

The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Marshfield



Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council For the Year ended 31st December 2019

Incumbent: The Revd. Sally Ann Wheeler
Associate Minister (2020): Rev. Lynne Godfrey
Licensed Lay Ministers: Aurea Hart, Mike Strathdee and Charles Keen
Lay Worship Leader Andrew Gammie

Bankers

Lloyds TSB Bank PLC
47 Milsom Street Bath BA1 1DN
The Co-operative Bank PLC
PO Box 250 Skelmersdale WN8 6WT

The Central Board of Finance of the Church
of England, Senator House,
83 Queen Victoria St. London EC4 4ET

Treasurer

Mrs Pam Mills
West End, High Street, Marshfield SN14 8JJ

Independent Examiner

Jarrold Waring
34 St Martins Lane, Marshfield SN14 8LZ

Administrative Information

The Church of St. Mary the Virgin is situated in Church Lane, Marshfield. It is part of the Diocese of Bristol within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Vicarage, Church Lane, Marshfield, Chippenham, SN14 8NT.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity exempted from registration with the Charity Commission. The PCC met six times in the year.

P.C.C. members who have served in **2019** were:

Incumbent	Reverend Sally Wheeler	
Curate in training	Reverend Lynne Godfrey	
Lay Ministers	Mrs Aurea Hart	Parish Safeguarding Officer and Deanery Synod
	Mr Andrew Gammie	
Wardens	Mr Eric Pullin	
	Mr Paul White	
Elected members	Mr Bob Wheeler	Deanery Synod Member
	Ms Kate Precious	Deanery Synod Member
	Mr Richard Owen	
	Mrs Donna Chambers	
	Mrs Amelia Pryor	
	Mrs Kirsty Bushell	
	Dr Peter Brunyate	
	Mr John Pullin	
	Mr John Sanderson	
	Mrs Lynne White	
Treasurer	Mrs Pam Mills	
Secretary	Mrs Melanie Hardy	

Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointment of PCC Members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church attendees are encouraged to register on the Church Electoral Roll and stand for election to the P.C.C. at the A.P.C.M.

Objectives and Activities

St. Mary's P.C.C has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent, promoting the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the church; pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the church.

Benefice

The Benefice Churchwardens, along with the Treasurers, met together on three occasions to plan the pattern of services and events and to discuss any matters which concern the Benefice. Benefice Services are held predominantly in Marshfield on fifth Sundays and at other churches in the Benefice for special events, such as West Littleton's 'Open Gardens'.

Electoral Roll Report

There are now 112 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll.

Church Attendance

Normal Sunday attendance is around 64 adults and 8 children. There were 90 communicants at Easter, and 64 at Christmas. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day attendances were 414 adults and 164 children. The Carol Service attendance was 331

Occasional Offices

There were 6 Baptisms, 8 Weddings and 7 Funerals in Church with 2 more at the Crematorium.

Church and Chapel

The Church shares activities with Marshfield Chapel, with monthly united services especially at Festivals, and mid-week Communion. The two Study Groups and a children's Holiday Club in August are also joint projects as is the biannual parish weekend away.

Report on Deanery Synod Meetings 2019

The Primary Purposes of the Deanery Synod and the Deanery Leadership Team are:

- Firstly, to act as a forum to hear what is happening in parishes, encouraging and supporting one another in mission and ministry.
- Secondly, to help contextualise the Diocesan strategy locally and support parishes as together we seek to implement it.
- Thirdly, to maintain and build our partnership with our link Ugandan Diocese of Mukono.
- Finally, to communicate good practice and pertinent issues to Diocesan Synod through our representatives and/or directly to the Bishop's staff via the Lay Chair (Ron Pool) or Area Dean (Rev. Sally Wheeler).

We have three Deanery Synod representatives – Aurea Hart (Deanery Treasurer), Bob Wheeler and Kate Precious.

