

St Michael's, Begbroke



Annual Parish Report 2020

Introduction

2020 was dominated by the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Following some cautionary restrictions, the country went into full lockdown, announced on the evening of March 22nd, coming into effect the following day. This affected all aspects of our parish ministry, and the challenge was to sustain what was possible, within the restrictions of each period. We are grateful to all whose hard work and commitment to St Michael's enabled us to sustain the church's ministry in new as well as familiar ways.

Aims and purposes

St. Michael's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Oliver Petter, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Objectives and activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St. Michael's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish. The Parish profile published in April 2018 reflected an awareness of the "the need to contact and involve new residents of the parish." St Michael's is one of "three churches [in the Benefice which] are physically located on the edge of the communities which they serve, so there is little visibility of the church structures for village residents." Outreach is an imperative for our parish. The busy A44 provides a challenge with most of the villagers living on the other side from the historic church building. . Our Away day for 2020, with its opportunity to reflect further on the life and mission of our parish was one of the many things that was sadly lost to the pandemic.

Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. We try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work.

In 2018 the PCC had expressed a commitment to the Diocesan Vision, of which four points had great resonance. This commitment continued to guide us in 2019 and 2020 as a foundational point of reflection.

- To make a bigger difference in the world and serve the poor.
- To share our faith with adults, children and young people and grow the church in every place; rural, urban and suburban.
- To serve every school in our community.
- To put the discipleship of all at the heart of our common life and set God's people free.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Michael's.

Much of what we aspire to offer was limited by restrictions for much of 2020, whilst the core offering of public worship, and pastoral care continued within the limitations, both in person and remotely/online.

Achievements and performance

Worship and Prayer

At each stage of the year, worship and prayer were affected by the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and the year is divided up as such:

January- March

As we began 2020, the principal pattern of worship continued to be the Parish Eucharist at 9.30am on Sundays with refreshments and fellowship after the service. From the beginning of March, some restrictions began to affect church life, caused by the early impact of the pandemic in England.

National Lockdown March 23rd - 3rd July

From the moment of the National lockdown our church had to be closed for worship and personal prayer. Along with churches across the land needed to find new ways of communication, and of enabling worship and prayer to continue.

We expanded our online resources and offerings, and a lot was learned very quickly.

Sunday worship and daily prayer moved onto the Facebook Live platform, streamed from the Vicarage living room. We missed Lent 4 but from Lent 5 we live streamed our Benefice Eucharist, with the Petter family present in the living room, and Malcolm Hawkins offering live musical accompaniment via Zoom.

The whole of Holy Week was live streamed including the Easter Triduum. From Ascension Day we began to incorporate Zoom, and thereafter began to live stream Sunday worship via Zoom and Facebook Live, enabling face to face participation and post-service fellowship for those who so desired, whilst allowing others to participate via Facebook Live.

Daily prayer on Facebook Live had a small but faithful following and was a consistent outreach.

From the beginning of the first lockdown, the Vicar began to send out Benefice emails and updates, with Benefice news and prayer resources. This became a weekly email, with extra emails for special occasions and on an ad hoc basis. The email offered links to our online services, and also provided a Worship Sheet with readings, prayers and a reflection linking to the Sunday readings. This was written each week by Rev'd Dr Richard Turnbull, resident of Begbroke.

Restrictions easing 4th July onwards.

Government guidelines enabled us to re-open the church for public worship from Saturday July 2nd and our first Sunday service in the Benefice was the 11am July 3rd at St Bartholomew's Yarnton. At first we did not resume at St Michael's with the smaller church building making it harder to ensure distancing and especially ventilation, and with fewer of our regular congregation in a position to attend. In addition building work was in progress. An online 9.30am Benefice Communion Service continued streamed from the vicarage.

Gathering in hope

Our first service since March was on Sunday 12th July in the churchyard, entitled "Gathering in hope". Our first service in St Michael's was on Sunday 26th September. The church had been risk assessed in accordance with the Diocese of Oxford protocol. There was 2m distancing between households. All kneelers and cushions were removed, along with service booklets and anything that could be passed around. Singing was not permitted, apart from by a single person. Holy Communion was distributed in one kind only. No gathering was allowed after the service. The celebration of the Eucharist was stripped back to the core elements. There was advice that those who were vulnerable should exercise great caution in attending public worship. Our services nonetheless maintained a momentum, with some new faces coming, whilst many of our congregation exercised wise caution and did not return to public worship at that point. We continued to offer online worship on Sundays.

Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication

On Tuesday 29th September we had a particularly special service. +Colin Fletcher visited to dedicate and bless the new facilities installed in the West Tower. This was in the final week of his ministry as Bishop of Dorchester, and it was wonderful to welcome +Colin to bless the facilities which promise much for the next chapter in the history of St Michael's, following his twenty years of faithful service.

Second National Lockdown November 5th - December 2nd

During the second National Lockdown, we reverted to online worship with services livestreamed from St Michael's for our Benefice online service, and a core of 5 people enabling this.

December 3^d onwards - return of public worship: Advent and Christmas.

Restrictions in December 2020 continued to limit numbers via 2m social distancing, and only 6 singers were permitted in church. This was a great sadness during the Advent and Christmas season where singing would usually be at the heart of worship at a time when many occasional worshippers visit.

We held a Carol Service which was streamed as an online Benefice Carols for those at home to join in with. Sadly our Carol Singing was cancelled on a very wet evening. Our services for Midnight Mass and Christmas morning were well attended, all considering. On Christmas morning the service ended with Carol Singing in the churchyard.

