



**Report to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 5th July 2021 at 11.30am**



Contents

Church Management

Our Vision	3
Vicars Report	3
Curates Report	11
Church Activity	13
Churchwardens Report - Maintenance	15
Deanery Synod	15
GDPR	16
Safeguarding	16

Children and Families

Messy Church	17
Open the Book	18
Sunday Morning Children's Group	18
Light Project	19

Church Activities

Communications Group	20
Garden Gang	21
Gloucester Child Contact Centre	21
Hospitality Group	22
St Paul's Church of England Primary School	22
Linden Primary School	23
Music Group	24
Monday House Group	24
Moveable House Group	25

Fundraising and Accounts 2020	26
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1. Church Management

Our Vision

Our vision is to be God's family, here in this part of Gloucester, faithful, loving and open to God, to one another and to the world. As part of the Diocese of Gloucester, we also share the diocesan vision statement, and we are constantly seeking ways to put this into practice.

We are called in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit:
to proclaim and live the gospel of Jesus Christ,
transforming lives and communities,
advancing the Kingdom of God.

Vicars Report for the year 2020



A few weeks ago, as I was walking with a parishioner they turned and said to me, "so you'll be staying here with us for an extra year on top of your original plan now then?" I looked at them quizzically and asked, "why?" (not least because you learn really early with God there is no plan that you make but only one of His making). Their response was to say, "because we've missed a year of you." On the surface 2020 does indeed seem to have been a missed year. One where we have been locked in our own homes and communities, unable to function in any capacity as we would wish and that has included everything that constitutes mission and ministry including worship.



As I write this we are approaching the first anniversary of the first lockdown and our second Lent and Easter without being able to gather physically. Doesn't this picture seem a distant memory? And one that makes my heart mourn - for all that has been lost. Yet, this year has been far from empty and certainly not restful. Mission and ministry and even worship have taken place every single hour of every single day - just in ways I had never imagined. But also, I realise, in ways that have been happening for years but perhaps have not been distilled in such a way before. Single moments of connection with people in every walk of life and at every stage of life. Big moments. Small moments. Moments of life. Moments of death. Every moment in between. Life in all its fullness. All of us have, in so many ways, taken part in mission, ministry and worship.

Yes, we have lost much and there will be much in-depth work to do with people as we exit this latest lockdown and hopefully, with vaccines, the pandemic itself to help us all process what has taken place. There have been losses great and small and all of them matter. All of them become the story of the people in this place. All of our stories will go on to form the people we become and the community we become. There will be a great need for space to tell our stories and a great need for deep listening too.

We remain, however, a body of people whose ultimate desire is for inclusiveness. Whose deepest desire, even when we cannot physically sit around the same table and share bread and wine together is to be strengthened by God and one another for the journey ahead. It still remains our purpose to live out the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, in every area of our lives, individually and collectively. We might have had to learn to do it on an individual basis more than a collective basis this year but nothing is wasted with God. And in our individual acts we always add to the collective acts of God in bringing His Kingdom to full fruition.

One of the most striking things that occurs to me as I reflect on the past year has been the value of relationships already established. It is on these relationships we have built our mission and ministry in the absence of the 'normal' things we do and from them also established new relationships.

For example, working with our local councillor's and our local schools, during every lockdown but especially the first one, to be a distribution centre for food parcels. The

building itself became a storage place for the food, funded by the council and the church. Parcels were delivered to over 60 different families several times over. Many stood on the doorstep and asked why the vicar would be giving food when they didn't go to church. What an invitation to a missional conversation!

Electric and gas top ups have been given on a weekly basis to people who we were already in relationship with and who trusted us enough to ask for help. Phone calls, emails, texts, physically distanced walks, a lot of laughter amidst a huge amount of tears - the list of conversations is endless - everything that encompasses the beginning of life to the very end - however that might come about. Frustration - particularly with technology! Who else had never heard of zoom before March 2020? If only we'd taken shares out we could have fixed the roof by now. Hey ho!

As I reflect I recognise the joy of mission, ministry and worship here. For it has been about living our God-given lives of faith with the people we live amongst - wherever we are. It has been about the 'incarnational' presence of Christ - however gently offered - into the spaces we have spent our time. It has been about the prayer for and with people - in silence; in the dancing in our kitchens; in the singing out loud in our lounges; in the screaming in despair; with words or no words; with voice or heart; mind; soul; in our walking and in our talking; in our eating and in the sharing of what we could.

It has been the ministry of salvation born in the gifts that have arrived on people's doorsteps - either from well-known companies or from friends, neighbours or strangers. It has been in the sharing of this time together. We might not have been able to share broken bread and wine outpoured but we have shared a new brokenness and a new understanding of what it means for Jesus to give his life that we might have life in all its fullness. It has definitely not been an empty year or a restful one.

Ultimately, then we remain a body of people who believe in the saving grace of a God who loves and asks us to love in return. We do not ask the cost of such love and we give what we can.