Synod has held 3 meetings during this period. Each meeting has combined worship and Synod business with an "open" session on a topic relevant to the overall Diocesan Strategy of "Creating Connections". There has also been a "Parish Focus" slot - an opportunity to learn from the experiences of other parishes in building God's kingdom in their communities

The theme of the Synod meeting in March 2019 was 'Journey of Invitation'. The speaker was Chris Priddy, Head of Parish and External Relations, Bristol Diocese and he gave us an overview of the resources available through the diocese to help churches invite, engage and disciple within their individual contexts. The parish focus was on the monthly LIGHT services, a fresh expression for people with special needs. The Rev Alice Kemp gave a presentation and then members of LIGHT led us in worship

The second meeting was in June when the theme was 'Resources for Parishes'. The worship was led by a music group from St Paul's Church, with a focus on celebrating 'Thy Kingdom Come' and

Parish Focus was on St Paul's Chippenham. The Rev Simon Dunn and Becky Melton, St Paul's Youth Minister, spoke about the church's relationship with community caring and the support that could be offered in difficult and tragic circumstances, and how they had built on contacts made with the local secondary schools. Prior to the meeting the Area Dean had sent out three questions for PCCs to discuss and feedback on. The Rev Victor Howlett led discussions on these responses to find out where the Deanery priorities should lie in providing help and resources for parishes. The top three were:

- How small groups can work in a rural setting
- Ideas how to sustain existing patterns of worship or introduce new ones
- Forum to share ideas and practical help.

At the final meeting in November 2019, parishes were given a list of resources which can be accessed electronically to help parishes respond to the challenges they face. The meeting focused on Eco-Church, a scheme run by A Rocha to help churches assess their progress in five areas: Worship and Teaching; Buildings; Church Land; Global and Community Links; and Lifestyle. Parish Focus was on parishes who had already signed up to Eco-Church, St Andrew's Castle Combe who had already achieved an Eco-Church Silver Award from A Rocha and Marshfield, who had started by doing the audit.

The Diocese celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Uganda Link in October and we had hoped that Bishop James and Archdeacon Wilson from our link Diocese of Mukono would be with us for this but they were unable to obtain visas. As part of the celebrations within the deanery we were able to worship with the African Youth Choir at St Andrews in Chippenham and the Choir, also made very successful visits to three of our church primary schools.

During the year the Deanery organised a First Aid Course, the cost of which was subsidised by the Deanery, and a session on the Healing Ministry.

Aurea Hart, Deanery Synod Representative

Fabric report for St Mary the Virgin church, Marshfield, 2019/2020

The last two months of this church reporting year have been rather overshadowed by the Covid-19 pandemic Lockdown, however the church building is still free from any major problems!

During the past 12 months we have attended to the following:

1. The refurbishment of the clock. Simon Boyd (Timsbury Clocks) has removed the clock and taken it away for repair. The clock dial should have been removed but this has now been delayed until the Lockdown has been lifted (see first para).
2. A full electrical report has been undertaken and those items flagged as unsatisfactory have been attended to. We now have a valid satisfactory certificate of conformity for the electrical installation which lasts for two years.
3. The main pathway to the church has been levelled and made more user friendly, with signs displayed to warn people that the path is slightly uneven.
4. All rainwater goods and doors have been painted or refurbished (main door)
5. The south aisle gutter has been cleared of debris to stop ingress of water into the church during heavy storms. Thanks to Bob Wheeler and Doug Bond for carrying out this work
6. A new electrical contract has been agreed. Thank you to David Colbourne for organising.
7. We have purchased 4 Halogen portable heaters for "spot heating" areas of the church during services and the hospitality area.
8. Our work for Eco-Church carries on a-pace with thanks to Peter Wheeler and the committee. A team of volunteers are carrying out fairly large-scale enhancements to the churchyard (composting, planting shrubs/flowers, cutting back invasive trees and surveys of wildlife etc). For some months we have been striving to be more eco-friendly and this involves a myriad of initiatives within the church and churchyard.
9. We were due to start refurbishment and replacement of stone to various areas of the external walls of the church but this has been delayed due to Covid-19. A contractor has been appointed to do the work however.

10. Thank you to Bob Wheeler for organising a team from Community Payback who carried out numerous jobs in the churchyard during the year, including the refurbishment of some of the churchyard benches.

