

Vicar's Report 2021

It has been a shorter time since our last APCM in October and most of this time we have been in lockdown, but we have been able to continue our worship and ministry. I want to say thank you for all the prayer, care, generosity of our church members, including to those who were even able to give significantly extra. Thank you for all the support, physical and spiritual, that so many of you have given to All Saints during this time.

Among our new means of working during lockdown and constrictions we have been able to offer:

- 1 Services on zoom , on recorded video and on-line specials
- 2 Morning Prayer on Tuesdays
- 3 Phoning one another, especially those who may feel most isolated.
- 4 Churchyard Exhibitions for Advent to Christmas and Lent to Easter
- 5 Christmas Alone Hampers via Janet and her team
- 6 Live Lent online course, Prayer course
- 7 Monitoring safety procedures
- 8 Quiz online for fun and togetherness
- 9 Fabric – repairs to the bells
- 10 North Porch exhibitions for Christmas and Lent/Easter, including keepsakes to take away.

In particular I offer my thanks to

Nerine
Leon
Janet
Colin
Martin
Mary
Verity
Luella and Mario, Soraia and Isabel
Dorothy and Richard
Kay and Andrew
The Ford Family and the choir
Members of the PCC
Members of the phoning team
Doug

The way Forward is
.....Growing Together in God's Love

Vicar's Address - "Fired up, ready to go"

In June 2007, then-Senator and presidential hopeful Barack Obama visited the small town of Greenwood, South Carolina, as part of his campaign efforts. When he arrived at the small hall, late at night after a

one and half hour journey in driving rain, he was surprised to find a room of only 30 supporters. Disheartened by the low turnout and uninspiring start to the campaign trail, to his surprise a woman suddenly yelled out, "Fired up!" The room responded, "Fired up and ready to go!" Obama, encouraged by the enthusiasm, went on to win the election and this chant was repeated at larger Obama rallies. It shows how one lone voice, one positive heart, can have an amazing affect to the good just as the apostles in Acts stood before rulers and people, and spread the Good News of God's Love.

We may be tempted to feel that we have low numbers at present, yet to share in the work with our own positive and hopeful vision can make all the difference.

Challenges: I expect that we are all aware that there are many challenges to be faced at present, and in the church they are:

- We cannot continue as we are, we need to grow, to re-engage with our ministry of care and witness
- There must be a sustainable solution to our financial shortfall.
- Communication has not always been appropriate: with unkindness, even anger in emails and meetings, so we need to look at how we can be kind and caring at all times.

The Way Ahead

- To grow through our outreach
- The church building and St John's hall need to build on the role that they have as the community hub
- To communicate well and positively, to respect those we may disagree with, to be a group of people that others will want to join and flourish in.

In our thinking about the way ahead we must remain prayerful, seeking God's will for our parish. We need to plan for the immediate future, which has been rendered uncertain by the coronavirus, and for the years ahead as we, with our nation and with other churches, begin to recover from the isolation , anxiety and suffering of these times.

These are the steps which we have currently identified.

1. **Embrace the opportunities** we've uncovered during the Covid pandemic:
 - a. Renewed recognition that 'church' is much more than the Sunday worship.
 - b. Regular phone calls for pastoral care
 - c. Support for those in need – emotional, practical and pastoral.

- d. A stronger focus on 'people' rather than 'plant'.
- e. Opportunities for evangelism.
- f. Making the Churchyard work for us.
- g. Better co-ordination/consolidation of the many things that we do individually.

2. By end July: review and reaffirm our long term purpose:

- a. What is our role in the community and what do we offer people?
- b. What makes All Saints special? What are our strengths?
- c. How do we reach new people to join us as disciples?
- d. What do we want/need to be in 10 years time?
- e. What does that say about our priorities and use of resources?

*The points in 3-6 should be seen currently as **pointers for the time when we can meet in person to re-examine our position and decide** which route to take.*

- 3. In parallel look at potential projects to achieve sustainability:
 - a. Flesh out the current options – and research more options.
 - b. Embrace any objections – they may hint at further opportunities.
 - c. How well do any/all of these support 1 & 2 above?
 - d. Will this enhance our work across the community?
 - e. Do the figures 'add up'? Need for close scrutiny.
 - f. Sensible/appropriate timing as restrictions are eased.

4. Dates

Thy Kingdom Come – prayers during May Ascension to Pentecost.
 Public Meeting about the Church Hall and grounds
 Prayer and Gift Day in June

Celebration lunch/tea when the lockdown ends completely

During Autumn.

- a. Consolidate the above.
- b. Various events, including Eco Christmas
- c. Confirm projects/timescales (including basic costings/benefits).
- d. Make the 2022-2027 plan.

5. Early 2022. Prepare to launch

6. Mid 2022. Enact

I prayerfully ask that everyone takes part in supporting this with prayer, with welcome to new people, by sharing ideas for giving of time and finances

Based on discussions 12/1/21 and papers from JL, JB, NC and others.

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**ST JOHN'S HALL AND LAND
STATEMENT TO APCM 25 APRIL 2021**

The PCC has been discussing the need to ensure long term sustainability of the church for some years, as has been reported to previous APCMs. Amongst a number of other options, it was decided early in 2020 to seek advice from East Herts Council planning officers on whether updated plans to erect 15 new dwellings on the St John's Hall site would be looked upon favourably. (In 1995 permission had been granted for the erection of 22 dwellings, but this lapsed when the financial needs of the time were met with a sizeable legacy from Reginald Cull).

This month we received the advice requested. Planning policies have changed and now include a presumption that applications will be refused if they result in the loss of buildings or land for public or community use unless, inter alia, the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by enhanced provision in terms of quantity and/or quality in a suitable location. As we have not yet developed plans for enhancing the community use of the church building, the advice is that the application would not be viewed upon favourably.

The need to secure our financial future remains, as does our desire to improve and enhance our buildings for community use.

We are hopeful that we will, over the rest of the year be able to come forward with definitive plans to move us forward.

There will be an open meeting to look at how we can sustain and care for St John's Hall as a hub for the community encouraging a wider commitment.