



# St Peter's Church

North Hill, Colchester

# Annual Report 2020-2021



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"2020, a year that may not be forgotten as the Covid pandemic touched everyone's lives in some way. There were many challenges as the necessary restrictions made every day seem long and hard, we had to stay home and couldn't meet our friends and family. The world became quiet and still. It was a time to see the beauty of creation and worship our Creator, a time to think, pray and reorder priorities. Although, the church building was closed the church family continued to meet through technology, with online services, Bible Studies, WhatsApp

prayer meetings and regular updates of church life. There were phone calls, letters and cards and socially distanced visits when possible and encouraging and thought provoking prayerful meditations, a great blessing to me. It is a powerful reminder that the church is people, not just a building and I am truly thankful for St Peter's church family and God's grace in sustaining us all through these strange times."

(Val Morris)

# Vicar's Introduction — page 1

Even without Covid, this would have been a year of great change.

In August 2020, we said goodbye to Revd Aëlla Gage after six years as our Associate Minister. His departure has been keenly felt in many areas of church life, and we wish him and the family well for the future.

Also in the summer, our partnership with St Botolph's in the benefice of which we are part (known locally as 'the Town Centre Parish') came to an informal end. St Peter's has been part of this benefice since 2001, but it was agreed on all sides that it made sense to move in a different direction for the future.

In September 2020, I began a new role as the Senior Chaplain to the Bishop of Maidstone. This half-time role is now one I hold alongside my half-time role in the parish (technically, as Curate-in-Charge of St Peter's).

In October 2020, Dr Dan Watts and Mrs Wendy Whitfield stepped down as Churchwardens, after more than six years faithful service in that role. I am indebted to them for their partnership in this gospel work, just as I am very grateful to Dr Matthew Cox and Mrs Anne Kavanagh for being willing to serve as our new Churchwardens.

In December 2020, it was agreed with our architects that it was time for a change. We remain very grateful to Mr Quinlan Terry, and all those at his firm, and the redevelopment of the west entrance to church will stand as a testimony to their skill and ability. From early 2021, we are now looking to develop a good working relationship with Mr Ben Downie, from our new architects, Inkpen Downie.

Early in 2021, I was delighted that the PCC felt able to make two new appointments to the Church Staff Team, to work alongside Mrs Bernice Watts (as Church Administrator) and myself. Mrs Vivienne Depledge has joined us as our Pastoral Care Co-ordinator, and Mrs Lizzie Wallace is now employed as our Children's and Youth Worker.

So much has changed, and that is even before we consider the impact of the pandemic and the lockdown.

It has now been a year since we moved much of church online. I am painfully aware of how hard this has been for so many, although at the same time I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have sought to help and to serve in so many new, challenging, and creative ways.

But — wonderfully — nothing eternal has changed. God is still faithful, Jesus is still king, the Bible is still true, forgiveness is still available, grace is still free, and our future is still secure. In such changing and challenging times, it is good to remind ourselves of these truths.

One final change. You will notice that this year's Annual Report is in a different format. I trust you will find it interesting and informative, and I hope that it might stimulate your ongoing prayers. The PCC would welcome feedback on the new format for this Annual Report, which I am now happy to commend to you.

With best wishes,

*Mark*

## page 2 — Ministry Report

The PCC aims to offer services that will be beneficial to church members, the local community, and visitors of all ages and backgrounds. Attendance at services in church (when they have been possible) remains at a healthy level (although there is always room for more), and a wide range of ages is represented.



The Covid-19 restrictions meant that services in church were not possible for a large part of the year, and St Peter's provided a range of online services during those periods. When services were permitted again, the online services continued in parallel to cater for members not able to get to the church. This has enabled us to reach a wider

audience that would otherwise be possible, and meant that services could be viewed at a later time if needed.

On Sunday mornings from March to June, our Vicar and his family presented "Worship with the Wallaces" live from the vicarage kitchen. In addition, Rev Wallace streamed a short online morning and evening prayer service each day.

From July onwards, online Sunday services were pre-recorded, with members of the congregation contributing prayers, readings, music and talks.

The church building opened again for private prayer once a week from the end of June, and then fully for services from September. As numbers in church had to be limited, St Peter's held two Sunday services in church from October onwards.

Prior to March 2020, our worship and services included:

- Our informal evening service, 'Rock Solid'. Preceded by a light meal for those who would like it, and also an opportunity to learn and sing some of the new Christian songs.
- A (non-profit-making) bookstall at Sunday morning services in church, providing a range of Christian books and other materials.
- Children of primary school age have had their own group - St Peter's Kids (SPK), which provided teaching and activities designed especially for them.

## Ministry Report (cont.) — page 3

- Many of our secondary school-age children attended a regular youth event (named '421') on Friday evenings, run jointly with, and hosted by, the Fordham and Eight Ash Green church.
- Monthly prayer meetings were usually held on the first Saturday of each month.

