



Keith Phillips and Rodney Fowler
Churchwardens of St. Oswald's Church, Lower Peover.

2020 AGM CHURCHWARDENS REPORT
for the year April 2019-April 2020

28th October 2020
(Delayed due to CV-19)

Dear Parishioners,

St. Oswald's church has been in a period of Interregnum effective from Sunday, 7th July 2019. Accordingly, the churchwardens assume the responsibility of maintaining services at the church. It is worth mentioning here that without the help and direction of Ann Barlow, this task would have proved nigh on impossible. So, an early but huge 'thank you' to Ann for her tireless help and leadership.

Parish Representatives were elected (Keith Phillips and George Dutton from St. Oswald's and Vicky Irlam and Bill Moss from St. Lawrence's) and the process of sourcing and selecting a new incumbent was put in motion. Interviews were finally held on Wednesday, 18th March 2019 at Radbrooke Hall and Father Murray Aldridge-Collins was unanimously selected. It is not likely that he will be able to take up post until late summer 2020.

From 7th July 2019 until 17th March 2020, the regular three main Sunday services have been held at St. Oswald's as well as several baptisms and weddings. It is a tribute to the kindness and generosity of visiting clergy, and a huge amount of time and effort by Ann Barlow, that we were able to maintain all bar two of these services during this period.

To make things just that little bit more challenging, the Covid-19 virus appeared in the UK on 31st January 2020. Under Government instructions, churches and other places of worship were closed from 17th March 2020 as the virus spread. A full national lockdown was introduced on Monday, 23rd March 2020 (*and was relaxed on Wednesday, 13th May 2020*).

Losses/Security

Inside the church there have been no known losses of church property during the last year. All our property, including artefacts held inside the church and all metal items outside, are marked with Smartwater® and registered with the relevant authorities (see later).

Insurance Claims

None.

Faculties in Progress:

The removal of rear two pews in the front right 'block' of pews, plus the re-direction of heating pipes was successfully finished in November 2019. The two pews require replacing back in the church, probably in the Shakerley Chapel. The faculty was extended to allow this.

Grants:

Clutterbuck Trust: Applied July 2019. £2,600 for new carpet runners in central and Shakerley Chapel aisles. Granted £1,000 April 2020. Runners replaced using additional privately donated funds.

Headley Trust: Applied August 2019. £23,000 for interior and exterior maintenance (primarily painting) as per Quinquennial recommendations. Granted £6,000 October 2019. Funds currently earmarked and held in restoration account pending work.

Insurance

From 1st June 2019 we agreed a 3-yr Long-Term Undertaking & Rate Stability Agreement with Ecclesiastical Insurance. This will effectively lower our monthly payments until 31st May 2022. We are insured for an increased sum of £8.4m (up from £7.8m) of building and contents cover, £5,000 cash (held inside or outside the church) and £10m public liability. The premium is paid in monthly instalments of £237.03 (down from £263 pm). In annual terms this is a reduction from £3,161 to £2,845. The premium was unaffected by the flood claim from last year.

Electrical Inspection

We are due a full electrical inspection, the last one having been completed in March 2015.

Lightning Conductor

The Lightning Protection System inspection was completed in August 2017 by Omega Red Group Ltd. and the appropriate certificate issued. Ecclesiastical require these inspections roughly every four years, but no longer than five. So, August 2021 is anticipated.

Fire Risk Assessment

Our last full Fire Risk Assessment was completed on 17th August 2015.

Fire Extinguishers

Inspected and certified. They will require replacing around December 2020 as they are all now 10 years old.

Contents

As reported last year, the church silver remains in a secure place, fully insured to its value of £41,000. We are still looking into the installation of a further safe at The Vicarage to house these items. Insurance would not be compromised.

Boiler

The boiler was last serviced by Mellor Mottram Heating Ltd. in November 2019 following the installation of the new radiators as part of the Pew Removal project.

Clock

Last serviced 30th May 2019 by Smiths of Derby as part of the pre-paid 3-year contract agreed in March 2019. The cost was £601.20 inc VAT for the three years. Next service due May 2020.

Organ

The organ still throws up occasional problems, but these have been covered in the regular servicing which occurred in July and October 2019. All servicing by Cartwright & Cartwright of Newcastle Under Lyme. The servicing cost is £190 (inclusive of VAT) and this occurs twice a year.

Archdeacon's Triennial Inspection

We were visited and 'inspected' on 12th August 2019 by Ian Bishop. He was satisfied with the standards of wardenship and offered ongoing help from the Diocese during the interregnum. Sadly, and almost without exception, this has not been offered proactively.

Quinquennial Inspection

This took place on 7th April 2016. Works still requiring attention is the brushing down and redecoration of timber framing to all elevations and interior re-decoration.

Churchyard

No issues to report, although some irregular 'gardens' and stonework still appears on some of the graves. This is strictly prohibited and only leads to awkward discussions with relatives. The 16 horizontal gravestones in the south-west area of the churchyard which had collapsed inwards, have all been made secure and safe.

Smartwater®

Last ordered and applied April 2016. Applications have a maximum 5-year effective usage period, although the bottle solution before application is only effective for 2 years. Therefore, recommend replacement solution approx. April 2021. Ref. No. CHU012/25785.

Churchwardens/Archdeacons Visitation Service

This years' service was held at St. Mary's church, Bowdon on Monday, 20th May 2019. Keith Phillips, Rodney Fowler and Brian Drye attended.

Thanks

It has been a strange year. Three quarters of it without a vicar, a quarter of it with a virus, and for the first time in hundreds of years, the Church of England has ordered all its churches to close.

But we still owe as much, if not more, thanks to all those who have helped keep the church functioning during the Interregnum in particular.

We owe huge thanks to the retired clergy who have stepped up to help (many without financial reward) maintain our pattern of services, especially those who offered their time at the 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion. And for those not retired but willing to give up even more of their Sunday to officiate at the mid-morning Holy Communion services.

And finally, the wardens wish to thank Ann for the encouragement and support she gave to each of us during an incredibly difficult year.

There is light at the end of the tunnel regarding the appointment of a new vicar later in the year. Alleluia!! Our prayers have been answered in that respect. But let us also be aware of the Covid cloud which is darkening by the day. We are facing another year of uncertainty.

Keith Phillips.