

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF SS PETER & PAUL, AYLESFORD.
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020**

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 now 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		
Alan Longmuir	Churchwarden Deanery Synod Representative*		2021
Aline Ongley	Churchwarden		2021
Julie Hambelton	Elected PCC member		2021
Christine Hatfield	Elected PCC Member		2021
Emma Parren	Elected PCC member		2021
Ian Packer	Elected PCC member Elected Deanery Synod Representative		2021 2023
Sharon Stigle	Elected PCC Member		2022
Pam Storr	Elected PCC Member		2022
Anita Keays	Elected PCC member		2022
Andy Brown	Elected PCC member		2022
Gordon Hunt (Vice Chairman)	Elected PCC Member Elected Deanery Synod Representative		2023
Ann Beale	Elected PCC member Secretary		2023
Janet Holdstock	Elected PCC Member Pastoral Assistant		2023
Sue Gallico	Elected PCC member		2023

*Alan Longmuir remains a Deanery Synod Representative by virtue of his membership of Diocesan Synod.

Peter Smith (Lay Reader) and Peter Walton (Treasurer) are not members of the PCC but have a standing invitation to all PCC meetings.

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 B.Sc. (Hons), ACMA, CGMA

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 want to enable and attract as many as possible to worship and be part of our parish community at St Peter and St Paul's. We aim, under God, 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, noting that this is currently under review. 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 2020

As at 31st December 2020 there were 114 on the electoral roll of which 48% are not resident in the Parish.

Attendance

We can usually report the number of people attending church on a 'usual' Sunday. In 2019 it was 74 adults and 6 under 18's. This year it is not possible to compare like with like. A 'usual' Sunday took one of three possible forms:

Church-only	12 services	Average attendance 55 adults
Zoom-only	23 services	Average attendance 51 adults
Church with Zoom	15 services	Average attendance 55 adults.

(On 2 Sundays, 23rd Mar and 27th Dec, there was no congregational service).

These figures do not include attendance at 8am, but the incidence of 8am services does not correlate exactly with the types of services above. However, on the 11 occasions when there were 8am and 10am church-only services on the same day, the average adult Sunday attendance was 71.

Average 8am attendance before the first lockdown (10 services) was 17 adults; on 3 later occasions it was 12 adults.

Under 18's attended 22 10am services across all 3 forms, giving an average of 4 per service (but this figure was heavily weighted by the attendance of the Junior Choir at 2 Come & Praise services before the first lockdown).

Special services included 12th Jan – Covenant Renewal (69 adults, 2 under 18's); 14th Feb – St. Peter's School End of Term (79 adults, 177 under 18's – not included in the figures above); 16th Feb – Special service for 2020 wedding couples (67 adults, 12 under 18's); 8th Nov – Remembrance Sunday (61 adults, 3 under 18's); 12th Dec – 2 x Services of Remembrance (31 and 24 adults) – not included in the figures above); 13th Dec – Carol Service (57 adults, 3 under 18's); 24th Dec – Nativity Service (32 adults, 17 under 18's – not included in the figures above). These figures cannot realistically be compared with 2019 (when Remembrance Sunday attendance was 332, for example).

The following figures are easier to compare with 2019, so 2019 numbers are shown in brackets.

This year we reported a worshipping community of 91 (137). This included 1 age 0-10 (12), 2 age 11-17 (4), 29 age 18-69 (40) and 59 age 70+ (81). (The worshipping community is people who attend a church service (not necessarily *in church*) at least once a month.) This reduction was despite 14 new adults joining the worshipping community. Unfortunately, we lost 47 adults from last year's total and 13 under 18's. The reduction in adults was due to people without internet access and not being able to hold services in the community (including Home Communion services). The reduction in under 18's was mainly due to the Junior Choir not being able to take part in services.

Sadly 3 (4) adults left the worshipping community during 2020, due to death/illness.

This year 5 (15) babies and children, and 2 (1) adults were baptised, 2 (5) couples were married in church, 8 (9) funerals were held in church, 14 (10) in a crematorium and 2 (3) burials of ashes were conducted.

