From April 2021, we are hoping to begin this again.

With Deaf Clubs and meeting places being closed, reaching out to the wider Deaf Community has been mainly through Facebook videos which have been watched by many hundreds of Deaf people. Despite trying to be visible and available, one to one conversations with those outside

the Deaf Church, have been limited.

However, the Deaf Church is being built up in faith and community, and will be ready to reach out to others, when the time is right. We trust God to lead us in his mission, and continue to pray and give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thess 5: 16-18).

Rev Jan Smith

PCC Report

The PCC met eleven times during the year, which included an extra meeting on 30th December to discuss the future of in-person services as Covid case numbers were rising as we approached the winter months and a 'second wave'. The Standing Committee and Fabric Committee met on one occasion.

The following committees also met at various times throughout the year: Personnel; Property; Finance; Children and Youth; World Mission; and the Strategy Review Working Group (SRWG)

The year began with plans to implement a communication strategy to raise awareness of the importance of being a PCC

member. This included the development of an induction and training plan for new members. The SRWG appointed five new work stream leads to work on specific areas of the plan (see Ian's report above). Light 2020 was cancelled due to COVID.

From April all PCC meetings were held on Zoom with the main focus being how to implement a virtual church and reach as many members as possible. The possibility of a broadband connection to live stream services and address the continuing issue with the church roof alarm were considered, since this first discussion, Mike Pinnock has spent lots of time researching the idea.

Lots of planning and discussion has taken place this year around how and when we can safely open the church for in person services.

Music – Worship

Thank you to all the music team and all the PA, AV and Zoom operators who support us and to Susan Cooke who never fails to have a music rota in place for the next month regardless of our different availabilities.

What can we say about this year? It has proved very different from any of the other 22 years that I (Alwyn) have played in the St James band, and I would imagine that longer serving musicians would support that. Initially, those of us who provide the live music in the church were able to take a break. Many who missed meeting with the church family in the building, were glad when the Church permitted in-person services inline with Government Guidance. The introduction of live music at these services has been appreciated.

Until guidance allows the use of the church organ, different and smaller music groups have been leading the sung worship. A special thank you to the musicians who have felt able to play - socially distanced of course. An understanding message goes to those who have not felt comfortable meeting in the church building during this troubled time. We miss you all and can't wait to resume normality.

In more usual times, we provide musical support around the village - at the school, Field Lodge, the

Christmas market and the Axe and Compass (Christmas Eve Carols) but these all had to be cancelled which was disappointing.

This year we have missed John Tuttlebee playing keyboard in the band and we wish him and Di well as they are now Zooming closer to home with Godmanchester Baptist Church.

Despite the current scenario, if you have musical talents, please feel able to offer your time to the music team. With the current smaller groups and smaller congregations, you might feel the time is right to have a go. Despite the fact that we have around a dozen musicians, we do have to work round people's holidays and other family and work commitments (we are not all retired!), and some new volunteers to take turns on the rota (maybe just once a month) would be very much appreciated.

We are all blessed by the time that we spend singing and playing for the Lord, and His people at St James'.

Ian Cooke, Alwyn Frost and Stephen Terrell

Flowers

The flower team were at my house planning for Easter flowers in March last year, before in person services were suddenly halted, the church building locked with no Easter service to decorate for. Since then, the building has been open intermittently, but without our usual weekly floral contributions. There were three additions to our small team during this year, and I'd like to welcome Zoe, Ranjini and Aline, who have kindly volunteered to join us, and of course, thank you to Christine, June, Rosemary and Sandra for their ongoing support in helping to make our church building welcoming to members and visitors as we look forward to a better year.

Elaine Lee

Safeguarding

I am pleased, and relieved, that there have been no safeguarding disclosures or

concerns over the last 12 months. The Church of England has continued to develop its safeguarding practice guidance, with which we are compliant. Safeguarding training has continued online, with the C1 module revised and the requirement for the C2 Leadership module very much reduced. As the lockdown rules are relaxed and more face to face activities are permitted, the need for continued safeguarding vigilance will increase throughout the coming year.

