

Great Brickhill Annual Parish Meeting, Tuesday 3rd May 2022

Parochial Church Council Report

I am pleased to report that these last twelve months have been very much more like normal than the previous two years. During the year the Covid restrictions were gradually eased. From July the guidance changed such that each church could, if it wished, recommend certain restrictions to remain. The main criteria for any decision were made on the size of the building and the likely number in the congregations. The last of the changes came in March when the chalice could again be offered but there is no pressure on parishioners to receive the wine if they prefer not to do so.

The Annual Church Meeting was postponed until 28th July. A report was presented on the events of the year and the Accounts for the year to 31st December 2020 were adopted. Julia Turner was re-elected as Warden and the PCC members all served for another year, along with newly appointed Clare Hankins-Lewis. The Electoral Roll had been revised and the current number on the Roll is 38. This year's Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday 19th May in the church at 7.30pm.

The building work for the new facilities was mainly completed by early September and so we were then able to have the church open daily, as before the pandemic, between 10.00am and 4.00pm.

Apart from a few outstanding items, the building work was finished just in time for our one and only wedding for the year on 11th September. The remaining items are taking a long time to complete. The Planning Department took until November to give permission for the colour of the rendering, by which time the weather was too cold as the temperature has to remain above 7 degrees. The same applies to the top covering of the path. Due to supply difficulties, the builder was unable to obtain the resin until recently. All jobs including the snagging issues are due to be completed this month.

A Service of Thanksgiving for the facilities was held on Sunday 10th October. It was a joyous occasion and Bishop Alan treated us to an uplifting sermon. As we had been waiting for this moment for many years, it was a very fitting way to mark this milestone in our history. It was wonderful to see, especially after the previous 18 months we had all endured, the church really come to life, beautifully decorated and full of people who were so obviously pleased to be celebrating with us.

Over the last few months, we have been delighted to see the benefit of having the new facilities:

- Refreshments after morning services (so much easier to do than previously with just a tap in a cupboard in the church)
- Teas were served on the afternoon of the Open Gardens on 4th July
- Coffee Mornings have been held in the church on Saturday mornings; the first one in September was to welcome new families who had moved into the village during lockdown
- Christmas Coffee Morning on Saturday 4th December
- Monday Morning Coffee Club from 9.30am – 11.30am
- Teas at the Snowdrop Walks on 13th & 20th January
- Plant Sale on 9th April

We would welcome requests from village groups who would like to use the church to hold community events. We now have fibre optic broadband which can be used by anyone visiting the church.

A new Service Pattern for the Benefice was introduced in September, a four-month cycle with a Benefice Service at one of the churches in rotation each month, the only service held

that is held that day. Each parish has a Holy Communion and Family service each month. For those who were not yet ready to attend church, the weekly recorded reflections and stories continued until the end of December.

A contemporary style service was held on Ash Wednesday with modern worship songs and all the words etc were shown on a screen. We hope to develop these services which are attractive to some within the Benefice who normally worship elsewhere, as well as some of our regular congregation.

It has been wonderful to be able to welcome High Ash for their services in church once again. The school is too big for them to all come together and so there is a service for Foundation and KS1 pupils and a separate service for KS2 pupils. The pupils produced Christmas and Easter cards for us to distribute to senior residents here and also in Little Brickhill and Stoke Hammond. They also created some Easter gardens for the 3 villages.

Following the departure from the village of Ted Maley, the Remembrance Sunday service was organised this year by David Marlow. He has published a book entitled "Great Brickhill Ex-Servicemen: A Compendium of Résumés", created from documents and personal memories about servicemen who have lived in or have an association with Great Brickhill. The books in three formats are available to purchase via the Blurb website.

Unfortunately, throughout the year we had a number of funerals of long established, well-respected parishioners. Among them was the Rector's wife, Pauline Waller who passed away just before Christmas.

We have had three baptisms and look forward to three more in the coming months. We also have one wedding planned for late August.

Christmas was much more like normal this year:

- The popular Advent Windows took place
- Carol Singing around the village on two evenings
- With thanks to the Cricket Club, the Village Nativity was held on Sunday 19th December - a large number came to see the enactment of the Nativity Story with carols and readings. The mist gave a very atmospheric feel to the occasion
- Carol Service on 24th December, not as well attended as usual as people were very cautious due to meeting up with family members
- Christmas Morning Holy Communion

The Church finances were again hit because of the pandemic. Church collections were curtailed due to the decrease in services and fund-raising activities were affected due to the loss of income from the Snowdrop Walks and Plant Fayre. A deficit of £1,444 was incurred – in light of the projected deficit, only £17K (the same as in 2019) was paid towards the allocation of the £22,094 Parish Share to the Diocese (£11K was paid in 2020).

Going forward, we have the roof repairs to do. Following the theft of lead, permission was given for a temporary covering of roof felt, which runs out in August this year. Planning permission was granted to replace the temporary felt with terne coated stainless steel on 4th February 2022. The architect is working on detailed drawings so that the Faculty application can be submitted to the DAC. Tenders will then be sought and grant applications made. Due to the ingress of water and subsequent drying out, many of the internal ceiling panels will have to be replaced. The total cost is not yet known but will be in excess of £100k. We would like to install audio visual equipment – a quote has been received and an application for a grant has been submitted. Unless the application is successful this will have to be put on hold.

Phillipa Cook
(Great Brickhill PCC Secretary)