

## **PCC Secretary's Report 2021**

### **The Post-Covid situation**

From the post-Christmas lockdown, the PCC agreed that the churches should remain closed until March. Eventually St Edmund's was reopened for private prayer and the PCC agreed that a return to church services became possible just before Easter. Until the end of the year, the PCC agreed that some restrictions should remain for social distancing and hygiene reasons, but many of our worship practices and parish activities had returned to near-normal by the end of the year. Occasionally, lack of access to priests meant that the PCC had to plan for alternative worship provision (e.g. there was no Maundy Thursday service) but usually the services returned to the normal pattern by the end of the year. The PCC also agreed the pattern of Christmas services in a time when there were fewer priests available and more services were led by lay worship leaders.

Explorers was the first of the parish's ministries to restart, and the PCC agreed that Pete and Nikki Luther should lead for a trial period. Holding Explorers once a month was successful and was extended to twice a month later in the year. The PCC approved the restart of Little Lions for young children and their parents in September and the beginning of the Elephant Club for people with dementia. A coffee morning for isolated people and "Mark's Brothers" as a breakfast club for men was also approved to start once a month in the autumn.

### **Finance**

At the beginning of the year, the PCC decided to reduce the Barn rent temporarily because of Covid restrictions on group activities such as skateboarding. This impacted on our income, as well as electricity bill increases. As a result, the PCC agreed to increase the cost of the hire of the church and coffee lounge, to offset these additional costs. Additional payments became necessary for the PCC to approve also as Sarah was asked to do more cleaning, Pete and Nikki Luther were paid monthly for running Explorers, Tracie Wilson was paid a small sum monthly to do accountancy work for the parish, and the quinquennial inspection recommendations required the PCC to agree expenditure for repairs, which were fortunately mostly cosmetic. This repair work will continue in 2022. Nevertheless, the PCC noted that due to the work of the Treasurers, the parish's financial situation markedly improved in 2021. The parish had paid off its share debt from 2020 by July and by the end of the year, the total payment for 2021 had been met.

The potential appointment of an Assistant Treasurer as a paid role was discussed near the end of the year as the Treasurer (Helen Davison) asked to stand down. David Bennison is willing to become Treasurer from 2022 and David McCulloch offered to be employed as Assistant Treasurer. The PCC agreed to go ahead with this proposal and for an official process to start in January.

### **PCC Officers**

At the start of the year, Helen Davison temporarily became PCC Treasurer again after Andrew Snow realised his commitments meant he could not spare the time to

carry out the role. Following the APCM, the current PCC officers were approved for another year. Janette Thomas was appointed the PCC's GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) Officer. In May, the PCC elected Mike Broadsmith unanimously as Deputy Churchwarden to reduce Ann Capps' workload. At the end of the year, since Helen Davison realised she could not continue as Treasurer, the PCC agreed in principle to a paid role of Assistant Treasurer, and appointed David Bennison as Treasurer, effective from January 2022.

### **The Parish Response to the Deanery Plan**

In the spring, the PCC made their first responses to the issues raised by the Deanery Plan, which initially placed the parish of Wootton in an area with East Cowes and Whippingham. The first steps for the PCC were the appointment of representatives to meetings with other key people regarding the interregnum and the next stages of implementing the Deanery Plan. The PCC then agreed the updating of the parish profile to allow other parishes and prospective candidates for the vacancy to know our talents and areas of development as a parish. The PCC then decided to ask Rev Sue Paterson of East Cowes was asked to chair our APCM. The PCC also received a letter from the bishop suspending an appointment to our plurality vacancy until the Deanery Plan came more fully into effect. It therefore agreed that the Secretary should write a response to the Diocesan Registry explaining why we had not yet sent a parish profile.

Following the APCM, the PCC agreed to form a plurality with East Cowes and Whippingham, because it made sense pastorally and geographically. The PCC agreed that our previous plurality experience with Binstead and Havenstreet should be an advantage in this process. The PCC also agreed to allow East Cowes and Whippingham to see our draft parish profile. The PCC believed that although there were many differences of parish culture between us and East Cowes and Whippingham PCCs, we should show that we are willing to reach out and work with them. After Sue Patterson's resignation (effective Easter 2022), the PCC assessed that it was important to begin the process of moving towards a plurality immediately, as Sue would not be around for long to bring the plan for our area to fruition. Discussions started in the PCC about holding an extraordinary parish meeting. However, this meeting was postponed after a deanery meeting where the Plan was discussed and many concerns were expressed by other parishes of their situation.

