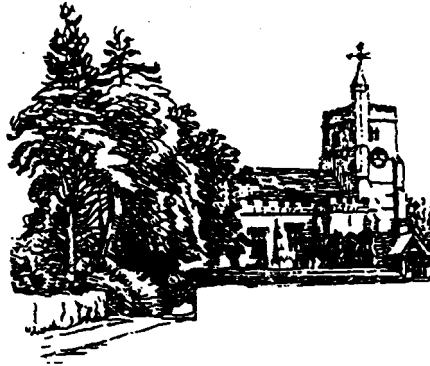


ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, BENENDEN



ANNUAL MEETING 2022

REPORTS

Secretary's Report

This year your PCC has consisted of:-

Rev. David Commander (Chairman)

Rev. Ylva Blid Mackenzie

David Collard (Churchwarden)

Sue Fisher (Deanery)

Julia Collard (PCC Secretary)

Charles Trollope

Jane Davies

Richard Fisher

Martin Pexton

Janet Kellie-Vickers

Ian Malaugh

David Barnes

Heather Trollope

Unfortunately, we had no Deanery Synod representatives last year and hope two or three church members will come forward at the forthcoming AGM to attend their meetings.

The Committee were devastated by the unexpected death of Heather Trollope just after Christmas. She had formerly been a very successful PCC Secretary and was very active in the church.

The committee met five times since the last APCM with two Standing Committee meetings. The average attendance since the last APCM has been 85%. Membership of the PCC is open to all those who have been on the Electoral Roll for a minimum of six months and once again there are a number of vacancies for which information can be found in the folder containing nomination forms, or simply talk to any member of the PCC. The meetings are bi-monthly and offer members an opportunity to be involved with the decision making and running of our church. The PCC continues to be supported by Groups who have met and reported through the year.

Julia Collard, PCC Secretary

Financial Report

General Account

A summary of income and expenditure for the general account of the years 2020 and 2021 with the budget for 2022 are shown separately. The general account is amalgamated into the full accounts which have been prepared to follow the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 together with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006.

Income.

Total Income for the year was £87,080, 10 % up on budget with the very successful fete (profit £13,915) being the main cause. Planned Giving was 5% down compared to last year. With a number of weddings held over from 2020, Parochial Fees were 43% up on last year. With no Speech Day or Confirmation for the second year running the income from Benenden School was lost but the school did give a £500 donation.

Expenditure.

Total Expenditure was £70,998, 4% below budget. Choir and Organ expenditure was well down with no choir master in place and the use of non fee paying organists. There were few other significant variances other than churchyard costs that included a new grass cutter £1000 (funded by a legacy).

The surplus on the General Account was £16,082 enabling £12,041 and £4,041 to be transferred to the Fabric and Mission funds respectively. The extra amount awarded to the Fabric fund will go towards the forthcoming back of the church project. To compensate The Mission Fund will be repaid £4000 from its unused donation it made to the BAT Fund last year.

Budget for 2022

Income

Planned Giving is forecast to decline fractionally to £32,973 (Actual 2021 £33,871) Tax refunds will come to £9,493.

Fees will show a large increase with some weddings taking place that were scheduled for 2020 and 2021. The annual fete will be held in June and is forecast to make £10,000. (This does not include the auction). The total income is budgeted to be £86,900 compared to 2021 £87,080.

Expenditure

Total expenditure is forecast to be £75,500 about £4,500 up from last year. The main reasons are the large price increases expected in electricity and oil costs.

The 2022 budget is forecast to give a surplus of £11,360

Fabric Fund

Expenditure this year was £4,600 and included expenditure (£1,153) on safety rails put in on the lych gate and on the main entrance steps. The Friends of St George's kindly made a donation to cover this cost. £1,958 was spent on restoration of a set of hand bells, this was financed by a legacy and the surplus from the Bell Fund. With £12,041 being transferred to Fabric Fund from the General Fund enabled the fund to make a surplus of £9,822 which will be needed to finance quinquennial repairs (£12,000) in 2022.

