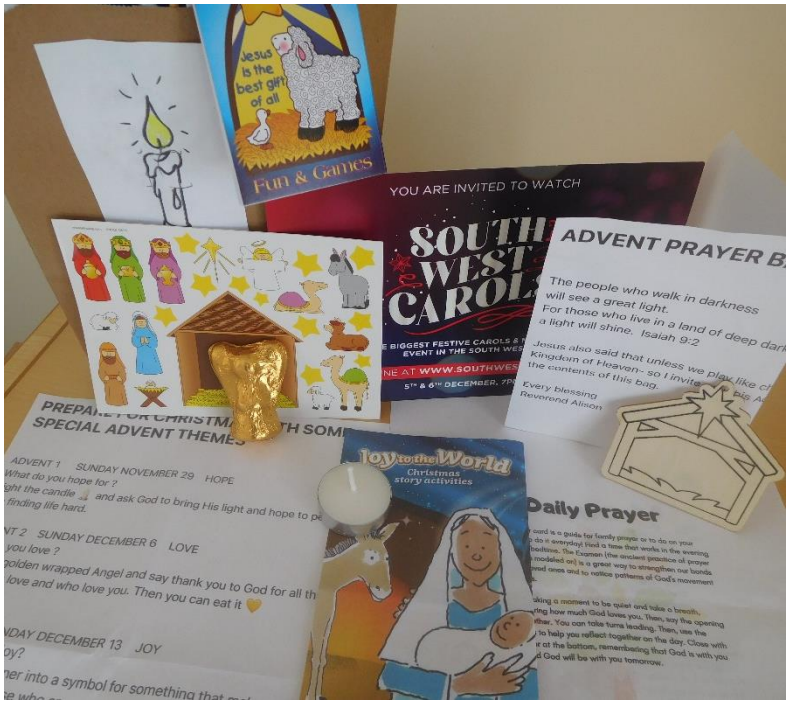




# St Peter's Church Stoke Fleming



*Covid may have restricted communal worship but Revd Alison gave everyone on the Church Electoral Roll an Advent Prayer Bag.*

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



## **A Word from the Rector**

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2020.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, it has been a very strange and challenging year.

No one imagined as the clock struck midnight heralding in 2020, the enormity of the global pandemic, the loss of loved ones, of livelihoods and of the personal freedoms we so take for granted.

But it was a year too of love, of a renewed sense of community, a sharp learning curve for many reasons – technology: who'd ever heard of ZOOM in 2019 !

Whilst we have deeply missed worshipping together in our church building, we are aware of the dangers of social mixing and the vulnerability of our congregation.

Wearing a mask, as I have said many times, is an act of love and in a tiny, tiny human way, us showing love to one another reflects, dimly, the great and sacrificial love our Lord Jesus showed to us, by dying for us.

So let's trust and pray that soon we may experience a glorious coming together again, when we can sing, see each other's faces and worship God in our lovely church.

Every blessing.

*Reverend Alison (pictured on leave before the pandemic)*

## **Safeguarding Report**

St Peters is part of the larger Church of England safeguarding network which promotes a safer Church for us all. We have an online safeguarding dashboard which is hosted by the Diocese of Exeter and helps us to make sure that all the activities we put on at our Church, and any outside events, are safe for all who take part. The areas we look at are safer foundations, safer activities and safer practices. Safeguarding is wide ranging and involves risk assessment, DBS checks, training, safer recruitment to name only a few things.

Unfortunately our Church activities have largely been curtailed in 2020, because of the pandemic, but safeguarding continues as a very important part of Church life.

*Hazel Smith*

## The Parochial Church Council 2020

### Rector

\*Revd Alison Shaw

*\*Ex officio*

### Churchwarden

\*Mr. John Dietz (Health & Safety Officer, Fabric Goods & Ornaments Officer)

### Representatives on the Deanery Synod

\*Mr. Peter Barker (Reader, Vice Chair and Hon Secretary; Deanery Lay Chair)

\*Mrs. Rosemary Shiffner

### Representative on the Diocesan Synod

\*Mrs. Rosemary Minshall (Hon Treasurer)

### Elected to the Parochial Church Council

Dr. Hazel Browne

Miss Jenny Harris (Reader)

Mrs Hazel Smith (Safeguarding Officer)

Mrs Sarah Stevenson-Olds

Mrs. Heather Stramik

Mrs. Sue Walford (Assist. Treasurer)

## Financial Report

It is difficult to be positive about our finances this year as our normal income has dropped to 76% of our norm due to the effects of Covid 19 on church collections, some gift aid, fund raising and lack of fees from weddings and funerals. However, we have just managed to break even and still give 8% of our income to other charities that are in desperate need. Once again this would not have been the case without apart from our membership of the *Parish Giving Scheme* and without the further parishioners who have joined. We would also like to thank those faithful parishioners who dug deeper in response to our plea for extra help with finances during the year.

