

## **2021 Trustees' Annual Report for the Parochial Church Council of the Parish of St Michael and All Angels, Maidstone.**

### **Aim and Purposes:**

The St Michael and All Angels' Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent, Fr Neil Bryson SSC, in promoting in this ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the church building and the two church halls on the church site in Tonbridge Road, Maidstone.

**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 worshipping community. In our case this includes developing links, not only with the geographical parish, but also with many people from outside our geographical parish who are committed to the traditional Catholic position within the Church of England. Our worship puts our faith into practice, and seeks to nourish it through fostering our sacramental life with prayer and scripture, teaching and music. Mindful of the Charity Commission's supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion, we try to enable people to live out their faith as part of our community through:

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

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Michael and All Angels' Church and its halls. Moreover, since the beginning of the pandemic we have not only kept our church building open for public worship, when this was permitted, but also made a major and continuing effort to communicate online with regular members of the congregation and with "visitors". A recent Deanery document describes St Michael's thus:

*'ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS' is a high anglo-catholic church on the west side of town and its long-standing tradition is appreciated by many. Under new leadership the church is seeing the fruit of respecting, and developing, that tradition; it has been experiencing growth since 2017. This provides the deanery with a clear contribution to Christian witness. The ministry team is looking at a variety of new initiatives for engaging with both the unchurched and with its growing congregation, as well as maintaining its work with the schools in the parish.'*

### **Safeguarding:**

The PCC has adopted the safeguarding policies and procedures of the Church of England. In particular we are committed to

- \*the safeguarding of all children, young people and vulnerable adults

\*carefully selecting and training paid and voluntary staff who might come into contact with children or vulnerable adults, using the Disclosure and Barring Service amongst other tools, to check their suitability

\*responding without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed

co-operating fully with the police, local authority and any other statutory body in any investigation

\*ministering appropriately to anyone, child or adult, who has experienced abuse

\*extending pastoral care to those known to have offended against children or vulnerable adults whilst ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are protected from them.

The PCC has appointed Mrs Jessica O'Sullivan as the parish Safeguarding Officer.

All members of the Parochial Church Council have completed the national online Basic Awareness and Foundation Safeguarding modules, and all members of the Ministry Team have completed the Leadership Safeguarding Course conducted by the Diocese of Canterbury.

## **Achievements and Performance:**

### **Worship and Prayer:**

All are welcome to attend our regular services. At present there are 51 members on the church Electoral Roll (an increase on 2020), of whom 29 are not resident within the parish, though the fact that the church is not located in the geographical centre of the parish is probably relevant here. Our church family has continued to grow as new people have joined us in the church building or via You-tube. In response to the diocesan questions about participation in "Church at home", we were able to report 87 participants in October 2021.

Eucharistic worship has remained at the centre of our parish life and, for those unable to worship in person, resources for prayer, reflection and Spiritual Communion are made available on the parish website and our Sunday and weekday services are nearly always live-streamed. Since churches were permitted to re-open, worship has continued uninterrupted on Sundays and Thursdays, and continuing risk assessment by the parish Treasurer and her family has ensured that the building is as Covid-secure as it is possible to make it. Among the particularly memorable services during the year was that for Battle of Britain Sunday, in which members of the Air Training Corps, 40F (Maidstone) Squadron - of which the Vicar is the Padre and in whose activities he is regularly involved each month - took part. Education Sunday had an ecumenical dimension, a retired RC headmistress being the guest speaker. The church was decorated as usual for Harvest, to the pleasure of all who saw it, physically or on a screen, and the harvest gifts, contributed both by church members and by the pupils of the church schools, were afterwards delivered to the Food for Thought food bank. The choir having resumed singing during the year, the pre-Christmas service of Nine Lessons and Carols took place physically and was live-streamed, although, in

response to the then growing concern about the Omicron variant, the Crib Service (aimed at young families and including a dramatic presentation by children) was pre-recorded and went out online. Viewing figures indicated that a considerable number of people participated remotely in these services either “live” or later. As far as we have been able to calculate for the purpose of our submission to the Diocese, our “online community” numbers 108. Meanwhile, even though Omicron meant that many of the congregation were shielding, or nervous about coming to church, over 50 people attended Christmas worship in person, and Mass was live-streamed for those at home, at midnight and also on Christmas morning. Two younger members of the choir, who – encouraged and taught by our organist - had continued to work at their music even when singing in church was impossible, have now achieved the RSCM dark blue ribbon, and gained a Merit and a Distinction in the Grade 3 Theory Examination of the Associated Board. Children and teenage members of the church continue to contribute to our worship by reading, and display material for the Harvest service was produced by members of the Guide company. A boat girl who is a member of our serving team has also begun her career as a bellringer, being now a full member of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers. With diocesan permission, 4 children, regular worshippers from Christian homes, are preparing for admission to Communion, and 5 candidates are preparing for the Confirmation to take place in 2022. After a Covid-related “low” in 2020, 2021 saw a recovery (7 Baptisms: 6 infants and one adult). Baptism families were invited to participate remotely in the Mothering Sunday service and the Crib Service, and will continue to be invited to take part in our worship, whether online or in person.