Other Funds

The **Magazine fund** made a surplus of £1,500 with demand for advertising remaining buoyant though debt collection is hard work. Paper costs are rising sharply which will increase costs and these will have to be passed onto the advertisers in 2022 for the magazine to remain viable. The **Rollings Interest fund** was not used this year enabling the fund to make a gain of £23,500. The **Poor/Hardship Fund** paid out £889 to various needs. The **Memorial Hall Fund** made a loss of £3,012. Six months of the year were lost to the pandemic in which time a number of repairs were carried out costing £2,986. Income for the last half year was

£1,130 other overheads were £1,160. A number of clubs together with the Primary School no longer using the hall, the Hall remains under utilised and will struggle to cover its costs.

Nearly all funds have exposure to the equity markets with some £199,087 increase in market values surprisingly taking place in 2021.

The overall result for St George's combining all funds shows a profit of £37,516 for 2021.

Churchyard

Once again I am indebted to the hard-working band of volunteers, albeit unfortunately reducing in number, as well as ageing, who turned out for the monthly Saturday morning working parties. Special thanks are due to those who also attended at other times.

We did our best to keep up with the planned maintenance of the various areas in the churchyard, which was not easy because growth seemed to have been so lush compared with previous years.

Thanks to a generous donation, we now have a new scythe mower – the old one packed up a couple of years ago – which will make it much easier to keep certain parts of the churchyard under control.

The 2022 programme began on 5th March and we aim to meet on the first Saturday of each month. Details will continue to appear in the St George's weekly Notices and in the Parish Magazine.

Of course, fresh volunteers would be very welcome. We can provide tools, no experience necessary and you do not have to attend for the whole session – 9.30 to noon, with a break for refreshments. Every little helps!

Dick Hill

Fabric Report

"Quinquennial work from the 2020 review accounted for most of the year's activity. Largely it involved re-pointing, some masonry replacements and re-bedding loose stonework. Guards to the stained glass windows in the east end were replaced. Internal work has been held over for attention in 2022.

New handrails to the lychgate and church steps were installed for the benefit of the elderly.

The proposed new footpath through the churchyard and on to the new primary school still awaits permission from the Diocese, however the design has been approved and some funding promised.

David Barnes
Fabric Manager

Benenden Memorial Hall

The Memorial Hall reopened again in July 2021 after being closed for 18 months. Colin Hayman had arranged for roof repairs and other items to be done prior to the reopening. A team of church cleaners also thoroughly cleaned the hall and Colin Hayman made sure the facilities were in working order. Recently he has improved the heating and added easy to use booster switches for the heating.

The Hall has made a large loss over the year because of Covid and the repairs added to the lack of use. With this in mind an advertising programme will be prepared. To update the hall further Colin Hayman is arranging for wi-fi to be installed.

David Collard

See also Memorial Hall account under Finance report.

Planned Giving & Gift Aid 2021

After many years helping support St George's financial management in many ways, Clive Turner stood down as Gift Aid Secretary in August. Since then, he has helped coach and mentor me in getting to grips with the role. Nat West Bank have been frustratingly slow in authorising the change of signatories too. A big thank you to Clive for his unstinting work while in role and during the transition phase.

There have also been changes in the support we get from The Canterbury Diocese, Gift Aid Office. The system for gift aid claims has been simplified, payments have generally been quicker than in the past, and training has been provided.

Despite the pandemic our planned income for 2021 remained secure and broadly on target. Fortunately, inevitable membership losses have been offset by new regular donors and one-off donations, for example gift aid qualifying donations from funerals donated to the church.

The use of cash is declining in all areas of our lives, and the pandemic has only accelerated this. Consequently, areas to look at in the coming 12 months include: -

- Phasing out weekly planned giving envelopes and, where possible, encouraging a regular standing order
- Encouraging greater use of the Sum Up facility for taking gift-aid qualifying donations via credit or debit card. Ideally this would include donations from visitors outside of church services.

