

St Peter's Church Stoke Fleming



Ready for the Little Stars!

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The Parochial Church Council 2021

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)

*Mrs. Rosemary Shiffner (until September)

Elected to the Parochial Church Council

Mrs. Rosemary Minshall (Hon Treasurer, until August)

Mr Mike Dodsworth (Hon Treasurer, from August)

Miss Jenny Harris (Reader)

Mrs. Heather Stramik

Mrs Hazel Smith (until May)

Mrs. Sue Walford

Dr Hazel Browne (until May)

Mrs Sarah Stevenson-Olds

A Word from the Rector



It is a pleasure to look backwards and forwards in a constructive and optimistic way, and it is a great joy on this occasion to be able to look back at a year which has seen many positive things happening in our church, despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Even though it has included a period when we weren't able to meet together properly, the people who make up God's church at St Peter's have carried on faithfully – in person when possible, but always praying and staying close to God and to each other.

Although things were very different in 2021 and there was a sense of loss personally and corporately in so many ways, there has also been much to celebrate and give thanks for. I hope you will accept this as a huge thank you to all those who have played any part in the past year in getting things done, keeping us all going, and keeping us on the right path as a parish with such support, enthusiasm and dedication.

I wouldn't mind betting that when we first went into lockdown most of us had no idea of how long this pandemic would last and the impact it would

have on us all. However, whilst we left our buildings, God didn't leave the church and has continued to work in and through us by His Holy Spirit.

The ways in which churches express themselves and their faith may change to meet the differing needs of society, but at our heart is a faith with Jesus Christ as the one who inspires, encourages, and enables. Every church member is called to be a part of the Church's mission and while not all in the congregation might feel able to go out and spread the word, there are plenty of tasks to be done that can help. Every activity needs fresh blood and ideas and I would ask every member of this church to think and pray carefully about what you might do to help.

Good stewardship of our and God's resources is not so much what we are good at but how willing we are to be committed. John Milton dictated poetry when he was blind; Beethoven was deaf when he composed many of his greatest works; Robert Louis Stevenson was in ill health most of his life and yet wrote lasting literature. It is said of D L Moody, the evangelist of the 19th Century, that he had no idea that he himself could teach but he devoted to God his one talent of being able to drum up recruits. Look at the Psalmist David, Martin Luther, William Booth, people who did what they could and were then led further by God.

Our vision as a church must be to continue reaching out to the community we serve, to be better at sharing our faith and our life, and to make the most of our building – amongst them the delights of our Christmas Tree Festival and our emerging Baby/ Toddler Group – so that we can bring the abundance of God's life to those amongst whom we live and work. In this way we play our part in our church's history as witnesses to God's presence and activity in this place.

I believe that our willingness to rise to the challenges of life in a pandemic has been the gift of our faithful and creative God. It has not been easy, and it isn't quite over yet, but we go forward with courage and hope, praying that we will continue to know and enact God's vision for his people, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and in the unquenchable light of Christ.



Every blessing
Revd Alison

Financial Report

Introduction. For the first time in 26 years, this report has a new author. I assumed the role of Treasurer from Rosemary Minshall with effect from August this year. I'd like to thank Rosemary very sincerely for the time she has spent since in offering advice based on years of experience, also for initiating me into the processes required, the quirks of Anglican bureaucracy and the dark arts of church financing! I'd also like to thank Sue Walford for her time on initiation re HMRC & Gift Aid matters.

Church Income & Expenditure. Our receipts have picked up again as the impact of Covid lessened as the year progressed. Nonetheless, average congregations have not fully recovered. The Parish Giving Scheme has helped to minimise the effect on income. However, expenditure has exceeded income by around £11,500 which has been covered from our reserve accounts. We seem to have just covered more regular expenditure. The second half claims for Gift Aid relief have NOT been received in this financial year, so finances are a little healthier than they appear. There has been a spate of one-off expenditure as the year ended – £700 for organ tuning and minor repair (first time in five years) and about £1500 on the sound system with more to come in 2022, and considerable lighting maintenance needed! An essential but not very promising start to the new year!