For obvious reasons the usual pattern of school worship, both in the schools and in the church building, was severely disrupted in 2020 and in 2021, but there are plans for it to be restored in 2022. Although unable to visit in person for her planned Advent Assemblies, Mrs Bryson emailed her script and PowerPoint presentation to the schools so that a member of staff could deliver them. Children of the Wendy House pre-school, who use our halls, were this year able to join in a pre-Christmas service in church, and we hope that, as in pre-Covid years, they will be able to resume their Easter and Harvest church services in 2022. Wendy House children have delighted residents at a neighbouring care home by socially-distanced singing visits.

One area where our “remote” worship has proved to be of particular value since the advent of Covid is that of care homes. Since the commissioning of Mrs Elizabeth Bryson as one of the diocese's first Anna Chaplains in 2019, the ecumenical ministry of Christians to the care homes in Maidstone and the North Downs has become more effective and has had a higher profile in the Maidstone area, with improved communication and co-operation among those involved. When care homes were closed to visitors, continued ministry across the area was carried on by telephone and streaming, according to the rules operating at individual homes and what was technically possible for them, with the result that a vigorous ecumenical team has come into being, meeting regularly via Zoom, and seasonal DVD services appropriate to different stages of the Christian year are now delivered to over 20 care homes in

the Deanery. Particularly noteworthy was the circulation of services on DVD before Christmas, for the benefit of residents who might otherwise have been especially isolated at that time. A total of 24 local care homes received some form of Christmas ministry. Naturally, ministry of this kind has been particularly in evidence in St Michael's parish, where Mrs Bryson has led twice-monthly Skype services at two homes and has also provided individual telephone services for room-bound residents, while making similar services available for housebound members of our own congregation who have no internet. One care home in the parish now receives live-streamed worship from St Michael's twice weekly.

Many of the activities that have hitherto enriched our parish life of prayer and worship were unfortunately impossible in 2021; our hopes of a Walsingham pilgrimage, for example, were disappointed, but a small group from St Michael's made the journey to St Albans for the Richborough Family Day in August, organised by our Provincial Episcopal Visitor, the Rt Revd Norman Banks.

### **Deanery Synod:**

The Vicar and three PCC members (at present Mrs E Bryson, Dr E Relle and Mrs J O'Sullivan) represent St Michael and All Angels' on the Deanery Synod, thus providing the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church. Mrs Bryson is a member of the Deanery Mission and Ministry Committee and Dr Relle also serves on the Diocesan Synod. Both Diocesan and Deanery Synods have continued to meet via Zoom.

### **The Church Halls:**

In normal times, these are used regularly by the church for meetings, classes, choir practice and church fairs, and social gatherings. Our hall users also normally include the Wendy House pre-school, the uniformed organisations and several local groups. For most of 2020, in contrast to previous years, the pre-school was the only occupant of our halls during the week and its numbers were reduced, but 2021 has seen more activity and we are anxious to see the return of more local users as concern about Covid diminishes.

### **Pastoral Care:**

The church's two Readers have maintained contact with a total of 4 care homes within the parish (see above). The Care Quality Commission's CQC Regulation 9 (3)(a) emphasises the importance of meeting "the religious and spiritual needs" of service users, and the care homes and their residents have much appreciated our help in addressing these needs. Residents of two local care homes were delighted by a consignment of twiddle-muffs knitted by members of the St Michael's Mothers' Union, while further twiddle-muffs and knitted holding crosses produced by local church members were distributed to care home residents throughout Maidstone through the Anna Chaplaincy.

There is an informal network of parishioners who keep in touch with those who

cannot come to church, delivering copies of the magazine and generally “keeping an eye”, so that they feel part of church life. Ill and housebound parishioners are remembered by name in the intercessions on Sundays, so that the congregation remains prayerfully aware of them, and several members of the congregation make a point of visiting, or inviting, individuals who are in danger of becoming isolated.

This parish is affiliated, through Forward in Faith, to The Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda and, while situated within the Diocese of Canterbury, is under the episcopal oversight of the Bishop of Richborough. The Bishop takes a pastoral interest in all his parishes and is particularly anxious to ensure the well-being of his clergy, with whom he has maintained frequent contact throughout the pandemic.

