

FABRIC, GOODS, ORNAMENTS AND CHURCHYARD REPORT – APCM 2021

Churchwardens' Report

FABRIC

1. A structural survey was carried out in March 2020. The report confirmed that the cracks are caused by movement related to poor drainage of the clay ground in the churchyard. The cracks are more of an aesthetic issue than a structural problem, and the church is not in any danger.
2. The Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in September. The report confirmed that the structure of the church is fundamentally sound. The Inspector took account of the Structural Survey of the chancel and confirmed that we should continue to monitor the cracks. A number of minor issues were identified, but none require immediate action.
3. In June a severe storm led to rainwater flooding the kitchen through skylights on the flat roof of the Trinity Room. Remedial action was taken to raise the skylights and replace the flashing. The seal where the roof meets the wall of the Church was also repaired. An insurance claim paid for the redecoration of the kitchen and the replacement of the floor covering.
4. The annual inspection of the boiler confirmed that the burner required replacement. It was feared that the cost would mean that the boiler was beyond economical repair. Fortunately, the contractor was able to replace the burner which should extend the life of the boiler for the short to medium term. This should allow time to examine options for a carbon free replacement system.
5. During the year, replacement heating elements were installed in the storage heaters in the Trinity Room.

GOODS AND ORNAMENTS

6. Following the closure of church in March 2020 under the Covid-19 restrictions, services were streamed from the vicarage. Once the church reopened in May, the number of people permitted to attend services was limited and the streaming of services was essential to reach the majority of our church community who are unable or unwilling to attend church. The services were streamed using a laptop as the church's AV system was not configured to upload content to the internet.
7. The PCC agreed that the AV system should be upgraded to improve the quality of the output to a more professional standard. The LGREF trustees agreed that the fund would cover the cost of £9,900. An Archdeacon's Letter authorised the project.
8. During the year, a number of items were acquired to meet Health and Safety requirements. These included rechargeable emergency torches, hazard warning signs and a lockable chain to secure the ladders.
9. The Terrier document listing the Additions and Deletions to the Church Inventory has been completed and signed by the Incumbent and churchwardens.
10. The Church Inventory was checked by the Church Wardens on 4 March 2021. All items were present. The inventory has been signed off by the Incumbent.

CHURCHYARD

11. Following the 5-yearly inspection of memorials in the churchyard, a number of gravestones were laid flat by DBC staff. Subsequently, the DBC Bereavement Services generously arranged for these gravestones to be restored.
12. During the year, we have received excellent support from DBC . The Trees and Woodlands staff reacted with commendable speed in tackling the fractured goat willow, and the Clean, Safe and Green Department undertook the major task of cutting back the long hedge alongside the carpark.

Agenda item 3.5

REPORTS ON DEANERY AND DIOCESAN SYNODS

Deanery Synod

The Deanery Synod has largely been in abeyance for some 12 months due to the pandemic. The last meeting before the first lockdown was on 11th February 2020 with no more meetings until the recent one on 23rd February 2021. However, the Standing Committee has met periodically in the meantime via Zoom, most recently on 1st February 2021, to keep the Deanery arrangements ticking over.

At the Synod meeting via Zoom on 23rd February the lay parish representatives elected at last year's postponed APCMs were commissioned. Our representatives are Beverley Burgess, Mike Hawtin, and Colin Gage. Apart from a brief consideration of the Deanery's finances, most of the meeting was taken up with a report from Anthony Archer, our General Synod representative, explaining what had occurred at the various General Synod meetings in the past 12 months, and an introduction of the newly published book "Living in Love and Faith" which aims to inspire us to think deeply about the future of Christianity and the difficult decisions that have to be made in a time of profound change. The meeting concluded with small "getting to know you" socialising groups in breakout rooms.

The next meeting is scheduled for 15th June 2021 which it is hoped can be held in person at St John's Boxmoor. This meeting will include elections for the Deanery's clergy and laity representatives for the next 3 years on the Diocesan Synod. Colin Gage

Diocesan Synod

Due to the pandemic, there have been only two of the usual three meetings of the Diocesan Synod in the past year, both by Zoom. The first scheduled meeting in June 2020 was cancelled. The Autumn meeting on the 17th October 2020 was primarily taken up with reports from the various Diocesan Boards and Committees, and on financial matters which it had not been possible to deal with at the cancelled June meeting. However, the opportunity was taken to introduce the proposed Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing with the aim of producing detailed recommendations for the next Diocesan Synod meeting, and the possibility of St Albans becoming an ECO Diocese to combat climate change as proposed for all Dioceses earlier in the year by the General Synod. This is now being discussed widely by individual PCCs.

The most recent meeting was held by Zoom on Saturday 13th March when the principal items of business were further discussions on the implementation of the Covenant of Wellbeing and Care for Clergy and the Diocese's Youth strategy. Both debates were positive and thought provoking and the Covenant was unanimously adopted, with the implementation proposals approved. The principal outcome of the discussion on Diocesan Youth policy aimed at bringing more young people into the church was that culture change was required so that people in this group would relate more to the church. The team who have been working on the policy undertook to take the suggestions on board as part of the continuing development of the policy. Colin Gage