



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

2022 AGM CHURCHWARDENS REPORT
for the year April 2021-April 2022

26th April 2022

Dear Parishioners,

From 8th March 2021 until 19th July 2021 England gradually emerged from the third and final Covid related national lockdown. St. Oswald's eventually spluttered back to life towards the end of July with tentative opening times and the focus very much on a cautious return to some semblance of normality.

Sadly, from a Warden's perspective it has been a disappointing year. During the past year, there has been little involvement by the incumbent in the strategic planning and administration at St. Oswald's. There have been no formal meetings between the incumbent and his Wardens, and only a single meeting (Standing Committee) has been held at the vicarage in that time. This is not normal or desirable. Discussions concerning the fabric of the church and matters of practicality have not been forthcoming. The lack of communication has unfortunately made the Wardenship of St. Oswald's a difficult job. Whilst we are of course sympathetic to Fr Murray's sickness, there is much work 'behind the scenes' that has simply not been done. Of particular concern, poor communication has made it difficult to assist the vicar with pastoral care and/or visits to those who are ill. Being unable to drive has seriously curtailed the ability of the vicar to fulfil this role without such assistance. We have also been unable to offer any care and consideration to Fr Murray, which is also part of the Churchwarden's role.

Losses/Security

Inside the church there have been no known losses of church property during the period covered by this report. 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:

None. It will be necessary to provide notice and information pertaining to the repairs of the Lych-Gate and plaster repairs in the Chancel, which are both due for completion in or around October 2022.

Grants:

Headley Trust: £6,000 funds remain earmarked in the restoration account pending allocation to a suitable project. It has been continually suggested that a group/individual could be usefully engaged in actively researching the many Grants available for church restoration/repairs. Can anyone help?

Electrical Inspection

The five-yearly electrical inspection was successfully completed on 16th November 2020 by AT Moores Electrical Contractors Ltd. There are no ongoing works required.

Lightning Conductor

The Lightning Protection System inspection was completed on 17th May 2021 by Omega Red Group Ltd. Ecclesiastical Insurance now require an annual visual inspection (by a PCC member) and a certified inspection every four years.

Fire Risk Assessment

Our last full Fire Risk Assessment was completed satisfactorily on 17th May 2021 by the Health & Safety Officer (Brian Drye) and me (Keith Phillips). The assessment was in line with the requirements issued by Ecclesiastical Insurance and a review has been recommended for 1st May 2023.

Fire Extinguishers

All inspected and passed 13th January 2022. 5 x 6 litre foam and 1 x 2kg CO2 extinguishers were replaced August 2020. Extinguishers require replacing every 10 years or before if used or pressure has reduced.

Insurance

In June 2019 we agreed a 3-yr Long-Term Undertaking & Rate Stability Agreement with Ecclesiastical Insurance. This will be effective until 31st May 2022. We remain insured for £8.4m 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 £242.35 (previously £239.19 pm).

Contents Insurance

All items within the church are fully covered for fire and theft. The church silver is kept in a secure place. It was last valued in 2012 for a collective total of £41,000 with one item at £24,000. Our insurance provides cumulative cover up to £30,000 in total, with a maximum single item value of £15,000. Ecclesiastical may review these figures and/or the premium if the address where it is held is disclosed, along with make and model of the safe plus details of additional security measures. Details are being sent from Ecc. Ins. to KP with recommendations of safes.

Ecclesiastical Insurers Inspection

Our next inspection by our insurers is due in 2022. TBA by Ecc. Ins.

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 8th December 2021 by Smiths of Derby as the final part of the pre-paid 3-year contract at a cost of £601.20. We have now agreed a new 3-year servicing plan costing £631.20 (inc VAT) for services in 2022/2024 inclusive. Next service due December 2022. There was an electrical fault reported and dealt with 25th April 2022.

Organ

The organ was last serviced/voiced on 9th June 2021 and is next due 5th May 2022. A replacement solenoid will be installed at the same time to deter mice chewing the existing leather covers. Cartwright & Cartwright (Philip) of Newcastle Under Lyme. The servicing cost is £190 (inc. VAT). Servicing/voicing is required twice a year, spring and autumn.

Archdeacon's Triennial Inspection

We were last satisfactorily 'inspected' on 12th August 2019 by Ian Bishop.

Quinquennial Inspection

Completed 14th April 2021. Mark Pearce of Kepczyk Pearce Sanderson was the architect attending. The report was complimentary of the condition of the church with no urgent works requiring immediate attention noted. Of the work requiring attention in the 12 months to present, the plaster repairs between the windows in the East elevation behind the altar are in-hand (October 2022). The repairs and infills to the external south and east elevations of the main building are still subject to the spending moratorium as instigated by the PCC. As for the more ambitious plan for the improvement/renewal of the heating system to meet the CofE's target for being carbon neutral by 2030 is concerned, the writer would respectively consider that there are matters closer to home of a more pressing nature that should be considered first.

Churchyard

We have not been made aware of any item of significance requiring attention in the churchyard over the year. We are grateful for the enormous amount of work that Norman, Terrence and Mike put into the maintenance and upkeep of the Churchyard throughout the year. Mostly unseen and unannounced, it is very much appreciated.

Vicarage

We have not been made aware by the incumbent of any issues and neither have we been invited to make any inspection of potential problems that may exist. We have been told via email by the Archdeacon that the internal repairs and condition of the vicarage is good and is being well maintained, but because of the current situation we have been unable to confirm this.

Smartwater®

Previously applied in April 2016. Applications have a maximum 5/6 year effective usage period, although the bottle solution before application is only effective for 2 years. New Smartwater (£81) was delivered March 2021 and is still awaiting application. Ref. No. CHU012/25785. This matter will receive priority in the near future.

Toilet

This was serviced on 17th May 2021 by G&G Pumps (Sandbach) Ltd. The annual service cost is £150.

Churchwardens/Archdeacons Visitation Service

The official 2021 Visitation Service to swear in churchwardens was cancelled. We were however duly sworn in by Fr Murray by special dispensation after the 2021 APCM .

Churchwardens

Both Wardens indicated in good time that they are officially retiring from their posts at this year's Meeting of Parishioners. There have been, to our knowledge, no volunteers offering to stand as new churchwardens. As prescribed, in the event of no replacements being nominated and elected to post at the meeting, we will continue officially until 31st July 2022.

In Closing

Yet another strange year. Three months of restricted opening and three months without a vicar. We owe sincere gratitude and thanks to all those who have helped keep the church functioning spiritually, practically and financially during another trying year.

A very special 'thank you' is owed to George and Noreen Dutton for single-handedly painting the entire interior of the church in August 2021. This was a mammoth task conducted quietly, efficiently and generously. Sincere thanks.

And finally, we wish to thank Ann Barlow for her dedicated service and the monumental amount of work she has undertaken since the arrival of Fr Murray. Behind the scenes (and very often in the front of them), Ann has been the real driver behind the continuity of our church over the past year. St. Oswald's would have been a poorer place without her. Thank you, Ann for 25 years of resolute and uncompromising service. You will be very much missed.

So, in closing we wish our successors all the luck in the world, and we will be happy to lend a hand and offer our help in the future.

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