

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF SS PETER & PAUL, AYLESFORD.
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2019**

Administrative Information

St Peter and St Paul's Church is situated in Vicarage Close, Aylesford. It is part of the Diocese of Rochester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is Church Office, The Brassey Centre, Station Road, Aylesford, ME20 7QR. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is registered with the Charity Commission under Registration No. 1138956.

Structure, governance and management

PCC members who have served at any time from 1 January 2020 until the date this report was approved.

Name	Office	Dates served if not full year	Elected term ends
The Revd Ruth Peet	Incumbent		
Peter Smith	Lay Reader appointed to PCC		
Alan Longmuir (Treasurer)	Churchwarden, Deanery Synod Representative		2020 2020
Aline Ongley	Churchwarden		2020
Ann Beale (Secretary)	Elected PCC member		2020
Gordon Hunt (Vice Chairperson)	Elected PCC member, Deanery Synod Representative		2020 2020
Janet Holdstock	Elected PCC member, Pastoral Assistant		2020
Bob Halliday	Elected PCC member		2020
Ann Beale	Elected PCC member		2020
Julie Hambelton	Elected PCC member		2021
Christine Hatfield	Elected PCC member		2021
Emma Parren	Elected PCC member		2021
Charlie Bunker	Elected PCC member	Resigned January 2020	2021
Sharon Stigle	Elected PCC member		2022
Pam Storr	Elected PCC member		2022
Andy Brown	Elected PCC member		2022
Anita Keays	Elected PCC member		2022

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All those attending Church are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

Professional advisor: Simon Miller and Company
Bank: CAF (Charities Aid Foundation)
Independent Examiner: Martyn Burt BSc (Hons), ACMA, CGMA

Sides-persons:

8.00am

Mr & Mrs J. Vidler, Mrs R. Chapman, Mr & Mrs J. Lloyd, Mrs Doreen Dilling, Gloria Johnson.

10.00am

Mr & Mrs G. Game, Mr G Sladen, Mrs A Beale, Mrs B Hunt, Mr R. Turner, Mrs D. Longmuir, Mr & Mrs S Hambleton, Mrs A Keays, Mrs R Robinson, Mr N Simister, Mr A Brown, Mrs A Ongley, Mrs B Russell.

Aims and Purposes

The PCC of St Peter and St Paul has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical; this includes the provision of regular church services and baptisms, weddings and funerals. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the church of St Peter and St Paul.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to a vision of sharing God's love for all, worshipping, serving and growing together. We aim to enable and attract as many as possible to worship and be part of our parish community at St Peter and St Paul's. Grounding the life of our church in our relationship with God through Jesus Christ, through prayer and worship, we aim to grow in faith and in numbers, to provide pastoral care for people living in the parish and to help build community.

We have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and in particular the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. We believe that our work contributes public benefit through the development of the spiritual well-being of individuals, the practical outworking of faith in wider society, and the support for those in need. We deliver on our responsibility to maintain and provide the parish church and its services for worship, including baptisms, weddings and funerals, for all in the parish.

Church Electoral Roll

As at 31st December 2019 there are 110 on the Church Electoral Roll of which 53 (45%) are not resident in the Parish.

Church Attendance (Numbers in brackets are the 2018 figures for comparison).

The number of people attending church on a usual Sunday was 74 (61) adults and 6 (1) under 18's. These figures include 8am and 10am congregations, including family services, but do not include other special services. The increase was largely due to 14 new regular adult members of the congregation and 4 under 18's. Special services included Easter Day attended by 135 (109) and Remembrance Sunday attended by 332 (361); not too bad a reduction considering that 2018 was the centenary of WW1. 572 (339) attended special services and events (e.g. carol singing) during December, with 295 (290) attending Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.

These figures are very encouraging and we are hopeful that further growth is possible.

4 (3) adults left the worshipping community during 2019, due to death/illness.

This year 15 (19) babies and children, and 1 (1) adult were baptised, 5 (6) couples were married in church, 9 (10) funerals were held in church, 10 (0) in a crematorium and 3 burials of ashes were conducted.