### **Mission, Evangelism and Outreach:**

Since the appointment of the Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin as Bishop of Dover, mission is being strongly emphasised at both diocesan and deanery levels.

Mission is an item on the agenda of every St Michael's PCC meeting, and the PCC remains conscious of the Six Priorities for Mission outlined in 2016 by Bishop Philip North. During 2021 Mrs Bryson, as a member of the deanery Mission and Ministry Committee, has been involved in discussions, originating at diocesan level, about “Shaping our Life for a Flourishing Future”, at which there has sometimes been a wish to hear more about mission and less about finance. Members of our congregation are actively encouraged to make their Christian faith known to their neighbours and to invite others to church.

With all this in mind, the PCC decided, after discussion, that the parish should prepare a Mission Action Plan, especially as the diocese was already encouraging the deanery to work towards a Mission Action Plan of its own. Fr Peter Harnden, SSC, Rector of Harbledown, spent an evening with us in August 2021 to offer ideas and guidance, and the result is a document, now lodged with the Treasurer, spelling out a number of objectives for the short and longer term; progress is already being noted in relation to some of the former.

We have a particular asset for mission in the form of our church building, which is significant both as a place of ongoing worship and as part of Maidstone's heritage. Designed by Arthur Blomfield and erected in 1876, St Michael and All Angels' Church – which has a handsome interior and a striking programme of angel windows by Heaton, Butler & Bayne and by Hardman & Co - was one of very few local places of worship to open as a venue for Heritage Open Day in September 2021, acting simultaneously as a host church for Kent Ride and Stride. Covid precautions were carefully observed, and we were pleased that a variety of visitors, with a variety of interests, were attracted and came to enjoy the church, some of them from outside the local area. We are becoming increasingly aware of our building as part of the history of our county town, born of the Victorians' determination to make worship and education a possibility for the growing population of the West Borough of Maidstone, and continuing to function as a base from which the Christian message is

spread in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2021 were delighted to provide guided visits for two groups, one from a nearby parish and one from the University of the Third Age. We enjoy having the opportunity to talk to visitors about our faith and worship as embodied in the building and its history. In December 2021 Historic England listed the church building at Grade II, a welcome recognition of its significance, and a letter from the local residents' association, expressing their pleasure at the decision, indicated that our church is a valued element in our neighbourhood.

Relations with the schools within the parish - both the St Michael's Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Schools and St Augustine Academy, part of the Woodard Academies Trust - continue cordial, and when their normal activities resume we see prospects of further development. Fr Bryson is a Governor of the St Michael's Church of England Schools.

Among the Five Marks of Mission developed by the Anglican Consultative Council since 1984, particular concern continues to be expressed in Maidstone Deanery for the fifth - "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth" - a concern reflected by this parish in its membership of ECOChurch, which we joined in 2018.

We remain aware of the ongoing need to make information about our church and its activities readily available to people within our local area and indeed outside it. In addition to our internet presence on *A Church Near You*, our dedicated St Michael and All Angels' website (<https://www.stmichaelallangels.org.uk/>), designed and managed by our webmaster Mr Mark Elvers, provides a valuable link with the community and with interested people farther afield, presenting forthcoming events, information and teaching material in an attractive and accessible format. It has been of particular value in providing an increasing range of resources for parishioners and enquirers during the pandemic. Our parish magazine, produced entirely "in house" and edited by Mr Michael Trout, is supported by local advertisers and has a good local circulation, appearing both in paper form and on our website. Our local residents' association, the Fant and Bower Group, now benefits from some extra publicity thanks to our parish magazine. In normal times, various parish events receive additional publicity in the local press.

As Christians we believe that people's spiritual needs cannot be addressed without considering their physical needs. Some years ago the PCC decided that our church should collect imperishable items for those in need, particularly as food bank workers were then reporting that many of their clients were, owing to administrative problems, simply not receiving benefits to which they were in fact entitled. During 2021, bags of food from St Michael's were, when possible, delivered to the Food for Thought food bank based at the Maidstone Day Centre in Knightrider Street, Maidstone. The PCC also authorises retiring collections after Mass for causes further afield; in 2021 these included one on Sea Sunday for the Mission to Seafarers.

## **Ecumenical Relationships:**

It is important to us to emphasise and develop our links with fellow-Christians of other denominations as we seek to make known the love of Christ in Maidstone.

St Michael and All Angels' is a member of Churches Together in Maidstone and is represented at its meetings. A regular ecumenical ministers' breakfast, organised by the leader of Connect Church, Maidstone, is attended by Fr Bryson and Mrs Bryson, and the St Michael's ministry team is always represented at a monthly ecumenical pub lunch, primarily for ministers based on the west side of the town, organised by a Reader from St Margaret's, Barming.