Our Fresh Expression, Messy Church, continued fortnightly on Zoom during the first lockdown. Average attendance was 9 adults and 6 under 18's. However, interest dropped to only one child present, and the last session was held on 3rd July.

Annual Report on the Proceedings of the PCC and the Activities of the Parish Generally

During 2019, in accordance with our hopes and plans, attendance increased, and finances and communication improved. Our aim was to continue that gain in momentum through 2020.

As reported at last year's APCM (24th October 2020) we started 2020 with high hopes – we ran Christianity Explored, we had a thoroughly enjoyed wedding event for the 2020 couples and we were heading towards linking all our ideas for growth and community engagement into the Diocesan 'Called Together' initiative, beginning with a planning day to involve the wider community. However, the necessary response to the Covid-19 pandemic significantly changed the pattern of church life and created various challenges and opportunities.

The pattern of church life related to the church building was as follows:

1st Jan	Normal Sunday and weekday worship and activities.
23rd Mar	First UK lockdown. Church building closed completely until 1st July when we opened twice a week for private prayer.
26th Jul	Sunday worship and other services resumed (5 baptisms, 5 funerals and 1 wedding in our case).
8th Nov	Second UK lockdown. Remembrance Day service was Zoomed from church building.
29th Nov	Sunday worship and other services resumed (1 wedding and 1 funeral in our case).

March

On 17th March the Church of England published a statement suspending public worship until further notice. Our immediate response was to set up a group of pastoral telephone contacts and to phone everyone we could identify who was isolated. We set up the church to keep it open for private prayer, we made sure our regular food bank collection could continue and on 20th March published our first email newsletter which included resources for prayer and worship. The eNewsletter has been published at least weekly, since. Every weekday we held Morning and Evening Prayer by Zoom. Evening Prayer ended at the end of the first lockdown, but Morning Prayer still continues (attended by around 9 people). We also began the continuing process of going through the diary, trying to guess what we should cancel!

The March issue of 'Contact' magazine was the last one to be published in the year.

On 22nd March the Mothering Sunday service was videoed in church and published on YouTube, and we all lit a candle for hope in our windows. That day also saw the instruction from the Church of England to close all church buildings. Entry was only to be allowed for essential maintenance. So, on 24th March we formally

closed the building but did everything we could to communicate that the church was not the building, and we were still here.

On 29th March we held our first Zoom service from the vicarage, which was extremely well received, especially because people were so glad to see each other.

April

From 1st April, the Chequers (who were feeding many isolated people) included our pastoral telephone contact details with their food deliveries.

Gift baskets of biscuits were sent from us to the sheltered housing and care homes Royal British Legion Village and the hospice.

All Holy Week and Easter services were held on Zoom and we also sent the first printed newsletter aimed especially at people with no internet.

Sunday worship continued on Zoom, trying to reflect the mood but lift spirits with every service. Towards the end of April, a telephone 'Dial-A-Service' was introduced.

May

In May we held our first Messy Church by Zoom. Also, very concerned about people suffering and nearing death without spiritual support, we provided a second phone service 'Words of Comfort', and advertised it to RBLI sheltered living, care homes and hospice.

The eNewsletter continued to include topical information as necessary, for example, support for domestic abuse.

The postponed Lent Course 'Finding a Voice' began (via Zoom) on 23rd May and was thoroughly enjoyed. And then, for 'Thy Kingdom Come 2020' (Ascension to Pentecost) we put together a prayer series called 'My Prayer' from people in our community and published it on Facebook and YouTube.

June

On 13th June, Ruth was videoed leading a Sunflower Remembrance Service, for streaming by the Heart of Kent Hospice (HOKH). On 14th we set up a Food Table near Base Camp in the RBLI village. People could donate or take the food they needed. Excess food was taken to 'Food for Thought' in Maidstone.

We tried another initiative – Emma Parren, Charlie and Gemma Bunker offered home schooling support. Sadly, there was no take up, possibly because of the timing in relation to the school summer break.

June also brought the news, first, that church buildings could reopen for private prayer and some funerals, and then that from 4th July they could reopen for public worship. Weddings could also take place but with a cap on numbers.

