# 2020 Report and Accounts for the Parochial Church Council of St Laurence Church, Appleton with Besselsleigh

**Aims and Purposes**

Appleton with Besselsleigh Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

**Objectives and Activities**

2020 was immensely challenging for our country and community as the pandemic impacted on all of our lives.

St Laurence began the year in interregnum, which of itself provided significant additional burdens on the church wardens and PCC as we set out to maintain as much of the mission and pastoral work of the church in this place as possible, while at the same time preparing for the search for a new incumbent.

As the pandemic took hold it was important for the PCC to set out what has been described as a Coronavirus Continuity Plan. This was designed to ensure that we were able to continue to provide pastoral and practical support especially to those who were vulnerable and housebound and also to address the plan for prayer and worship when our church was closed.

**Achievements and Performance**

Following a seven-month recruitment process, which included revising and refreshing the Parish profile, final interviews were held in July. We were delighted to appoint Phil Parker as our new part time house for duty Rector. Phil and his wife Isabel were able to move into the Rectory at the end of July. We pray that Phil be greatly blessed in his leadership of our church in this place.

We continue to strengthen our link with school; Martin, our Licenced Lay Minister (LLM) led an Epiphany Service in church at the start of term. We held a ‘pop up’ café for parents in February. Since September, Reverend Phil has led weekly collective worship with the children via Zoom. We have continued to keep in touch with parents via the parent mail system. For Remembrance, school created an outdoor poppy installation along the entrance to the church, which the community was able to enjoy. Reverend Phil has joined the governing body as an ex officio governor. In September, Martin retired as LLM; we would like to give special thanks to him for his work with Appleton School.

At the start of 2020 the PCC agreed to support The Abingdon Bridge, a charity which supports the wellbeing of young people aged 13-25. The intention was to commit a proportion of our fundraising to one charity for a three-year period. The proceeds from the Ceilidh were greatly appreciated by this local organisation, whose work over the past 12 months has been much called upon.

As a PCC, we had previously agreed to support two other charities that had been nominated by Electoral Roll members- Barnabas Fund and Oxford Colon Cancer Trust (OCCTOPUS). Money raised from stars for the tree of remembrance and the Advent windows were donated to these charities. Thank you to all those that organised and participated in these events.

**Worship and Prayer**

Although we were initially able to continue with collective worship in the early stages of the pandemic by implementing the Church of England’s ‘Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public’ it soon became necessary to make significant adjustments in church to ensure public safety.

When we were then instructed to close St Laurence for public worship, twice weekly online prayer meetings were started and well attended. As regulations permitted St Laurence was opened on Sundays to enable socially distanced private prayer.

We would like to thank all those who undertook sanitation duties to enable the church to be used safely.

We were very fortunate to have members in our church whose IT skills enabled us to provide filmed services for Easter, VE Day and a Carol service at Christmas, these were accessed by many people. Those without access to IT were kept in touch by regular phone calls and delivering hard copy resources.

After Reverend Phil’s licensing in September, services at 10am started via Zoom and themed Bible talks commenced online on a biweekly basis and we held an outdoor service in the school playground to welcome Phil and Isabel. In October and December (including Christmas Day) we were able to have services in church (with appropriate sanitising and social distancing measures in place).

The music we choose for our 10am service reflects our aim to fuel our church’s thanksgiving, prayer and praise to God, participating together in teaching each other, Gods word about Jesus Christ and praising him with thankfulness.

At its heart, this is a collective ministry, and not being able to all join in with the singing in person together this past year has been a sadness. This notwithstanding, it has been encouraging to join congregation members singing along in their homes during the Zoom services, participate in the children’s song actions or stand in silent collective worship when led from the front in the church building. We pray for a time to come swiftly when it will be both permitted and wise to resume full collective sung worship.

We thank God for our diverse congregation, many of whom prefer a particular style of sung worship, such as found in children's songs, traditional hymns, or contemporary songs. In choosing the music for the 10am service, we acknowledge and reflect this diversity, attempting in our choices to build up the church in its diversity, whilst staying rooted in the biblical truths expressed in the passage that is read and preached on. Many will have noticed a pattern of styles emerging, with most 10am services featuring at least one children's song, traditional hymn, and contemporary song.

Paul writes in another of his letters, to the church in Ephesus, that (Ephesians 5 v. 18b-20) they should “be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Although it has not been possible to sing together for some time now, we can indeed continue to make music in our hearts to the Lord, with thankfulness, in Jesus’ name.

We are extremely grateful to Ben and Jane Elvidge and Claire and Stephen Barratt for providing the music for our 10am worship and at Evensong, Andrew Dyer, Pete Day and Barbara Payne. Listening to the music created by our musicians has been an uplifting part of our worship.

**Deanery Synod**

The deanery synod met three times during 2020. Once in person and twice virtually via Zoom. Presentations were given by a representative from The Church Mission Society and from the Diocesan Youth Adviser on children’s and families’ ministry.