Items 2,3,4 & 9 above were included in the repairs flagged up by the Quinquennial report of 2018. When item 9 has been completed, all the recommendations in that report will have been dealt with. This is very satisfying as we will have done the work well before the 5 year timescale! I would like to thank, once again, all those who have helped with the upkeep of the church and especially to those who advise me of things that need doing which I may not have noticed, however small!!

Paul White (Churchwarden). 17th April 2020

Safeguarding

The Safeguarding situation in the Diocese is constantly changing and one can keep up-to-date by following the links on the Diocesan website. The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Adam Bond, is always most helpful, giving advice and guidance when needed.

At the end of 2019 I was able to apply for a Safe and Welcome Silver Award for our parish and this came early in 2020. The Safe and Welcome award recognises, affirms and celebrates churches that are welcoming and safe places for all members of our communities. It is good to know that the efforts we have made to improve our safety, accessibility and our welcome have been recognised.

I encourage our PCC members and Kids Club helpers to attend the training sessions arranged by the Diocese. Currently out of our 9 Kids Club helpers, 7 have done their C5 Refresher training. One helper, Nigel Goldsmith, still needs to attend the Basic Course (C1) and Tim Cooper is due to take the Refresher Course. They are all up-to-date with DBS clearance.

As PCC members are Trustees of a charity, they too need to apply for DBS Enhanced clearance and all but three members have been cleared. They are also required to complete the on-line training (C0) and so far, 7 out of 15 PCC members have done this. 7 members have also completed C1 Basic Safeguarding Training.

The Diocese no longer needs a Safeguarding Audit to be completed each year. Instead the Church has introduced a Safeguarding Dashboard which once completed produces an action plan for the parish. On the whole we are doing well but there are a few questions that need to be answered and this Action Plan will be taken to the next PCC meeting for review.

In Marshfield the Kids Club meets in the Vicarage, by kind invitation of Sally and Bob Wheeler. Risk Assessments have been carried out for Kids Club and for the Christingle Service. As a Church we should all be aware of the need for Risk Assessments before embarking on any new activity and we should check that these are up-to-date for existing activities.

There are two youth groups for the Benefice – The Bunch and Thrive – which have met most months in Marshfield Church Hall or the Vicarage led by Rev. Sally Wheeler and Rev Lynne Godfrey with assistance from Richard Shreeve and Jules Collis, all of whom are DBS checked. There is also a Junior Choir formed for special occasions organised by Mrs Frances Gammie.

The Policies and Procedures for the Diocese are posted on the Diocesan website.

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/parish-resources/safeguarding/> and the policies for Marshfield are in the Safeguarding Folder which is kept at the back of church and on our own website (www.marshfieldchurch.org).

Once again I am pleased to report that there have been no incidents during the year. It is important that we as a church record our gratitude to those people who give up time to working with Kids Club, Bunch, Thrive, Edward Bear and Junior Choir. We assure them of our support and thanks.

Aurea Hart, Safeguarding Officer for Marshfield Benefice

St Mary's Kids Club Report

Leaders and Helpers

The youth work at St Mary's Marshfield continues to go well and we are thankful to all our volunteers. We currently have five youth work leaders and three helpers within the team for Kids Club, in addition to occasional informal parental support within the younger group:

Leaders	Helpers
Sue Shreeve (co-ordinator)	Richard Shreeve
Bob Wheeler	Nigel Goldsmith
Molly Williams	Tim Cooper
Charlotte Barton	
Jules Collis	

One of our previous leaders, Stephen Green, and previous helpers, Yvonna Green, are no longer attending St Mary's Marshfield. Melanie Hardy, previously a leader, also stepped down from that role at the end of the year. We would like to note our thanks for all the support they have offered in the past. Jules Collis, previously a helper, has volunteered to become a leader which is appreciated.

Two of our young people, Benjamin Hardy and Jessica Green, who were helping with the younger group are no longer assisting in this way.