July

From 1st July, the church opened for private prayer twice a week, an arrangement that allowed us to keep a 72-hour safe period between opening times. On 3rd July we tried our first Zoom quiz which was a great success. On 21st the church clock was started after being stopped at 10:37 for months and on 25th Terry Barnard tried out the bells. On 26th we re-opened for public worship (with booking).

In July, the new church website was launched, offering a more flexible and up to date form of communication.

August

15th August was billed as our last Zoom only service (that was what we thought at the time!) and on 22nd we held our first service in church that was also Zoomed.

September

In September we returned to a service pattern which included 8am Communion services on the 2nd and 5th Sundays of the month. On 6th September, as part of our continuing involvement with Churches Together in

Malling (CTiM) Ruth led a combined Songs of Praise service on Zoom, which had originally been planned to take place in Aylesford Church. On 12th, Ride & Stride raised £700. On 25th TMBC offered us a £500 grant to support the food table, and Pride Fencing offered us a shed for it. Emma Parren, one of our trainee Licenced Lay Ministers, led the Harvest service on a 'creation' theme. The 28th saw the publication of a second printed newsletter for those with no internet.

October

On 18th, Charlie Bunker (the other trainee LLM) led a Sunday service with a 'healing' theme.

November

On 2nd the second lockdown began but this time the church remained open every day for private prayer. Sunday services went back to Zoom.

Around Remembrance, we extended an intended 'Weekend of Remembering' to a fortnight. We offered the wider community three ways of being involved – we made poppies for people to plant in the churchyard 'Poppy field', we set up the 'Memory Tree' in church and we offered display space for memories and thoughts from the year, in the 'This Year' exhibition. Nearly 300 poppies were planted in the Poppy Field. St. Peter's School and Aylesford Primary contributed to the display. The 'Memory Tree' was popular, with 160 wooden leaves being added. On Remembrance Day itself (8th) Ruth was interviewed on Radio Kent and the Zoom-only service was conducted from church and via a second camera, included the ceremony outside church, by the war memorial.

Other November events included: On 15th Jane Roberts, training for the Bishop's Certificate, led a service on Zoom; 18th, the food table was closed, largely due to the change in weather; 27th, another Zoom quiz.

December

On 6th December Ruth was videoed again for the HOKH Light up a Life services to be streamed, and on the same day we were able to conduct Sunday worship in church again (also with Zoom).

On 8th we opened the Food Bank in the Brassey Centre and we were started off with a generous gift of food from Larkfield Community Church. On 22nd the donated food bank shed was erected behind the Brassey Centre.

The Christmas decorations in church included a Christmas tree displaying all the Lights of Love stars from 2019.

We planned Christmas services, including transmitting the Carol Service to outdoors, but eventually cancelled that because of safety concerns. The Christingle service on 17th was fun, as both church and Zoom congregations made their own Christingles as part of the service. The Christmas Eve Nativity Service was held on Zoom and was surprisingly well-attended by 32 adults and 17 children. On Christmas Day, the last service (church with Zoom) was held – for the year, and for the time being, as we headed into the third lockdown.

PCC Meetings

The PCC oversaw the above events and activities, holding a total of 10 meetings during the year, including 3 extraordinary meetings (23/4, 3/6 and 18/6) held to deal with specific pandemic-related issues and the financial implications. We continued throughout the year, to try to reduce time-consuming discussion on routine committee-related work and to focus on the priority concerns. Naturally, due to the pandemic, pastoral care, maintaining contact, safety, safeguarding and finance were the priorities. We also spent time discussing what we had learned from the pandemic situation and ideas for changes to church life and ministry. We tried to combine effective response to the situation with starting to think about new ideas, especially in relation to different forms of worship and a future community hub of some kind.

Due to the pressure of his work, PCC member Charlie Bunker resigned in January 2020. In May, the vacancy left by Charlie was filled by Ian Packer, who joined the PCC specifically as part of his discernment process for ordination.