General Comment. We have eaten into our reserves by more than we can really afford to do, especially if the urgent quinquennial work and the desirable kitchen project are to proceed. Given the small amount left in the CBF Tower Account following the spending mentioned above, the two CBF accounts have been merged resulting in a balance in the CBF Ordinary Account of about £17,500. We also have an Ordinary Account with NatWest whose balance is about £7,300 and a Tower Account with NatWest whose balance is about £9,000. A small amount (about £2800) from a historical legacy is invested in CBF funds.

Whilst grateful for all donations, however given, as a new Treasurer I have to say that the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) is my favourite, as the tax relief comes into our bank account automatically about two weeks after the end of each month. With the blue envelope scheme, this relief has to be claimed quarterly which involves considerable record keeping and paperwork, though HMRC do pay up promptly once that is complete. I would be very grateful if those now very few users, typically about 4-5 each service, would give serious consideration to switching to PGS. I would be delighted to facilitate this for you – just ask!

Mike Dodsworth

Churchwarden's Report Church Building and Maintenance

The completion of the work originally planned in 2017 for the windows, and completed in February, was reported in the fabric report for last year, 2020. A large part of it was paid for by the Friends of St. Peters and we are extremely grateful to them for their magnificent contribution.

It is now a very long time since the church roof was re-slatted; the last time was probably in the late eighteenth-hundreds, and the problem of slates slipping on various parts of the roof has been increasing for several years. It is caused by nails rusting because of age, coupled with the more severe winter gales we are now experiencing. In April scaffolding was erected and all the missing or loose slates on the both sides of the main roof, and on the east end of the nave, were replaced. Some sections of decayed wooden soffit boards were also replaced. The repairs were carried out by R. C. Pillar of Dartmouth at a total cost of £11,190.50 plus VAT. Similar repairs were carried out in September to the roof of the porch at the main doors, again by R. C. Pillar, at a cost of £296 plus VAT.

Unfortunately the repairs mentioned above are not a permanent solution because the condition of the roof will continue to deteriorate, and we should keep in mind that complete re-slating will be required within the next few years, together with the replacement of the guttering.

In May, Western Steeplejacks repaired cracks in the stone parapet on the south east corner of the tower, beside the flagpole; the cracks were stitched with stainless steel tie bars, the work being paid for by the Friends of St. Peter's. At the same time the lightning conductor system was tested, the old flagpole was removed and lowered to the ground, and its corroded iron fixing brackets were removed from the stonework. The flagpole has since been replaced with a new one, again paid for by the Friends of St. Peter's, which will be recorded in the 2022 fabric report.



*"I AM the Light of
the world."*



*"I AM the Good
Shepherd."*

The tower clock had its annual service by the Cumbria Clock Company in June and continues to keep time to within a few seconds per week. In November the fire extinguishers were tested and three replaced. Also in November, William Drake Organ Builders, of Buckfastleigh, tuned the organ and carried out repairs to a leaking wind channel and one of the pipes. The general comment from our various organists is that the organ is now sounding better than it has done for some considerable time. However, it is due for a thorough cleaning and overhaul when resources permit. The last major overhaul was some fifty or sixty years ago.



"I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Churchyard

The grass in the churchyard has been cut regularly throughout the year, on the south side by contractor Christopher Reeve. Adrian Lloyd-Edwards, who for some years past very generously took responsibility for keeping the north side of the churchyard cut, is unfortunately no longer able to do so. Ian Forsythe was asked to cut that part of the yard at the end of the year. In June our Rector, Revd. Alison Shaw, assisted by and Mrs. Gill George, (Ordinand on placement), and Mrs. Teri Larson, very kindly cleaned and repainted the main gates into the churchyard.

Church Treasurer

In July Rosemary Minshall retired as Church Treasurer. The PCC is extremely grateful for her twenty-six years of faithful service in the post. We are also pleased that Mike Dodsworth kindly agreed to take over as the new Treasurer.

Organists

The organ was played for us every Sunday by members of our band of regular organists, Mike Dodsworth, Carol Warboys and Janet Dietz. Karen White has also played occasionally, and Jonathan Oliverio volunteered to play for the Carol Service in December. We were also pleased to welcome Tom Lowe from Cheltenham, who was visiting his mother in the village, to play the organ on Christmas Day. As in previous years, we are grateful to Mike for playing on the first Sunday of every month for no charge.

Bellringing



Our bells have been rung regularly since the relaxation of COVID restrictions allowed bellringing to restart across the country. However, over the year and a half of the lockdown period we lost four of our team for various reasons, which meant that we were reduced to just six regular ringers. We are looking for new recruits and currently have three volunteers who are learning to ring.