- Some of us have much to give and others have less.
- Some of us have deep faith and some of us cling on by our fingertips.
- We are all broken and recognise our need of Christ.
- We live in the light of this revelation and seek to do God's will in this place.
- We are not 'whizzy' but we are faithful, heart-filled people who want to serve God and our neighbour with all that we do have.
- We seek to live out our faith in the many and diverse places we might find ourselves during the week.



Can you remember back to Advent 2019 when we launched our new logo and had such hopes for 2020 and beyond? - here's a snapshot to remind you:



Our focal points for mission and ministry at that point were:

- Placing schools at the heart of our mission with creative connections between churches and schools.

Possible priorities:

- a. Hold Christmas and Easter experiences, inviting local schools.
- b. Promote the Brownie group which holds its regular meetings in the church hall.
- c. Hold a school's carol service.

- **Investing in our engagement with baptism families to spark an amazing adventure with Jesus Christ.**

Possible priorities:

- a. Extend our support for families whose children are to be baptised by introducing a church support member to be involved during and after the baptism process (including anniversary cards and follow-up).
- b. Offering or providing baptism teas.
- c. As well as the baptism candle and certificate, giving first bibles to the baptised child.

d. Make parents of children being baptised aware of the services offered by the church. For example, Little Angels, Messy Church.

- **Approaching the use, upkeep and future of our church buildings in bold and creative ways.**

Possible priorities:

- a. Continuing to provide the hall to existing groups and to help them promote attendance. For example, Art & Soul, Messy Church.
- b. To promote the use of the hall for life event celebrations.
- c. Hold regular church/community events. For example, a monthly film.
- d. Approach individuals/organisations who may want to provide services in our area. For example, Tumble Tots, toddler singing group.
- e. Can we make better use of our grounds? We need to address grounds and church maintenance issues. Can we develop a register of church helpers and skills?
- f. Look at our meet & greet processes. Celebrate the life events of parishioners and look at catering. For example, should we offer coffee so there is a better link between our Sunday 8am & 10am services.

- **Being advocates for human flourishing, through initiatives which combat injustice, environmental destruction, exclusion and isolation.**

Possible priorities:

- a. Continue with current activities. For example, Tuesday Drop-In sessions.
- b. Continue our support for the Gloucester Foodbank and aim to become a member of their 200 Club.
- c. Through our Eco-Warrior Group, promote recycling and use of eco-friendly projects. Is there anything we could do with our grounds?
- d. Could we visit vulnerable local people through a neighbouring scheme?
- e. Could we hold a regular community tea to help local families?
- f. Work with local organisations. For example, Samaritans, Gloucester Sanctuary Fellowship.

We also had a focus on the Growing Faith Initiative - <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-reform/growing-faith>

Obviously so much of this has been on hold but let's take a moment to think about what has been built upon:

- **Placing schools at the heart of our mission with creative connections between churches and schools.**

We built upon our existing relationship with St Paul's and Linden school and each week, even though we were unable to go into the school to deliver collective worship, we have enabled collective worship to take place by providing videos for both schools. It is now a regular occurrence to meet children in the shops and streets who shout - "I see you on the tele!"

I also took up the role of Chair of Governors for St Paul's School during the first lockdown. This has necessitated very close working relationships with the staff and other governors to make sure the school has been able to deliver remote learning for those at home as well as physical learning for our vulnerable children and those of key workers. It has also taken a lot of work to ensure the school was Covid secure and ready to receive the children back into the classroom in September and now in March 2021.

We did manage, with a lot of care, to have the children from the school into the physical building for their Christmas services. It was not the usual jam-packed event with parents, grandparents and carers but instead a very carefully managed 'bubble' event which was live-streamed to the parents, grandparents and carers instead! It was the highlight of the year as I looked out from the sanctuary to see the children and staff filling the church. We will do the same at Easter too.

We continue to partner with St Paul's School and The Long Table to deliver Easter meals to 28 families in need.

- **Investing in our engagement with baptism families to spark an amazing adventure with Jesus Christ.**

Many of our baptism families have kept in touch by email or telephone and the conversations have developed beyond the surface level. Previous relationships have been built upon to support baptism families through a whole host of life 'events' - some joyful and some utterly sorrowful.

We hope that as we exit from lockdown and reassess our provision for children and families we will be able to include those baptism families, as well as others in the wider community, in the events that will hopefully begin in the coming months.

- **Approaching the use, upkeep and future of our church buildings in bold and creative ways.**

One of the great losses over the last year has been the ability to eat together and to use the hall as a meeting space for everything from film nights to coffee mornings, Art and Soul and Messy Church. However, we also now have an opportunity to look at how we might want to use the space we are blessed with in a fresh way.

During the last year we have managed to stay open to the Gloucester Child Contact Centre as their work is vital to maintaining relationship between children and parents and is Court-ordered work. A huge thank you to Tammy, their co-ordinator and the volunteers for the care they have taken in making this a safe space for the families that use them and ourselves as well.

We have also been able to welcome and develop relationship with The Roma Church who now use our building (when we are physically open) for their worship services on a Sunday evening.