Thanks go to many people this year: to the late Bernard Rowland for his most generous legacy, to the same very generous parishioner who helps with the significant expense of Churchyard maintenance and to the *Friends of St. Peter's* – what would we do without you? – for the further work on the stained glass windows that means this job is almost finished.

We miss our coffee mornings at *Stoke Lodge Hotel* with Peter Beamish and the School ukulele band and our fund raisers in the *Avenue Gardens* but hope that we may be able to resume these during 2021.

Once again, I would like to thank Sue Walford for all her work reclaiming our Gift Aid tax so quickly and efficiently. The full accounts are published separately.

*Rosemary Minshall*

## Churchwarden's Report

### Church Building and Maintenance

Despite the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, work has still been carried out as and when the various restrictions have allowed.

The most notable job this year has been the completion of the work originally planned in 2017 for the windows. This second phase consisted of work to the Johnson window, the St. Aubyn window, the east window and the four large windows on the north side of the church. In addition, the vestry window and a small window behind the organ were also removed and repaired; observant passers-by may have noticed the disappearance of the unsightly sheets of Perspex which had covered those two windows for many years. In all, the work cost £11,675, without the VAT, and was paid for by the *Friends of St. Peters*; we are extremely grateful to them for this magnificent contribution.



A number of slates slipped on various parts of the church roof through the year, a problem which is due in part to the age of the roof, coupled with the more severe winter gales experienced over recent years. Repairs are being planned for 2021.

Over the last two or three years we have had several lights fail in the main part of the church. In July our electrician managed to obtain three LED units bright enough for our needs and we fitted them in the north and south aisles on a trial basis. They use only a third of the power of the old lights and so far all has been well, so no doubt we shall gradually replace the rest of the old fittings; not an easy task as the next ones to be replaced are high up in the nave.

In November the weathervane started to make an annoying squeaking sound as it turned in the wind. Peter Bailey, Nick Teage and I lowered it and greased the bearings, which has stopped it for now, but it will require new bearings eventually.

The tower clock had its annual service by the Cumbria Clock Company in June and has kept remarkably good time, generally to within a few seconds per week.

### Churchyard

As before, the grass in the churchyard has been cut regularly, on the south side by a contractor, and on the north side paid for by Adrian Lloyd-Edwards; we are very grateful to Adrian for this generous contribution.

In November the two small paths, from the east end of the church to the war memorial, and along the north side to the main porch, were generally tidied up, cleaned of moss, and the edges trimmed back, to make them safer and easier to walk on. Our thanks go to the anonymous donor who paid for the work.

## Organists

Through January, February and part of March, the organ was played for us by our regular organists, Mike Dodsworth and Carol Warboys, with Karen White covering one Sunday. As in previous years, we are grateful to Mike for playing on the first Sunday of every month for no charge.

From 22nd March until early August no services were held in the church because of COVID-19 restrictions. Services restarted in August but on a restricted basis with no singing. Mike Dodsworth nevertheless played some music for us before and after some of the services, and on a few occasions accompanied Hazel Smith when she was kind enough to sing a hymn for us as a solo voice, the only singing allowed in church during the second phase of the restrictions.

For the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services the organ was played by Janet Dietz, again with some solo singing by Hazel Smith.

## Bellringing

Our bells were rung regularly up to March, when bellringing was suspended across the whole country, along with many other group activities. We were allowed to start ringing again at the end of August, after church services had resumed, but only if certain conditions could be met concerning spacing between the ringers in the tower.

In order to comply with the requirements, we could only ring four bells, which no doubt sounded somewhat strange to people outside who are used to hearing us ring normally. We look forward to restarting normal ringing again as soon as the restrictions are lifted and we are allowed to do so.

## Unlocking and Locking the Church

I am grateful to Nick Teage and Peter Bailey who, between them, made sure the church was unlocked in the mornings and locked again in the evenings on those days when it was open. The pattern was somewhat irregular throughout most of 2020 because of the changing COVID-19 situation.

Finally, to anyone who does anything for the church, be it great or small, but who I may have forgotten to mention, please accept my apologies and my sincere thanks.

