

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF SS PETER & PAUL, AYLESFORD.
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2021**

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 2021 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*		2022
Aline Ongley	Churchwarden		2022
Sharon Stigle	Elected PCC Member		2022
Pam Storr	Elected PCC Member	Resigned	2022
Anita Keys	Elected PCC member		2022
Andy Brown	Elected PCC member	Deceased	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
Charlie Bunker	Elected PCC Member		2024
Christine Hatfield	Elected PCC Member		2024
Emma Parren	Elected PCC Member		2024
Ian Packer	Elected PCC Member Elected Deanery Synod Representative		2024

*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

As of 31st December 2021 there were 114 on the electoral roll of which 48% are not resident in the Parish.

Attendance 2021

Once again, the ability to report attendance in a meaningful way, has been affected by fluctuating pandemic conditions.

In the last 'normal' year (2019), the number of people attending church on a 'usual' Sunday was 74 adults and 6 under 18's.

In 2020, a 'usual' Sunday took one of three possible forms: Church-only, Zoom-only or Church with Zoom. For much of that year, attendance in church was restricted by government regulations. On the Sundays when there were 8am and 10am church-only services (the nearest comparison to 2019), the average adult attendance was 71.

This year, 2021, has again been a mixture of types of services, as government regulations and pandemic conditions have continued to vary. Conditions have been so erratic that the Church of England did not even try to calculate a 'usual' Sunday attendance for 2020 or 2021, from all the Parish Returns.

No services were held in Aylesford church until Easter Sunday, 4th April 2021, but a service was held every Sunday after that, despite many churches remaining closed.

The average attendance at the Zoom-only service prior to Easter Day was 46 adults; perhaps an unsurprising drop from 55 in 2020, as people tired of online-only services.

From Easter Day 2021 onwards, the average adult Sunday attendance at 10am, spread across all weeks was 50, with an average of 29 in church and 21 on Zoom. (This compares with an average attendance in 2020 at 10am Church & Zoom services, of 55). In 2021 the numbers in church were held down by regulations until the end of July, when we were able to stop the booking system and allow people to sit not socially distanced if they chose to do so, however numbers did not start to increase overall, until October.

The average attendance (in church) of the 12 services held at 8am, was 11.

The total number of Sunday services held was 39, and children and young people were present at 13 of those; mostly only 1 child present, but numbers increased to 12 and 10 at the 2 services the Youth Choir attended in October and November, respectively.

Special services were not really viable for much of the year, with restrictions in place – Harvest Festival for example only had 24 adults present in church. However, an overall increase in attendance is clear from October onwards. Special services included: 21st Oct - St. Peter's School Harvest Celebration (120 adults, 170 under 18's – not included in the figures above); 14th Nov – Remembrance Sunday (59 adults, 1 under 18); 5th Dec – A Service to Remember (70 adults – not included in the figures above); Christmas Eve Nativity (50 adults, 26 under 18's – not included in the figures above). Once again, these figures cannot realistically be compared with 2019 (when Remembrance Sunday attendance was 332, for example).

The following figures are easier to compare with previous years as reporting requirements for these have remained the same. It seems sensible to not only compare this year with last year, but also with 2019 (as the last 'normal' year), so those figures are shown in brackets as (2020, **2019**).

This year, 2021, we reported a worshipping community of 131 (91, **137**). This included 14 age 0-17 (3, **16**), 47 age 18-69 (29, **40**) and 70 age 70+ (59, **81**). (The worshipping community is people who attend a church service (not necessarily *in* church) at least once a month.) The drop in adults in 2020 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 Youth Choir not being able to take part in services. By the end of 2021 both Home Communion Services and services with the Youth Choir were once again possible. It is also encouraging to note the growth in the 18-69 age group.

The change in circumstances meant that 44 people joined or re-joined the worshipping community. Those who left were, sadly, 4 members who died (David Brown, Tony Dalton, Diane Atkinson and John Riggs) and they are much missed.

This year 23 (5, **15**) babies, children and young people, and 0 (2, **1**) adults were baptised, 6 (2, **5**) couples were married in church, 9 (8, **9**) funerals were held in church, 12 (14, **10**) in a crematorium and 7 (2, **3**) burials of ashes were conducted.

PCC's Annual Report on its Proceedings and Activities of the Parish Generally 2021

Worship

Sunday worship was sustained throughout the year, despite Covid restrictions and guidance. Initially we were confined to using Zoom but from Easter Sunday, services in church resumed. Many assessment and control measures were needed and adjusted as restrictions were changed. Members of the congregation were encouraged to make their views known to the Vicar or other members of the PCC.

In May the PCC agreed a revised pattern of Sunday services with standard Common Worship Holy Communion services, 8am and 10am on the second and fifth Sundays of the month and some more flexible and less formal Services of the Word, either with Communion, or followed by a short-spoken Holy Communion on others.