Kids Club Format and Content

We are currently running 2 children's groups: 3-7 yrs and 8 yrs +. Sessions usually last approximately 30 minutes and run on the first, second and fourth Sundays of the month, with the fourth session offering the older and younger children the opportunity to learn together for part of the session.

We continue to use the Click age-specific, bible-centred teaching material for the older group, while the younger group have completed all the Click units and have been using the bible-centred Roots material. Both types of material include suggestions for games/quizzes, teaching and craft activities. This year we have been studying 'Follow the Leader: From the Gospels and Acts' with the older group, while the Roots material follows the lectionary.

Kids Club Attendance

Kids club attendance has always been variable. In recent months there have been times when we have only had one child from the older age range attend. In these circumstances we have merged the older and younger groups.

The Crèche

The crèche continues to be appreciated and used during both regular services and at Weddings.
Sue Shreeve

Edward Bear

Edward Bear Toddler Church meets weekly in Marshfield Chapel with a summer break in August. The pattern is that twice a month they have a story and songs together with a linked craft activity, and on the other Fridays whoever is available meets for coffee. The story sessions are taken on a rota by myself, Rev Sally, Rev Lynne and Janet and David Spence. The parents are on a rota for setting up and providing refreshments for the alternate weeks. We are still catering for the very young as the children are 2-3 yrs of age with some babies of babies.

In 2019 the number on the register went down to 10 families, out of which there are 5 regulars with 6 toddlers and 4 babies. These mothers keep in touch on WhatsApp and enjoy meeting regularly. They are very supportive of each other.

The group meets at the Chapel as it really is not cost effective trying to heat the church and the Chapel is ideal for the size of the group and the age of the children as it is a safe space. This has always been a collaborative project between St Mary's and the Chapel and we are most grateful to

David and Janet Spence for their support and for providing the space and bearing the cost of heating etc.

Aurea Hart

Bunch

BUNCH has continued to meet on for one hour on first Sundays of the month and regularly had 6-9 youngsters attending most Sundays. At the end of the school year last July, 5 children were at an age to move on from BUNCH. A decision was taken in December to change the age range of children who are eligible to attend from 8-12 years to include children across KS2 at school. The sessions in the Church Hall start at 5.30pm with games and activities followed by food and a brief time considering a 'Thought for the Day' from a Christian perspective. The theme this year is 'Messy Parables', which is being explored through the parables Jesus told. Rev. Lynne and Julia Collis are the current leaders with support from Rob Narbett who we are very grateful to as he spends most of his time in the kitchen prepping food and clearing away!

Revd Lynne Godfrey

Thrive

Thrive has continued to meet on a monthly basis in the Church Hall with a core group of six teenage boys. Richard Shreeve continues to work alongside Sally Wheeler as joint leaders of this group. They are a great bunch of lads and we enjoy our time together playing balloon volley ball, eating pizza, and chatting about life and faith.

Rev Sally Wheeler

St Mary's Marshfield Bell ringers report

The St Mary's Bell ringers have continued to announce the call to worship with ringing most Sunday evenings and some mornings too up until the Covid 19 lockdown. Also 2019 was rung out and the New Year rung in on 31st December with the familiar firing when all bells sound together twelve times.

The tower clock mechanism has been removed and, now repaired is awaiting refitting which will mean bell 7 can be reconnected to the new clock chiming mechanism.

There have been several visiting bands this year, up to the lockdown, who have enjoyed ringing. Since the lockdown in March the bells have been silent apart from a single ringer ringing the treble on Easter morning before the online service. Also, bell 6 has been tolled at several recent socially distanced funerals. The Nine Tailors has normally been tolled. We have missed not being able to ring at several postponed weddings.

Up until the lockdown we have had practice nights once a month on a Monday as usual and visitors regularly came from other towers to help and join in. We do need more ringers or learners to keep the bells ringing in Marshfield.

Doug Bond continues to serve as our Tower Captain. Simon Gaylard is the Tower secretary.