Our regular 'worshipping community' is larger than those able to attend church. This year we counted 137 (162). Comparison with the 2018 figure is unreliable because the basis of counting used may be different. Of the 137 this year, 59% are aged over 70. We are not complacent about the implications of this for the future.

Our Fresh Expression, Messy Church, continued on a monthly basis with on average 17 adults and 11 under 18's attending.

In September 2019 we started Sunday Club for 4-11 year olds on the 2nd and 4th Sunday mornings, which has not been well attended. We are aware of the emphasis that we need to put on encouraging families, children and young people, and this will undoubtedly be encompassed in our aims for 2020 and beyond. The Junior Choir, introduced during 2018, continues to bring a good number of youngsters to the 3rd Sunday Come & Praise service, often with their families.

Review of the Year and Vicar's Report – Revd Ruth Peet

2019 at St. Peter and St. Paul's Aylesford began for me on 12th February with the most wonderful Institution, Induction and Installation service, attended by 240 people, and conducted by the Archdeacon, The Venerable Julie Conalty. My thanks again to everyone who had any part in that glorious and hugely welcoming occasion.

Prior to my induction, the church had held a planning meeting on 12th January. The outcome from that meeting was a list of ten mission and ministry proposals for 2019. Obviously that meeting was held in the absence of an incumbent, and as the year has advanced the items on that list have assumed greater or lesser priority, as we have worked together to identify and progress various aims. This does not diminish the attempt of the church to plan during the interregnum; I was greatly impressed that such planning was undertaken, and have considered all the aims identified at every opportunity.

Of the ten items, one was achieved during 2019, in that a Christmas Family Service was held in the Capel Morris Centre on the RBLI village. A second, concerning the prayer life of the church, was explored, in that Morning and Evening Prayer, and prayer stations were introduced during *Thy*

Kingdom Come (May 30th (Ascension) – June 9th (Pentecost)), and since then, Morning Prayer has been held in church every weekday at 8.30am, providing an important daily opportunity to underpin the life of our church and community in prayer. The Prayerline and Prayer Link have also been strengthened and advertised, and a Prayer Corner established in church.

Three further aims are in the pipeline for 2020 – a Christian explorers’ course, the development of home groups in the parish and the establishment of a Communications and Publicity Group.

Eight weeks after my induction, at last year’s APCM, I stated the obvious priorities – communication, growth and income, saying that these were not unusual; there were many churches in the same position, but also there were many who were not, and it was my aim and belief that we could be one of the thriving churches. Throughout the year I have emphasised the balance we need to achieve – careful, responsible money management alongside warmth, generosity and love for all around us. I felt that we needed to ground the life of our church in prayer and trust God to show us the way forward. This need is being met through Morning Prayer as described above, but the development of our individual prayer life and spiritual growth was recognised as essential too, and further ways of praying are yet to be explored. Individual prayer during Communion services was also recognised as needing reliable organisation.

The number of people attending church has grown this year (as reported in the section: Church Attendance); it has been a pleasure to welcome 14 new adult, and 4 new under 18’s as regular members of the congregation. Weekly worship has offered a variety of traditions, styles and content, and has been very well supported by the music leaders, the choir and the many volunteers who share in the leading of worship.

We have also seen an improvement in our finances, in that regular giving increased to the point where the predicted overall deficit greatly decreased. Hopeful of a continued improvement we agreed to offer the full amount requested for the 2020 Diocesan Common Fund (with the understanding that we could, of course, reduce the offer if necessary). A Stewardship Campaign will be run in 2020, through which we will aim to explore further ways of increasing income.

Our communication and publicity have benefited from more flexible use of the website and regular Facebook page updates. The number of Facebook followers grew by over 100 during the year. The website will be moved to a more up to date platform in 2020. The monthly magazine, *Contact*, has been enhanced with extra content and colour throughout. Ideally, we will find someone other than me to do the editing and layout. The price of the magazine was raised, which the majority of subscribers were happy with, but there is more work to be done on managing the magazine finances and on growing it into a broader community magazine.

