

PCC Chairman's Report - 2020

Objectives

The objectives of the charity are promoting the mission of the church in the ecclesiastical parish.

Well done St Mary's family

We made it through 2021! Honestly, well done to the whole church family for persevering through what was at times a difficult year or ups and downs. I believe we have come through stronger in faith, hope and love. There is no doubt that the past two years have changed us in a good way. I believe we are more united, more hungry for God and because we know we are also at our weakest in some ways, we know how much we need God to move. When the darkness is darkest, the light of Jesus shines brightest!

2021 Reflections

This was a year that looked towards renewal and emerging from the pandemic, but also needed perseverance as we felt things were not over yet and there was a sense of fatigue, grief and loss that was still clear. So it was a year of mixed emotions. At the beginning of the year, we were still in lockdown. This gradually eased leading up to much more freedom in July. However, new variants continued to impact life and navigating changes and restrictions has become part of people's lives over two years now.

It has also been clear that there has been an impact from Covid. Our Sunday's attendance has been 30% down from 2019. Our regular giving has declined, mainly due to the numbers who has passed away or moved away. Our volunteer teams have been down by up to a third and our staff capacity also reduced due to illness.

However, there have also been some real encouragements in 2021. We have seen new people join St Mary's. God has provided financially in various ways, not least a wonderful response to our Renew Gift Days. We have sensed a new freedom in Sunday services in worship and sharing. New people have stepped in to serve. There is a fresh sense of vision and anticipation for 2022.

Highlights to give thanks for:

- **Renew** – At the beginning of 2021, we focussed on Isaiah 40:3, "In the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord." We encouraged people in spiritual renewal and also to connect with one another and rest. People have felt tired from 2020 and needed fresh hope in 2021.
- **Kingdom Come** – We have also called the church to prayer again in 2021. We now have a new prayer meeting every fortnight on a mid-week evening. Sometimes we have met on Zoom and mostly in person. This has been better attended than previous prayer gatherings and very encouraging.
- **Renew Gift Days** – In the summer we asked the church to give into 7 areas to help our recovery. We aimed at £40,000 and received approximately £45,000. This was such a sign of generosity and God's goodness. The seven areas were revitalising Café Hope, online mission, investing in ignite, resourcing prayer, remembering our story, improving the experience of church and also upgrading the buildings. The delivery of these areas was limited due to unexpectedly reduced staff capacity, but we are committed to delivering as soon as possible in every area as promised and have been grateful for the generosity in giving.
- **Helping people reflect and remember** – This has been a year of reflection and remembering. We held a special service in July on Freedom Day, helping people process and reflect on the past 18 months of pandemic. We also held a memorial service for HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and other memorial services for those who have died during these times. Some of these had been delayed due to the pandemic.
- **Church online** – in the first months of the year we relied again on online church for Sundays. We are very grateful to Martin Stanesby and Matt Ayers for their help with this. We made the decision in the Spring to move to teaching only content. This is because of our capacity in terms of volunteers and equipment needed. Plus, we know that there are a wide variety worship resources available online and we don't really

need to keep broadcasting entire services. We now have 215 YouTube subscribers (up 840% from February 2020) and have had around 13,000 hits on our YouTube content in 2021.