Various ecumenical activities in which we normally participate (for example the Women's World day of Prayer) went into abeyance in 2020 and have still to resume, but the ecumenical spirit has continued to make itself felt, notably in the work of the Anna Chaplaincy (see above).

## **Financial Review 2021**

### *Income*

Total receipts on unrestricted funds in 2021 were £43,085 versus £53,182 in 2020. This significant difference from the previous year was due to the roof insurance claim from 2020 where £12,000 was recovered.

There has been a significant increase this year, in planned giving, a rise of around 40%. This has offset the decrease in collections at services, indicating greater card payments and online giving.

Fundraising activities were greater in 2021, generating additional funds of £557; these included Ride and Stride, the Christmas card roof appeal and the Christmas raffle. As the pandemic draws to a close, it is hoped these activities will increase further in 2022. Thank you for your donations.

As Après Mass Coffee was able to resume in 2021, there was some income generated from this. It is hoped that this will continue in 2022.

Last year, it was reported that, due to the pandemic, we had months of 0 income from the hall lettings. This was not the case in 2021 and most of the hall lettings resumed as normal. This meant our income from lettings, both regular and casual one-off rentals, amounted to £16,900.

We have been able to make a Gift Aid claim and received £1,251. Thank you to all

those who have been able to gift aid their donations this year.

### Expenditure

Expenditure for the year was £44,767, thankfully down from last year in which £58,150.67 was spent. The main reason for the big difference is that last year's accounts showed the payment for roof repairs when the internal plaster fell. Expenditure dropped due to a change in electricity and gas supplier and a fixed rate tariff being secured.

During 2021 the church benefited from a 0% interest loan from a member of the parish, allowing the whole of 2021's parish share to be paid in full. Paying the parish share in full allowed the church to benefit from a saving of 1.5% on the full cost, which amounted to a saving of £417. The loan was repaid in full by the end of the year.

### Other Funds

There continues to be funds held in two restricted accounts. At Close of 2021 the bell ringers' fund totalled £11,839.90, an increase of £906.25. This increase in income is mainly due to the re-opening of the bell tower, allowing peals and quarter peals to be rung. The general restricted Fund has a balance of £5,156, of which £4,147 is specifically allocated to the organ. The remaining balance of £1,009 is not designated to a specific item.

### Donations

During the year a donation of £1,000 was made specifically for roof repairs above the lady chapel, which has enabled work to begin.

### The year ahead

Moving forward into 2022, there will hopefully continue to be further fundraising events to help continue the work of the church.

### Auditor

Applied Accountancy, Riverside Suite, Maidstone Kent ME16 8GD



**Volunteers:**

We are most grateful to all the volunteers whose hard work makes St Michael and All Angels' a lively, welcoming and outgoing community. Particular thanks are due to our Churchwarden, Mr Mark Elvers; to our Treasurer, Mrs Heidi Elvers, who has gone to great lengths to ensure that the church has remained Covid-compliant since its re-opening after the first lockdown; to our magazine editor and webmaster; to our sacristan, electoral roll officer, church cleaners and gardeners, whose work for the church has continued throughout the year; and to our servers and sidespersons, musicians, bellringers, flower-arrangers, caterers and fair organisers, who are gradually resuming their activities as post-Covid confidence returns.

**Structure, Governance and Management:**

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St Michael and All Angels' the membership of the PCC consists of the Vicar, Churchwardens, Readers and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. Representatives elected to the Deanery or Diocesan Synod are *ex officio* members of the PCC. All members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC; the current Electoral Roll was compiled in 2021. PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. Regular PCC meetings occur bi-monthly, mostly via Zoom in 2021; 6 regular meetings were held in all, plus an additional meeting to discuss the Mission Action Plan, the average level of attendance being about 80%.

**Administrative Information:**

St Michael and All Angels' Church is situated in Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent. It is part of the Diocese of Canterbury within the Church of England. The correspondence address is:

The Vicarage, 416 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, ME16 9LW

The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2006) and a charity currently excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

**PCC Members** who have served at any time from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 until the date this report was approved are:

***Ex Officio* Members:**

Incumbent: Fr Neil Bryson SSC (Chairman)

Readers: Mrs E Bryson, Dr E Relle

Churchwarden: Mr M Elvers

Deanery Synod Representatives: Mrs J O'Sullivan, Mrs E Bryson, Dr E Relle (*ex officio* as she is a Diocesan Synod member).

**Elected Members:**

Mr J Ardley

Miss S Dray

Mrs H Elvers (Treasurer)

Mrs M Gatehouse

Mr G James

Mrs A Ponter

Mrs K Svarts

Approved by the PCC on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and signed on their behalf by

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Fr Neil Bryson SSC (PCC Chairman).