The lockdown restrictions did provide us with the opportunity to do some things differently:

- Creation of a *WhatsApp* group for mutual support and news.
- Weekly prayer meetings held via *WhatsApp*.
- 'Rock solid online' on *Zoom*.
- 'Rock solid nano online' - for children 7 - 11
- 'SPK online' - for children 3 -6
- PCC and other meetings held on *Zoom*.

We still managed to run some courses during the year, aiming to provide members and inquirers with the opportunity to learn more about the Christian faith. These have included:

- 'Christianity Explored' - a series of meetings explaining the basic concepts of the faith for those for those wanting to know more.
- 'The Course of your life' - a study based on the letter to the Colossians.
- 'Quiet hours for Christians' - bible based meditations

St Peter's continues to sponsor two children via the charity Compassion UK. We have also supported:

- The Operation Christmas Child initiative, providing shoeboxes filled with presents for children in other areas of the world, who would otherwise receive very little.
- Essex University Christian Union
- Beacon House - a local charity working with the homeless.

"a heartfelt thank you to you all for all your support during these long months"  
(Helen Ballard, Ruth Downham & Jean Moore)

Rev Aëlla Gage has been our Associate Minister since 2014, and has done much to proclaim the gospel, and build up the church. His contract having come to an end, his final service was in August, and we wish him and his family well in whatever the Lord has planned for them next.

## page 4 — Children's & Youth Work Report

Last spring, St Peter's launched its Online Youth Work; Rock Solid, Rock Solid Nano and Spark met weekly until the Summer holidays...

**Rock Solid** – hosted by Mark, James and Peter - took place on Sunday evenings. Aimed particularly at older teens, these sessions involved games and chat followed by a short talk by Mark from the book of James. We were joined by a number of young people from other churches as their groups had been temporarily suspended.

**Rock Solid Nano** This group for school years 6-9 was led by Lizzie. Each session started with games and tuck and these were followed by Bible study, discussion and prayer. Using the Video Bible Talks material they worked their way through Habakkuk and the early chapters of Acts.

**Spark** Our younger members and their parents met with Lizzie for these sessions. We watched some specially produced videos by Colin Buchanan which encouraged us to remember that - despite the apparent chaos of Covid - God is in control, he promises to care for us, and he always keeps his promises. There were Bible verses, songs and prayers. We also had a Spark WhatsApp group where we shared encouraging songs and video links through the week.

A change in Mark and Lizzie's work commitments meant that they were unable to run Children's and Young People's groups through the Autumn term – a source of sadness to the PCC. It was decided that St Peter's would look to appoint a part-time Children's and Youth Worker to take on this work for the next 18 months. At the start of 2021 Lizzie

was appointed to this role and we are delighted that online groups have been able to re-start.

With the appointment of Lizzie, Online groups have been re-established for our 7-18 year olds (Rock Solid Bible Study for those in school years 10-13, Ignite for those in school years 7-9, Spark for those in school years 3-6). All three groups have been working through the Sermon on the Mount – with activities, crafts, games and application being tailored appropriately for their particular ages. We are very thankful for the dedicated team of leaders (Chris Gray, Clare Reid, Andy Lawn, Matt & Morvern Cox) who assist Lizzie with these groups and who are committed to praying for our young people through the week.

Meanwhile, 421 has restarted online and we are delighted that our Teens are able to join with their peers from other local churches. They have been studying Colossians as well as playing a lot of hilarious games. Karen Van den Broek continues to serve as a leader in this group, alongside our friends at Fordham, and we are very thankful for her dedication in this.

## Children's & Youth Work Report (cont.) — page 5

### COMPASSION

We continue to treasure the children we sponsor through Compassion. Mary lives in the Philippines and turned 13 on Christmas day. Richard lives in Brazil and will be 13 in May. Each year on Mother's Day we have a collection to raise the sponsorship money for the year ahead and we pray for them regularly in our church and prayer meetings. Andrew and Lizzie write occasional cards and letters, and we send money to buy birthday and Christmas gifts. We are in the process of putting together a team of honorary 'Aunts, Uncles & Grandparents' who will join in the ministry of encouragement by writing regularly to Mary and Richard. Following people's wonderful generosity this Mother's Day we are considering whether we can commit to sponsoring another child too!

"There is NOTHING in the world more important than knowing Jesus, and it is my absolute privilege to have been given this role teaching, encouraging and reaching out to young people with the gospel. My prayer for all the children and young people (as well as us leaders) is that we will see Jesus more clearly as we read his word, love him more dearly as we discover his amazing goodness, and resolve to follow him more nearly day by day on our way to heaven."

(Lizzie Wallace)

### EQUIP

This year the Equip training conference took place online. Fifteen members of our church family attended and were encouraged and challenged by a series of really great talks on a wide variety of issues; setting a vision for youth and children's ministry; making church as accessible as possible for those with additional needs; fostering, adoption and the heart of God; gospel hope for those who self-harm. It was great to spend time together being taught and encouraged. There will be further opportunities to learn and grow as a Youth Team in the months ahead - and our prayer is that we will be better equipped to serve the children, young people and families in our church, and in our town.