*John Dietz*

## St Peter's and the Wider Church

### Christians Together in Dartmouth and District



At an enjoyable and well supported Service, tea and AGM in the Flavel Church, Revd Alison and Rosemary Minshall were confirmed as chair and secretary for another year. In early March the World Day of Prayer Service (planned by the Christian women of Zimbabwe) was held in St Peter's and led by Jenny Harris.

Although other activities were curtailed by Covid Restrictions, on the Saturday afternoon before Christmas families in their cars from all around converged on Blackpool Sands (courtesy of the Newman family) for a hugely successful



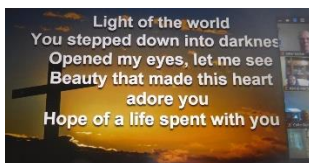
**Carols on the Sands** with the band of the Flavel Church. As well as introducing the carols, Revd Andrew from Dartmouth welcomed the

'donkey' of the Nativity Story, later revealed as none other than Bishop Nick! The Thorn Alpacas were also in attendance, ably filling in for Santa's Reindeer.



### Sharing Zoom Services

During the various lockdowns, along with members of our other *Coast and Country* parishes and those from *Start Bay Benefice* and further afield, we were able to enjoy Sunday Services on Zoom ably organized by Ken Ball, a Reader from West Charleton. Bishop Nick was among the preachers and retired priests Revd John Corrie and Revd Mark Kichenside contributed greatly.



Our own Revd Alison featured frequently, preaching or leading the Service, as did Peter Barker from time to time. One of the joys was being able to sing along lustily (with one's computer microphone securely muted!).

## Woodleigh Deanery

At the Deanery Synod on February 6<sup>th</sup>, Jon Curtis, the Lay Discipleship Project Manager, told us about *Grass Roots*, a collection of ideas and activities illustrated with scenes from Devon (including Dartmouth and Blackpool!). These form a resource, and course in booklet form, to encourage us, at whatever point we may be on faith's journey, to think about how we follow Jesus. Archdeacon Douglas Dettmer then spoke about the importance of General Synod and gave us a personal overview of its workings and the many and varied issues which were due to be debated. The Deanery had exciting plans for *Joy 2020* in May and for a chain of prayer all around the Coast path, but these were among the casualties of the pandemic.

The summer and autumn synods, reviewing responses to the lockdown, were held on Zoom, and were very successful in enabling all participants to speak, and to see everyone's faces.

## St Peter's Charitable Giving



Despite the pandemic we still managed to give roughly 8% of our income to 'good causes'. We continued to make a monthly contribution to CMS partners Grace and Festo Kanungha. Unfortunately they have had to leave rural Tanzania, but we hope they will be able to visit us when Covid restrictions are over. In addition to the usual donations to *Stoke Fleming Village Magazine* and *Devon Historic Churches Trust*, we also gave to *Bible Society* (supporting the development of *Open the Book* amongst their other activities), *Open Doors* (supporting persecuted Christians), *Youth Genesis* (working with young people in Torbay and Dartmouth), *Children's Society* (supporting children in this country with a wide variety of needs) and, a new addition this year, *Mary's Meals* (a wonderfully focused and effective charity organizing free meals for children in poor countries in their schools, meals cooked by local volunteers with local produce as far as possible). St Peter's also supported Stoke Fleming Christmas with a substantial contribution.



*Peter Barker*

*Volunteers preparing Mary's Meals in Malawi.*

## Friends of St. Peter's

### First the Negatives:

1. We were just about to go into rehearsals for a Village Concert in March last year; John Belli had agreed to produce it for us, our original compères were going to introduce the acts again, and John had assembled an excellent line-up of talent, including a special turn by our very own Vicar. We hope that once we can gather again we may be able to re-visit this.
2. At the same time, thanks to Adrian Lloyd Edwards, we were also busy with plans for an Autumn 2020 Fund Raiser concert by the Maesteg Male Voice choir from South Wales. You can guess the rest - concert and Maesteg washed out together with our AGM and everyone else's plans too. However, although it may appear that we have little to show for the year, in the twelve months since the last Annual Report have been surprisingly active for your Committee.

### And now the Positives:

1. We learned how to Zoom for our meetings, and held a very successful Zoom AGM in November.
2. We are absolutely thrilled to be able to report that not only is the work on the Vestry and organ windows now complete but all the windows have now been renovated, except that three grilles remain to be removed, which we expect will happen the next few months. Thanks to of our loyal members and supporters, and of course the work of the Committee, the end of this project has arrived two years earlier than we thought would be financially possible; we are very pleased that *Friends of St. Peter's* were able to contribute the lion's share, something over £20,000, to the overall cost of this whole project.