St George's relies enormously on those who give regularly and so freely – thank you for your generosity. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding donating to St George's or the Gift Aid scheme and please be assured that all information regarding donors and their donations is always treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Paul Hewitt, Planned Giving & Gift Aid Secretary

The Weald Deanery Synod Report

Area Dean: Revd. Fr. Rodney Dreyer (Incumbent at Hawkhurst)

Lay Chair: Graham Codling

Secretary: Brian Woodgate

There have been three Deanery Synod meetings since our last APCM: at the Vestry Hall, Marden on the 4th August 2021; Sandhurst Mission Church on the 1st December 2021; and Cranbrook Church on the 22nd February 2022. There has also been a presentation to Deanery Incumbents, Treasurers and Churchwardens by the Acting Diocesan Secretary on the state of the finances within the Diocese (11/10/2021); and follow-up meetings of Deanery Incumbents, Treasurers and Churchwardens (10 & 17/11/2021).

Attendance at Deanery Synod meetings is, generally speaking, not good. The meeting in December at Sandhurst was particular sparse, with just 15 people; two of whom were from the Diocese and, as it was an “open meeting”, three visitors. The latter, particularly, is regrettable as the guest speak (Niki Paterson, Diocesan Education Dept.), contribution from Canon Neville Emslie (Director of Mission and Ministry) and the subject matter (“Growing Faith in Church, School and Households”) were very good indeed. This tied in extremely well with the initiative that we were working on at the time for a new family event/service. (“Connect Four” started in March 2022, with a “taster” in February.)

The Diocese finance presentation was good; but the finances are pretty dire. All “contingency” for unpaid Parish Share has now been removed from the Diocesan budget, and the responsibility for parishes to meet their share has been placed upon the Deaneries. There will be problems with the Deanery budget, but we are in a better position – financially – than many of the other Deaneries. The Deanery finance meeting(s) were poorly managed; we do not know officially whether there will be a hole

in the Deanery budget for 2022 or not. (Quarterly meetings have been arranged throughout the year.)

The Diocese have, in consultation with all the Deaneries, produced a working document entitled, “Towards a Flourishing and Sustainable Future.” This can be found on the Diocese website. This includes our local Deanery Plan. At the December meeting, we were reminded that, *“The Deanery Plan was now in place for all parishes to work with to achieve sustainability.”* And, *“In answer to a couple of questions, Secretary re-emphasised that there was no specific path for parishes to follow, but that, as previously stated, they should follow the courses of action that are most relevant for them.”*

On a positive note, there was a Deanery “Pulpit Swap” on the 17th October 2021. (The first one for over two years due to Covid.) Revd David lead, preached and presided at St. Mary’s Frittenden; the Revd Pete Deaves (incumbent at Frittenden and Sissinghurst) led, preached and presided at St. George’s Benenden.

One final piece of Deanery news: Revd Ann Pollington, incumbent at St. Dunstan’s Cranbrook (and former Area Dean) conducted her last service on Shrove Tuesday (1/3/2022), prior to her retirement. Cranbrook parish will shortly be going into interregnum.

Revd David Commander

Ringling master’s Report

The bells themselves make their own report, together with comprehensive and regular updates on the ringing, both in the Parish Magazine and on the Benenden Bell Ringers Facebook page, to which I have nothing further to add.

Rod Lebon

Sacristans' Report

The last year has been a time of picking up the pieces from the aftermath of Coronavirus 19. People have got used to following advice for health precautions and we currently have optional wearing of masks inside the church with advice to respect other peoples' personal space.

Our team of sacristans has been strengthened by a new member, Cathy Presgrave joining us last autumn, so we now have four sacristans serving once a month each on average. Cathy has quickly become familiar with the weekly preparations for Holy Communion and is learning about the seasonal changes of colour throughout the church year. We currently meet as a team for each colour change so that we are all familiar with the routine for the Altar, Pulpit, Lectern and Vestments. My teacher, Chris Hayman, gave me a way of remembering the significance of the colours:

Purple for Penitence and Preparation in Advent and Lent.

