

# St Michael's, Begbroke



## Annual Parish Report 2021

## Introduction

2021 continued to be greatly affected by the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. We began the year by going into another lockdown, and deciding to suspend public worship. Resuming in mid March, it was not until mid July that congregational singing was permitted, after a 16 month gap. There was a period thereafter where restrictions were less significant. However as we moved into the winter, the omicron wave sadly arrived just as we were entering the most joyful period of the the Advent and Christmas season.

The pandemic continued to affect all aspects of our parish ministry, and the challenge was to sustain what was possible, within the restrictions of each period. Within our church community there were members who were greatly affected by health challenges, and by bereavement. There were members for whom the cumulative effect of the pandemic was the cause of great fatigue. The wider picture of the local church was that volunteer resources were stretched in a way unseen since the second world war. It was a year of challenge.

Thank you to all who have continued to support St Michael's. We are so grateful to all those whose hard work and commitment to St Michael's enabled us to sustain the church's ministry in new as well as familiar ways, and to maintain our central offering of worship and prayer, and pastoral care in our community. We are blessed by all our congregation and friends, those joining us in our church building and those keeping in touch remotely and online. Particular thanks must go to our excellent and dedicated PCC led by our wonderful churchwardens Neill Brodey and Rob Hands, supported very ably by Treasurer Jenny Hands, Rosa Cadd and Caroline Waugh.

We can only strive to be faithful in that which God asks of us during times of unknown challenge and trust that that in keeping our eyes fixed on the Lord and walking with him on the faultline of the Cross, he will walk with us into the future that is revealed in the light of His Resurrection.

## **Aims and purposes**

St. Michael's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Oliver Petter, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

## **Objectives and activities**

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St. Michael's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish. The Parish profile published in April 2018 reflected an awareness of the “the need to contact and involve new residents of the parish.” St Michael's is one of “three churches [in the Benefice which] are physically located on the edge of the communities which they serve, so there is little visibility of the church structures for village residents.” Outreach is an imperative for our parish. The busy A44 provides a challenge with most of the villagers living on the other side from the historic church building. . Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. We try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work.

In 2018 the PCC had expressed a commitment to the Diocesan Vision, of which four points had great resonance. This commitment continued to guide us in 2019 and 2020 as a foundational point of reflection.

- To make a bigger difference in the world and serve the poor.
- To share our faith with adults, children and young people and grow the church in every place; rural, urban and suburban.
- To serve every school in our community.
- To put the discipleship of all at the heart of our common life and set God's people free.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Michael's.

*Much of what we aspire to offer was limited by restrictions for much of 2021, whilst the core offering of public worship, and pastoral care continued within the limitations, both in person and remotely/online.*

## **Reviewing 2021**

### **Achievements and performance**

#### **Worship and Prayer**

##### *January- March - lockdown*

As we began 2021, the principal pattern of worship continued to be the Parish Eucharist at 9.30am on Sundays. However, due to high number of covid infection around Christmas 2020 and into the start of January, our Benefice took the decision to pause public worship. This was a painful decision in the midst of a situation that was highly uncertain and where the word case scenarios projected were concerning. Worship moved exclusively online once more, being offered initially from the Vicarage. Public worship resumed for Mothering Sunday on 14<sup>th</sup> March.

##### *March 14<sup>th</sup> onwards*

Public worship restarted. Initially our worship in church was without congregational singing, and supported by a single cantor. Face coverings and 2m distancing continued.

##### *Lent, Holy Week and Easter*

We ran an online Study Group in Lent, exploring the Creed. (See below in Mission and Evangelism.) During Lent public worship restarted for the fourth Sunday in Lent, Mothering Sunday. As we moved into Palm Sunday and Holy Week we were limited to a cantor singing, and congregational singing outside. We were grateful to Caroline Waugh for regularly taking on this responsibility. We ended services with a hymn in the churchyard.

On Good Friday Neill led a prayerful Stations of the Cross meditation.

As we returned to public worship, a loyal core were at the heart of our gathering, with some faithful zoom worshippers. For Easter Sunday we had a slightly larger congregation, although fewer than we normally would expect.

*HRH Prince Philip* On Sunday 11th April a Service in the period of public mourning for HRH Prince Philip took place on what was low Sunday.

*Congregational singing and fellowship returning*

Congregational singing was permitted again from July 19<sup>th</sup> – after a gap of 16 months.

We had been permitted to resume post service fellowship weeks before, and the chance to share a cup of coffee together. It was striking to reflect on the significance of the restrictions over that long period.

Our response to God in sung praise, and our encounter with Christ in one another in fellowship is integral to the life of faith and discipleship for most Christians and it was painful to be without these realities for so long.

In the summer we reintroduced holy communion in both kinds.

*St Michael's Day*

We celebrated St Michael's Day on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September with a lovely service followed by cake.

*Harvest Festival*

After a covid absence the Begbroke Harvest Supper returned in the Village Hall on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October. This was a wonderful event and raised a fine total for church funds. We are grateful to all the organisers for their splendid efforts, and especially to Elaine Simonds.

We celebrated an enjoyable Harvest Festival service on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October.