Bob Wheeler

Music at St Mary's Marshfield

Good music has wonderful power to excite, console, cheer, tug at the heartstrings and simply take our breath away. In 2019 we witnessed all of these in St Mary's Church. What a marvellous gift from God, whose entire creation sings, shouts, plays and claps his praise! (Psalm 98)

We are blessed to have so many of our number willing to share their musical gifts. St Mary's services continue to be enriched by the music of choirs and instrumentalists, helping us to draw closer to God through our worship. A small rota of musicians leads the music during morning services with piano and other instruments, whilst Evensong continues to be led by the small, but long-standing evensong choir with organ accompaniment. A full choral evensong, with an enlarged choir (singers from within the Marshfield community and further afield) has become an established event taking place every eight weeks. This has brought joy to many.

We have been fortunate and incredibly grateful to have some wonderful organists coming to play for us, again from within the Marshfield community and from further afield. Locals and walkers passing by the church have also enjoyed hearing the organ being played during organists' personal rehearsal sessions.

A large group of singers from the local area were invited to join us to make amazing choirs for an Easter performance of "Before the Cross", Harvest Evensong, and again for the Carol Service. Similarly, a large choir of children came together to lead the Christingle service, with singing and orchestral accompaniment.

Our services each week (plus weddings) have been wonderfully heralded by the dedicated bell ringers, who rehearse together every week.

The church building was used throughout the year as a venue for various sacred and secular musical events, big and small, informal and grand. We continue to enjoy having the availability of electric piano and organ, as well as the good upright piano, which is holding its own well in the church building atmosphere but does need quarterly tuning. The sheet music cupboard was again fully sorted, culled and re-organized this year by a few hard-working souls. The diversity of the music within the cupboard does reflect the diversity of the music in St Mary's. And there is room in the cupboard for more!

Frances Gammie

Marshfield Wednesday Lunch Club

The Wednesday Lunch Club has been running now for over 20 years and meets weekly at noon in the Church Hall, to provide a two-course hot meal and companionship to people over 70, living in Marshfield and surrounding areas. Many of our members live alone, and indeed, 3 of them are over 94 years of age!

A Keep Fit class is an optional extra and runs from 11am until 12 noon for those who wish to attend before their lunch. It is run by a qualified instructor (Carol Ramsay) and is "chair-based" and most beneficial.

We are lucky to have a team of 25 volunteers, who work on a rota basis of 4 people per week. They act as cook, kitchen helper, leader and Hostess. The latter provides "after lunch" entertainment, whether it be a quiz or musical interlude! Rev Sally Wheeler provides a short service on the first Wednesday of each month.

Lunch Club has a capacity to serve up to 20-25 people. Numbers on the register at present are 21. If anyone knows any elderly person who would benefit from our club or who would like to join us as a volunteer, then please contact Lynne White on 01225 891765.

Lynne White

Report from Marshfield branch of The Mothers' Union

Marshfield Mothers' Union is small branch. We continued to meet monthly in the Church Hall, until December 2019. We have decided for 2020, that we will meet in members homes. Our members still appreciate the opportunity to meet monthly for our services led by Rev'd Sally Wheeler and Mrs Aurea Hart. We support the work within our Benefice by sending baptism cards to all babies baptised in our 4 churches, also baptism anniversary cards.

We still try to support our MU projects, for example the 'Make a Mother's Day' appeal by our donations. We have, unfortunately been unable to hold fund raising events during 2019.

Several members have attended the MU Diocesan and Deanery meetings,

We are trying to keep our branch surviving, but we do need more members to help us – everyone is welcome on 3rd Tuesday of the month, at 2.30pm. Contact either Aurea Hart or myself for further details.

Jean Purnell, Branch secretary. April 2020

Churchwardens' Report 2020

The Church community of Marshfield have been worshiping at St Mary's Church since 1242 withstanding numerous challenges along the way, including the Reformation, a plague, flu epidemics and World wars to name but a few. However, in March of this year the arrival of the pandemic Covid 19 brought many countries to a standstill, and with Parliament instructing all Churches and Chapels to close their doors, no further services were allowed to take place. However, the Church at Marshfield is not only a building but more importantly the people. Under the inspirational leadership of our vicar Rev Sally, ably assisted by Rev Lynne and our ministry

team, both communal and pastoral ministry has continued with virtual services each Sunday on Zoom at 10.30am – these have proved very popular and successful. Home groups have also met online each week, activities arranged for the youth groups, as well as phone ministry being available from all the ministry team.