Red for Redemption and Remembrance on Palm Sunday, Pentecost and Remembrance Day.

White for Celebration – Christmas, Epiphany, Easter and Trinity.

Green for Growth between Epiphany & Lent and from after Trinity until All Saints.

Thank you all, Clare Cooper, Mary Parkinson, Cathy Presgrave.

Rickie Bishop

Sacristan.

Learning and Sharing the Faith

There is no report as this group has not met this year.

David Collard

Worship Committee report 2022

The various and changing restrictions and regulations associated with Covid has meant that the full Worship Committee has not met during the last year. However, an opportunity for some sort of worship has been available for the congregation throughout the whole period of the pandemic. This has ranged from edited recordings, through live streaming, in person services under tight restrictions and finally, most recently, back to more or less ordinary access to services of worship and prayer in church. We are especially grateful to David for all the extra effort that he has put in throughout, to make this possible.

In the immediate future, besides the regular services, it is expected that the usual variety of special services and events associated with the different seasons of the church calendar will take place throughout the coming months.

Sue Fisher

Parish Magazine Editorial Report

It has been a challenging year for the Benenden Magazine, but our close-knit editorial team has risen to that challenge and forged ever-stronger links with the local community, largely thanks to the efforts ‘in the field’ of our roving co-editor Ruth Clark, who seems to find people and topics of interest wherever she goes.

Camilla McDonald continues to work wonders as our layout editor and we remain indebted to the contributors who help us keep our finger on the pulse of the village; on that front, and again largely thanks to Ruth, we have gathered several regular writers with varied specialist subjects, who seem keen to take up some of the workload on the magazine, which is of great help to the team.

It has been a controversial year, with the Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum producing some marked differences of opinion among our readership, but we kept the village up to date with progress and managed, mostly thanks to Camilla and our friends at Wealden Print, to delay printing of the March edition to include the plan's official ratification by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Thanks, as ever, go to our finance/advertising team of Paul Leek and Charles Trollope, who were able to report a robust end to an uncertain year.

Over 80 businesses and individuals placed advertising entries with us over the year, the majority committing to the full 12 months. Our usual strong focus on local enterprises, together with the mix of business types, delivers a variety of styles and imagery which add to the look and feel of the magazine.

We featured many adverts to promote parish events and projects; the Benenden and Iden Green Directory listed local services, organisations, clubs etc. We are grateful for the continued sponsorship by Mr Noah's Nursery School.

All of this supported our production expenses and has allowed us to build some modest reserves. We have, however, been faced with a significant increase of our print costs, and with a difficult financial climate to contend with, we took the decision to reduce pagination where appropriate, in order to offset these added costs.

This cautious approach helped us weather the storm, although reluctantly we have decided to increase our advertising rates in the new financial year - the first rise for four years.

The accounts for the magazine can be found under the Finance report, 'other funds'.

Peter Thomas

Mission Allocation Report

The Mission Allocation group met by Zoom on 24th February 2021.

There was only approximately £6000 in the fund. The Treasurer, at the recent PCC meeting, suggested an allocation of £3.500/£4,000 be made from the fund. The consensus of the Mission Allocation Group is that the total amount we are giving away as a church is far too small. The meeting agreed to work with the allocation of £4,000 for this year, but also to work with the PCC and the church family to raise the profile of our giving, and to have a “heart for giving”. An objective being to plan to tithe our giving. This cannot be done straight away, but we can – with the right heart – work towards this over a number of years.

The Group wished to Crossroads Care (A charity that supports local carers.) see added to the list. The following charities and amounts to give were discussed and agreed as follows:

Charity:	£
The Children's Society	200
St. Luke's Healthcare for Clergy	100
Let the Children Live (Peter Walter)	300
St. George's Church, Baghdad	100
Secondary School Child, Starfish Malawi	300
Catching Lives	250
Médecins Sans Frontières	200
Demelza Hospice for Children	350
Dolen Llanbrynmair	300
TWAM	200
Salvation Army	100
Hospice in the Weald	350
The Weald Family Hub	750
Sight Savers	100
Nourish	100
Young Carers of Crossroads Care, Kent	300
Total	4000

In addition, we will be supporting Water Aid through the collection and donations at the Harvest time, and the Royal British Legion through the collection on Remembrance Sunday.

