

WEST DEEPING PCC MEETING 5th MAY 2020: CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT

This report is written against the backdrop of the extraordinary times we are facing. The pandemic is impacting every facet of our lives and, as we enter the 6th week of 'lockdown' and church closure, it's uncertain how and when life will return to a semblance of normality. At this time, we pray for those affected, those who are guiding us, doctors, nurses and medical researchers, the vulnerable, the fearful, the gravely ill and the dying. We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God.

This will be our first meeting since last October; however, the PCC annual report prepared for our now deferred Annual Church Meetings record activities for 2019. This Report attempts to summarise the status of activities from the start of this year (Agenda Item 5) and how we continue to care for the future of our church building (Agenda Item 6) to help our thinking as Government restrictions are eased.

Agenda Item 5: Rector and Churchwarden Reports

Under Government restrictions, all places of worship were closed on 17/03/2020. As yet, it is not clear when social distancing restrictions will be relaxed sufficiently for churches to reopen. Since our church has been closed we have held two 'virtual' services using 'Zoom' technology. The response has been very positive with 60+ joining our Easter Day and All Age Services on 26/04/2020. The Easter Cross at the church door during Holy Week helped bring our community together in some small way and the Easter message closer to those who would not otherwise hear it. At our 'at home' services, it was a particular pleasure to see the joy in people's faces by just seeing one another. We look forward to conducting future similar services learning from our experience. Maybe this will be part of our future norm!

To promote our 'virtual' services, we have used the West Deeping Facebook page, the Friends' Group mailing list (compliant with the PCC GDPR procedures), the Church pages on the West Deeping Parish website and, with grateful thanks to Carole Martin, the West Deeping pages for 'A Church Near You' (ACNY).

A prayer sheet has been prepared weekly by Rev Martin Brebner and circulated to those on the pew sheet distribution.

For the record, attendance figures for Morning Prayer, Holy Communion and All Age Worship from 1st January to 16th March 2020 were similar to those for 2019. Thank you to Padre Stewart Shaw and Canon David McCormack for their continued support to these services and to Fr Aran for the Group Epiphany and Ash Wednesday service held at St Andrew's.

One baptism service (Arthur Sly on 09/02/20) and a funeral service for the late Mr Derek Moon on 16/03/20 were held at our church during this period. We have bookings for two wedding services in 2020 (25th July and 12th September).

The Bible Study Group was held from January until social distancing measures were imposed in early March. Thank you to Ian and Susanna for hosting this Group and for the contributions from those able to attend. Similarly, Fr Aran led an Alpha course at Uffington which unfortunately was also discontinued.

At this time, there are a good range of on-line resources available for people to help meet their spiritual needs. But there are some in our community - such as those without internet - who we are not readily able to reach. We should consider what we could do to improve our outreach particularly in these difficult times. As the local Community Emergency Cell co-ordinator, I have been moved by the way so many volunteers in our community have been stepping up to help others during this pandemic. These truly Christian acts highlight all that is best about our village. Thank you to everyone who has willingly given up time to care for others in our community. Whilst not all are regular churchgoers, they are a source of practical support, encouragement and hope that we should foster in our wider church.

During our meeting we should consider what opportunities for future worship might exist in the post-lockdown environment. My thoughts include:

- Should we have weekly services or fewer quality services?
- What are our future AAW plans?

- Should we reactivate joint HC services with Tallington?
- What about 'virtual' services?
- Should there be a service of celebration when the church reopens?

Agenda Item 6: Fabric, Facilities & Events Report

- **Toilet/Servery and Reordering Project.** Much of the progress with the toilet and servery project has been achieved by the 'Friends' Group Management Team'. I am grateful to Gareth Williams and Andrew Bowman for their continued support and efforts. We now have more than 100 members and thanks to their amazing generosity we have raised more than £25,000 towards the project. The faculty for the project was approved in November 2019. Ten applications for grant funding have been submitted of which 4 have been successful (£26,000) and 2 are awaiting outcome. There have been a few 'bumps in the road' but I believe that we will reach our target. Government restrictions permitting, our aspiration is to start the installation work in early Autumn. We held a Coffee Morning in the Village Hall on Saturday 14th March at which we presented progress but unfortunately, the fund-raising event 'Molecey for Easter' had to be cancelled. We will review the finances for the project under Agenda Item 3.
- **Repair to the Nave/Tower Abutment.** To prevent precipitation ingress into the Nave in the area of the Vestry, an extension of the tile crease course to the Nave/Tower on the north-east corner was recommended by our architect in November. A faculty (List B) was approved in March (as reported to the PCC by email dated 19 March). In accordance with PCC Action Item Oct 19-6, Cedars has agreed to undertake the work and a start date will be planned once Government restrictions permit.
- **Electrical Certification/Security Alarm Wiring.** Topcat completed the 5-year electrical assessment for the church building in March. At the same time, they replaced the temporary wiring installed by E-Bound for the roof alarm with fire-proof wiring as required by the faculty approval.
- **Quinquennial Inspection.** Our architect conducted our 5-year inspection on 2nd August 2019. His report was received on 15/11/2019. A summary of the status of recommendations was circulated to PCC members in the email dated 22/11/2019.
- **Maintenance.** Our maintenance plan is up-to-date. Thank you to Allan for oiling the bells regularly. We should consider holding a church cleaning event once Government restrictions permit the church to re-open.
- **Risk Assessment.** Ecclesiastical reviewed our latest risk assessment in March 2020 (including Health & Safety) and it is up-to-date.
- **Diocesan Annual Reports.** The Diocese has introduced an annual Environmental Return to complement the annual Mission (+ additional Lincoln Questions) and Finance Reports. All reports for 2019 are completed: the Environmental Return was submitted on 28/04/20.

Events. Inevitably, all church events and rotas are on hold for the foreseeable future. At our meeting we should discuss ideas for future fund-raising events.

In closing this report, in these uncertain times, the words of St Paul to the Philippians come to mind:

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus'.

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Colin Blagrove
Churchwarden

Dated: 30th April 2020