Ian Sinkinson

Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Finances

I would like to thank Tim Drye for his time as Treasurer over the past years and his advice and guidance to me as new treasurer. I would also like to thank Karen Timmins for her invaluable work as accountant and for her patience in handling queries from myself and from the PCC.

Voluntary giving to the general fund in 2020 was £181,945 and total income was £195,254. The cash balance in the general fund at year end was £100,879.

We had a very successful appeal last year and raised £39,077, of which £24,918 went to the Anbesan Hoole Covid Appeal and £9,180 to the Anbesan Hoole Mission.

This year I am pleased to report that we are able to fulfil our goal of donating 15% of our income to our Mission Partners. The total budget for our mission partners for 2021 is £29,300.

We are also working with Hope Into Action to support a homeless family in one of the church houses. This will result in a reduction in income from the church house of approx. £6000/year.

An increased budget of £5,680 has been allocated to our youth ministry and provision of £10,000 has been made in the church budget for essential repairs. We are also looking at how we may support the coffee

shop as it returns to opening after Covid-19.

In the next year I would like to look at how we invest the money that has been so generously donated and conduct a spending review to ensure we are making best use of the funds entrusted to St James.

We are extraordinarily blessed as a Church and I ask you all to pray that we may use the gifts given to us wisely and to the greater glory of God.

Edward Nevill Hon. Treasurer

Monthly Prayer Meeting

A monthly prayer meeting started in July on Zoom. This comprises some worship, reading of Scripture and individuals presenting 3 or 4 topics for prayer. They lead us together in prayer before we breakout for smaller groups where we each have the opportunity to prayer with 4 or 5 others.

If you haven't ventured to pray in this way do follow the link in the weekly email and join the 20+ who come regularly.

Friday Prayer Group

The Friday evening prayer group has continued to pray together even during this last rather different and remarkable year. We provided prayer points, which were collated and sent out to the group every week. While we were in very restricted lockdown we prayed in our homes – still on a Friday evening at 7pm . While the in-person services took place in the church, we were allowed to meet in the coffee shop, with social distancing, wearing masks, not being able to sing, but praying together and being blessed through it. Anyone who would like to join us is very welcome. The group comprises presently about nine people.

Ute Mokros

Deanery Synod

Covid hit the functioning of the Huntingdon Deanery Synod very hard in 2020, with the Synod meetings scheduled for March and June both cancelled.

At the St James's APCM our Deanery Synod Representatives for the next triennium, which commenced on 1st December 2020, were confirmed as Alison Craven and Ian Sinkinson.

The first meeting of the new Synod was held on 19th January 2021 on Zoom. Welcoming members to the new deanery triennium, the Rural Dean, the Revd Ian Brennan thanked all who had contributed to enabling worship to continue through three lockdowns, particularly by embracing 21st century technology to keep congregations and communities together. He warned that synod would face some challenging issues, both nationally and internationally; particularly the question of a Christian understanding of

human sexuality. He pleaded for mutual support, understanding and cooperation in maintaining the life of our churches so that, when the crisis eased, we could together worship in spirit and in truth; knowing that in these difficult times we had indeed loved and supported each other, as we were called to do.

Synod was reminded of the continuing need for vigilance in safeguarding, and the Deanery Treasurer congratulated the Deanery in meeting in full its Deanery Share for 2020. He said that, in spite of a reduction in diocesan investment income of around £1m in each of 2020 and 2021, the diocese had not changed the ministry share request from deaneries other than to absorb an increase of £2,000 offered by Huntingdon Christchurch.

The Archdeacon, the Ven Hugh McCurdy, introduced the new deanery planning process which offered an opportunity to shape the future, with each deanery in the diocese planning for a post

-Covid world that did not necessarily reflect either the status quo ante or the 'new normal' shaped by what was permitted during the crisis. In many communities, the church had seen its profile rise as it worked to fulfil the needs of vulnerable and marginalised people, with more people feeling connected to the church and greater numbers taking part in 'virtual' services than had been in congregations before the pandemic. The impacts on the church would be multi-faceted – on finance, leadership, aging congregations, underlying health issues in relation to the use of buildings, stretching of ministry resources and uncertainty about the future. This required deaneries to have big, honest conversations, not about reducing posts (which was not the objective), but about the use of resources, including ministry, buildings, finance, schools and governance.