Unlocking and Locking the Church

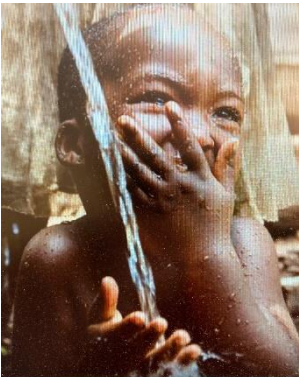
Since Nick Teage moved away, Jenny Harris has undertaken the unlocking of the church every morning. Peter and Anne Bailey have continued to lock it again in the evenings.

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, Churchwarden.

St Peter's Charitable Giving

The collections on Christian Aid Sunday, Sea Sunday, Harvest Festival and Christingle were donated to *Christian Aid*, *Mission to Seafarers* and *Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen*, *Water Aid*, and *Children's Society*; and we continued to make a monthly contribution to CMS partners Grace and Festo Kanungha. 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), and *Mary's Meals* (organizing free meals for children in poor countries in their schools, meals cooked by local volunteers with local produce as far as possible). This year we also gave £400 towards *Compassion's* project to fund clean water schemes for 3 of their *Child Development Centres* in Eastern Uganda. Women and girls usually have the job of collecting water, often from distant, inadequate or unsafe sources such as a swamp. The schemes have been carefully costed with detailed itemizing and will be closely monitored. The total cost is £56,275, but that's the gift of clean water for just £12.50 per recipient!



Peter Barker

Safeguarding

During this year our resourceful Safeguarding Officer resigned due to a move to the Midlands. Everyone at St Peter's is very grateful for Hazel's organisation of this crucial area of Church Governance and the excellent order in which she left it. Revd Alison agreed to take on the responsibility in the short term and has insured continued compliance with regulatory matters. There have been no safeguarding concerns.

Friends of St Peter's

Rokie Shiffner was one of the founders of FoSP and her drive, imagination, enthusiasm and hard work played a big part in ensuring the success of the *Friends* over the years; the numerous events which she did so much to inspire and manage were both hugely enjoyed in themselves and very successful in raising funds which have made such a difference to the fabric of our lovely village church. All were sad that illness forced her to resign from the committee in early autumn and she is sorely missed.

There have been other changes: David Holmes has taken on Rokie's role as chair; he, Susie Dodsworth and Tim Hailstone (treasurer) were joined on the committee towards the end of the year by Kathryn Case, Anne Worsfold (secretary) and Peter Barker (providing liaison with the PCC). The committee enjoyed an evening together preparing the strings of UK national flags bunting which decorated the FoSP tree at the Christmas Tree Festival.



Covid restrictions have not made fundraising easy but FoSP mounted a successful photography competition in the summer to raise funds for a new flag pole in memory of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. It had been hoped that the pole would be in place by the end of the year, but in fact it was January 2022 when the pole was actually hoisted up the tower. FoSP also financed the necessary 'stitching' of the cracked parapet and the new fixing brackets. Exciting ideas are in the pipeline for 2022.

The Church remains extremely grateful for the support of the *Friends*, the committee, members and all involved.

Soloist

Earlier in the year, when congregational singing was not allowed, we were hugely grateful to Hazel Smith whose solo singing of the hymns was truly inspirational and enabled us both to enjoy the music and to reflect on the words.



Little Stars

In September Revd Alison started a drop-in group for Mums with Babies or Toddlers on term time Monday mornings 9-10.30am at the back of church. Coffee or tea is served to the mums and there are loads of toys and books (and snacks too) for the little ones. The group adopted the name 'Little Stars' and in the run up to Christmas painting became a favourite activity, and in particular little hand prints on star shapes. These became key decorations for the tree the Little Stars' tree at the Christmas Tree Festival.



One of the mums writes: *"Having Little Stars to look forward to every Monday morning is such a life-saver.*

Baby classes can be hard to come by in rural communities, but this one – right in the heart of Stoke Fleming – really brings local mums and babies together. The group is warm, friendly and very inclusive. Alison and her team make everyone feel instantly welcome; my baby absolutely loves it and lights up when we get to the church doors. She knows exactly where she is: the place with all the toys! That first year of motherhood can really feel a little bit lonely at times and knowing that there are other mums on your doorstep is such a comfort. It's really what the local church is all about: community."