Following the 2019 APCM, changes were made to the PCC Committee structure as follows:

- The Worship Committee remit was changed to include more proactive planning, and representatives from Families, Children and Young People’s ministry, music and lay ministry were invited to join.
- To avoid duplication of effort and consolidate event planning, the Outreach Committee and the Social & Fundraising Committee joined together to form the Mission, Outreach, Social & Fundraising Committee.
- Two new committees were approved - a Families, Children and Young People’s Committee (FCYP) and a Communications Committee (and will be established in 2020).

To provide for children at church on 2nd and 4th Sundays, in September we started Sunday Club. This is very ably led by Emma Parren, but the uptake has only been small. The FCYP Committee will continue to look at this, and at supporting families more broadly, in 2020.

During 2019 other notable events were:

- The Patronal Festival Weekend (29th-30th June) – a study morning, cream teas, special service and barbecue.
- Two combined services with The Friars, held in Aylesford church (Lent and Advent).
- ‘Pledge to Use Less Plastic’ Harvest project and service/sermon series.
- ‘Lights of Love’. This Christmas tree festival began on 1st December, with a special service and through the selling of commemorative stars, raised £1260, half of which went to the Heart of Kent Hospice.
- Carol singing in the village square and at Preston Hall (new this year).

Many other social and outreach events have been organised throughout the year, most of them reaching an audience outside our regular congregation.

Following keeping the church open during *Thy Kingdom Come*, we experimented with keeping it open (staffed) on Fridays and Saturdays in August, and at weekends during ‘Lights of Love’ and this was much appreciated by a good number of visitors.

It has been immensely encouraging to support Charlie Bunker, Emma Parren and Jane Roberts as they began the Bishop’s Certificate Course this year. We are the only parish to be supporting three candidates!

It was also a joy to prepare and celebrate with five confirmation candidates – Christine Hatfield, Kellie Packer, Toby Packer, David Peek and Pam Pope. All were confirmed on 3rd November by Bishop Simon, with the exception of Pam (on holiday), who will be confirmed as soon as possible in 2020.

During the year I have been involved with and supported Royal British Legion Industries in various parade and remembrance services, The Heart of Kent Hospice in two ‘Light up a Life’ services, and three of our four schools, through school governorship, leading Collective Worship and support to Aylesford Secondary following the tragic death of a pupil. The relationship with St. Peter’s CE Primary School has been strengthened, and worship in church is now a regular occurrence. In 2020 I hope to similarly strengthen the relationship with St. Mark’s CE Primary School. When the Queen visited RBLI on 6th November, I was invited to say grace.

In 2020 we will integrate the Diocesan initiative ‘Called Together’ into our planning process. ‘Called Together’ will provide a framework for local missional planning, and we will have the help of our Archdeaconry Growth Enabler.

During the year we sadly lost three members of our regular congregation: Meryl Walsh, Marion Cole and Richard Bourne; all of them greatly missed.

There are many challenges ahead of us. Bringing our finances onto an even footing remains a priority. We also need to work out the best way of reaching out to all the new housing in our parish.

It would be remiss of me to talk as if my role was easily manageable, which is not too surprising considering the shortage of clergy in the Church of England. I am spending more time on administrative than pastoral/ministerial work, and not always maintaining a good work/life balance. I do work hard but there are times when all the ongoing objectives simply cannot be met and I am grateful for your clearly expressed understanding. This state of affairs is obviously not ideal, but I am not unhappy. I will continue to look for ways of addressing this issue.

There are many, many people who contribute to the life of the church, on both paid and voluntary bases, and I would like to express my gratitude to each and every one. I hesitate to mention anyone by name, because as soon as I do I will have to name many more. The church simply could not thrive without the huge voluntary workload undertaken, which is so greatly appreciated.

Finance Report

The loss for the year was £3478. This was a significant improvement on last year when the deficit was £7530.

Income was up due to additional givers. The future of our finances is by additional givers, which means we have to grow our congregation and I know that is the intention of the PCC during 2020.