The group also decided to put five pieces in the village magazine in the coming year telling the community a little of the charities being supported. The different charities were allocated to the Group; this will commence with the May edition of the magazine.

Rev. David Commander

Choir Report

St George's Church Choir has continued to rehearse and sing at services over the past year, subject to national laws and church guidance concerning the pandemic. New members are welcome.

We have been fortunate to continue to enjoy Geoffrey Davison as our organist for some services each month, and Jane Whiteley who plays for rehearsals and most Sunday services.

Richard Fisher.

Coffee Morning at Memorial Hall

The Coffee Shop has now been renamed Coffee Morning. With the Spring arriving we hope more people will find us and come along for a cuppa, biscuit and chat. Some days we have quite a few, including visitors to Benenden, other days just enough to sit round the table.

Julia Collard

Children and Youth Report

This year has felt a little more normal although not quite back to where we would like to be. Cakes and Chaos, our Friday morning toddler group, returned after the summer. The first two weeks were a little quiet but since then we have gone from strength to strength once again. Families with preschool children and babies definitely appreciate this time on a

Friday and were more than happy to comply with all Covid guidelines as required (hand sanitizing, mask wearing etc.) The children are very at ease with being in the church space and whizzing around on the little bikes and cars. The singing at the end with some parachute fun is always a hit!

Thank you to all those who help me run this group...I couldn't do it without you - Sue, Diane, David, David Collard, Mary, Alice and Emma. We are always keen to welcome new helpers so come and have a chat if you are interested.

Sunday School has still to restart but as always it is finding the right time and the right space and finding the right people to assist. Being enclosed in the choir vestry still doesn't seem appropriate either. However to try and address the issue of engaging with families with young children, on March 5th we introduced a new initiative called Connect Four. (Connecting with one another and God...at 4o'clock.) This will be a one hour event on the first Saturday of the month. There are refreshments and fellowship. A short story based on scripture, some singing, and some craft based on the story. It takes place in The Mission Church in Sandhurst.

Helen Commander

Pastoral Group Report

To call this a Pastoral 'Group' report isn't quite accurate as we haven't resumed meeting as a group as these types of gatherings are only now beginning to take place. However, I know for a fact that pastoral care in our community has continued by the good will and neighbourliness of those around. We all know of people close to where we live who need an extra eye kept on them either in a practical or friendly fashion. Revd Ylva has been visiting those further afield too which has been a blessing to them. We always ask that people contact David, Ylva or me if you feel

there is someone you know that would appreciate a visit, some prayer or even a phone call if you are not able to do this yourselves.

Our biannual newcomer's lunch has obviously not taken place due to Covid restrictions but hopefully we can address that, possibly later this year. It's amazing how many people will say they have lived somewhere for many years but not met anyone other than possibly their closest neighbours. These lunches are an opportunity to meet a few more villagers.

Helen Commander

Flower Report

We had another quiet year in 2021, thanks to Covid, but we had two weddings, one organised by the happy couple themselves. We were very horrified that their florist removed every vestige of flowers from the church even before the bride and groom left the church! This meant there were no flowers for the services the next day. We resolved that this would not be allowed to happen again, and couples are very firmly informed that they cannot strip the church to take the flowers to their reception! We were surprised that a florist could have this in mind.

We have fun starting the flower year with spring colour at Easter. Our super arrangement on the lychgate by Charlotte Molesworth for Harvest was much admired. The nativity scene at Christmas on the lychgate was stunning and the church looked lovely with the candles and greenery. Our stall with interesting wreaths and fresh foliage candle table decorations was a great success. We are grateful to everybody who contributes flowers from their own gardens. We have had some very heartening feedback for our efforts.

This year we will have 18 weddings, which will keep us very busy.

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Alison Prall