St Peter's and Stoke Fleming Primary School

After a year without *Open the Book* because of Covid, it was especially good to welcome pupils, staff and parents to St Peter's for the traditional KS2 Carol Service on December 14th. The whole School was in church two mornings later for the annual end of term Christingle Service led by an augmented *Open the*



Book team. In addition to singing by the different phases, year six children lit their Christingles. The team performed a 'radio news' version of the Nativity Story with year 5 children excited to dress up and form a visual tableau. We also

showed the animation of this year's Bible Society Christmas booklet, *The Impossible Promise*, and gave the children each a copy from the church.

Lee Abbey Weekend

All 4 Churches in the Coast and Country Benefice were represented in the group that gathered at Lee Abbey on November 19th for a *Renew, Refresh, Resource* Weekend hosted by the Warden and the Lee Abbey Community. As well as worship and teaching on 'God's Power' there was plenty of time to enjoy the warm hospitality, to explore the beautiful grounds and simply to chat. We returned south hoping to go again next spring!



St Peter's Joins a 'Demo'!

On Saturday 27th November I joined a group of Mothers' Union members from the Exeter Diocese at St. Mary's Church, Totnes, assembled to call attention to the violence and abuse suffered by 1 in 3 women across the world.



The United Nations' *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and Abuse* is an annual international campaign from 25 November (*International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women*) until 10 December (*International Human Rights Day*) and started 30 years ago. Mothers' Union joins with over 6,000 organisations from some 187 countries to raise awareness of, and call for an end to, gender-based violence and abuse against women and girls in all forms and in all societies.

It felt good to be involved in this protest. Many people stopped to ask about the campaign. We prayed before and afterwards in St. Mary's Church and several clergy members were with us. I hope to join my MU friends again in November this year.

Heather Stramik

St Peter's at Blackpool Sands

(by kind permission of the Newman family)



On Easter Sunday afternoon St Peter's, along with the Flavel Church and Dartmouth Anglican Churches, organised a **Family Easter Treasure Hunt** on Blackpool Sands. We were blessed with beautifully calm and sunny weather. Participants, in socially distanced family groups, followed clues in rhyming couplets to different locations across the beach all linked with Jesus' death and resurrection. At each location there was information about that part of the story and a question to answer. Letters from the answers could then be rearranged to form the special message 'He is Risen' which won the prize. 91 chocolate Easter Eggs were awarded and the event was greatly enjoyed by both children and adults.



Songs of Praise. Earlier the weather forecast had been dire, but - praise God! - the afternoon of Sunday, 5th September, was dry, warm and still, albeit misty.

Christians from Stoke Fleming were joined by others from the Benefice and beyond (especially Dartmouth) and several beachgoers joined in too. Chris and Kate kept up the flow of cups of tea and lots of cake was served by Rosemary and Shirley. Ken provided the PA system and Frank and Karl accompanied the singing on trombone and guitar. Peter introduced the 'Songs' (*How great Thou art; Knowing you, Jesus; For those in peril on the sea; My Lighthouse; Will your anchor hold in the storms of life? and There is a Redeemer*) and Revd Alison said a prayer and blessing.



Carols on the Sands on Christmas Eve was another collaboration between St Peter's and Dartmouth Flavel Church. Revd Alison narrated, Karl and Deborah led the singing, over a hundred cars came and the carols were much enjoyed.



Rogation

Celebrating Rogationtide on Sunday May 9th, we were blessed with beautiful sunny weather. After starting the service in the Church, *Reader* Jenny Harris led us on a journey to a field replete with buttercups, through the beautiful Sanders garden and back through the churchyard to the war memorial. On the way we stopped at different places for appropriate hymns and readings. We prayed for crops, animals and gardens, farmers, seafarers and villagers. We gave thanks for earth and water, and for those who came before us. It was a lovely opportunity to

acknowledge and enjoy God's many blessings to us in our surroundings here in Stoke Fleming.

Remembrance Sunday

The Annual Remembrance Sunday Service was held in St Peter's on November 14th, led by *Reader* Peter Barker, and wreaths were laid at the war memorial in the churchyard by Sir Geoffrey Newman, Cllr Marion Holmes, Jason Wallace, Karen Moseley and Julie Duthie.