### LOOKING AHEAD

There will be many possibilities to explore as lockdown eases. The questions: "How can we best disciple the children, young people and families in our congregation?" and "How can we best reach out to those in our town?" are hugely important and there are many possible answers. Please pray with us for God-given opportunities as we go forward and the wisdom and resources to make the best use of them.

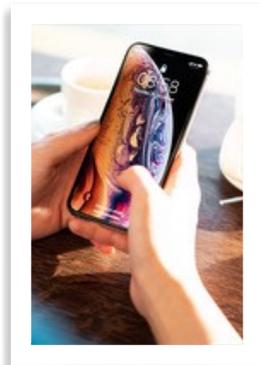
## page 6 — Church Family News & Pastoral Care Report

2020 has put an additional pressure on the ways in which we have provided pastoral care, but has also helped us to be creative and adaptable.

In March 2020 the church buildings had to close, so the church offered online opportunities with services on Facebook and YouTube and online groups via Zoom. We have also set up a *St Peter's WhatsApp group* which has been used for prayer and encouragement. People have posted beautiful and uplifting photos, shared prayer requests of sorrow and joy, and posted links to hymns and worship songs.

When national lockdown was announced, practical help was coordinated by Morvern Cox and Bernice Watts. People helped with shopping, picking up prescriptions and getting on to social media. Smartphones and other things were offered. It was a great response to an unexpected change that had shaken up people's patterns for doing life.

"The Course of your Life" started on 20th April 2020 via Zoom, and in the course of nine group seminars, two intensives and Bible readings took us through God's purpose for our lives. Some paired people have continued to meet regularly online to read, pray and share things with each other.



During the summer our Associate Minister, Aëlla Gage, organised book reviews which went in the regular newsletter and gave people five suggestions for a 'summer read'.

Rosemary Milne and her husband Roger, invited church members to join them in their garden on Sunday afternoons. Rosemary wrote in the invitation: "Every Sunday afternoon I sit with my other half and enjoy our back garden . . . unless it's raining of course! We'd love to offer refreshment to anyone who might like to call in and join us." Others in the church, including Stephen and Sheila Lloyd, and the Wallaces also opened up their gardens to others while it was permitted.

In August 2020, Aëlla Gage's time as our Associate Minister came to an end after six rewarding years. His final Sunday, 30th August, was marked by a Zoom call from the Vicarage. The church family gave a book of memories with good wishes and messages for the family to take away as a memento of their time at St Peter's, as well as a financial gift as a token of our appreciation. We are so thankful to God for Aëlla and the family. Their work in our church family was a real blessing and we thank Aëlla for his enduring love and faithful cheerfulness.

Home-made Christmas cards were made and distributed to many of our church members and to Balcerne Gardens, and a letter from the Vicar and invitations to Christmas events were sent to all in the congregation. Stephen and Sheila Lloyd coordinated the willing volunteers to help with the mail drop.

## Church Family News & Pastoral Care Report (cont.) — page 7

A Zoom event from Oak Hill, 'Dealing with depression', was held in February 2021, with teaching and opportunities for interaction. The sessions looked at what the Bible says about depression and how God uses the church and secular means to care for those struggling. The event was well attended by St Peter's folk, and a WhatsApp group enabled people to share their thoughts and comments.

After the successful impact of the home-made Christmas cards, we made Easter cards for church members, residents at Balcerne Gardens and for the businesses in the town centre.

During Lent, everyone was encouraged to read a short book entitled "The Blessed Life". All were invited to pair up with one or two other people to share the learning, and a Lent group was set up with meetings via Zoom.

Church members have lost other relatives and friends during the past year. Some were not directly connected to St Peter's, but the sorrow and loss that church members carried were shared with the church family. We have also seen a small number of people who have found St Peter's for the first time, either by coming to the church when it was allowed to be open, or by taking part in our online services and events that we have offered. This has been hugely encouraging.



This year, we have had to say farewell to several long-standing members of St Peter's...

- Ken Cooke, a former Mayor in the 1990s and a longstanding member of St Peter's Church up until his death on 2nd March 2020, aged 79.
- Joan Tomlin, remembered and loved by many at St Peter's, mother-in-law to Richard Lawn and grand-mother to Andrew Lawn, died in July 2020, aged 89.
- Sydney Crease, who had been part of St Peter's for many years, died in January 2021, aged 99.
- Maureen Fitt, who died 28th February 2020, aged 81. Her son John writes that she took pride and gained a sense of belonging in her role in typing up the Church magazine.

As an additional resource in a year where Social distancing added challenges to creating and maintaining a supportive environment, several people joined an initiative called the Barnabas Scheme. In addition to friendship, we supported each other with cards, messages and phone calls of encouragement and hope.

Another additional resource came in the form of the new Pastoral Care Coordinator, Vivienne Depledge, who was appointed by the PCC to encourage people in their walk with God. Vivienne had already worked with many at St Peter's during the Guest House Project, and hopes to encourage and empower all the church family to make supportive and caring connections within the church and across the parish.

## page 8 — Jericho Road Ministries

In one of Jesus' parables, a Samaritan shows compassion on a wounded Jewish stranger – along the road to Jericho. In our Jericho Road Ministries at St Peters, we seek to respond to Jesus' command: *love your neighbour as yourself*. We also believe that caring for the needs of others is an important part of our Christian witness to outsiders (see e.g. Matt 5:16).