We hope too to be able to extend our hospitality to the Gloucester Sanctuary Fellowship as Lockdown eases.

After nearly six years of trying we managed to get the internet into church within three months - thank you Steve Roberts for being the man who persisted when others said, 'no.' This has allowed us to live stream services which has been a blessing for funeral and baptism families unable to attend the live service in the church as well as being a blessing to those at home.

Unfortunately, Heather and I are not the BBC so we have only been able to do our best with a laptop balanced on a credence table in the middle of the nave. Thank you to Mike and Steve who have been persistent in enabling the best quality we can have to come to fruition - and for all your patience with us. We now have people around the country watching our services.

As part of our investment in new technology we were able to set up a YouTube channel and this has been invaluable for enabling many to watch services, reflections and things such as collective worship and the now very famous LEGO videos. If you haven't watched the LEGO videos made by Kiri, Steve, Storm and Boaz Roberts then you can find them at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8vTY5V4ag85DmyKsSAnBOSgQ4-R3gop_

In the next few months as lockdown hopefully eases we will be looking at how we want to use the building once again for the well-being of our whole community. Please do engage with the discussions when the invitation to do so arrives in your inbox or on your door mat.

- **Being advocates for human flourishing, through initiatives which combat injustice, environmental destruction, exclusion and isolation.**

As above with the ability to offer our space for the Child Contact Centre to continue its work. The flourishing of human relationship is exactly what they contribute to and I am proud to say, that we as a church, support them in every way - as they do us.

Working with the council and the Long Table we have been able to provide much needed food parcels to the community.

A huge thank you for all the connection that each of you has enabled too - either through enabling technology, picking up the phone to speak to people, texting people, delivering parcels - food, Advent, Lent or otherwise, emailing, walking, speaking, laughing and crying. All of this has led to the flourishing and overall well-being of so many different people in so many different situations.

Thank you for your faith, your company on this roller-coaster ride, your prayers and your love in Christ.

Reverend Ruth Fitter

Curate's Report



What a year 2020 turned out to be. It was certainly not the year any of us expected. But despite suggestions that Covid-19 has brought life to a standstill and the sense that there is nothing to report I have found that looking back over the year has proved it to be fairly full after all.

The year started with plenty of plans afoot – preparing for moving house, preparing for ordination as priest, planning for a Mission Partnership Weekend with the West of Severn Benefice (which saw me organising a pet service in the tythe barn) and the International Youth Forum (including a trip to the Lambeth Conference). By mid-March, most were looking unlikely and indeed in time postponed or cancelled completely. Thankfully my college awards ceremony was able to take place before the virus hit and I was able to attend Cuddesdon College and receive my BA.

The preparation and paperwork that Ruth and I did early in the year meant that as soon as ordinations *were* able to take place once more, I was ordained as priest in Gloucester Cathedral on 20th September. A smaller service than expected due to restrictions but very moving nonetheless. This was followed by my presiding for the first time at Holy Communion on the 27th September and we welcomed my tutor from CGH, Rev. Dr Roger Latham, to preach – Cyril the Caterpillar, who ate more and more and more until he was sick, has certainly made sure I remember that sermon! We did eventually move house in October to King Edwards Ave and are really pleased to be living in the parish at last – it is only sad that having arrived we have been unable to have anyone over for coffee but are hopeful for the year ahead.

Over the year I have continued preaching, funerals and pastoral care work – since I have been priested, I am now able to do weddings and baptisms. Sadly, for the couples, the COVID-19 situation has meant that all of our weddings have been postponed and my heart goes out to them as all of their carefully laid plans have

fallen apart. I had the privilege of undertaking my first baptism in September – again due to corona restrictions it looked different and strict guidelines were in place. Again, all of our other baptisms have been postponed in line with guidance, but we look forward with anticipation to a time when we can welcome families for baptism once more.

Digital skills have been a must this year – something they do NOT teach at theology college (although I think they might have to from now on). This year I have learned more about zoom, live-streaming and video editing than I ever thought I would need and am grateful to Steve for endless patience and tech support. We are fortunate to have such technologies to make use of, but it is without doubt that I am looking forward to being with people in person more.

Other areas/projects that I have been involved with include the ABCD Toolkit pilot (Community Development), Growing Faith (partnership between home/school/church), Gloucester City Deanery and Clergy Chapter (as Chapter Clerk, Deanery Synod and the Deanery Strategy Plan), Gloucester Sanctuary Fellowship, Care Home Worship (pre-lockdown), the Diocesan Vocations Team (particularly involved in Young Vocations and more recently as the UKME Champion encouraging vocations among minority ethnic communities) and Forest Church at Robinswood Hill (currently on pause until restrictions are lifted).

It has been a huge privilege to be involved in our local schools through regular collective worship (both in person but more recently in providing recorded assemblies for them to use during lockdown either in the classroom or remotely), class Christingle (February) and supporting their Christmas services where we were able to have them in the building in carefully bubbled groups and live stream their services for their parents and families. We started an after-school club, Faith Explorers, for children and their families in school with a view to encouraging baptism but this was sadly put on hold due to the first lockdown.