- **Revive Sundays** – We continued using this model of church at 9am, 11am and 5pm from March until August in 2021. This has been a helpful model of church, which allowed for us to meet the Covid requirements and also to be able to worship together. It was only in July that we were also able to reintroduce sung worship back into our services, which has been wonderful. We have also continued to seek to make space for the Holy Spirit and listen to one another. We even had a few open-air services, which were fantastic. In terms of Sundays, I also want pay tribute to the amazing worship team we have. This team also reduced due to the pandemic. They have done so well in rebuilding through 2021.
- **Food distribution** – We have continued this year to have a real ministry through Saved surplus food, Epping Forest Foodbank and also regular food deliveries to Norway House in Epping, which is accommodation for homeless families.
- **Café Hope recovery** – Café Hope has adapted so well at every stage of the pandemic and has been vital to many people in terms of connecting. We have tried to keep it open as much as possible, but twice have sadly had to close completely due to legal restrictions. I especially want to pay tribute to Paola Rees, Phyllis Prichard and Peter Blake, who have kept Café Hope going during these times. It is so important as a place of support, love, prayer and belonging. In July, we said goodbye to Paola in her role as Acting Café Manager and recruited Brooke Smith as Café Hope Coordinator and Jeff Potter as Café Hope Missioner. Both are part time and have been an amazing team to take Café Hope into its post-pandemic recovery phase. We really wanted to step up our offering to get back to where we had been in terms of our missional and community impact. Café Hope is now back to its normal opening hours and also regained a 5-star rating from the Food Standards Agency. We are excited to see what is next in 2022.
- **New Mission Partners & Global Missions Coordinator** – PCC approved Evangelical Alliance and International Justice Mission as two new mission partners in 2021. They will both receive financial support from St Mary's. Having said goodbye to Carolyn Bluck who moved to Dorset who was a fantastic advocate for missions in St Mary's, we were delighted to appoint Susan Brown to the role of Global Missions Coordinator (voluntary). Susan has a real heart for mission and also revival.
- **New website & ChurchSuite** – We were pleased to launch a new website this year, which is easier to use, simpler, less cluttered and focussed mainly on people outside church, rather than church members. We also launched ChurchSuite, which help manage our database and rota management systems in a GDPR compliant way. This remain a work in progress, but has been helpful in our administration.
- **Pastoral calls** – We continued in the early part of 2021 with regular pastoral calls to those most affected by lockdown. We sought to identify people who would be most isolated and call them. This eased gradually and stopped following the easing of restrictions in July. Thank you to everyone who has helped with this important ministry throughout the pandemic.
- **Ignite children & youth** – The pandemic has presented real challenges delivering children's and youth ministry, but Michelle Stanesby, the ignite Advocates and ignite team members have done an amazing job at re-engaging our children and youth in 2021 as we emerged from lockdown. We reorganised so we could deliver ignite on Sundays again on a weekly basis. We started by offering ignite fortnightly and building the team back again, which had reduced. During 2021, we renewed weekly ignite ministry using four, rather than six, groups on Sundays. Also, the mid-week youth ministry was combined from two groups into one group called Fusion. We also ran the Raising Faith Course for parents, and will do so again in 2022.
- **Releasing new callings** – Each year we seem to be sending new people to train for ordained ministry. In 2021, Debbie Lake started on placement at St Mary's as an ordinand.
- **New Wine** – We hosted United Breaks Out online this year and it was good to find ways to do this in a way that brought new people to experience New Wine.
- **Life Groups and Connect events** – 2021 was another challenging year for Life Groups. Many have met as best they can either on zoom or in person. It has not been

easy. I want to thank all the Life Group Leaders who have been very faithful in connecting people, pastoral care and loving people through the past few years. Life Groups are the heart-beat of St Mary's. We arranged a series of small-scale events in the summer to help people reconnect, build back friendships and have fun together. These were all small, but very good.

- **Quieter Christmas** – Due to continued anxiety of the new Omicron covid variant, and also our staff capacity reductions, our Christmas plans were reduced, but in a way that meant we could still celebrate and engage in mission. Highlights included our first ever YouTube Christmas production that covered the whole of Christmas, 'The Best Christmas', which was viewed over 350 times. We also changed the larger Christmas Fayer into a smaller Christmas Café, which was well received. We still held all the events we did in previous years, but with a smaller feel. Our main services were ticketed online, which was helpful in terms of expectations. But, due to Covid, around 40% of those bookings did not come. We still felt every service was well attended and the gospel was shared and received.
- **New mission opportunities** – Living Hope has adapted so much during the pandemic. One such adaption has been the new Cook Project. Working with the Cook shop on the High Road, Living Hope volunteers have been visiting and delivering over 20 meals a week to vulnerable people. Other opportunities have included working with ASDA and Epping Forest Foodbank to make up over 100 food parcels at Christmas for those in need. These are only two of a number of such new opportunities that have happened in 2021. Other Living Hope ministry has been adapted including a Coffee Morning in Café Hope, which seeks to minister to the elderly. This was adapted from the lunch club which met pre-pandemic.
- **Our amazing staff team** – This has been another tough year for our team, who have adapted many times to new rules, restrictions, circumstances and have completed multiple risk assessments and procedures to keep us as open and compliant as possible. Much of our staff team has been furloughed to varied extents during this year. A number of the team have also faced ill health this year. Sometimes this has meant extended time off work and ministry. As a team we love one another and when one part suffers, we all suffer. I want to pay tribute to our wonderful staff team, who all do everything they can to serve others. It is a genuine privilege to lead and serve alongside them.

Staffing & Leadership

The PCC, which has the responsibility, together with the Vicar, to promote the mission of the Church within the Parish, met eight times during the year. The Standing Committee met five times during the year as the executive of the PCC.

Ignite ministry is also led by a team of dedicated Advocates: Michael Smith (secondary ages), Sam Clayfield (pre-school ages) and Eleni Constantinou (primary ages). Many thanks to Carl Lee, who stepped down as an Advocate this year.

