

This has been another good but challenging year for our parish of St. Oswald's with many high points. Keith Philips and Rodney Fowler have shown great dedication and hard work as churchwardens with Pam Adlington being an invaluable help as assistant warden. Keith and Rodney are both retiring from their roles at this meeting .We thank them both for years of sterling service and for all their past commitment and support to the church, especially in the last few years. Our treasurer, Colin Gidman, has been very diligent in keeping our finances in good order and has continued to provide us with bi-monthly financial reports. The PCC have this year chosen The Farm Community Network as the annual charity for us to support. Many other members of the congregation contribute a lot of time and effort in supporting the church and we are grateful for all their help. The University of Manchester will not be continuing as the patron of our church-patronage will pass to the bishop of Chester.

We celebrated Rogation with an outdoor worship with singing, prayers and readings. Some of our animal friends came to join us too. At Whitsun the church was decorated with balloons for the church's birthday.

Unfortunately, due to covid, there was no church fete this July .Father Murray very kindly proposed a garden party in the vicarage garden instead but that also had to be postponed due to the continuing restrictions. The quiz still took place with many entrants.

Following the relaxation of covid restrictions in early summer, the church opened daily for private prayer. We remained at two services in church on a Sunday- a service of Holy Communion at 8 and again at 11, an all age service being held on the first Sunday of the month. The weekday Communion service restarted on a Wednesday at 10am. Printed service sheets were still in use at the 11am service but the Book of Common Prayer was used at the 8am service. Holy Communion is still distributed by Ministerial Intinction rather than offering the use of the Communal Chalice. We started using the common praise hymn books again in October. There was a gentle re-introduction of congregational singing in church in late July. Hymns were limited in number at the start with organ or piano music being played during communion. This soon increased to the normal four or five hymns and we all enjoyed being able to praise God by singing again.

A welcome party for Father Murray took place on 25th July, a year after Father Murray had arrived in Lower Peover. Refreshments were enjoyed in the garden of the Little House by kind permission of Sue Lake. Our first united benefice service was held at the end of August at St Oswald's. It

was wonderful to meet together. A small choir was brought together to help us with our singing. The All Age harvest thanksgiving service in October was well attended. Gifts of produce and tinned items were collected for the Salvation Army in Northwich. The harvest hot pot lunch in the school hall was a great social occasion and enjoyed by all who attended.

The second benefice service was held at St Lawrence's at the end of October. Remembrance Sunday on November 14th began with the usual outdoor observance. Father Murray's formal induction service was held at the end of November. The choir came together to sing for this service and it was good to finally and officially welcome Father Murray. Refreshments were held in the school after the service. A harp recital in November was well received and those who attended thoroughly enjoyed Gwen's music and hope for a revisit soon.

Our annual all age gift service took place on Sunday 5th December. The congregation was invited to bring gifts of new toys either unwrapped or in gift bags to be distributed through the Salvation Army to families in need in the area. The children in our church also received a small gift from us – this service is always a lovely start to our Christmas celebrations.

The Nine Lessons and Carols was well attended and it was good to have one this year despite the difficulties with Omicron. We managed to get a choir together to lead the singing. Grateful thanks to David and Yvonne for all their hard work in organising the choir and music. Our services for Christmas Day followed the usual pattern with the Midnight Service of Holy Communion on Christmas Eve starting at 11.30pm. We were lucky to be able to listen to Linda Richardson's lovely voice and sing carols to herald the start of Christmas. The crib had been refurbished and was placed under the altar and blessed at this service. The decorations in church were excellent and many thanks to all involved especially Sally Aspin for her work on the crib. On Christmas Day there was a said service of Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer at 8.00am and All Age Worship at 11am.

Unfortunately after the middle of January, Father Murray became unwell and unable to carry out his ministry. We all missed him and wished him a speedy recovery. The benefice service in January took the form of a Plough Service. Liz McGrath from the Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy spoke about her work and the links she has with the Farming Community Network. Fr Murray recovered to join us for the service on the anniversary of the Accession of

Queen Elizabeth II to the throne 70 years ago .However, Father Murray was unwell again shortly afterwards and continues to be on sick leave. We continue to hold Fr Murray in our prayers and hope he will be back with us soon. Our hard working and incredibly supportive lay reader Ann has been covering many of our services which has been fantastic. She also took a service Morning Prayer with Litany on Good Friday. Ann did manage to find retired priests for several Sundays including Easter Sunday when the 11am service was well attended -it was fabulous to sing the rousing Easter hymns.

One of the most encouraging parts of church life this year has been the continual growth of the children's church. The children and parents started meeting inside the church again in October. They sang a short hymn together at the November all age service and the gift service. The children also take part in saying the prayers at the all age services. Two mums, Rebekah and Rosie started leading children's church in January. After Easter and beginning in May, this children's church will be at 11a.m and the children will participate at the beginning of the service, go out for their activities and return for a blessing. Sue Lake has kindly agreed that the children and leaders can meet up in the little house for their activities .The next aim is to start a children's choir for the older children hopefully in September.

Pastoral relationships with the staff governors and the Children at Lower Peover Church School have continued to build over this year. Fr Murray held weekly school services in the church and worked with children in school following that service. Collective worship was held again in September. An additional three Harvest services were held for the children and their parents in St. Oswald's. All three services were well attended with around 60-80 parents choosing to attend each service with the children. The school also had two Easter services in church.

Ann, our lay reader has been going to the Little House once a week for prayers and a story. The link between the Little House and Church has grown stronger over the past year and some children from the Little House are involved with either All Age Worship or Children's church. The nativity still took place despite the number of colds among the children. Their Easter service took place in March. The Easter Garden in church was lovely.

The church has been beautifully decorated for all special services, thank you to everyone involved. Lynda Boag-Munroe has carried out a sterling job of editing the parish magazine. A few hard copies of the parish

magazine are now available at the back of church for those who are not able to access the online version. The website has been kept up to date by Ann who has also sent out regular emails and updates to parishioners, especially helpful through Father Murray's absence. Ann and the rural dean have chaired PCC meetings recently and standing committee meetings have continued in this period.

I would like to thank our organist David Tredwell for providing us with beautiful and sensitive music through our services. It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Barry Dodson, a fabulous musician and great friend to the parish, he has been greatly missed.

Two of our church members, Sally Geake and Sally Aspin, have been organising collections of essential supplies to be taken to the Macclesfield Ukrainian Aid Collection Point and from there to the Ukrainian Centre in Manchester where transport is arranged onwards to Ukraine. This is wonderful work and thank you so much to all who have contributed to this appeal.

Our fabulous lay reader Ann has worked untiringly this year to run the church in Father Murray's absence. Her help and ministry have been outstanding during his absence. We would not be where we are without her input. We will miss her very much as she and Roger leave us to live in West Wales. We wish them all the best in their new life. Their new parish will be the richer for it.

We must now look forward to the future – we already have a full three days of celebrations planned (courtesy of Roger and Elspeth Turner) over the Spring Bank Holiday in June to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. With the support and dedication of all the PCC and all parishioners, we will pull together and go from strength to strength. We hope that Father Murray will return to good health and the parish very soon. He is much missed.