In previous years, our work has included two major projects: the St Peter's Guest House Project (GHP) and our Refugee Relief Project.

The GHP provided warmth, shelter, a hot meal and companionship for guests who would otherwise have been rough sleeping during the coldest parts of the year. We worked together with Beacon House, a local Christian charity, and a large volunteer network including folk from many local churches. It was crucial to the ethos of this project that the guests who stayed with us were treated as just that: our guests.

In our Refugee Relief work, we supported Samara's Aid Appeal providing humanitarian aid for refugees in the Middle East. We ran a drop-off point for clothes and other items which were then shipped to Syria.

Various factors have meant that we have not been able to run these projects this past year - not least of course the pandemic. But we have been keen to find ways nonetheless to build on the experience and relationships and volunteer networks established through these projects.

To this end in autumn we formed the Jericho Road Working Group which has been meeting online to share ideas and make the most of opportunities as they arise.

One thing to have emerged out of this group is our current weekly Jericho Road 'Walk-&-Talks'. These events aim to help build



relationships between folk at St Peters, Beacon House staff and folk who currently occupy Beacon House 'move-on' accommodation. The atmosphere is informal and low-key: a group of us simply meets, currently on a Thursday morning, for a 30-minute wander around Castle Park.

"I have really enjoyed taking part in the Walk-&-Talks around Castle Park on a Thursday morning. I have met 5 or 6 Beacon House residents now, as well as Sarah [Occupational Therapist at Beacon House] and her students. It has been a refreshing experience, both physically & mentally, getting out and sharing stories about ourselves at the same time as taking exercise & realising how unfit I am! We go at our own pace, there is no pressure & I hope that more church members may come along on a Thursday"

(Sue Almond)

## Jericho Road Ministries (cont.) — page 9

We're hoping the group will grow -- and we may get more ambitious with the walks in time! We're also hoping to be able to host different sorts of events once Covid restrictions lift.



We have also been able to respond to a call from the co-ordinator of Colchester soup-run. While this has not been running in its usual form since Covid struck, sandwiches are distributed daily from the hatch at Beacon House. Members of our working group have filled vacancies in making and delivering the sandwiches.

Thankfully, other aspects of our Jericho Road Ministries have not been so disrupted by Covid-19. For example, we were again able this year to collect food and other goods as part of our Harvest Sunday, which we passed on to Beacon House for distribution. We were also able to support Samaritan Purse by packing shoeboxes filled with Christmas gifts to children in need.

Another great encouragement has been our 'Make a Mother's Day' appeal as part of Mother's Day. Through the Christian charity Compassion UK, this has enabled us to continue our sponsorship of Mary Bilardo and Richard Oliveira. Mary lives in the Philippines and is 13 years old; Richard lives in Brazil and is 12 years old. Our sponsorship gives them both access to education, health checks, and opportunities to hear about Jesus. They write wonderful letters to the church and a group among us is currently being formed to take up a letter-writing ministry. In fact, the response to our 'Make a Mother's Day' appeal has been so generous this year that we are also in a position to support the Compassion UK Child Survival Programme or possibly even sponsor a third child. Praise God!

## page 10 — Churchwardens' Report

Hello from Matt Cox and Anne Kavanagh!

2020 was not what any of us were expecting, was it?! But thankfully God was, for: “all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” (Psalm 139.16)

We are incredibly thankful that, despite all that has happened, we have been able to continue our mission as a church to build God's Kingdom. It has been particularly lovely to see new folk joining us and to have been able to appoint Lizzie and Vivienne to new roles supporting the ministry of our church.

### The important legal bit — “THE FABRIC, GOODS & ORNAMENTS”

**Church Roof and Rainwater Goods:** All priority 1 and 2 works, as identified by our architects, have now been completed. This has included bringing our downpipes, guttering etc. up to an acceptable standard, the clearance of the underground drains, and the cleaning and redressing of some areas of the lead roof to the nave. This work, together with regular clearance of debris from the roof, has resulted in minimal ingress of rainwater over the winter. The overall condition of the nave roof is poor. Ideally the roof should be replaced but proposed “holding works”, to be carried out when funding is available, will delay this necessity for 10 years or so.

**The vestry** remains in poor condition. Work is required to the ceiling and walls.

**Oil painting of St Peter's Church (c.1770):** This painting remains on loan to The Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service as per the Faculty granted in February 2020.

**Silver Chalice:** One of the pair used regularly for communion was accidentally damaged in November and is currently undergoing repairs to remove dents and reconnect the cup to the base.

**Church Hall Roof:** Work was carried out in September to repair the holes, replace slipped slates and re-instate the guttering. However, the roof remains in poor condition and the need for such “holding” repairs will continue until such time as it is replaced. The hall is in poor condition mainly due to its age.