Attendance

See Attendance Report above.

Ministry

Throughout the pandemic the pastoral team with other volunteers, worked to keep in touch by phone with people who were isolated or vulnerable. A Caring Concerns course was run to assist those interested in pastoral work. As restrictions on gatherings were relaxed a very well attended Vicarage Garden Tea Party was held which helped re-establish social contacts.

Bishop's Certificate and Licensed Lay Ministry Training: Emma Parren, Charlie Bunker and Jane Roberts completed the Bishop's Certificate during the year. Emma and Charlie continued Licensed Lay Minister training.

Mission

Our Community Food Bank was established in the Brassey Centre operating three sessions a week. Grants from local authorities and local traders together with individual donors of food and money have enabled it to be well equipped and stocked. Volunteers drawn initially from the congregation and subsequently augmented by other volunteers have enabled families and individuals to receive supplies. Those volunteers have been able to supply food to 366 families, including in some cases delivering to those families. Judging by demand the food bank is still required by the parish.

Our junior choir had to suspend its activities because of the Covid restrictions but was re-established as a Community Youth Choir during the year, engaging about a dozen youngsters. This was aided by a grant from the Mallory Institute. The Youth Choir sing in a morning service once a month; the resulting change in tone and atmosphere in church is very much appreciated.

H&S activities

Attention has been paid to Health and Safety during the year with some significant fabric improvements (see fabric report). Emergency lighting and upgraded light switching has been provided in church along with improved fire and smoke alarm arrangements. Handrails have been provided for the churchyard steps.

Safeguarding

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Its Safeguarding Committee works to ensure guidance is followed and training and other requirements are met. It reports regularly to the PCC.

Sadly, a serious sexual abuse case had to be dealt with during 2021. A former bell tower captain was convicted of sexual offences involving a child. These offences took place in the mid-2000s and are extremely serious. While a lengthy police investigation was taking place, representatives of the PCC worked confidentially with the diocese, which has responsibility for case management, and have cooperated fully with all the appropriate statutory authorities as necessary.

Giving campaign

Against the major loss of some income streams because of Covid the PCC ran a giving campaign in October.

Organised and executed by a team with the support of the Diocesan Generous Giving Adviser the result exceeded expectation with an increase in planned giving equivalent including gift aid of more than 17.5% or £8,000 pa.

Brassey Centre

There is a full Brassey Centre report however it is worth reiterating the loss of income compared with previous years. Thanks, must be given to the Brassey Trust who decided not to charge rent to the PCC for the years 2020 and 2021.

Castle Water

A huge volume of water was lost from a leak in the churchyard resulting in a very large water bill, (£6,500). Firm and lengthy negotiations with our water supplier resulted in the PCC being excused all the excess water and drainage charges. However, we now must arrange the replacement of a very old water main to avoid future expensive leaks. Thanks to Gordon, Peter and Alan for their very hard work to resolve this.

Cherith Legacy

The PCC received a generous legacy of nearly £22,000 from the estate of the late Cherith Bourne. It plans to use this to support specific projects for the most part and has already allocated £1000 to support the Youth Community Choir.

PCC Review

The PCC took time in the year to review its own ways of working. A course ("PCC Tonight") was begun, to explore the purposes of the PCC and each member's part in it. Recognising the amount of routine necessary business was crowding out opportunities for deeper thinking, it was decided to move to a monthly meeting, from January 2022 onwards, with, in the alternate months, "exploratory" meetings to look at selected issues in more depth.

It became increasingly evident that there is a shortage of people available to carry out all the activities needed for a flourishing church and that an excessive burden was being borne by some, including our Vicar. One response to that has been to review the way projects of all sorts are managed. The intention is to be more realistic and focussed on what should be progressed, and to put other matters on hold until our limited resources of time, talent and money can be allocated.

Thanks are due for the volume of work undertaken by the Churchwardens, Treasurer, PCC members and others. We have lost the services of Pam Storr as Assistant Treasurer, for many years she has undertaken her tasks efficiently, loyally and always with a smile. Pam, good luck to you in your new home in Tunbridge Wells.

A special mention must be made of our Vicar, Ruth who has worked tirelessly to maintain regular services but also to move us forward. COVID certainly hasn't helped and the lack of resources has created that extra burden. Thank you, Ruth.

Finance Report 2021

Peter Walton's first year as treasure has, let us say, been interesting. With the ongoing pandemic still having a significant effect on the church finances.

We have ended the year with a small but positive result which has been good news after a few ups and downs along the way, especially with our successfully fighting off the large water bill that hit us.

As reported last year Giving has continued to increase with hopefully more to come. A big thank you to all who have helped and given.

Sundry donations have continued to increase, and a significant unexpected legacy has been received, currently held in Designated Funds.

Other areas of income have fluctuated within different areas e.g., Fundraising and Fees but overall held its ground, despite the ongoing pandemic.