We are also saddened that the work we were planning around intergenerational worship had to be put on hold due to corona virus – I am particularly sad that one of the effects of the virus is that we don't have children in church much anymore and look forward to being able to find ways of strengthening our ties with children and families both inside and outside the church over the year ahead as restrictions are lifted.

As we approached the usual busy season of Advent and Christmas, it was clear that things were going to be very different this year. I was really pleased that we were able to offer both an Advent Course and Advent Reflections, albeit online. We also arranged a Christmas Eve Nativity Trail around the parish for families and children since we were unable to hold our usual Crib Service, enabling people to engage with the Christmas Story in a new and different way.

In a year of challenge and change, probably the biggest challenge was Ruth's illness in November. I cannot thank the clergy team, the vergers and church warden enough

for their support during this time, particularly when I was required to self-isolate. It is with enormous pleasure that Ruth is now back at work and in improving health. With thanks for all your prayers and support throughout 2020 and my prayers for you all in 2021.



Reverend Heather de Gruyther

Church Activity



Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals - There were 7 baptisms in the parish during 2020, 1 wedding and 17 funerals held either at the church or at the crematorium.

Average Attendance at Sunday Services - This is difficult to monitor but in the annual statistical return which was submitted in January 2021 we were also asked for the number of online worshippers as well as those worshipping physically in the building. This can be done using the data from our YouTube channel. Therefore,

during 2020 the average attendance across the main Sunday services is 52 people. Obviously some people have neither engaged with the physical or online worship but have instead used the hard-copy orders of service which we made sure people had for use at home where we knew people could not access the internet.

Expenses Payments - Other than the reimbursement of expenses and purchases made on the church's behalf, no payments have been made to members of the PCC.

Electoral Roll - As of October 2020 there were 92 people on our electoral roll.

Report of PCC meetings - The prime role of the PCC is co-operation with the vicar in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, social and ecumenical. It is also to safeguard and hold to account the clergy and the vision of the church in all matters. The PCC are the trustees of the charity and as such are responsible for the running of the church alongside the Incumbent.

Churchwarden - We currently have one Churchwarden, Sister Cynthia Kerr.

PCC membership - As we currently have 92 members on the electoral roll for the church and because this is under 100 members, we are required to have 9 people on the PCC.

The PCC members are as follows: (please note the terms of office for those due to step down were originally until April 2020 but due to the Covid-19 crisis this was extended until the APCM could take place in October 2020):

- Graham Brooks - re-elected to serve as a Deanery Synod member in October 2020 and is therefore also a member of the PCC until April 2023.
- Kiri Roberts - elected to serve as a Deanery Synod member in October 2020 and is therefore also a member of the PCC until April 2023.
- Ruth Parsons, Steve Roberts, and Rachael Hawkins whose term of office will end in April 2022.
- Beverley Evans, Anne Minchin, Helen Scott and Miriam Afortude whose term of office will end in April 2023.
- Ex-officados members of the PCC are Rev Canon Pauline Godfrey, Rev Ruth Fitter and Sister Cynthia Kerr.
- Rev Heather de Gruyther is a member of the PCC as she is a clerk in holy orders but she does not retain any voting rights.
- The PCC met 7 times during the year. The minutes of these minutes can be found in the pink folder in the hall and can also now be found on our website.

Deanery Synod Representatives - Graham Brooks and Kiri Roberts both of whose terms of service will end in April 2023

Vacancies - We have vacancies for the following:

- 1 Churchwarden

Reverend Ruth Fitter

Churchwarden's Report - Maintenance

During the year repairs were made to our church garden wall following it being hit by a car. In addition, a full review was undertaken of our fire signage and extinguishers. This was updated and we are now fully up to code on fire regulations.



Our next Quinquennial Inspection will take place during 2023.

Deanery Synod

Deanery Synod is a sort of go-between that links the individual parish churches within each deanery to the diocese. Graham Brooks has been a Deanery Synod rep for the whole year, and I became one in October 2020 at the APCM. The role of a Deanery Synod rep is to carry your stories, ideas and challenges to the wider deanery, and return news from the wider deanery to you, effectively acting as your link to the bigger picture.

During my time as a rep, the main topic of discussion at Deanery Synod has been something called the Deanery Strategic Plan. Each Deanery in Gloucester Diocese has been asked to look at how best mission and ministry can be carried out over the

next ten years, using creative thinking and not necessarily sticking with the usual clergy roles. In fact, we are being specifically asked to reduce these by two posts and focus more widely on the needs within our Deanery. The hope is that this new and missional way of thinking will enable healthy and flourishing communities.

The four main objectives that have been decided for this project are:

- Collaborative working across parish and benefice boundaries.
- Making schools central to our mission and ministry.
- Reaching out and increasing our involvement with the wider community.
- Ecumenical working across the Deanery.