So whilst these challenging and unprecedented times are affecting everyone, it has been so comforting to have their support portraying God's love to us all.

Looking back over the past year and following last year's A.G.M, Easter week 2019 was very memorable. Maundy Thursday's last supper as always was a very moving occasion. This was followed by 'Before the Cross' on Good Friday, the inspiring choral music and readings leading us to the Easter Festival services, both morning and evening, proclaiming the Easter message – 'Christ is risen,' 'He is Risen indeed Alleluia!'

We thank our musical conductors, organists, musicians and choirs for the lovely performances they give us. Indeed, we thank so many of you who work to enhance our church life throughout the year, the flower arrangers and those who provide refreshments following services, thereby encouraging fellowship for our congregations.

Thank you to our bell ringers and to those who care for our churchyard. This year as you will know, we are registered as part of the Eco Church. A special thank you to those who have put into action Eco Church in the Churchyard with an impressive composting system to the North of the church tower, and the establishment of a dead hedge sanctuary. Also a change in the mowing regime in parts of the Churchyard to allow certain areas to grow through to mid August, and providing mown paths in parts of the churchyard. We encourage you all to explore our churchyard in its Eco format.

Other notable events during the year included the Church Fête in June. A special thank you to all stall holders, and to all involved in the preparation and running of this event, which once again was a lovely occasion, well supported and successful both socially and financially.

The harvest festival in September saw our Church beautifully decorated. The morning service at which the children presented harvest gifts and at 6.00pm we enjoyed an excellent festival choral evensong.

Remembrance Sunday once again gave us the opportunity to remember the sacrifices made by so many in years past. The Remembrance Service, observing the two minutes silence, was attended by members of the British Legion, youth uniformed groups and music provided by Marshfield Band as they have done for many years.

Christmas services provided inspiration to us all, the carol service, Christingle on Christmas eve, midnight communion and Christmas morning service, all well attended and bringing the joy of Christmas to us in a variety of ways.

Plough Sunday in January provided our now customary service of worship and praise followed by lunch, giving a social gathering that was much appreciated by all, with the farming community well represented.

During the challenging period of lockdown we have been blessed with a variety of virtual services with many members of the congregation involved and enhancing our worship. As well as regular Sunday worship we have celebrated Mothering Sunday, Easter week leading to the celebration of Easter day and most recently Pentecost.

Having now been in lockdown for the past weeks and months we look forward to overcoming this corona virus and witnessing the re-starting of Church services, and going forward in true Christian fellowship to spread God's word throughout our community and beyond.

On behalf of Paul and myself as wardens, may I thank all of our congregations for their continuing support given to our church in such a variety of ways.

I finish my report by thanking Sally most sincerely for her ministry and pastoral care to us all throughout the past year, and to Lynne for all her care and ministry to us. Indeed, to all the

ministry team, Aurea, Mike, Andrew and Charles for their support to our community throughout the year.

Eric Pullin Churchwarden

2019 MARSHFIELD CHURCH HALL REPORT

This has been an unusual year and we realise now how spending £87,000+ in 1998/9 we have had 20 years almost trouble free without large major expenditure which has allowed us to become financially secure.

During 2019 we have replaced the 100 chairs with a lighter version as our users were finding the comfortable ones in use, heavy to move.

The replacement of the lead water main from Tormarton Road (where the water meter is sited) to the Hall was a cost to the Hall of £10,029. This did take a while to fix as Bristol Water contractors were unavailable for 3 months. We are grateful to David Rutherford for replacing the water main so the Hall could be available for use again without 3 months disruption.

The balance at the Bank at 31st December 2019 is £9,457.66

The number of regular users have reduced this year. This has been through a drop in their participating membership except the Beavers and Scouts which had increased numbers and outgrown the Hall. They have now joined the Cubs at the Community Centre.