[with thanks to Wendy Whitfield, Buildings Manager for the PCC]

# Churchwardens' Report (cont.) — page 11

## **OUR CHURCH FAMILY —**

Things to give thanks for:

- That many of us have been regularly able to meet together either online or in person to hear God's word preached and encourage each other
- New folk joining us online and in person
- That when we have met together in person God has kept us safe
- The huge – and ongoing – contributions of Dan Watts and Wendy Whitfield who stepped down as church wardens this year

Things to pray for:

- Ongoing and growing faithful ministry by all members of our church family
- That as we reopen, folks old and new would feel both welcome and safe as they join us
- Opportunities to re-establish outreach to our parish and town
- Mark, Lizzie, Vivienne and Bernice to daily grow in their faith and joy in you. For particular protection from temptation and sin as they publicly and privately live for you

## **THE BUILDINGS AND CONTENTS —**

Things to give thanks for:

- The provision of a large, visible, physical space to meet and serve in

- Successful completion of urgent repairs to roofs and drainage systems
- The dedicated team who maintains this for us – even when we have not been meeting there

Things to pray for:

- Provision for interim repairs to the church roof – to delay the eventual need to replace this by approximately 10 years
- Wisdom how to use the church hall as its condition deteriorates with age

## **THE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT —**

Things to give thanks for:

- The opportunity to improve our building to better serve the ministry of our church family and the wider community
- The huge generosity of members of our church family and grant organisations in giving sacrificially to this project
- Provision of an alternative architect after our original architect had to step back

Things to pray for:

- The PCC as we consider how best to use the money already raised
- Favourable response to outstanding grant applications

## page 12 — PCC Secretary's Report

St Peter's PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent, Rev Mark Wallace, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. St Peter's is a town centre church, with a gathered congregation and a valued heritage of evangelical and expository ministry. The PCC is also responsible for the maintenance of the Church building and Church hall on North Hill, Colchester.

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 Peter's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the people that live within our parish, and beyond.

Our services and worship put faith into practice through study of God's word, prayer, music and sacraments. We also have a concern to provide practical help to those around us in particular need - especially the homeless, families and the elderly.

When planning our activities for the year, 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, and members of the congregation.
- Evangelistic, social and outreach work.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of the church of St Peter's and its Hall.

Safeguarding remains a high priority for the PCC. We are grateful to Mrs Anne Kavanagh for continuing as our Parish Safeguarding Representative, although moves are underway to form a Safeguarding Committee to enable the burden to be more effectively shared.

Our thanks to Mrs Clare Reid, our Electoral Roll Officer, for her upkeep of the electoral roll. The number on the roll had at the time of writing risen to 60. Of those 60, 13 are resident in the parish.

A meeting was held with the Bishop of Colchester and other diocesan officials to discuss the intention to continue the suspension of the benefice. The hope is that the process of 'de-coupling' will begin as soon as possible, although it may take 12 months or more to complete.

"One unexpected blessing for me has been the midweek WhatsApp prayer time. It was initially a strange experience trying to type in prayers as others came flooding onto my screen, but it felt like a glimpse of what it must be like for God hearing millions of simultaneous prayers from his people. I soon realised it's not about creating perfectly worded prayers but gathering as one family to be with our Father. If weary, I could still muster simple 'amens', but also read over the prayers later and pray them again."

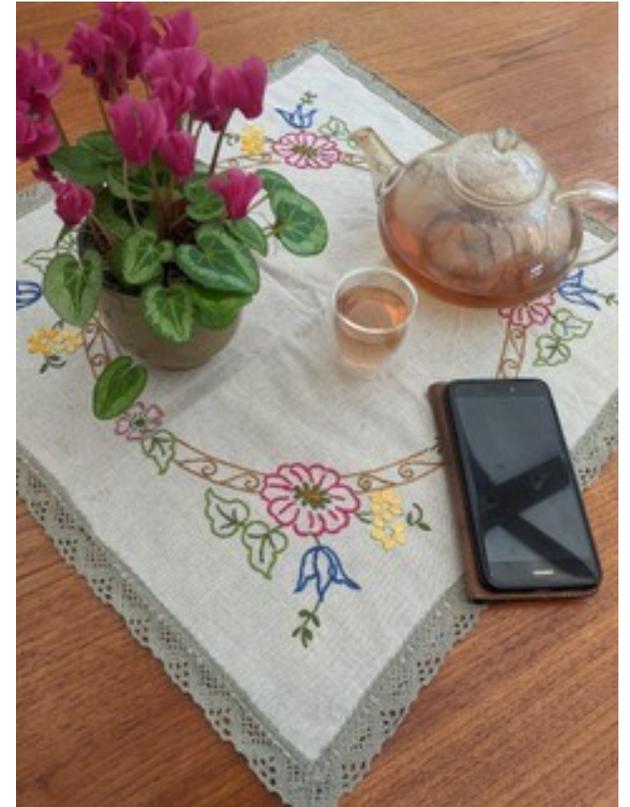
(Anne Kavanagh)

## PCC Secretary's Report (cont.) — page 13

Give thanks to God for...