*Advent and Christmas.*

We held a broad variety of events and services to celebrate Christmas, hoping to reach out to as much of the community as possible after the great restrictions in 2020.

- LVS Christingle Service
- Carol Singing around the village
- Christingle celebration in VH
- Village Carols in Church
- Crib service in Church
- 'Midnight Mass'
- Christmas morning

The programme organised coincided with the peak period of concern and rising infection with the omicron variant, and no doubt this lowered attendances. This was especially frustrating for the weekend where our Christingle Service and Carol Service were scheduled – which coincided with the peak of worry around omicron. It was good to make contact with several families in the village across these events nonetheless.

Thank you to everyone for helping to host and support these events and services. Special thanks to Caroline Waugh for excellent organisation and resourcing of a superb Christingle event, and to Neill Brodey for creating a lovely and thoughtful Christmas Carol service. We were grateful to Richard Turnbull for leading Midnight and Christmas morning services.

### *Occasional Offices – Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals.*

#### *Weddings and baptisms*

Sadly there were no weddings or baptisms in 2021.

#### *Funerals, and Memorial Services*

There was one funeral at St Michaels in 2021, with two large Memorial Services, and as well as a Service of Remembrance for a member of the domestic staff at LVS School.

## **Parish Life**

*Electoral Roll* The total on our Electoral Roll at the July 2021 meeting was 18.

#### *Ministry at St Michael's*

The Vicar continued to be supported by Rev'd Dr Richard Turnbull and Rev'd Jim Turner in leading worship, and wrote the weekly worship sheet which was distributed online up until the return to church for Mothering Sunday in March.

Jonathan Roberts continued in his two year placement in the Benefice, running from the academic years 2020-1 and 2021-2. He was a regular participant in worship at St Michael's, and acted as cantor and IT support. He also assisted Oliver with pastoral visiting in the parish.

#### *Online worship*

St Michael's continued as the Benefice 'online hub' for worship, following the installation of wifi. We were extremely grateful to Neill Brodey for continuing to anchor the online hospitality and technical side of services.

### *Music*

We were once again grateful to Malcolm Hawkins for playing for us throughout the year, and at each stage of restrictions, playing either in the church, or from home via online platforms.

### *Deanery Synod*

Neill Brodey faithfully continued in his role as our representative. The Synod provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church

### *Safeguarding*

The PCC adopted the new Safeguarding Policy in January. Thank you to Caroline Waugh for her work as Safeguarding Officer.

### *Pastoral Care*

*Pastoral visiting* Pastoral contact continued to be greatly restricted. At the peak periods of restrictions in January and February, pastoral visiting was restricted to end-of-life ministry and pastoral funeral ministry. Pastoral conversations by phone were encouraged during these periods or meeting outside where possible.

Pastoral contact by phone and outdoors continued to be prioritized for the whole year, with restrictions varying at different points. Rev'd Oliver Petter, Rev'd Jim Turner and Rev'd Dr Richard Turnbull kept in touch with members of the parish and Benefice by telephone, and from the doorstep during the greater period of restriction. We tried to maintain particular contact with those living alone and those who were vulnerable. As the year moved into warmer months and the restrictions eased, visiting became possible once again.

The pastoral care expressed within the Begbroke community within the challenges of lockdown, and ensuing difficulties continued to be a striking living out of Jesus's command to love one's neighbour.

### *Mission and Evangelism*

#### *Lent group - online*

In Lent we began another study group series, studying the Creed. Due to the infection rate we met online, as a Benefice series. The series used 6 short videos from our Bishop Steven Croft, and material written by Oliver. The series raised some profound questions and generated good conversation.

### *Study Group in Begbroke Village Hall*

In the autumn we held a study group series in Begbroke Village Hall, reflecting on the Parables of Jesus. This was attended by a regular group and led to deepening discussions as the series progressed, and as we got used to meeting in person once again for such a purpose.

## **The church in the community**

### *LVS School*

The vicar continued to be in regular contact with the school throughout the pandemic as a Governor. The headteacher Louisa Allison-Bergen retired at the end of the academic year 2020-2021. The new head Ian Peters began for the academic year 2021-2, along with a senior leadership team.

### *Begbroke Link*

We continued to provide regular articles for the Begbroke Link, and were grateful for their support of the church, and especially to Jane Verdon.

## **Care of the church and hospitality**

*Open church* – Keeping the church open is a valuable and cherished part of our ministry. Thank you to Caroline Waugh, Rob and Jenny Hands, Rosa Cadd and all those who helped to open and close the church.

*Church cleaning* – thanks are due to our loyal church cleaners for their dedication and care in keeping the interior of the church so clean.

*Tea & coffee* Thanks to Rob Hands for provision of splendid post service coffee which we were delighted to resume in May 2021. This is much appreciated by regulars and visitors alike.

*Flowers* The beautiful flower displays in church are warmly appreciated. Special thanks to Jenny for her work, and thanks to all who help with floristry.

*Churchyard* We are very grateful to Caroline Waugh for her dedicated care of the churchyard gardening duties, and to Jenny Hands and all those who have also assisted.

Likewise we are very grateful to Neill Brodey for his thorough care of the churchyard administration.