Latest developments include the appointment of Tom Whittaker, Churchwarden at Longney, who is experienced in Project Management, and who has agreed to help facilitate the next stage of planning. A small working party of 6 clergy and 6 laity will be set up, in order to come up with a plan for each of the core objectives, and DS reps have been asked to feed in any ideas and information that may come from discussions with their PCCs.

The deadline for a draft plan has been moved to November 2021 to allow more time, and we will keep you updated as things progress with this.

Kiri Roberts

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

As a church we are required adhere to GDPR requirements. We ask permission to use personal information in certain circumstances so that people's rights are protected. In order to comply with GDPR we have and will continue to ensure that the information we hold is:

- Collected lawfully and for specific purposes.
- That information is adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are used.
- That data is accurate and kept up to date.
- That data is kept securely and kept for no longer than is necessary.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the term used to describe the responsibility we all have as a community of people to work for the flourishing of others around us and to make sure everyone lives life in a safe and secure way which offers them wellbeing in every aspect of their lives. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone, not just a few people.

At St Paul & St Stephen's there are some people who have a greater responsibility for this aspect of our life together. Rev Ruth, as the Vicar has ultimate responsibility, but she carries this responsibility alongside the rest of the clergy team, the PCC and particularly the nominated persons who are Sister Cynthia Kerr and Susan Matthews. These are the people to whom you can talk about any concerns you have about anyone in the congregation or even outside of it if you would like some advice. Rev Ruth's contact details are on the newsletter each week and Cynthia and Sue's contact details are on the poster in the porch.

Each parish is also supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. If you have a concern about either a child or an adult and their wellbeing, please talk in the first instance to Rev Ruth but if you think the concerns relate to Rev Ruth's treatment of someone please talk to Cynthia, Sue or someone on the PCC. You are always at liberty to call the Diocesan Team on 07801 750664. The team holds an out of hours mobile telephone so if there are any concerns at any time they can be contacted. To contact social care services in Gloucester you can call them on 01452 426565.

This year Rev Ruth has brought to the attention of the Diocesan Team 15 children she has had concerns about (this does not include safeguarding incidents relating to children at school where she has the responsibility of being Governor for Safeguarding) and 1 adult where the case has needed to be escalated through the Diocesan Policy.

2. Children & Families

Messy Church



Messy church met as normal in January and February but since then we have been 'Messy Church at Home.' BRF Messy Church, which is the central body for Messy Church in the UK, has produced 'At Home' sessions to use throughout lockdown and we have posted these on our Facebook page month by month [and sent them out by email], along with songs and some stories. There has been very little feedback to this, just a few reports have trickled in from messy church families that they have been happy with our attempts to keep in touch.

For Advent and Christmas we distributed activity boxes to twenty families with ideas of ways to share the Christmas story together and containing the things they needed to complete the activities. Families were also invited to join in with a Light trail organised by Gloucester Community Church [St Luke's] on 31 st October and the Nativity trail at St P and St S just before Christmas. The families that took part had a good time, particularly enjoying the brief face to face contact that it gave us.

Looking to the year ahead, we long to be able to meet in person and do 'messy' explorations of our Christian faith together.

Ruth Parsons

Open the Book

The Open the Book team led 2 assemblies at St Paul's School in early 2020 and we were very happy to be part of one day of Experience Easter, bringing the children into church just before the first coronavirus lockdown.

Our clergy have continued to provide collective worship throughout the year but the OTB team has not contributed to this since March. The hope for 2021 is that the team can recruit new members and relaunch when it is safe to do so.

Ruth Parsons

Sunday Morning Children's Group

In late 2019 the PCC and clergy team started to look at how to best help our children grow in faith. There are ongoing discussions around inter-generational worship and the role of separate children's groups.

The Sunday morning group was rested in January 2020 and then resumed with the clergy leading some Godly Play style 'wondering' sessions between our usual Bible story, prayer and craft sessions. This was paused in March as coronavirus struck and church went online. The clergy trialled a Sunday teatime for children via Zoom for a few weeks but this did not seem to meet the needs of families.

We delivered an Advent calendar for church families to use in December and the clergy set up a Nativity Trail round the parish a few days before Christmas. During the year there has been much prayer and soul searching and we are still trying to seek a way forward to help our children and their families grow as disciples of Jesus.



During lockdown the Roberts family produced some Bible stories in Lego to much acclaim and Kiri has started The Light Project, so exciting new things are happening....

Ruth Parsons

Light Project

The vision for Light Project has been bubbling away for some time now, and it's essentially quite a simple one - to build a sense of community amongst local families and share God's light together.

Back in the early part of 2020, plan A was beginning to take shape. I had hoped to start a fortnightly family gathering on Friday evenings, that would allow people to experience a way of 'being' church that is less formal than the 10 o'clock service. The idea being that the style of communication should particularly engage parents, as well as children. My hope was that this gathering would offer everyone a chance to eat together, catch up, be creative, worship God and grow in faith, in a way that was fun, relaxed and relevant.

