

General Report 2019-2020

When we met for the Annual Meeting in 2019 I don't think any of us ever imagined what would transpire in the year ahead. We knew that there would be changes as Jane, our vicar, had announced on Palm Sunday that she would be leaving the Peover benefice to take up an incumbency elsewhere. We were prepared for change but at the same time there was a lot of uncertainty as to what was ahead. With there being several vacant parishes in the deanery we faced the possibility of reorganisation and the beginning of the time of interregnum was taken up with many meetings before we were able to go ahead with advertising for a new incumbent. It was a great blessing that the interviews for our new vicar were able to take place before lockdown and we've been able to welcome Father Murray, though not with the party we would have liked to have.

Despite the uncertainties, as far as our regular worship and social activities were concerned it was business as usual at Lower Peover from Easter 2019 until mid-March 2020, when, as we all know, the spread of Covid-19 forced all places of worship to close their doors for four months. The main report will give more details of our activities so I won't go into those at the moment but I'd just like to highlight some things which have made an impression on me during the year.

I feel that even though it's been quite a difficult time since our last APCM we have as a community pulled together really well to make sure that St Oswald's has been active and welcoming. The wardens have borne the brunt of administrative arrangements and they're to be congratulated on managing everything so smoothly. I've been grateful for Ged for keeping us on track as chairman of the PCC, for Colin's rigorous approach to our finances and for Felicity's detailed records. I'm aware that there are also a lot of people whose contribution we take for granted because we only see the results of what they do, things like opening and locking the church every day until we went into lockdown, washing and ironing the altar linen, providing flower arrangements, cleaning the church, keeping the outside tidy and many other necessary tasks. We can be really thankful for everything that's done to make this a living church.

As usual, St Oswald's has seen a fair number of occasional offices during the year, or life events as the Church of England now calls them. Baptisms have featured regularly and we had a spate of weddings before Jane left, as well as a few more later on. There have been fewer funerals than in some years for which we're thankful but we have lost some regular members of our congregation. Joe Norbury and Philip Barnshaw were regular members of the 11am congregation and many of us will also have known Peter Fairclough and Richard Budenberg. We remember them along with our former vicar Ken Burghall who died more recently.

There are still difficult times ahead of us. As the financial report shows, there are concerns about our income against expenditure which have become even pressing as a result of lockdown. The Covid virus isn't going to go away for some time yet and this is limiting our ability to welcome baptism and wedding parties in the way we have in the past. It's also having an effect on our capacity to grow in fellowship as a congregation. I do believe though that God has plans for us and with a new bishop in the diocese and a new vicar in the parish I'm looking forward to seeing what those plans might be.

Ann Barlow
Reader