Expenditure has remained similar to last year, with the only significant increases being providing the valuable service of the food bank, that is self-financing through donations and grants, and Church maintenance mainly to make good repairs, covered by our insurances.

Peter thanks all who have helped him through the year. I cannot do this job alone and look to those who have rallied as a team to continue with their support going forward.

On that note a huge thank you to Pam who has recently decided to move away and has had to give up her role of Assistant Treasurer, although she continues to help cover some of the gap for the time being, until we recruit a replacement. This role is a key position in the regular management of our finances and will need filling.

Reserves Policy 2021

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 2021 this amounts to circa £31,000. At the end of the year unrestricted funds were £1,077 which is far below the desired level. The PCC notes that 2020/21 have been challenging years, 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. The PCC secured an emergency loan of £12,000 to draw upon if required.

Annual Report of Fabric, Goods and Ornaments 2021

The 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 (Spring 2021 and Autumn 2021) and Gas Certification certificates provided on each occasion. A new electric wall heater was installed during the year in the Vicars Vestry as per the agreed Faculty together with discussions with the Diocese.

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. The report has not been received to date and is currently being chased. Worth noting the Quinquennial Report states the Tower roof covering needs to be addressed within 5 years from the date of the report.

The Surveyor/Architect to 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 by the Surveyor 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.

A light switch was installed during the year just inside the Priest door to allow safer entry and exit from the Church on dark evenings.

All repairs as a result of the break in at the Church during 2019 were completed during 2021.

A plan generated for a rose garden or something similar in the New Remembrance Garden area is still under discussion/to be finalised.

Handrail configuration installed at the steps near the South Door into the Church.

County Fire Protection installed a number of recommended safety improvements within the Church during the year, namely emergency lighting, signage, alarm system and safety issues in the Bell Tower.

Memorial Bench requested by Jennifer Shepherd installed in the grounds of the Church adjacent to the West Boundary Wall near the New Remembrance Garden as per the approved Faculty.

Currently in final stages of approval from the Diocese to install a Memorial Bench near the West wall of the Church as requested by Mr Jamie Steele.

Car park surface within the Church grounds in need of repairs, currently under review with respect to costs together with safety concerns about the potential issue of cars accidentally being driven down into the New Remembrance Garden.

Notice Boards have been erected in the Old Remembrance Garden, the New Remembrance Garden and Entrance into the Church Car Park ready for laminated notices to be attached.

The mains water pipe from the meter near the gate into the Church grounds on the East Boundary needed a section to be repaired owing to a leak. The leak being found just inside the East Boundary on the north side of the Church. Investigations are being planned to establish the route of the pipe into the Church with the aim of replacing the existing iron pipe which is showing very bad signs of corrosion.

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 2021

What is the Deanery Synod? The Deanery Synod provides for parishes to channel their views to the Diocesan Synod and implements decisions made by the General Synod. Our representatives are Rev. Ruth Peet, Gordon Hunt, Ian Packer and Alan Longmuir. There are three meetings a year held in different parishes of the Malling Deanery.

The first meeting of the year was held virtually in February. The main speaker of the evening was Jennifer Ross, the Diocesan Communications Advisor. Jenny provided an interesting and informative report about her role in the Diocese throughout the pandemic.

In June again the meeting was held virtually. There was a very interesting talk by Nigel Walker who is the Chair of Ride and Stride which comes under the Friends of Kent Churches. During 2020 over £140,000 was raised. Half of that raised by our Church comes back to us the rest goes to the Friends, which allows them to make grants to help all Churches make essential repairs to their Church.

The meeting in October was held at St John the Baptist Church in Watlington. Nice to be out again at Deanery Churches. We had a presentation from the Revd. Sue Brooks. She talked about ecology and caring for the climate and suggested PCCs put care creation and environment as a standing item on their agendas.

There are many resources available and there is information on the Rochester Diocese website.

A continuing subject at our Synod meetings is the Pastoral reorganisation. The PCC of Teston Church agreed to become a united parish with Barming. As a result of an appeal by the Teston Parish Council the reorganisation is still to be concluded. The Parish Council was worried about Teston parish losing its identity in the reorganisation. The appeal is now at the highest level within the Church of England. The difficulty is that this situation has a knock-on effect on the other Parishes.

The potential for a physical Church on Kings Hill gets closer, it is anticipated that good news is imminent

Safeguarding Report 2021

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 Committee to assist it in meeting its commitment to prevent harm. The committee comprises Revd Ruth Peet, Charlie Bunker, Janet Holdstock, 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.

It is important for all church role holders to keep up to date with safeguarding training. Each module expires at 3 years. The training is online. Basic (CO), Foundation(C1), Leadership (C2). The modules have changed over the years so really well worth doing. For volunteer as well as paid roles safeguarding training is essential. Some will be required to complete Safe recruitment and Domestic abuse training.

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