Well, the pandemic hit, and plan A flew out the window - at least for the time being. However, I'm pleased to tell you about the birth of plan B, which came to fruition in January this year. I've begun sending out a fortnightly email via Mailchimp, which aims to build community amongst families even though we can't meet at this time. Each email typically includes a few words of encouragement, a Parent Ponder (short video reflection), a song, a craft activity, a chance for people to share photos or comments and a prayer. It's early days yet, but so far this has gone really well. Please do let me know if you'd like to join the mailing list or know someone who you think might like to.

I'm hoping that as restrictions allow, during 2021, there'll be an opportunity to combine plan A and B in some way, to enable the Light Project to grow further as a community.

Kiri Roberts

3. Groups & Activities

Communication Group

What a year it's been to be involved in church communications! Ways of communicating that have endured for years have needed to be supplemented by totally fresh expressions as we've all adapted to the pandemic. Just as we've got all of the details correct across noticeboards, news sheet, Facebook and the website and AChurchNearYou.com, the rules have changed and we've needed to start again. But we should also celebrate what we've achieved. This year we've got a broadband connection installed in the church building, launched our church YouTube channel (which now has over 100 subscribers) which we use regularly now for both livestreaming and pre-recorded audio-visual services, set up the ability to hear the latest sermon over the phone (for those unable to access them online) and moved our weekly news sheet to MailChimp (which helps keep your information more secure). Ruth and Heather have then ensured that those who need a paper copy of this, still receive it through their letterboxes. We also put out details of the Christmas activities (and some of the activities themselves) across our various platforms, with only one minor change to the poster we had printed. And over this time we've built up quite a library of sermons, reflections, audio-visual services and Lego videos across our various online platforms. So as we look into the next year, we're cautiously optimistic that things will settle down into a new routine, but also keen to take forward with us the good things that we've learned.

Steve Roberts

Garden Gang



'A garden is a thing of beauty and a job forever'.

Our grounds were again maintained to a high standard mainly due to the hard work and dedication of George Marchant. We now have a "Garden Gang" which meets on a monthly basis under George's guidance.

Special attention was given during the year to our Garden of Remembrance, an area which is a restful and beautiful area of our grounds.

If you would like to help us maintain our small piece of God's kingdom, please join us for our monthly meeting.

'A weed is a plant that is not only in the wrong place but intends to stay there'.

Gloucester Child Contact Centre

Firstly, big thanks to Ruth and everyone involved in supporting the GCCC reopening, so families could continue contact with their loved ones. It is a testing time for families going through their contact journey already, without the added uncertainty of COVID. Thank you, not only from the GCCC but also from all our users, I know they are extremely grateful, to see our door is open for them.

The Centre remains open fortnightly, with a session in the morning and one in the afternoon, with COVID measures in place, to protect all users.

Our lines of communication are regular with Ruth and we know how fortunate we are, to have a very good relationship between the Church and the Centre and how we are able to support each other, through testing times. You have played an important part in continuing to see smiles on our families faces. Thank you.

Tammy, Coordinator, Gloucester Child Contact Centre

Hospitality Group

The early part of 2020 was 'normal' with a New Year party in January and Pancake party in February hosted by Rev Ruth. There were film nights in January and February too, hosted by Mike Parsons.

Hospitality group met once only in 2020 to plan events around Easter and to clean the church kitchen before its 3-yearly inspection. So just before lockdown in March the kitchen was duly inspected and received a 5-star hygiene rating from the local authority. None of the events we planned that night were able to take place as church life moved to a virtual setting.

Thanks to Steve and Kiri a quiz night via Zoom rounded off the year in December.

Ruth Parsons

St Paul's Church of England Primary School

Collective Worship has continued to be of great importance to the staff and community of St Paul's during this challenging year. Despite being unable to be together as a whole school, or even in a 'Phase' for the greatest part of the year, we have managed to maintain a sense of togetherness, reflection and prayer through Collective Worship.

During periods of lockdown when the children were not at school, staff ensured weekly assemblies and stories were filmed on a rota basis and then blogged for families to share together.

When we have been in school, we have aimed for three class assemblies a week. The focus values were set, by the RE lead, in line with our curriculum and what we felt the children needed to reflect upon. The values included are: thankfulness; forgiveness; hope; trust; love; resilience; respect and next term we will explore peace and joy. This has been through a combination of videos and teacher led Collective Worship.

We have been lucky to have access to weekly iSing Pop online Collective Worship since September, funded by the Diocese, which the children have thoroughly enjoyed with the upbeat songs and fun way of communicating important Christian values. The children watch these in every class and they are blogged for families to share together too. The children especially enjoy Reverend Ruth and Reverend Heather's weekly Collective Worship videos, reminding us of our important links with our Church and how we eagerly await the return of visitors into school.

We were grateful to be able to celebrate both Christmas and Easter in Church this academic year, which was live streamed to our parents who I know are also missing the sense of belonging and celebration that we have when we are together in Church or our school hall.