Photos by Barry Morris



Jenny Harris had decorated the Church with some beautiful arrangements of poppies. At the short service at the War Memorial led by Revd Alison on Armistice Day itself senior pupils from the village Primary School attended and planted remembrance crosses in the banks beside the path.



The Stoke Fleming Big Cream Tea

Covid restrictions meant we couldn't actually eat together (and gale force wind and rain kept us from our gardens) but no fewer than 50 cream teas were much enjoyed in Stoke Fleming on Saturday, May 8th.

During the morning the team assembled the teas in attractively labelled bags at the back of church ready for collection or delivery. Including some generous donations £401 was raised for St Peter's. Many thanks to Revd Alison, Jenny Harris and Sue Walford who baked the scones, to Rosemary Minshall and Rokie Shiffner who sorted the other items and to Hazel and Alan Smith who delivered many of the teas.

Coffee Morning and Tower Tours

A coffee morning with cream teas was held in the church on Saturday, 25 September. As an added attraction there was the opportunity to take a guided tour of the church tower to learn about bellringing, to see the bells and the workings of the clock and to admire the view from the tower roof. The latter was somewhat disappointing as there was heavy mist all morning, rendering the ground, let alone Start Bay, invisible. One group came in the afternoon and had a better experience! With the bric-a-brac stall, raffle, tour tours and teas a total of £376 was raised for church funds. Our thanks to Revd Alison, to Peter and Ann Bailey and to all the volunteers who made the morning a success.



Catching up with Grace and Festo

At our United Benefice Service in Strete at the end of August we had the joy of catching up with Grace and Festo Kanungha, and their children Zephaniah, William and Hannah. Grace told us a little about the circumstances of their move from Tanzania to Cornwall (and long separation because of the pandemic before Festo was able to join the family in the UK). After much prayer and heart-searching they had felt called to continue with CMS and the opportunity had opened for

them to do pioneer work with children and young people in Liskeard.

Christmas Tree Festival



It was wonderful to be back this year after our enforced absence in 2021. It is hard to explain what a huge community event this has become. All the sponsors and helpers from the lifters and shifters to the refreshment team all play their part, without which the Festival just could not happen. We had several new sponsors this year which was good news as some of our staunch supporters decided to take a step back for various reasons. We also saw some new faces volunteering which was hugely encouraging. The Church is a buzz of excitement on decorating day as trees are decorated by the various groups accompanied by much chatter and laughter. The sense of awe at the end of the day is amazing and commented on throughout the Festival by our many visitors. We welcomed just over 600 people this year, which against the increasing Covid cases in the area was a true testament to how popular this event has become. It is indeed the start of Christmas celebrations for many.

Dartmouth Caring was our chosen charity this year and who could forget those giant size Quality Street chocolates decorating their tree! Thinking big must have had a positive impact as we were pleased to donate £850.00 for their work in the community at the end of the Festival, whilst retaining a similar amount for the Church.

A huge thank you to everyone involved in this event. The floral arrangements, the imaginative ideas, the music and the sense of the Church being the true heart of the community make it a very worthwhile event to be involved in. We look forward to doing it all over again – 9th-11th December 2022, when we have the added bonus of celebrating the 15th Festival.

Shirley and Caroline.

Valete

Several members of our congregation moved away from Stoke Fleming in 2021. We miss their active involvement and fellowship, and we wish them every blessing in their new locations. Yvonne Hanbidge for many years was a stalwart at fundraising events, particularly on the bookstall at Royal Avenue Gardens. Hazel Browne led inspiring and heartfelt intercessions for us; she was a keen and talented *Open the Book* team member and Mike painted and constructed some wonderful props which we continue to use with gratitude. Sarah Stevenson Olds was another enthusiastic member of *Open the Book*, always taking a genuine interest in all at the School where she was also a governor. Hazel Smith's outstanding contribution as our Safeguarding Officer and her lovely singing have already been mentioned; she and Alan still have their caravan here, so we can look forward to visits.

After a long and courageous fight with cancer Fred Walford passed away in December. He delighted especially in the many hymns and carols which he played by ear; in the words of one of his favourites, he was indeed 'a valiant pilgrim.' Our prayers and sympathy are with Sue in her bereavement.



Church Flowers arranged and photographed by Jenny Harris.

