

2020 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, but in this particularly challenging year we have not only kept our church building open for public worship, when this was permitted, but also made a major effort to communicate online with regular members of the congregation and with “visitors”.

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 Janet Digby-Baker, OBE, as the parish Safeguarding Officer. All members of the Parochial Church Council have completed the 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 47 members of the church Electoral Roll, of whom 27 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. After an encouraging 54% rise in our attendance figures between 2017 and 2019, the figures for 2020 were for obvious reasons not recorded in the usual way, but 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.

Eucharistic worship has remained at the centre of our parish life, despite the disruption caused first by problems with the church ceiling early in the year (which made it necessary for Mass to be celebrated in the parish hall) and then by Covid in March (which made it necessary for Mass to be celebrated at the vicarage and live-streamed). Hopes of a return to the church building in time for Easter were thus disappointed, but, during Lent and thereafter, resources for prayer, reflection and Spiritual Communion were made available on the parish website. Because of the March lockdown the Mothering Sunday Mass could not take place in church, but Mrs Bryson had already invited all the baptism families and members of the uniformed organisations to take part, thus maintaining a valued line of communication with those on the fringes of our congregation. When churches were permitted to re-open, first for private prayer and then for public worship, full advantage was taken of this permission, worship has continued uninterrupted on Sundays and Thursdays since then, and after a risk assessment the parish Treasurer and her family have ensured that the building is as Covid-secure as it is possible to make it. 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 were afterwards gratefully received by the Food for Thought food bank. The pre-Christmas service of Nine Lessons and Carols went out online with recorded music and pre-recorded readings, including one by a member of the Air Training Corps, 40F (Maidstone) Squadron, of which the Vicar is the padre. The Christmas Eve Crib Service included an online dramatic presentation assembled and recorded, within the Covid regulations, by young people of the parish, and baptism families were invited to attend remotely. Viewing figures indicated that these services were widely appreciated. Meanwhile, even though the pandemic meant that many of the congregation were shielding, or nervous about coming to church, 41 people attended Christmas worship in person, and Mass was live-streamed for those at home at midnight and also on Christmas morning. Sadly, our choir has not been able to sing since March 2020, but two of its younger members have continued to work towards both Grade 3 Theory and the RSCM dark blue ribbon, which they will certainly

achieve in 2021. Children and teenage members of the church continue to contribute to our worship by reading, either in person or by pre-recording. We had secured diocesan permission for three children, regular worshippers from Christian homes, to be admitted to Communion during the year, but we now hope that this will happen in 2021 when more of the congregation will be able to share in the occasion. Covid affected our Baptism numbers (two only in 2020), but the families will continue to be invited to take part in our worship, whether online or in person.

Acts of worship at St Michael and All Angels' normally involve not only children of the immediate church family but also children who attend the schools in our parish or belong to the uniformed organisations, together with their teachers and parents. For obvious reasons the usual pattern of such services could not be maintained in 2020; from March onward it was impossible for the Vicar and Mrs Bryson to lead school worship in church or in the schools, and, once the pandemic made itself felt, the uniformed organisations could meet only remotely. We hope that we can look forward to better things in 2021.

One area where our “remote” worship proved to be of particular value in 2020 was 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 closed to visitors in March, continued ministry across the area was carried on by telephone and streaming, according to what was possible at individual homes, and particularly noteworthy was the circulation of services on DVD before Christmas for the benefit of residents who would otherwise have felt especially isolated at that time. A total of 24 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 began conducting Skype services at two care homes where she was no longer able to lead worship in person. Additionally, she conducted telephone services for residents of three care homes, and also for housebound members of the congregation who have no internet. One care home now receives regular live-streamed worship from St Michael's.

Many of the activities that have hitherto enriched our parish life of prayer and worship were unfortunately impossible in 2020; our planned pilgrimage to Walsingham, for example, had to be abandoned, as did the Holy Week Chrism Mass in Canterbury Cathedral.

Deanery Synod: The Vicar and two PCC members (at present Mrs E Bryson and Dr E Relle) 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. Meetings of both Diocesan and Deanery Synods had to be transferred to Zoom after March 2020.

The Church Halls: In normal times, these are used regularly by the church for meetings, classes, choir practice and church fairs, and for social gatherings. Our hall users also normally include the Wendy House pre-school, the uniformed organisations, several local groups and a Seventh Day Adventist congregation. For the early part of 2020, the parish hall was used for Mass and, in Lent, for Stations of the Cross, because the church ceiling was in a dangerous state. 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 things begin to look more promising for 2021. During the year a member of the congregation generously paid for artificial grass to be laid in the children's playground.