We were excited to hear that Reverend Ruth and Reverend Heather were keen to come back into school, so we have put a rota together to facilitate all children being able to have a Phase Collective Worship twice this term. Further to this, we have our weekly Phase Collective Worship reinstated when we can get together in the hall. Our first Phase Assembly was wonderful! Several children who joined us during

lockdown had never experienced a group of this size in or even been into our school hall, which made it all the more special.

Linden Primary School

I thought that I would give you an update on our interactions at Linden Primary School with St Paul and St Stephen's Church over the past year.

Before the pandemic hit, we had regular weekly sessions with either Ruth or Heather, or sometimes both. Either Ruth or Heather would lead an assembly for KS1 and KS2 separately, due to the size of the school. The worship would begin with lighting a candle for focus and would say our words to begin worship. The assembly would have a story or activity based on a passage from the Bible and would involve lots of pupil engagement and participation. The children certainly miss these assemblies, as do the staff! After a prayer, the assembly would finish through a usual goodbye, which would always indicate that worship was finishing.

Another way in which St Paul and St Stephen's Church would interact with Linden is through the school visiting the church for KS1's harvest festival. This was an occasion widely anticipated by both KS1 staff and children, where Ruth would lead worship for KS1's children and parents. The children would have a chance to sing hymns and read poems or other creations that they have made, and ultimately give thanks for all that we have today. For KS2, we have held our own harvest festivals in school, and Ruth has visited to lead worship before the KS2 children sing hymns and show their class' creations for our collective worship.

This year, we have had virtual assemblies/sessions which have been sent to us via a YouTube link. These would include our usual greeting for our collective worship, along with a story and other activities for the children to participate in. There is always time for reflection and prayer at the end of the virtual assemblies, which has been invaluable to all of the pupils and staff in these unprecedented times.

Most weeks, children would watch these assemblies in class and would spend time afterwards having discussions on them. The staff would complete follow up activities with classes after assemblies, linking these to events, situations or learning that arise during the week that follows.

I know for certain that we all miss having Ruth and Heather in to lead collective worship and it is an afternoon that we all look forward to. We look forward to welcoming them back to Linden Primary, once the world has settled down and is a bit more normal! I know that the children are excited to see them again. We truly appreciate the on-going support that is offered by St Paul and St Stephen's to our Linden Family.

Claire Langford

Music Group

Despite having not physically met as a music group in this last year due to COVID-19 restrictions, we have still been creating music in our own homes. Near the start of the pandemic, a few of us took turns to upload music to the church YouTube channel and for Christmas we (rather ambitiously!) put together a 4-part a cappella arrangement of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" with each part being recorded separately in our different homes, then combined on a computer.

Sadly, this year we said farewell to both Hannah and Izzy - they have both offered so much in terms of creativity, musicianship and friendship within the group over the years and they will be missed. Looking to the future, we all look forward to a time when singing can once again feature in a physical service, but acknowledge that it is likely the music group will be a different shape to the one that entered that first lockdown.

Steve Roberts

Monday House Group - an Appreciation of Dorothy Sell's Bible Study Group

This long-established and popular group has sadly come to an end as Dorothy passed away in January 2021, at the age of 91. The group first met as an Advent course in 1999 and was so successful that it continued for 20 years, until late in 2019. There were no meetings in 2020, due to illness and lockdown.

The group has involved members of this church and St Barnabas. Our meetings took place at Dorothy's home, where there was always a warm welcome, helped by the aroma of 'proper' coffee brewing. Numbers increased and meetings had to be held on both Monday and Tuesday mornings to fit everyone in. Meetings were fortnightly.

Over the years we studied all four Gospels, most of the Epistles and several books from the Old Testament. Dorothy always provided maps and commentaries to increase our understanding. Dorothy kept members active and there was a rota (kept by Marion) for opening each meeting with prayer and a quote from the Psalms.

Dorothy was a wonderful teacher, very wise and knowledgeable, encouraging us to share our thoughts with confidence, and enabling everyone to grow in Faith. Her own deep Faith always led us forward. She was so generous with her time and each member owes her a lasting gratitude for all she imparted to us.

During the group's 20 years, many members celebrated not only their 80th but also 90th birthdays! We miss this very special Bible study group, but the legacy of Dorothy's inspirational leadership will remain with us.

Margaret Steele, George Marchant

Moveable House Group

As a group we mix Bible study with chat and prayer requests, supporting one another through the ups and downs of life. We were part way through a Lent course in March 2020 when the effects of the coronavirus pandemic meant it was no longer safe to meet in person. Thanks to modern technology [Zoom] the house group meetings swiftly moved online.

This was difficult for some, who found it difficult to relate to, but a small group of us have persisted and managed to maintain our mutual support with weekly or fortnightly meetings and also daily What's app messaging. Remote meetings meant that on occasions one of Anita's friends in Latvia joined in our Bible study.

We were delighted In September that Hannah was able to start her ordination training and we kept in touch as a group during her early weeks at college. We look forward to a time when we can see each other face to face and share coffee and biscuits as well as continuing to explore our faith together.