The work of PCC Committees continued where possible (depending on the nature of the work and the availability of committee members), with the committees related to pandemic issues (particularly finance), meeting as often as was necessary. In response to the serious financial situation, a new committee, the Church Funding Group was set up in June, with all PCC members pledging support as necessary. Two sub-committees of the Finance Committee were also set up – one to set up Easyfundraising and the other to implement Legacy Giving.

Due to the volume of church-related work being attempted and the limited number of people available to work on it, in September, the Standing Committee was authorised to begin work to prioritise the church workload including ongoing projects.

The APCM was delayed but was eventually held successfully in church and by Zoom, on 24th October. We said goodbye to Bob Halliday and welcomed Sue Gallico as a new PCC member. Anita Keays' role as Electoral Role Officer was ratified (originally taken on in September, when Stephen Kyle stepped down due to his work commitments). Alan Longmuir stepped down from the role of Treasurer. Peter Walton took on the treasurer role; although not a PCC member, Peter has a standing invitation to all PCC and Standing Committee meetings. Thanks were expressed to all, those leaving and those staying, for their commitment to the church and their role.

Finance Report 2020

Well, what a year!! The pandemic has had a profound influence on our finances, although the yearend figures are reasonable with a loss of £419 compared with last year's loss of £3,455, however there are some significant changes. There has been a remarkable increase in Giving and Donations, thank you all you have been very generous Fundraising has maintained its income in very difficult circumstances. Just a couple of numbers, planned giving and income tax recoverable was £50,649 compared with 2019 of £44,042. Donations up from £3,210 to £8,923. The areas where we suffered was lack of income from Brassey lettings, loose plate collections and fees, down from £31,536 to £10,481, a huge loss. There have been a great many reductions in expenditure, including utilities at the Church and in the Brassey Centre. We have been fortunate in that the Brassy Trust were kind in that they did not ask for the rent for the Brassey Centre a saving of £5,000.

I would like to thank everybody who have helped the Church finances, an excellent result.

The PCC in an effort to bring our finances onto a better footing have created a Church Funding Group to look at ways in which we can deliver the projects we have for the future and the corresponding income. In the spring it is hoped to run a Stewardship Campaign, this may be delayed due to the coronavirus. Details will be distributed in due course.

As some of you will know I resigned as Treasurer last October, but it seemed right that I should fulfil the duties until the end of 2020. Our new Treasurer is Peter Walton. Peter is a member and treasurer of the Friends of Aylesford Church.

Over many years as treasurer for our Church I have had a great deal of support from the finance committee the PCC and Gerry Hughes, may I thank you all. If I may, I would like to say a special thankyou to Pam for all the years she has had to put up with me.

Reserves Policy (Re-written and approved at PCC Meeting 9th March 2020)

In addition to money designated for specific purposes including investments, it is the policy of the PCC to maintain [if possible] a balance of unrestricted funds which equates to four months unrestricted payments, to be available to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time. For 2020 this amounts to £29,500. At the end of the year unrestricted funds were £177 which is far below the desired level. The PCC notes that 2020 was a challenging year, with its pandemic effects, when reserves could be expected to be called upon. Nevertheless, the seriousness of the situation was recognised in 2020 and actions initiated to eliminate the deficit and make a start at rebuilding our reserves. A small surplus in unrestricted funds was generated in 2020 despite the large reduction in some income lines. There are also £16,785 in designated funds that could be

used to fund activities subject to PCC approval. The PCC secured an emergency loan of £12,000 to draw upon if required.

Annual Report of Fabric, Goods and Ornaments 2020

The committee reports 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 (January 2020 and November 2020) and Gas Certification certificates provided on each occasion. Location of new electric wall heater in the Vicar's Vestry as in the agreed Faculty was changed in agreement with the Diocese. A new quote for the new electric wall heater and installation was accepted by the Standing Committee/PCC, now waiting for an installation date.

The Standing Committee/PCC in March 2021 agreed to a quotation from a Surveyor/Architect to investigate the work needing to be addressed in the Quinquennial Report on the Church in July 2018, report not received until end of February 2019. Worth noting the report states the Tower roof covering needs to be addressed within 5 years from the date of the report.