- The times that our building was open during the pandemic.
- Online services, courses and interaction via Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Zoom. For the way that people's willingness, talents and gifts enabled us to serve the gospel faithfully and sacrificially.
- Weekly newsletters, phone calls and cards.
- The ministry of Revd Aëlla Gage from 2014 until the end of August 2020. We bid a very fond farewell to Aëlla, Liza and their family via Zoom from the Vicarage.
- The distribution of Christmas and Easter cards, letters, gift boxes, DVDs of the Carol Service and seasonal study booklets.
- Our previous Churchwardens Dr Dan Watts and Mrs Wendy Whitfield who served until October, and for our new Churchwardens Dr Matt Cox and Mrs Anne Kavanagh.
- The appointment of Mrs Lizzie Wallace as the Children's & Youth Worker and Mrs Vivienne Depledge as the Pastoral Co-ordinator.
- The beginnings of a Policy Handbook to help assist the PCC.
- The lives of Ken Cooke and Joan Tomlin, both on the electoral roll and who had sadly died. We have also had to say farewell to Sydney Crease and Maureen Fitt who used to be part of St Peter's.

Around the time of our last APCM, in October 2020, our Vicar reminded us that even when it is difficult to make predictions about the future, our priorities to look to reach others with the good news, to serve those in need and to find ways to be faithful and fruitful in this culture remain unchanged. It has been an unusual year but, by God's grace, He has sustained us. Let us continue to run with joy, delight and vision in the work of bringing the good news to others.



# page 14 — PCC Treasurer's Report

## OVERVIEW

Thanks to the generous giving of our congregation, much of this by regular standing order, the church finances coped remarkably well with the impact of the Covid lockdown. Church collections were, of course, greatly reduced (at just 22% of the 2019 figure), however with some reduced expenditure on electricity, heating etc. we ended the year having received £1,181 more in the General Fund than was spent.

The church hall continues to be a cause for concern - it was not let at all in 2020, so we paid £2,912 more than we received, some of which was met from our reserves.

Our Guest House fund had little movement - there was £4,504 at the end of the year - to be used for helping the homeless in Colchester.

Thanks to the receipt of a grant, and lots of pedalling from various members of the congregation (by means of sponsored cycle rides), the redevelopment fund now stands at £77,743. This excludes grants that we have been promised, but which we can only claim when we actually do the work.

We paid for the repairs to the church roof in 2020 - a total of just over £48,500. The majority of this came from reserves, and the Fabric Fund has a balance of £4,142 for any ongoing urgent repairs.

We do give thanks to God for his ongoing provision for our needs.

**The full and detailed accounts  
can be downloaded from the church website  
or requested from the Parish Office.**

## DETAILED FINANCIAL REVIEW

Total receipts into unrestricted funds (General Fund) in 2020 were £88,255 and are detailed in the financial statements. Total payments from the General Fund were £87,074, which includes the full payment of the Diocesan parish share (£37,281). The net result was an excess of payments over receipts of £1,181. After adding the balance brought forward at the start of the year, the balance of unrestricted funds at the end of 2019 was £3,668.

Our Church Hall was again not used for hire in 2020, so has been a drain on our resources. At the end of the year payments exceeded receipts by £2,912, and £2,500 was transferred from our reserves to bolster the fund. Even so, the balance at the end of the year was -£909.

The Fabric Fund receipts were £7,942, comprising payment of an insurance claim for our damaged churchyard wall, and recovery of the VAT paid on our roof repairs. There was significant expenditure of £53,170, the vast majority of this being for repairs to the roof, and

## PCC Treasurer's Report (cont.) — page 15

£40,000 was transferred from reserves to pay for this work. At the end of the year the balance was £4,142.

The Additional Ministry Fund is for the financing of our Associate Minister, Rev Aëlla Gage. His employment has only been possible due to the very generous provision of an external Christian trust. The fund also pays for Rev Gage's housing costs, council tax, water rates and expenses. Fund receipts during the year were £27,155, and expenditure was £35,541. The fund was closed following Rev Gage's departure at the end of August.

The Guest House fund is for receipts and payments towards the provision of shelter and food for the homeless during the winter. As the Guest House has not been operating, receipts were £159, and payments £178 (administration costs), leaving a balance of £4,504.

"I was generously given a Smartphone at the start of the pandemic by someone who wanted me to share in the St Peter's Whatsapp group. I struggle with the Wednesday prayer meeting. I don't enjoy this way of praying. By the time I have typed up a prayer the topic has moved on. It is all too speedy for me. But I attend every week because we pray for so many important matters in church and society. It is lovely to be part of so much heartfelt prayer. It feels like the heartbeat of the church at this difficult time."

(Stephen Lloyd)

Our only Investment fund is the Sears Fund, which yielded a good level of interest.

The Redevelopment fund is for the major work taking place to the church building. Receipts were £15,745, and payments £1,625 (fundraising costs). The balance at the end of the year was £77,743, to be used for the St Peter's Project redevelopment work.

### **RESERVES POLICY**

The PCC has no stated policy on the minimum balance of unrestricted funds. The end-of-year balance of £4,142 in the restricted Fabric Fund is to pay for any urgent maintenance of the church building (for which our policy is to maintain a balance of £5,000). Any expenditure beyond this will involve raising additional funds.