Archdeacon Peter Leonard came to the PCC meeting in November to explain the progress of the Deanery Plan and our parish's role within it. He thanked us for what had been done so far and for the progress the parish's lay leadership had made. He recommended against joining the North East Wight process of integration 6 months after the start, because that would be difficult for us as a parish and their area. He recommended that we should look at safeguarding and school ministry for things best done within groups of parishes. Some administrative changes might be necessary in the future in the running of parishes, but the PCC can continue working in the future with other ministers like Readers from our current plurality, even if priests are not always available. Inevitably there will be teething problems with other parishes Wootton has not worked together with before, but these can be overcome

by prayerful good will. Following his visit, the PCC agreed that continuing to move towards forming a new plurality was the right way forward.

### **Buildings, Land and Fabric**

Early in the year, the PCC updated and clarified the parish's graveyard policy, and approved a memorial bench for a recently deceased child. The PCC were asked to consider a proposal for a new wall memorial in St Edmund's but this was discovered to be unlikely to be agreed to by the diocese, so the proposal was rejected. The PCC agreed to reorganise the side chapel at St Edmund's which was later tidied.

Following the quinquennial inspection in the early summer, the PCC noted that the interior of St Mark's was fine, but some mostly cosmetic repairs would be needed on the exterior. The PCC agreed also that work should begin on St Edmund's after the report was received. Priority would be given to those works which required a faculty under List B and were affordable.

The PCC began to address complaints from some of our neighbours close to St Edmund's about our use of the copse, bonfires, and dumping spoil from the graveyard there. (Everything done on behalf of the PCC was reasonable). After further correspondence from neighbours near St Edmund's, the PCC considered that we had fulfilled our responsibilities. There were legal issues about a hedge that had been planted by a neighbour on the church land's side of a fence. The PCC took legal advice but this was complicated by our legal advisor also working for the neighbour. The conversations with our neighbour moved towards a satisfactory conclusion when her new hedge was discovered to be on the boundary of our land. After a PCC member raised that the road past St Edmund's was a potential access road for a housing development, which would endanger the church, the PCC agreed to ask the diocese to register the road as our property. Later in the summer, further investigations, including discussions between the Deputy Churchwarden and local councillors, were made towards making pinch points on Church Road to prevent future traffic problems.

The PCC renewed the contract with Carisbrooke Castle Museum to hold silver connected with the parish. The PCC also agreed to build a speed hump on the drive at St Mark's to reduce the speed of those driving towards the car park. Towards the end of the year, the PCC noted the discovery of a previously unknown brick-lined grave at St Edmund's. This was agreed to be made safe and further investigations made in 2022. The PCC agreed to use technology in the future to clarify burial plots in parts of St Edmund's graveyard.

Near the end of the year, the PCC approved Mike Broadsmith as the St Edmund's Building Fund Trust's representative on the PCC. In November, Eric and Wendy Griffiths proposed doing work on the copse and land opposite St Edmund's to make it a more attractive place and a benefit for the whole community. The PCC agreed to invite them to talk about their plans at the start of 2022.

## **Safeguarding**

The PCC were requested by the diocese to complete enhanced DBS checks for safeguarding. The PCC agreed that with a gradual return of pastoral activities from our parish team, it was vital that they all realised that they needed to be DBS checked asap. The PCC noted that basic DBS checks only were required for parent volunteers at Little Lions. No safeguarding issues were raised during 2021.

## **Pastoral Activities**

Later on in the year, the PCC approved the restart of the pastoral team returning to home visits and isolated people receiving Communion. The PCC agreed to set up a team to lead occasional worship at Solent Grange, which would start when care homes were more confident post-Covid. The PCC approved that Harry Kirby and Hilary Baldwin would make enquiries about leading occasional assemblies at Wootton school. The PCC agreed to organise a thanksgiving evening for all those unsung people who give the parish regular support.

The PCC welcomed the success of St Edmund's Open Weekend and thanked the organisers. The PCC noted the recent death of a parishioner who had been a parish stalwart, before moving away.

## **Miscellaneous Activities**

The PCC decided to move towards returning to a printed Bridge magazine in early summer. It also renewed the contract with the printers for the publication of the Bridge at an increased rate. The Bridge is now being regularly printed in colour.

The PCC agreed to change the regular meeting date of PCC meetings to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month.