During the year the fund raising has been varied and interesting and as a result there was an improvement in income as with Brassey Lettings.

There has been a marked change to the magazine, which is brighter, more colourful and has a much better content. Because of the use of colour the cost has gone up consequently the price of the magazine has increased however the previous price of the magazine had not changed for over a decade.

Next year we will have to pay the DBF part of the fees back to the diocese, which is in line with all other dioceses.

Again, I must thank members of the committee and a personal thank you to Pam Storr and Gerry Hughes.

Valerie Ballard and her 'Brassey Bazaar' team support the PCC's funds to a very large extent and I am extremely grateful.

Reserves Policy 2019

In addition to money designated for specific purposes including investments, it is the policy of the PCC to maintain a balance of unrestricted funds (if possible) which equates to approximately four months unrestricted payments, to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time, this is in addition to the money raised for specific purposes. Our balance this year is £5169, which does not meet the requirements of the policy. We have free funds of £24811 and restricted funds of £4522; these funds are held with the Diocesan Board of Finance. CAF Bank, The Church of England deposit fund and the Affirmative Deposit Fund.

Annual Report of Fabric, Goods and Ornaments

The Fabric Committee report that there have been no changes to the Goods and Ornaments of the Church in the last year.

The central heating system was serviced twice during the year (May 2019 and early January 2020) in accordance with the Diocese and Insurance recommendations. A faculty "B" raised and approved to upgrade the heating in the Choir Vestry and the Vicar's Vestry, work has been completed in the Choir Vestry, work in the Vicar's Vestry currently being planned.

Received Quinquennial Report on the Church end of February 2019 some 7 months after the inspection. Areas requiring attention within one year have been addressed which included checking and clearing all church gutters and down pipes and replacing missing/broken roof tiles on the south face. Worth noting that the report states that the Tower roof will need to be addressed within the next 5 years.

Received Quinquennial Report on the Electrical Installation within the church during the year and all CODE 2 issues addressed.

Footpath through the churchyard (south side of church) from the small gate in Vicarage Close up to the main church entrance replaced with a wider shingle path.

A yearly churchyard/ grounds tidy up was completed by a good number of the congregation and others during the summer months. This was yet again very successful and a bring and share lunch was enjoyed by all.

A deep clean of the inside of the church was carried out in October 2019. Again, this was supported by a good number of the congregation and others. This was the first time for a good number of years this had been done and proved to be very successful. It was agreed by the Fabric Committee that this should be a yearly event similar to the churchyard clear up.

There was a break in at the church during the year. Two windows on the north side damaged, chest adjacent to the vestry door broken into and the door leading up to the bell ringing chamber damaged with money taken from the cabinet within the chamber. Currently insurance claims being processed.

140 The Avenue: - Currently nothing to report.

The Friends of Aylesford Church very kindly replaced the door mats at the Priest's door and the main entrance into the church during the year. They have stated to the Fabric Committee they would potentially like to help with funding other issues/exercises within the Church or Church grounds.

In conclusion, the Fabric Committee would like to thank all those members of the PCC and congregation who have helped in any way with the work we have carried out over the last year.

Malling Deanery Synod 2019

Deanery Synod met three times during 2019. The Parish representatives are the Revd Ruth Peet, Alan Longmuir and Gordon Hunt.

February

The first meeting was in February in Wateringbury. Synod was told that the church is one of very few parishes to make a surplus due to lots of fund-raising events.

Wateringbury was in a joint benefice with East Malling and Teston but, as part of the Deanery Mission and Ministry Plan (DMMP), is about to join with Mereworth and West Peckham.

The Bishop of Tonbridge Simon Burton Jones addressed the synod. He feels we need to bring God more into our meetings – we tend to pray at the beginning and end and forget about the middle. He spoke of the loss of trust in professionals, but especially in the clergy, mentioning child abuse scandals as an important factor. On the other hand, the role of the church in various pieces of outreach work such as food banks was very valuable and appreciated.