Online worship

We streamed an online Christingle service, and Crib service from the Vicarage, alongside the Carol service which was live streamed from St Michael's.

We offered a broad range of online Advent/Christmas services and reflections. A daily Jesse Tree reflection was broadcast on Facebook Live and these gained a good following and level of engagement. Three Café Create sessions were live streamed, along with two accompanying craft videos. The latter were relatively popular.

Occasional Offices - Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals.

Weddings and baptisms

Sadly there were no weddings or baptisms possible in 2020

Funerals

There were 6 burials in the churchyard in 2020, 4 were graveside funerals, whilst 2 followed immediately from funerals at other locations.

Parish Life

Electoral Roll

The total on our Electoral Roll at the October 2020 meeting was 18.

Ministry at St Michael's

The Vicar continued to be supported by Rev'd Jim Turner in leading worship. We were grateful to Rev'd Dr Richard Turnbull, resident in the parish who assisted in leading worship, and wrote weekly worship sheet which was distributed online.

Online worship

St Michael's became the Benefice 'online hub' for worship, following the installation of wifi. We were very grateful to Neill Brodey for anchoring the online hospitality and technical side of services.

Music

We were once again grateful to Malcolm Hawkins for playing for us throughout the year, and at each stage of restrictions, playing either in the church, or from home via online platforms.

Deanery Synod

Neill Brodey faithfully continued in his role as our representative. The Synod provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church

Safeguarding

The PCC adopted the new Safeguarding Policy in January. Thank you to Caroline Waugh for her work as Safeguarding Officer.

Pastoral Care

Visiting: Pre-lockdown:

Reverend Oliver Petter and Reverend Jim Turner visited all church members who requested it, to celebrate communion with them either at their homes or in hospital.

After lockdown one:

Pastoral visiting Pastoral contact was greatly restricted. At the peak periods of restrictions, pastoral visiting was restricted to end-of-life ministry and pastoral

funeral ministry. Pastoral conversations by phone were encouraged during these periods or meeting outside where possible. Pastoral contact by phone and outdoors continued to be prioritized for the whole year, with restrictions varying at different points. Rev'd Oliver Petter and Rev'd Jim Turner kept in touch with members of the parish and Benefice by telephone, and tried to maintain particular contact with those living alone and those who were vulnerable. Thanks are due to Jim Turner for his dedicated pastoral ministry. The pastoral care expressed within the community within the challenges of lockdown was a striking living out of Jesus's command to love one's neighbour.

Mission and Evangelism

Our Benefice Away Day was sadly cancelled because of lockdown.

Lent group - the Gospel of Mark part 2

In Lent we began a study group, meeting in the village hall on Tuesday evenings. This was the third in our series of study groups, and we looked at the second half of Mark's gospel with a course written by Richard Turnbull. The series in the autumn of 2019 had studied part one of the same gospel. The series began encouragingly, but was suspended by the lockdown.

In Advent Neill Brodey created four weekly Advent reflections which were displayed on our notice boards in the village.

Servery/WC project

2020 marked a significant year in the life of St Michael's for a reason other than the pandemic. The installation of a servery and loo for Holy Cross was completed in the late summer. Christian Randall of Conservation Architects LLP has been appointed, and permissions had been sought. These were received in early 2020, and the work was done over the summer months, whilst the church was locked down for the pandemic. A special service of Thanksgiving and Dedication took place on 28th September, as detailed elsewhere in this report. The servery and WC installation was met with unanimous enthusiasm and delight. The design used the space of the north tower to remarkable effect. The new rooms gave the effect of filling a much larger space than the tower had seemed to represent.

Together the servery, WC and mezzanine storage room broadens the hospitality that St Michael's can offer very considerably. We now have fully modernised facilities in this regard, and the impact for special services and services week by week through the year will be profound. New possibilities are opened up for talks

and exhibitions, as well as for coffee mornings and toddler groups, and for hosting events such as retreats and quiet days. We thank God for this wonderful development.

The church in the community

Promoting St Michael's via a Friends' scheme

The pandemic meant that plans were put on hold.

LVS School

The vicar continued to be in regular contact with the school throughout the pandemic as a Governor.

Begbroke Link

We continued to provide regular articles for the Begbroke Link, and were grateful for their support of the church.

Care of the church and hospitality

Open church - Keeping the church open is a valuable and cherished part of our ministry. It was a great sadness to close the church during the pandemic, whilst this was also a period when the new facilities were being installed. Thank you to Rob, Jenny, Rosa and all those who helped to open and close the church throughout the parts of 2020 that we were able to open.

Church cleaning - thanks are due to our loyal church cleaners for their dedication and care in keeping the interior of the church so clean.

Tea & coffee Thanks to Rob for provision of splendid post service coffee throughout the early weeks of 2020. This is much appreciated by regulars and visitors alike.

Flowers The beautiful flower displays in church are warmly appreciated, and thanks to all who help with floristry.

Churchyard We are very grateful to Caroline Waugh for her care of the churchyard and gardening duties, and to all those who have also assisted.

St Michael Banner - in loving memory of Peter Cadd

2020 sadly marked the death of Peter Cadd, husband of Rosa. Peter, like Rosa, was a loyal member of our congregation. In memory of Peter, Rosa commissioned a beautiful banner of our patron St Michael, which was installed in time for our service of Thanksgiving and Dedication marking the completion of the new facilities on 28th September. We are grateful to Rosa for this special gift. A photo of the banner is on the front of this booklet.