The Guest House fund balance of £4,504 will be used towards our future care for the homeless in Colchester. The Redevelopment Fund balance of £77,743 is for the work to be carried out for the St Peter's Project. Our Reserve Fund has a balance of £29,979.

It is our policy to invest our funds with the Central Board of Finance Church of England Deposit Fund.

## page 16 — Synod Reports

### DEANERY SYNOD

The Deanery is the next level of church government above the PCC. It is the assembly that gets to hear reports and vote on things, a bit like a PCC meeting but with more people present and less opportunity to influence matters. Clergy are members of the deanery Synod as is at least one person from each parish, the actual number depending on the size of the electoral roll. The members of the Deanery Synod also form the electorate for General Synod, and that election has been delayed and will probably be this year. Decisions made by the next General Synod are expected to be crucial for the future of the Church of England.

Because of the restrictions on meeting in person, the Colchester Deanery Synod has over the last year been holding meetings by Zoom. For the same reason our last APCM was delayed and report on this Synod activity overlaps with the one made last year.

Each Deanery Synod meeting includes standard meeting activities, minutes, notices, reports of internal matters such as finance and elections of the officers. Much of the time is then taken up with presentations and talks, some of which are more informative and interesting than others. The content of the June meeting was more solemn than most, and dealt with the anticipated financial crisis caused by the suspension of worship and consequent drop in income. The most significant of these is that the reduction in clergy numbers planned to happen by 2025 is now planned for 2021. This is likely to

involve clergy redundancies and does not rule out closing churches. These plans from Chelmsford Diocese resulted in some doom-laden reporting of in the national press at the time suggesting there was going to be massive clergy redundancies.

The next gathering of Synod would normally have taken place in October, but was deferred to December, after the election of the new Synod membership during delayed annual church meetings, as it was the first meeting of the current “triennium” with new church representatives taking up their roles for the next three years (two and a half years this time).

Usually the first meeting of a new Synod takes the form of a communion service, internal elections, and little else. Because we could not meet in person, this time we had a short act of worship, the elections to internal posts, and then a talk by the Bishop of Colchester. He started by praising the value of Deanery Synods, and then used the Apollo 13 mission with the famous quote “Houston, we have a problem” to discuss the financial crisis faced by the Diocese. He felt uncomfortable with the “Red-Amber-Green” method of classifying parishes that had been introduced to decide employment priorities, but saw it as a tool to understand the current situation (proposed last year, this process of classification has been delayed by the same pandemic that led to it being proposed). People were asking important questions about Jesus and it is the responsibility of the church to help them find Him. With all the church buildings and with over 1600 people

## Synod Reports (cont.) — page 17

committed to churches in the Deanery, we were “in a good place” and need to work out how to get the “R” number of Christianity above 1. We need to be confident, not in the church, or in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ.

There were many questions to the Bishop, and one response that was highlighted is that we have too few people doing too much and as PCCs we need to focus on what we already have that is good, and on identifying the gifts that we have in our number that are not currently being used. The possibility of locally based training in matters that would be useful to the work of the church was discussed.

The most recent meeting of Synod was on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, and some interesting figures were quoted, including that of the people who identified either as Christian or as “none” (and did not attend church), who had attended online in lockdown. Of the under 35s, the figure was 50%. However, some 10% of regular worshippers may never come back. The main talk in the meeting was by Emma Buchan of an organisation called “Thy Kingdom Come”, a national initiative launched in 2016 by both archbishops. The plan is to encourage prayer for people to become Christians, but with material produced for all ages and 50 different denominations, there seems to be little clarity over what they mean by the term.

The Deanery Synod is planned to meet next in June and in October.

### **DIOCESAN SYNOD**

The Diocese of Chelmsford has had a difficult year. Not only did we lose a Diocesan Bishop, as Stephen Cottrell was appointed as Archbishop of York, but we also lost a Chief Executive, as Joel Gowan stepped down. At the same time, the financial impact of the lockdown has started to be felt, and the unfinished nature of the diocesan reorganisation (the MMUs, or Mission and Ministry Units) has made it harder to react swiftly to significant changes. Reports of financial crisis and reductions in clergy numbers have hit the national press, and there remains a lot of uncertainty for the future.

However, the Synod and the Diocese look forward to welcoming the Rt Revd Guli Francis-Dehqani, currently the Bishop of Loughborough, as our new Diocesan Bishop (although the search for a Chief Executive goes on.

“Online church, for us, has in many ways been ‘easier’ than in-person church. We have two young children and have been able to ‘mute’/‘pause’/watch church with a child on the potty/attend evening meetings together as a couple... the list goes on. And we’ve been really, really blessed by the online fellowship this last year – thank you! However, whilst online church has been ‘easier’ for us, we recognise it’s not quite right. We’re looking forward to (and need) the challenges of in-person church: the accountability, opportunities to serve and depth of relationships that come with being able to meet properly.”