In terms of staffing it has been yet another year of change and blessing:

- Paola Rees left the interim Café Hope Manager role she has held during the height of the pandemic. Paola showed great patience and grace in her flexibility as she led Café through various incarnations during the pandemic.
- Brooke Smith (Café Hope Coordinator) and Jeff Potter (Café Hope Missioner) were appointed at the same time to lead Café Hope. We have been thrilled by their impact and new leadership. Peter Blake and Phil Lowrie were both able to help in Café Hope on a casual basis, which was much appreciated.
- Paola Rees, later in 2021, was appointed Living Hope Assistant. This role is funded by the Charles French Trust and is for one year, to help with Living Hope ministry.
- Steve Opie was appointed Curate-in-charge of St Mary's Leyton in August 2021. This meant Steve moving on from St Mary's after only two years as Curate, most of which had been during the pandemic. We miss Steve and are very grateful to him for all the amazing work he did from 2019-2021 as our Curate.

There are also a few people to mention who are not technically on the staff team, but are really part of the team as far as I am concerned. They are doing phenomenal work on a daily

basis.

- Heather Scholer has stepped down from her leadership of Epping Forest Foodbank. I want to thank Heather for the huge amount she did over the years as founder and leader of the Foodbank.
- Yvonne Mearle and Delphine Kennedy have led Little Lambs nursery through the pandemic with such patience, care and love. Well done.
- Ken Bartells and Diana Dodds play the organ each Sunday at the 8:45am, which is very much appreciated.

Public Benefit

The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 17 of the Charities Acts 2011 in respect of public benefit guidance published by the charity commission.

Policies for the recruitment, appointment, induction and training of new staff.

The following applies to appointments made by St Mary's PCC.

- Clergy appointments are made by the diocese and separate arrangements apply to these.
- The filling of other posts is decided by the PCC. Vacancies are advertised internally and, if appropriate, externally as well. A job description is used for each post and selection is made using application forms, references and an interview panel.
- The appointment decision rests with the panel. Appointments are normally subject to a trial period and DBS checks are undertaken as appropriate before appointment. Each employee has a formal statement of their principal terms and conditions of employment.
- Line managers conduct appraisals for all our staff each year.
- Induction is tailored to individual roles and needs. We have a budget for training and formal training is provided as necessary.

Financial Report for 2020

Again in 2021, God has been good to us in our church finances. I want to underline my thanks to the church family for continuing to give. As I am sure you will appreciate, even when closed, we have significant monthly expenses, and your generosity helps us keep going. It costs a lot to run St Mary's.

Again, this year, we have had a number of factors that have drained our usual finances:

- Some reduction of regular Standing Order income.
- Decrease of Gift Aid, due to reduced Standing Orders.
- Loss of rental income
- Loss of ministry income, including Café Hope and Saved!
- Loss of Yellow Envelope income and resulting Gift Aid income.
- Loss of loose plate offering income
- Increased costs of utilities, as everyone has experienced.
- On the plus side, we were able to claim furlough for a number of staff as appropriate. Many thanks to Nicola Leach, who has processed these claims for us. We were also blessed by the Renew Gift Day and a legacy from the estate of Elna Green.

We are aware that we are always called to be generous and sacrificial in giving. We are glad to report that we have been able to meet our essential spending requirements and be generous. It is important to remember that as a church family we depend on the giving of God's people to sustain mission and ministry.

Income to St Mary's was more than budgeted mainly due to the Renew Gift Days and furlough income. We paid our Parish Share in full and during the year and were able to support St Michaels parish share with £10,000 which is included in our own parish share to the Diocese and allocated to them. We also supported a significant number of Mission Partners as well as helping people in need on a discretionary basis.

Once again, I would like to thank our finance team for 2020. Once again, they have all served voluntarily and with integrity and commitment. Many thanks to Richard Milne (Treasurer),

Martin Huff (Finance Administrator) and Nicola Leach (Payroll & Furlough Administrator) for their outstanding quality of work in fulfilling their role of keeping St Mary's finances in good order. Thank you also to Zac Cook for overseeing Gift Aid and also a big thank you to Peter Blake and Zac Cook who oversaw Sunday offerings, while we met on Sundays.

Regular checks are made (by finance team, PCC and Standing Committee) on the spending against the budget and we are always seeking to take measures to reduce wastage.

The total income received in 2021 was £359,488, with expenditure being £401,552. These figures take into account a £65,232 depreciation value, an income generated by ignite of approximately £567, and a pending Gift Aid recovery of nearly £2,419. Our cash reserves on 31 December 2021 stood at £175,508.

We do encourage every member of St Mary's to give generously. We are grateful for the generosity of the church family and know we can be confident that God will provide.

Once again, thank you St Mary's for everything in this year we will never forget. You are amazing. Praise the Lord!

On behalf of the PCC of St. Mary the Virgin, Loughton

Revd Malcolm Macdonald (PCC Chair)