Pastoral Care:

At the beginning of 2020 the church's two Readers, Mrs E Bryson and Dr E Relle, were as usual visiting a total of four care homes in the parish for monthly services of the Word and/or home Communion from the Reserved Sacrament. 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 been most appreciative of our help in addressing these needs. Once visiting became impossible, other kinds of contact were developed (see above). Mrs Bryson conducted the funeral services, at Maidstone Crematorium, of three residents of one care home who had appreciated her ministry there. Residents of two local care homes greatly appreciated a consignment of twiddle-muffs knitted by members of the St Michael's Mothers' Union, who also, during the summer, managed to hold meetings with careful social distancing.

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. In 2020, this "family" concern in many cases extended, during lockdown, to such things as shopping for fellow-worshippers and neighbours who needed to avoid going out.

During 2020 Fr Bryson administered the last rites to two dying individuals, one of whom also received home Communion several times from a Reader. A major pastoral concern arose when one of our regular communicants, an enthusiastic Christian well known to the whole congregation, was killed by intruders in the garden of another parishioner, whom he was just about to marry. His was one of two church funerals at St Michael's which, though subject to all the constraints resulting from the pandemic, were streamed for those unable to be present and had notably high viewing figures.

This parish is affiliated, through Forward in Faith, to The Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda and, while 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 2020 members of the PCC and congregation were invited to respond to the first "loop" of a diocesan exercise called "Listening and Discerning on the Way", intended to encourage reflection about the life and mission of the church post-Covid, and the responses were edited and submitted by the PCC secretary.

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 a piece of Maidstone church history and 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 2020, acting simultaneously as a host church for Kent Ride and Stride. Covid regulations 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 came from outside the local area, including one expert on Victorian stained glass. We are becoming increasingly aware that our building is a valuable part of Maidstone's heritage, and were sad that three groups, who had arranged guided tours as a result of the 2019 Heritage Open Day, have had to postpone their visits until 2021. We enjoy having the opportunity to talk to visitors about our faith and worship as embodied in the building and its history.

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, and two other PCC members have been Governors since 2019.

Members of the congregation are actively encouraged to make their Christian faith known to their neighbours and to invite others to church. Led by Fr Bryson, members of the congregation embarked in 2020 on a Lenten course entitled "Talking Jesus", intended to equip them to share their faith more confidently, and we regretted that this was halted by the March lockdown.

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, while in normal times various parish events can 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 2020, 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, and a donation button for families in difficulty was placed on our website.

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.

One major ecumenical project for 2020 was an open-air Easter play, conceived under the auspices of Waypoint - a group of over 20 Maidstone churches and organisations originally formed in 2017 to mount events with a Christian content in the county town. A representative from St Michael's was actively involved in the planning for this, but it had unfortunately to be cancelled because of Covid when the plans were at an advanced stage. St Michael and All Angels' is a member of Churches Together in Maidstone and is represented at its meetings.

Various ecumenical activities in which we normally participate (for example the Women's World day of Prayer) could not take place in 2020, but the ecumenical spirit continued to make itself felt, notably in the work of the Anna Chaplaincy (see above).

Financial Review: (See separate document from the Treasurer)

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 retiring Churchwarden, Mrs J O'Sullivan, and to her successor, 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 long for the day when they can get back into action.

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 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 2019 and updated in 2020. 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 2020; 6 regular meetings were held in all, with an average level of attendance of 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 1st January 2020 until the date this report was approved are:

***Ex Officio* Members:**

Incumbent: Fr Neil Bryson SSC (Chairman)

Readers: Mrs E Bryson, Dr E Relle

Churchwardens: Mrs J O'Sullivan, Mr M Elvers

Deanery Synod Representatives: Mrs J O'Sullivan, Mrs E Bryson, Dr E Relle.

Elected Members:

Mr J Ardley

Mrs F Callaghan

Mr M Coates

Miss S Dray

Mrs H Elvers (Treasurer)
Mrs M Gatehouse
Mrs I Horton
Mr G James
Mrs A Ponter
Dr T Samuelson
Mrs K Svarts

Approved by the PCC on 10th March 2021 and signed on their behalf by

.....
Fr Neil Bryson SSC (PCC Chairman).