(Matt & Morvern Cox)

# page 18 — Appendices

## **Administrative information**

St. Peter's Church is situated on North Hill, Colchester. It is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Vicarage, Balkerne Close, Colchester CO1 1NZ. The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2006).

The PCC was granted charitable status in its own right on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Our website is <https://www.stpeterscolchester.org>

## **PCC Membership**

The full PCC have met ten times since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020. The restrictions during Covid-19 prevented the PCC from meeting in person but we are thankful for being able to hold meetings via Zoom and email.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at the APCM according to the Church Representation Rules and serve for a three year term. PCC members who have served during this year are:

## **Incumbent**

Rev Mark Wallace (Chairman)

## **Associate Minister**

Rev Aëlla Gage (to 31<sup>st</sup> August)

## **Churchwardens**

Dr Daniel Watts (Vice-Chairman) (warden to 21<sup>st</sup> October)

Mrs Wendy Whitfield (warden to 21<sup>st</sup> October)

Dr Matthew Cox (warden from 21<sup>st</sup> October)

Mrs Anne Kavanagh (warden from 21<sup>st</sup> October)

## **Deanery Synod Representatives**

Mr Duncan Breckels (also our Lay Reader)

Mrs Bernice Watts (also PCC Secretary)

## **Elected Members**

Mr James Coe

Mr Richard Lawn (Treasurer)

Dr Mick Kavanagh

Mr Peter Holden

Mrs Elizabeth Wallace (to 27<sup>th</sup> December)

## Appendices (cont.) — page 19

### Committees of the PCC

The PCC operates through committees, all of which report back to PCC meetings:

#### Standing Committee

Has power to transact any urgent business between meetings. Its members are the Vicar, the Churchwardens, the Treasurer and the Church Administrator.

#### Finance Sub-committee

Assists the PCC in overseeing financial and budgetary matters. Its members are the Vicar, the Treasurer, Mr Duncan Breckels, Dr Mick Kavanagh and Dr Dan Watts.

#### Safeguarding Committee

We are grateful for the work of Mrs Anne Kavanagh as the Parish Safeguarding Officer. With Anne taking up the role as a Churchwarden, a committee is being formed that will help to share the load.



The screenshot shows a Twitter profile for St Peter's Church Colchester. The profile picture is a circular image of a church tower. The header shows the name 'St Peter's Church Colchester' with a blue checkmark and '130 Tweets'. Below the header is a large image of the church interior, showing a long nave with wooden pews and a red carpet leading to an altar. To the right of the image are icons for a menu, messages, and notifications, along with a blue 'Following' button. The bio reads: 'A community of Christians seeking to serve and love those around us, in the Colchester town centre and beyond.' Below the bio are location tags for Colchester, England, the website 'stpeterscolchester.org', and the date 'Joined August 2016'. At the bottom, it shows '188 Following' and '118 Followers'.

**St Peter's Church Colchester**  
130 Tweets

**St Peter's Church Colchester**  
@StPeters\_CO11DZ Follows you

A community of Christians seeking to serve and love those around us, in the Colchester town centre and beyond.

Colchester, England [stpeterscolchester.org](http://stpeterscolchester.org) Joined August 2016

188 Following 118 Followers

## page 20 — Vicar's Conclusion

I am so very grateful to all who have contributed to the life of St Peter's over these last few months in so many different ways.

Many of these contributions have been highlighted here, and I would like to thank a number of people by name:

the Churchwardens: Dan and Wendy, Matt and Anne — for their enormous efforts and unfailing wisdom in helping lead our church

our Treasurer: Richard — for so carefully and confidently handling everything the PCC throws at him, and for keeping everything in order

those on the Staff Team: Bernice, Lizzie and Vivienne — for their hard work behind the scenes, for their love for those they serve, and for their sense of humour!

This year, I hope you won't mind if I also publicly thank my family.

With the onset of lockdown, they have between them provided the cast for 'Worship with the Wallaces'; they've offered ongoing tech support as I've adapted to FaceTube, YouBook, or whatever's been next; they've performed and sung for pre-recorded services (often with very little notice); and they've helped, with others, to keep the youth work going.

Most of all, though, we are all grateful to the Lord — for sustaining us, for answering our prayers, for watching over us, and for teaching us more than we might have ever guessed about humility and dependence, about frailty and mortality, and about what it means to look to him in all things. May the praise be his into eternity!

And so now we look to the future.

Who knows what the future will bring? We can't be certain, but the Bible points us in the same direction as always: people will need to hear the good news of the Saviour who died for them, the church will need to consider how best to reach and love and help those around us, and we will need to find ways to bring the eternal truths of the gospel to bear on the shifting sands of our culture.

And mercifully, our Lord knows exactly what the future will bring. And as he has sustained us, so he will sustain us in the months to come. So I look forward to whatever lies ahead. But as I do so, I am comforted by some words I first learnt many years ago, and have returned to many times throughout the pandemic. They seem a fitting note on which to finish...

*I know who holds the future,  
and he'll guide me with his hand;  
with God things don't just happen,  
everything by Him is planned.  
So as I face tomorrow,  
with its problems large and small,  
I'll trust the God of miracles,  
give to Him my all.*