A further synod meeting was

held on the 16th March again on Zoom. The Revd Ian Brennand explained that long-awaited changes to marriage registration were about to come into force. While incumbents would no longer be required to issue marriage certificates, they would still have to maintain church registers. It was not yet clear how the changes would be implemented in parishes; new arrangements for reserving grave spaces in open churchyards would also be sent round. The Rural Dean thanked those parishes that had completed the ReachEly questionnaire. This was designed to inform the future, including a new round of deanery planning. As yet the diocese had not submitted a digest of data from the questionnaire to assist with the planning process and the deanery was also hoping for some specific guidance from the Archdeacon shortly. The Rural Dean had circulated documents relating to the *Seven Marks of a Healthy*

Church, which had first been published some years ago. He recommended that PCCs discuss these with their incumbents as a useful exercise, particularly for smaller churches.

The next meeting of the Deanery Synod was scheduled for 22nd June 2021

Ian Sinkinson

World Mission

As with everything, the pandemic has changed things in the ways our Mission Partners have been working, and in some ways, our support of them. Highlights have been seeing **Anbu** grow in his ministry in Bach Christian Hospital in northern Pakistan from being the new junior doctor to being the one ensuring Covid patients were treated, ventilators bought and put into use, a new ward established for use as a critical care unit, encouraging other staff to cope with the difficulties and dangers with trust in the

Lord, and through it all telling patients and friends of the gospel.

Another highlight has been the response of the local team in **Jigsaw** in the slums of Manila to the acute need of food and cleaning supplies among those now without work, and the support of the children and families with weekly activity packs, to help their wellbeing and continue to teach them about Jesus. These have been very popular and led to new contacts and the team have continued to develop this despite the loss of a senior staff member from cancer. **The Lee family** have been in lockdown in Malaysia, where Tim has been continuing his support of Jigsaw remotely.

Mission Possible's work has changed too, with schools not operating for most of the year in Rwanda and other countries. Children and teachers have been helped, and facilities developed, Richard and Ruth have continued to be very busy

supporting the work with funds and advice, but been unable to visit.

Seeta Gurung's work with **DAI**, training and equipping young Christians to manage, lead and live out their faith in their work and daily lives continues, but online.

Most of the work of **the Frèsard family** with **Wycliffe Bible Translators** is also done online but Pascal has been able during the year to travel to Senegal to support the team there as their manager. Janet has continued remotely helping with translation.

We have also continued to support the work of **CBM** and **Tearfund**.

During the year PCC agreed to end our partnership with **Baldaeus Theological College** in Sri Lanka as there has been a breakdown in governance, legal action taken by the two factions and almost no teaching has been done. This was done after attempting to help in reconciliation and with regret as

the College has been a great asset in the training of leaders for the Tamil church across the remoter central and northern areas of the country over the last 20 years.

Our giving to our overseas Mission Partners in 2020 was nearly £30,000. Praise God we were able to help others see lives transformed by Jesus through this and our prayer.

Alison Craven

Tower

Unfortunately very little ringing has taken place this year due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic. All ringing ceased in early March 2020 during the first lockdown. After four months silence the bells were given a thorough inspection in July and were still in good working order. In August we were able to ring three bells for a wedding when the restrictions were temporarily eased slightly and two bells were rung on Tuesday mornings when the church was open for

private prayer. On Saturday 15 August a bell was tolled 75 times to commemorate VJ Day as part of a national Ringing out for Peace initiative. It was not until September that we were permitted to ring two bells once again, and chose to ring before the in-person Wednesday morning services as they resumed.

