

## **CHURCH LIFE DURING 2020 Covid 19 and an interregnum**

2020 is best illustrated by the wedding of Jonathan and Lauren Kirby who, having arranged their wedding for May (wedding gatherings banned by the government in the first lockdown) postponed it until October 17th. With lockdown 2 came a further restriction of numbers gathering for weddings so Jonathan and Lauren brought forward their wedding to 26<sup>th</sup> September at 48 hours notice. The wedding went well!

The beginning of 2020 started normally, services were held, groups met but we were aware of the distant rumours of a pandemic.

Churches were closed for services during lockdown 1 but St Edmund's remained open for private prayer. Covid risk assessments had to be made for both churches and it was thanks to Helen Davison and Hilary Baldwin that St Edmund's remained open and safe. Church services went online and meetings were held by zoom and email.

Lockdown 1 meant that the celebration planned for the St Mark's Patronal Festival had to be cancelled but marigolds in pots, grown by Tony and Linda Redfern, together with a prayer card were delivered to many of the congregation by a team of volunteers.

Church services resumed following lockdown 1 but with restrictions in place. Households had to be 2m apart, everyone had to book online or by the telephone answering service, masks had to be worn and the congregation could not sing. Holy Communion was in the form of bread only.

Children's work stopped but the Brunch service was kept for family households only with each household sitting at a separate table and all worship and activities taking place at the table.

There had been no Easter services at the two churches because of lockdown 1 and it wasn't possible to hold the usual much-loved Christmas services because of the regulations. The Christmas Carol service did take place but with only the choir singing and this service was much appreciated as anything remotely resembling normality lifted the spirits of the congregation. St Edmund's is too small to hold larger socially-distanced congregations so Christmas services were held at St Mark's. It wasn't possible to hold the Christingle service so a crib service took its place on Christmas Eve. Midnight Mass and a family service on Christmas morning were held with reduced congregation numbers. This was the last time that both churches were open as the new coronavirus variant caused the case numbers and hospital admissions to go up dramatically.

There was no Roving Nativity Play held this year because of the ban on gathering in groups and Roving Nativity Carols planned for December 21<sup>st</sup> were cancelled due to bad weather. 'Follow the Star' put scenes from the nativity story in the shop windows of six premises on the High Street with the final stable scene at St Edmund's Church.

A highlight for December was the production of a paper copy of The Bridge that was delivered to households around the village. The Bridge had been published online only since March.

Online services had been provided by the plurality ministry team and we are very grateful to them. A nativity video was produced by Rodney Fox and Harry Kirby and delivered to both schools in the plurality.

The Revd. Veronica Brown told us early in the year that she would be leaving the plurality to take up a post on the mainland. Her post was due to start in early summer but covid-regulations meant that the Brown family was unable to move until early September. The congregation presented Veronica with a picture of her favourite walk on the Island together with some coasters and amazon vouchers.

Parish pastoral care took the form of regular telephone calls to the over-70s and offers to do shopping for those who were shielding. After lockdown 2, we held several covid-compliant rule-of-6 coffee mornings for those who had been shut in for so long. These were very successful.

CofE regulations prevented the Little Lions toddler group from taking place.

All church and coffee lounge hire ceased and a rental holiday/reduction was agreed for the skateboard school so, together with the cessation of in-church services for several months and restricted numbers at services, the church income fell resulting in a year-end loss of £8000.

2020 has tested us and we have seen God's care of us in many ways. The prayer request on the marigold card was to thank God for his provision for us in the past and to ask for His guidance for the future. Now we wait to see where He is leading us knowing that Christians can depend on God's loving care no matter what happens in our lives.

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Churchwarden