A proposal to set up a contingency fund was discussed and adopted. This fund is held at deanery level to help parishes who have lost significant fundraising/ hall rental income and are operating at a significant deficit or running low on reserves. Bishop Colin’s retirement in October was marked by a presentation of a book containing photographs and messages from each of the parishes within the deanery.

**Pastoral care**

The St Laurence church leadership, the Appleton and Eaton Parish Council, the Besselsleigh Parish Meeting and the Community Shop worked together to plan how individually and collectively they could provide help and support to the community throughout the pandemic. The Coronavirus Appleton, Besselsleigh and Eaton Support Group was formed.

We are immensely grateful to the many volunteers who have and continue to act as Coordinators, Companions and Volunteers in supporting so many in our community. They have organised collections from the village shop, urgent collections of prescriptions etc, provided pastoral support through prayer support or counselling and neighbourly support throughout the parish. We thank God for their loving care and generosity.

**Maintenance and Repair of Church Fabric**

We are pleased to report that the church fabric is generally in good shape and all the regulatory testing of electrics and fire prevention equipment were successfully completed. The church lighting is in fairly urgent need of upgrading and this will be addressed in 2021.

We are grateful to the Appleton St Laurence Heritage Trust for a grant towards repairing the church clock winding mechanism.

Although the wildlife project in the south churchyard had to be put on hold in 2020, we are very pleased that, thanks to Viv White, Nick Withers and the Wildlife project team, we now have two information boards erected in the churchyard. We hope that the project will move forward in 2021.

The graveyard ditch was cleared in the early spring and the banks re-laid.

Bell ringing took place for every 10 am and 6pm service until the first national lockdown. In early March, the 202nd aanniversary of the bells being given by Robert Southby was marked by a peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal being rung (congratulations to Jenny Dyer on ringing her first peal of Royal).

Sadly, we have lost two former ringers-Andrew Stubbs and John Drewitt to Covid in April.

In September, the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers announced that it would be possible to undertake some bellringing, we were able to ring 4 of the bells for a couple of Sundays prior to the 2nd lockdown. It was joyous to hear the bells being rung out.

**Church Housekeeping**

We are particularly grateful to all those who over this last difficult year have helped to keep the church safe through deep cleaning and ensuring the safety aspects of our worship are maintained.

**Financial Review**

|  |
| --- |
| All good things come from the Lord, and we are blessed that the church finances continue to be in a stable position, after a very challenging year.  |
| The financial statement is provided alongside this report. Headlines are:  |
| The Parish share for House of duty was met and direct debit payments secured a small discount and an annual rebate. |
| Many members joined the Parish Giving scheme which helped with budgeting - essential whilst services were held online, reduced administration (gift aid claimed on our behalf) and opted into intentional giving in line with inflation.Total church activities cost £49,526 (2019 - £79,416) of which the Parish share accounted for 55%, church running costs 5%, church repairs and maintenance 12%, administration and clergy costs 6%, grants to rector 0% of total costs. |
| Grants received from Church Repair Charity and Appleton St Laurence Heritage Trust £6,120 to cover exceptional expenditure for repairs and maintenance and from Parish Council £1,450 for supporting the costs of keeping footpaths clear in the churchyard and publication costs of the monthly Appleton Advertiser. |
| Total Voluntary receipts for 2020 were £ 27,458 (2019 - £54,710). |
| Fund raising events were drastically restricted due to Covid -19 but with support from the villages in the parish £5,034 (2019 - £9,908) was raised.Abingdon Deanery Synod asked all parishes to consider whether they could afford to donate the annual rebate to the Abingdon Deanery Contingency Fund. The PCC voted to donate the rebate to support those churches in our deanery who were struggling financially. We would like to thank Tian Davidson, our Treasurer for all her work in keeping a tight rein on the finances and keeping good administrative order.  |

**Volunteers**

We would like to thank all of the volunteers who work hard to make our church the lively and vibrant community it is.

In particular we would like to thank our churchwardens Stuart Gibson and Roger Mitty who have worked tirelessly throughout the year. Also, to Alison Jeffreys who spearheaded the weekly communication to all those on the Electoral Roll, ensuring that everyone kept informed throughout the pandemic. Thanks to all who are part of the events team for starting the year with a very enjoyable Ceilidh and ending with the ‘Bizarre Bazaar’. The opportunity for fundraising has been very limited, so thank you to everyone who supported these events.

Very special thanks must go to Ann Ford. 60 years ago, Ann got married at St Laurence and started to organise the flowers in our church, which she has continued to do ever since. Ann is standing down from that role. Thank you for your wonderful service over so many years.

We are looking for someone to take over the coordination of flowers in church, please let us know if this is something you can help with.