Ruth Parsons

4. Fundraising & Accounts

St Paul and St Stephen Church Accounts

End of Year 2020.

Incoming Resources	Unrestricted	Restricted	2020	2019
Tax efficient planned giving	24,254	0	24,254	20,415
Other planned giving	9,221	0	9,221	13,160
Collections at services	2,605	0	2,605	7,077
All other giving and voluntary receipts, including Special Appeals (recurring and one-off).	2,421	0	2,421	4,887
Gift Aid recovered	5,635	0	5,635	5,150
Legacies Received (capital value)		0	0	0
Grants (include recurring and one-off)	412	0	412	750
TOTAL Voluntary Income	44,548	0	44,548	51,439
Activities for Generating Funds				
Gross income from fundraising activities	16	0	16	0
Income from investments				
Dividends, interest, income from property etc	9	164	9	214
Church Activities				
Statutory Fees retained by the PCC (weddings, funerals etc)	1,069	0	1,069	3,044
Gross income from trading (eg hall lettings, magazine, bookstall) NOT fundraising.	695	0	695	1500

Incoming Resources	Unrestricted	Restricted	2020	2019
Other incoming resources				
Any other income/ receipts not already listed	7,556	0	7,556	545

TOTAL Incoming Resources (from financial statements)		2020	2019
Unrestricted		53,893	56,688
Restricted		164	54
TOTAL		54,057	56,742

Resources Expended	Unrestricted	Restricted	2020	2019
Costs of generating income				
Fund raising activities (costs and payments)	0	0	0	0
Mission Giving and Donations	0	0	0	0
Diocesan Parish Share contribution	33,796	0	33,796	32,856
Salaries, wages and honoraria	0	0	0	0
Clergy and staff expenses	2,676	0	2,676	1,483
Church Expenses				
Church expenses: Mission and Evangelism costs	0	0	0	0
Church running expenses	14,455	0	14,455	9,316
Church utility bills	3,008	0	3,008	3,202

Resources Expended	Unrestricted	Restricted	2020	2019
Cost of trading	0	0	0	0
Major capital expenditure				
Major repairs to the church building	0	0	0	0
Major repairs to the church hall or other PCC property, including redecoration	0	0	0	0
New building work to the church, church hall, clergy housing or other PCC property	0	0	0	0
SUBTOTAL for church activities and expenses	53,935	0	53,935	46,857
Other outgoing resources/payments	1,657	0	1,657	425

TOTAL Resources expended (from financial statements)	2019	
Unrestricted	55,592	47,282
Restricted	0	0
TOTAL	55,592	47,282

Cash and Investment Balances	Unrestricted	Restricted
Cash and deposit balance as at 31 Dec 2019	11,636	0
Investments as at 31 Dec 2019	(Fabric Fund) 12,015.37	(General Fund) 2,067.11

Cash and Investment Balances	Unrestricted	Restricted
Cash and deposit balance as at 31 Dec 2020	9,330	0
Investments as at 31 Dec 2020	(Fabric Fund) 10,764	(General Fund) 3,490

Notes to go with Church Accounts 2020

Incoming Resources

1. During 2020 Covid-19 struck and on March 17th, a week before a national lockdown, places of worship were told to shut. The first lockdown lasted until July 2020 and then there was a subsequent one in November of 2020. Even when we were able to resume services we had a much reduced capacity and many people did not come to church for the remainder of 2020 due to the virus. Our big fund raising events such as the summer fayre and the Christmas fayre were unable to be held and we lost out on collections from our Easter, Christmas and occasional office services. We also lost money through not being able to hire our hall out, although the Contact Centre were able to still use the church and have paid us accordingly. We also lost money from wedding and funeral fees as these were either cancelled or moved to the Crematorium. In total we lost approximately £12, 715. We have applied to the Covid-19 Recovery Fund at the Diocese and wait to see if any or all of this funds can be recovered.
2. Following a virtual stewardship campaign in June 2020 planned giving did increase slightly. Those who give by Parish Giving Scheme have enabled us to continue to pay our parish share and the necessary bills. Thank you to all who have given this year as it has been financially tough for many
3. Statutory fees were less in 2020 than in 2019 simply because there were less funerals at church during the year.
4. 'Any other income' comes from things such as the council paying for the church to be a polling station and one off donations by people outside of services or planned giving.

Resources Expended

1. Due to the generosity of those involved the nil cost of fundraising is because people give rather than claim. Thank you again.
2. Mission giving and donations were actually £900 but has been entered elsewhere. Due to the bank balance being significantly low when we were making the decision to give we decided to give £300 to our three chosen charities. For 2021 the PCC have agreed that our giving will be 10% of our income which with a budgeted income of £51,650 means our giving for the year will be £5,165 which will be split three ways and given to Christian Aid, Rooftop and The Long Table.
3. Mission and evangelism costs are also nil due to the generosity of people and costs being born from donations at Messy Church and Little Angels in particular. Other costs for mission and evangelism are reflected in the clergy expenses figures or in the general church running expenses.