June

The Synod met in July at Ryarsh and heard about how the four parishes of the BART benefice, Birling, Addington, Ryarsh and Trottiscliffe, worked together. Four PCC's, four sets of church officers, and a Sunday service in each of the four churches each week makes for a lot of work for the incumbent.

There was further discussion on DMMP; Larkfield were about to join with East Malling in September

The idea of "clusters", informal collaboration between parishes to share facilities and resources, was discussed. Some clergy spoke of the benefits they had found in this concept with the mutual support and help for clergy.

Revd Ruth Peet was elected as the Deanery's clergy representative on Diocesan Synod.

October

The Synod met in July at West Farleigh.

Wil North, Rector of Barming, St Margaret's, was introduced as the new Area Dean in place of Matthew Buchan.

West Farleigh has an ancient church and a population of only 500. It is part of the Coxheath benefice. Lots of quinquennial works on the church building were done in 2019 due to grants, fund raising and generous gifts from parishioners.

Teston and Barming were still exploring a merger.

The benefits of cluster working were further explored in the light of experience at West Malling, Offham, King's Hill, Mereworth and West Peckham. They hold a joint service every few months, often with outside speakers such as the Bishop. Wedding preparation and an Alpha course is shared. There is a shared Youth Group and a cluster administrator means that admin tasks and costs are shared.

The Revd Richard Williams, the Diocesan Finance Director gave a presentation on "Managing the Budget" and the changes being introduced for 2020. He explained where the Diocese income comes from and how it is spent. The average parish with one full time minister costs £73,000.

He explained that the Unrestricted General Fund has been renamed the Common Fund and a new presentation has been rolled out on the Diocese website this week. Richard set out how the fund is used in the diocese and why parishes are asked to give in this way. Most of the fund is used to pay, house and support the clergy.

Richard emphasised that the generosity of parishes enables the diocese to grow. He talked about the Indicative Offers process (i.e. requests for contributions to the diocese based on each parish's circumstances). The Diocese wants to try and change the language and culture from blame and negativity to working together and supporting each other. The Diocese is trying to support parishes and is trying to recognise difficulties.

Indicative Offers were about to be issued and Richard reiterated the system is voluntary but if all contribute the Diocese will break even. He asked all parishes to look at the position prayerfully and said that if we all pull together, we can do this. It was agreed that we all want to avoid a spiralling down position. Church attendance has declined by 24% over ten years with clergy numbers down by 13%. There is clear evidence that cutting clergy leads to further decline and most present agreed with this.

Safeguarding Report

Churches are particularly vulnerable to people determined to harm children, young people and other vulnerable people.

The PCC has formally adopted the House of Bishop's Safeguarding Policy and is committed to implementing it. It is complying with its legal duty to have due regard to the House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding. In May 2019 the PCC undertook the self-audit provided by the diocese; whilst a formal response from the diocese is still awaited it is understood our performance was satisfactory.

The PCC has a safeguarding group to assist it in meeting its commitments to prevent harm. The group comprises the Revd Ruth Peet, Aline Ongley, Gordon Hunt, Sharon Stigle, Charlie Bunker and Janet Holdstock. Janet is the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Adults' Safeguarding Representative; Sharon is the Children's Safeguarding Representative.

The safeguarding group meets regularly to implement National and Diocesan policies and guidance on safeguarding. The group reports at every meeting of PCC. Matters that are regularly considered include appointments of workers (including volunteers), training, raising awareness of safeguarding issues and good practice, assessing risks, and addressing concerns. Advice and support is obtained from the Diocesan Safeguarding team whenever needed. The PCC, through the safeguarding group, will respond promptly to any concerns or complaints, following procedures and guidelines and reporting to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor without delay.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, not only the appointed officers. A sound safeguarding culture will make it difficult and discourage people from harming or abusing children or adults.

There is a safeguarding notice board in church on which the PCC displays a formal policy statement and safeguarding contact details and the weekly notice sheet, parish magazine and parish website are used to promote awareness of safeguarding matters.