**Structure, governance and management**

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules 2020. The annual meeting elects new members to the PCC and Deanery Synod. The office of warden is an annually elected one. Deanery synod representatives are elected to a three-year term of office, 2020 was an election year for deanery synod representatives. Lay members are elected for a three-year term of office on a rolling three-year period, therefore anticipated that a third of the members are elected each year.

A Deanery Synod is a body which is representative and deliberative, a body which appoints and elects, which may pass motions to its Diocesan Synod, which may receive actions from Diocesan Synod or General Synod and may provide a forum for its members and others to act. It is meant to be sufficiently representative so as to command confidence and sufficiently skilled as to be competent in its business. A Deanery Synod is therefore part of the national synodical structure. Every three years the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) of each Parish within the Deanery should elect lay representatives to be members of the Deanery Synod. Each clerk in Holy Orders beneficed or licensed to any Parish in the Deanery is also a member of the Deanery Synod. Representatives should be fully committed to work for the mission of the wider Church and so to take strategic decisions to advance the mission and ministry in their Deanery as well as to influence Diocesan mission.

At St Laurence the current membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent, 2 wardens, 3 deanery synod representatives and 8 lay members.

The PCC is responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish; including deciding on how funds of the PCC are spent.

In 2020 the PCC met twice in person and held five virtual meetings via Zoom.

Given its wide responsibilities the PCC has a number of sub groups each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life. The sub-groups include: Finance and risk; Children and Youth; Events and Communications. During the interregnum a vacancy group was formed to lead the recruitment of a new incumbent. The sub groups are all responsible to the PCC and report back to the PCC.

The incumbent and the wardens have met biweekly, this was in person when regulations allowed and virtually via Zoom to comply with legal requirements.

**General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

Parishes must comply with the GDPR requirements just like all other charities and organisations. Our data privacy notice is on the website and will be reviewed during 2021.

**Safeguarding**

“I believe that the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults should be the highest priority of all parts of the Church …. There are no excuses for shortcomings.”

Archbishop Justin Welby, 14 February 2014

The acting Parish Safeguarding Officer is Victoria Marcham who can be contacted at safeguardingofficer@stlaurencechurchappleton.org

The PCC has adopted the updated Diocesan Model Parish Safeguarding Policy which is based on the National Safeguarding Team’s template. The PCC is therefore compliant with its duty to have regard to the safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops. The Policy is available on the Parish Website. The PCC is strongly committed to the care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities.

During this time of Covid the usual church in person activities involving children have been suspended as have regular meetings such as Tea & Chat but that does not mean that our safeguarding responsibilities have fallen by the wayside. They remain front and centre as always.

All the Church Officers[[1]](#footnote-1) have now received a role description and a personalised training plan with links to the training required. All have completed at least Foundation training and several of those eligible have also completed the Leadership module. All the training relevant to us can now be done on line. Unfortunately, the live Leadership training module which was due to take place in the church in May 2020 had to be cancelled owing to the pandemic. A spreadsheet of ongoing DBS and training requirements is maintained to ensure that we remain as up to date as possible.

The Archdeacon’s Enquiries this year were entirely devoted to Safeguarding. The PCC has considered the Independent Safeguarding Reviews published by the Diocese and is committed to developing an inclusive culture that promotes care for each other and allows all safeguarding concerns to be shared.

The PCC is also aware of its responsibilities towards those who offer their time and talents by volunteering for the many different roles within the Parish. Risk Assessment tools and templates along with helpful guidance are available both on the Parish Website and via the Church of England’s Parish Safeguarding Handbook.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/ParishSafeGuardingHandBookAugust2019Web.pdf>

Further information about Safeguarding resources and reporting abuse can be found at

https://www.oxford.anglican.org/support-services/safeguarding/

**Administrative information**

St Laurence Church, Church Road. Appleton. Oxfordshire. OX13 5JL <http://www.stlaurenceappleton.org/>

St Laurence Church is part of the Abingdon Deanery, which is in the episcopal area of Dorchester, Diocese of Oxford. The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measures 1956, Church Representation Rules) and a charity currently excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

PCC members who have served at any time from 1st January 2020 until the date this report was approved are:

Ex Officio Members:

* Incumbent: The Reverend Phil Parker (from 7th September 2020)
* Wardens: Stuart Gibson and Roger Mitty
* Licensed Lay Minster: Martin French (until 13th September 2020)
* Deanery Synod Representatives: Jane Cranston; Carol Dodimead; Annewen Rowe

Lay Members:

Tian Davidson; Pete Day; Stephen Day; Richard Dick; Ben Elvidge (co-opted up 18th October 2020, then elected); Alison Jeffreys; Lucinda Lewis-Crosby; Victoria Marcham

|  |
| --- |
| Approved by PCC on 25th April 2021 and signed on their behalf by Reverend Phil Parker |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

1. A Church Officer is anyone appointed or elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role whether they are ordained, lay, paid or unpaid. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)