A further lockdown in December put an end to all actual ringing to the time of writing. However some ringers have been meeting for virtual practices using an online programme called Ringing Room. Although this is in no way equal to actual tower bell ringing it has provided a chance for ringers to keep in contact and hopefully not to have forgotten all the methods!

In the belfry all the cable required for the simulator has been fitted but further work on this project ceased during the various lockdowns. Swift boxes are being installed in the east louvers and should be in

position for the return of birds this Spring.

Sharon and Martin Williams

Parish Centre

The coffee shop closed its doors to customers on 20th March; little did we know the Parish Centre would quickly follow as we were all ordered to stay at home. Although locked down, it felt like a novelty for some, the sun shone, we worked from home, took long walks and spent time with our families. We quickly realised this was a lonely, challenging time, for many people who missed their friends, family and social activities as they were unable to connect with Zoom church and other such on line activities.

During this year a **Stay at Home** broadsheet has been delivered to church family members in the Hemingfords and St Ives so they felt connected. During the warm weather we enjoyed conversations on the doorstep or through an open window whilst delivering news from St James'. Thank you to my supportive distributors.

In May the first '**Lunch on Wheels**' was trialled, delivering a hot meal

to approximately 55 people around the area. We continued these until September. Thank you to all those people who volunteered to make this mammoth task happen – carrying out food prep, cooking, packing food bags, delivering food and phoning around our lovely customers – all the time whilst maintaining social distancing! A particular memory from the hottest day of the year, was in the hot kitchen cooking whilst wearing a facemask, hopefully still getting the food out on time and delivered to the right address. Thank you all, listening to the positive feedback I know our efforts were greatly appreciated by everyone who enjoyed our home cooked meal.

The coffee shop opened again for business in August with reduced opening times due to having no paid team members and fewer volunteers. It was great to see our loyal customers and volunteers who were also happy to be back at the coffee shop. Thank you everyone who supported us during this time of uncertainty.

We have continued to provide administration support to both

churches during the year, although it has been mostly online there is still a lot to keep us busy.

Rachel Winton

In Conclusion

While we rejoice in the gift of new life and celebrate the birth of children and grandchildren, the successful adaptation of our worship, and the way in which so many of us have embraced the 15-years-in-one leap in the use of technologies, life has been significantly hard for many of you.

It was a joy last summer to baptise neighbours in Burlington Way - first, Lauren Barton in August, and Joy Robinson-Judd in September. Then little John Duah in October. One in her garden pool, the other in her bed, and little John with our new font - a gift in memory of John & Joan Soanes.

We thank Don Wright for his craftsmanship in making this and the lectern with the help of Stephen Terrell.

We also acknowledge the immense losses of the past year. As some of our oldest members became increasingly confined or moved, at first, temporarily away

to be with family, we have begun to embrace irreversible changes in what 'church' will look like in the months ahead with dear, missing, friends in Christ.

It is with sadness that we have not been able to celebrate the lives of Derek Clifton, June Anderson, Janet Burden, Barbara Tillyer, Joy Robinson-Judd, Ena Smith and others in both villages. This meant going further afield to conduct services in Fenland (to be live-streamed to New Zealand) and Barton Glebe Woodland Burial ground in January.

It is with sadness that many of our young people have been unable to enjoy the new challenges of the transition into independent living and enjoy finding a new church to flourish as disciples of Christ, or opportunities to follow their ambitions in work.

It is with thankfulness that we receive our vaccinations and know that God is Jehovah-Jireh, the One who provides.

We face challenges in the months ahead as we figure out how to take what we have learnt, and benefitted from, with us and what to leave behind. We can be certain that our Lord's great

commission remains unchanged and that he calls each one of us to be disciples who are to go and make disciples.

First pray, keep your eyes on Jesus and 'motivate one another to acts of love and good works' (Hebrews 10:24). Be witnesses to all that God is doing in your life, so that others may hear the story of God's redeeming love for themselves.

Remember the 4 E's - Evangelising, Establishing, Enabling and Engaging - and, having asked God, begin using the gifts he has given you in one of these areas so that we see lives being transformed by Jesus.

Rev Peter Cunliffe