The Surveyor/Architect will provide a report on his findings, recommendations and suggest future actions. Investigation will cover defective plaster areas, stonework, guttering, access to the Tower Roof and the covering of the Tower Roof. A discussion with the DAC to be held on alternative materials to lead for the covering of the Tower Roof. Surveyor/Architect requested to provide if known a list of Churches who have used materials other than lead on roofs. Contractors will also be contacted to get budget costs for the major areas of activity.

The Standing Committee/PCC agreed to a quotation for a light switch to be installed just inside the Priest door to allow safer entry and exit from the Church on dark evenings.

There was a break in at the Church during 2019. Three windows on the north side of the church were damaged, chest adjacent to the Vestry door broken into and the door leading up to the bell ringing chamber damaged. A Faculty was raised supported by repair quotations and an insurance claim, all were approved. The cabinet adjacent to the Vestry door now repaired, now waiting for a date to carry out repairs to the windows and the door.

Plan generated for a rose garden or something similar in the New Remembrance Garden area. Plan to be presented to the Fabric Committee at the next meeting.

Hand rail configuration, supplier and cost currently being addressed for the steps near the south door into the Church.

Health and Safety Committee have identified a number of areas within the Church that require attention, namely emergency lighting, signage and safety issues in the bell tower and ladder system leading up to the roof area.

140 The Avenue: - Currently nothing to report.

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 limited work we have carried out over the last year, limitations owing to the Covid19 government restrictions.

Deanery Synod Report 2020

Malling Deanery Synod was only able to meet twice in the year due to Coronavirus restrictions, once in February in person and once in October by Zoom.

Changes in the composition of benefices (groups of parishes under one incumbent or priest in charge) continued during the year. Mereworth and West Peckham are now with Watlington, East Malling is working with Larkfield and Teston and Barming are to join forces. These sorts of re-organisations are sensitive and not easy to achieve through the Church of England processes and a lot of time and care is required to bring them about.

The February meeting received accounts from the parishes of the work being done on community engagement. A wide variety of schemes were reported including Messy Church, new home welcome packs, church cafes, and youth groups.

The October meeting heard reports of parish's experience of online church. All reported positive results although practice varied considerably. Some reported benefits from having recorded services, with an added advantage that people could "go to church" at any convenient time. Others, like us, were broadcasting live, with the possibility of live interaction. Many had attracted new people, found that some irregular attenders had become more regular, and that those previously unable to travel to church has been able to attend virtually. On the other hand, there was concern for those excluded by lack of IT equipment, knowledge, or inclination.

The three yearly elections of lay parish representatives at Deanery Synod were due in 2020 at APCMs. These would normally occur in the Spring but were delayed to October. Our elected lay representatives (House of Laity) are now Ian Packer and Gordon Hunt. Alan Longmuir remains a lay representative as he is a member of Diocesan Synod; Revd Ruth Peet is a member of the Deanery Synod (House of Clergy).

Safeguarding Report

The PCC is committed to good safeguarding practice. It has formally adopted the House of Bishop's Safeguarding Policy and is complying with the duty to have due regard to the House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding.

The PCC has a safeguarding group to assist it in meeting its commitment to prevent harm. The group comprises the Revd Ruth Peet, Charlie Bunker, Janet Holdstock, Gordon Hunt, Aline Ongley and Sharon Stigle. (Janet is the Parish Safeguarding Officer and Adult's Safeguarding Representative, and Sharon is the Children's Safeguarding Representative). It meets regularly to implement National and Diocesan policies and guidance on safeguarding and reports at every meeting of the PCC. Matters that are regularly considered include appointments of workers (including volunteers), training, raising awareness of safeguarding issues, assessing risks, and addressing concerns. On behalf of the PCC, it ensures that any concerns or complaints are promptly addressed, following procedures, and reporting to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor without delay.

Changes in circumstance occur quite often and the safeguarding implications need to be assessed. An example in 2020 has been the increased use of phone calls to contact people, often isolated or vulnerable, during the pandemic. This has been looked at with care to ensure that procedures are in place and the latest guidance is followed.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, not only appointed officers. Vigilance and a sound safeguarding culture will serve to protect those at risk.

R Peet

Incumbent

27th April 2021