

Vicars Report APCM 2020

Looking back to June 2019, once again Dominic and I would like to thank you all for the welcome we have received here in Old Basing and Lychpit, and for a such a wonderful and joy-filled Installation and Institution service. What a glorious occasion that was, with the singing from the combined church choir and Basing Singers! My first weekend here included Hymns and Pimms, and the Summer Fete and was a wonderful introduction to the community here.

It was clear to me when I arrived that the vacancy had been handled capably, and on behalf of the whole community, I would like to thank Trish and Ian for all their work as Church Wardens, not only during the vacancy, but over the last six and seven years respectively. They have both given very generously of their time and skills to serve in the leadership of this church, not only in the public facing aspects of their role but especially behind the scenes. Thank you.

I would like to thank Penny Potter, who has served as Sacristan here for many years, along with a small sacristy team. During the vacancy Penny ensured that many a visiting priest was welcomed and that the church had been prepared for all services. Penny stepped down from her role as Sacristan in August 2020, and as a community here today we thank her.

Today we thank Hilary May-Miller, who is standing down as Electoral Roll Officer, Penny Potter who is standing down from Deanery Synod, and those who have served us on the PCC, and whose terms have come to an end: Vena Jackson, Robert Jackson, Gary Taylor and Julia Wright. Julia has been serving as our PCC Treasurer, keeping our accounts up to date and presenting them clearly to the PCC for discussion. Robert will of course be returning to PCC in his new role as Church Warden, and Julia has indicated that she is willing to continue to serve as Treasurer. Thank you.

The whole church continues to be hugely indebted to Debbie Filer, our Parish Administrator, who works hard behind the scenes to ensure that things run smoothly.

2019 also saw a major building project to ensure the repairs recommended from our Quinquennial report were carried out. A big thank you to the Church Wardens, along with David Stevens, Gary Taylor, Mike Jackson and Robert Jackson for all their work on that; and to the Friend's of St Mary's for their generous financial support. We were all very relieved that the repairs were finished just prior to lockdown in 2020.

Many other people contribute to the life of St Mary's and I cannot possibly mention everyone but I am grateful to you all: organists and choir, cleaners, church maintenance, flower arrangers, sacristy team, vergers, servers, acolytes, chalice assistants, readers, intercessors, sides people and stewards, refreshment servers, gardeners, junior church leaders, messy church team, PILOTS leaders, baptism team, small group leaders, home communion team, social event organisers, website and social media editors, food bank helpers, school governors, school's workers and the clergy who covered services during the vacancy and when I was on annual leave. Finally, Safeguarding is vitally important for every church to

ensure that we have proper procedures in place to care for children and vulnerable adults and I am thankful to Jeanette Edwards for her continued work in that role.

In 2019, Helen Holley, completed here Bishop's Permission to Preach through the Diocese of Winchester School of Mission, and it is always a delight to have Helen to preach at services here. The Bishop's Permission to Preach is part of Winchester Dioceses training programme for congregation members. The School of Mission also runs 8 week programmes to equip people in different areas of ministry across the church. As well as input from the Diocese, these sessions give participants a chance to share their experiences with one another, and learn from each other. Previous courses have included: Children, Youth and Families; Disciple; Pastoral Care; Leading Worship; Creation Care; Prayer Champions; School Champions. Reviews of the Bishop's Commission for Mission has been overwhelmingly positive, and I hope once the programme for Spring 2021 is finalised we will have a few from St Mary's taking part.

St Mary's is a church that is very much embedded in the local community and it was a joy during 2019 to be able to get out into the community and visit Bolton Under 5's, the Old Basing Village Nursery School, Old Basing Infant School, St Mary's Junior School, Basingfield Court, Oakfields, Rowan Lodge, the Royal British Legion, as well as the local shops and pubs! It was also great to be able to meet the wider community here in church at Messy Church, Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, the Christmas Tree Festival, and our Christmas services.

2020 has shaped up to be a very different year, and we will of course report on this year at our next APCM in Spring 2021. In the meantime, a big thank you to David Stevens, who has had a particularly busy year as Health and Safety officer, and to the tech team and to all who have worked to help us ensure that worship is offered both here in the church and online. I do not expect that church buildings will be closed again. We have worked hard to ensure that the church building is Covid Secure and I appreciate your help in keeping one another safe by wearing facemasks, sanitising hands, and keeping 2m apart at all times. The latest government guidance indicates that even under a Tier 3 lockdown, places of worship are able to remain open – as long as we can continue to follow the guidelines.

I fully appreciate that for various reasons not everyone is able or comfortable with returning to the church building at this time. As we plan ahead, we will continue to look at how we can enable worship and support one another as a Christian community in church, online, and from our homes.

As we move into 2021, the PCC will look once again at picking up the themes from our vision day of Welcome; Journeying Together; Sanctuary and Spirituality; and Serving the Parish; to help us as a worshipping community to grow deeper in our faith and wider in sharing God's love.

Reverend Heather