*One of the north side windows showing the work done on the stone mullions.*



3. As this Report is being written we are gearing up for a new, technical, venture which we hope will provide a Lockdown Variation: three PowerPoint talks in February on aspects of life in the village: the Village Shop, the Parish Council, and Start Point Lighthouse, which we hope will be well received and may lead to other similar ventures.

4. We are very grateful to those who keep our excellent website, [www.fospstokefleming.com](http://www.fospstokefleming.com), up to date; on it you can read much more about this lively organisation, and we will hope that we will be able to show some good feedback from the zoom talks!

*Rosemary Shiffner, Chairman*

### **Christmas Tree Festival**



In the summer, before the second lock-down, there were anxious debates about whether or not we could hold the Christmas Tree Festival this year. Events of course overtook us, but not before we had decided it should be cancelled; long appraisal had made it clear that, even had the church been open, there were too many imponderables - the whole event, from preparing the church, decorating the trees, refreshments, control of visitors, all involving people at close quarters, made it a no-no.

Then the debate moved to what we could do instead: after many suggestions the Committee (of three) decided to focus on the Prayer tree, sent round in each Parish magazine a cut out Christmas tree, so people could write their own prayers to put on their own trees rather than the large one in the church. Thank you Parish Magazine for enabling us to reach out and remind people of the Christmas Tree Festival in this way.

*Rosemary Shiffner*

### **St. Peter's Visiting**

For most of the year visiting inside other people's homes was not allowed. Some of the congregation did a sterling job of keeping in touch by telephone, especially with those who were ill or living alone. There were also encounters across the threshold (sometimes with shopping or flowers) and waving through the window. It was always a bonus if we chanced to meet one another while out exercising, and a joy when we were allowed to offer tea in the garden (still 'socially distanced' of course) and such a joy when collective worship could resume.

## A very Different Year

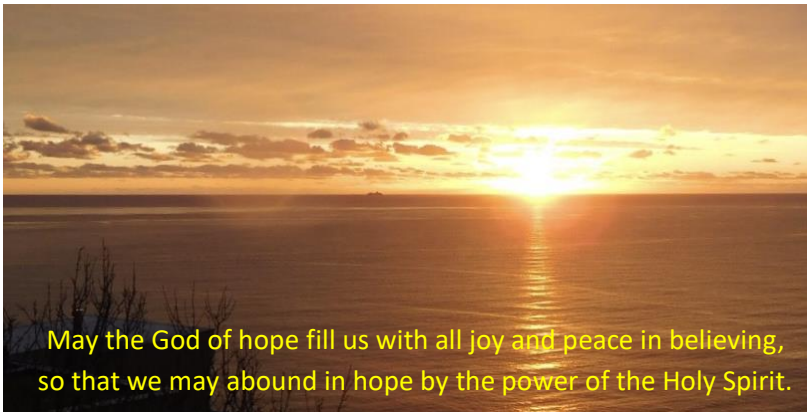
*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?*

*How long will you hide your face from me? (Psalm 13.1)*

Lament has seemed the key mode for 2020 in many ways. A trickle of Covid bad news grew into a torrent and then burst abruptly into our stunned lives: collective worship in person banned, churches locked; no more *Open the Book*, no more Lent Course, no more prayer group, no more getting together at all. Holy Week and Easter on our own. So different from 'community', 'congregation' and 'church' (the NT word for which originally meant 'assembly'). Let alone the general anxiety, loss and social deprivation experienced by everyone, and acutely by many. We knew that several of our members had other serious illnesses and others were 'shielding'.

Revd Alison quickly rallied us with a daily Hymn and Prayer (which she still continues), Lent Bags (followed later by Advent Bags) for everybody on the Church Electoral Roll, a form of liturgy for do-it-yourself Easter, and her encouraging presence around the village with Don dog. In summer St Peter's was open a little for private prayer. Sunday Worship resumed in August twice a month: masks, sanitiser, no mingling (let alone communal singing) and Communion, in particular, significantly curtailed. But for many it was still wonderful to be worshipping in church again, especially when Hazel Smith sang solo hymns; her beautiful renditions were a real blessing. Services were stopped again in November, but we managed some in December. Revd Alison also ran an Advent Course on Zoom on Tuesday nights.

Psalm 13 ends on a note of trust and hope: *I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me.* Perhaps we can look forward to a new dawn in 2021.



May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.