We are grateful to the remaining 17 regular weekly and monthly users for their cooperation, help and care of the Hall.

We are pleased to welcome Caroline Page who has taken responsibility for the Hall bookings and the numerous other jobs this entails including contact with the users.

We thank David Rutherford for agreeing to deal with maintenance problems as they occur.

Thank you to Denis Oram who for the over 40+ years has acquired knowledge of everything that has kept and is keeping the Hall functional and available for our Marshfield community.

Pam Mills. Treasurer 15th January

St Mary Marshfield APCM 2020: Incumbent's Report

Connecting with God, Each other and our Community, and Caring for Creation in the name of Christ

'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there...' These words of L.P. Hartley in his book 'The Go-Between' 1953, seem pertinent as we look fondly back at 2019, which does seem like another world to what we are currently experiencing.

In 2019 we continued to base our worship and service on our priorities to 'Connect with God, each other and our community'. Significantly, we added a further commitment – that of 'Caring for Creation'. The PCC signed up whole-heartedly to the Eco Church initiative to enable us to build on initial efforts at promoting and modelling sustainability in our church lives and our own homes.

There has been genuine enthusiasm and some changes were speedily made – from using only eco and Fairtrade products in the hospitality and cleaning facilities in church and changing lightbulbs for LEDs, to approaching the management of the churchyard with fresh regard for the well-being of flora and fauna, while maintaining this as a sacred and peaceful place. The Remembrance Garden for ashes is being re-planned at the moment to ensure year-round plants suited to this area of the churchyard.

Our annual pattern of services continued to pick up on the theme of Creation through Plough, Rogation and Harvest celebrations with opportunities to teach on the importance of caring for the world around us. This is an ongoing journey shared with those of other faiths or none, as we recognise our need to respect the environment and protect it for the future. As we approach the Bronze Level Eco Award, we are grateful for the commitment of an enthusiastic team of church and community members, overseen by Peter Woodward.

There are always 'thank you's which should be noted, although the church functions as well as it does, because there are so many involved in its life and worship, so it will not be possible to mention all by name! I am grateful to the Ministry team for their dedication and willingness to serve

you through taking services and leading groups, and I am delighted that Rev. Lynne Godfrey, having finished her curacy, has become Associate Minister in our Benefice.

I am the only paid minister in our Benefice – the rest of the ministry team offer their own time and skills to serve the church, along with so many other volunteers – PCC members, churchwardens, sides-men and women, bell ringers; flower arrangers, coffee makers; children and youth work leaders. Thank you all for using your gifts so selflessly to serve God and others.

At the end of last year Pam Mills handed on the Treasurer role to Kate Brain: our sincere thanks go to Pam and to Robin and Mary Hammond for their work as a finance team. The church finances are in a sound state with many giving regularly in a planned way through the Parish Giving Scheme. This means our Treasurer has a clear idea how much money will come in each month to meet regular outgoings. Thank you to everyone who gives in this way and in other ways to support the life and work of the church. We would not be here without the faithful giving of congregation members and community support.

The Churchwarden's report has summed up well the new place we find ourselves in this year – worship continues and there are positives in that the internet has brought people together in a new way across the Benefice. The chance to meet with others, even if online, has been much valued in the enforced isolation lockdown caused. There have been concerted efforts to ensure those unable to access the internet are supported in other ways by phone and printed publications.

Perhaps the biggest concern is the effect of lockdown and the school closures on children and young people – not only have they missed out on the regular contact with peers through school, they have also missed out on the regular assemblies and Kids Club. On-line hasn't worked so well for them, although there is a desire to find something that might work and there is a hope that we can go ahead with an online version of the Summer Holiday Club.

Following the impact of Covid 19 the future for the Church of England and for the country as a whole, will involve courage and resilience as we cope with change and the as yet unseen effects of lockdown on people's lives and livelihoods.

At such a time, as people of faith we turn to God's word for reassurance and hope and I offer you these words which God impressed on me at the start of lockdown:

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
Isaiah 41.10

Rev. Sally Wheeler Vicar