

Greater Whitbourne Annual Report for Y/E 31DEC2019

Dawn Hyett our Minister writes “Greetings – 2019 has, like the previous year, been a year of exciting new initiatives, significant repair and maintenance projects in our four churches and continued support and encouragement from members of our congregations. Our Ministry team has been enhanced by the involvement of ministers who have retired and come to live in Greater Whitbourne. From a position of great uncertainty when our former Vicar David moved to another parish to one of potentially enormous promise and hope, we are truly blessed.”

Reverend Dawn Hyett was officially licensed from 14th October 2016 and has been with our parish full time for three years now. Her appointment as a ‘self-supporting’ Minister in her first Benefice is subject to review in the autumn of 2020. She been blessed by having the steady and knowledgeable guidance of the Revd Doiran Williams, the Revd Andrew Bullock and the Revd Jan Webb, all of whom have permission to Officiate.

Besides the ordained ministers, we now also have one licensed Reader and a Reader in Training and five new LMDG Members. (Local Ministry Development Group) The LMDG has been subject to change in membership during 2019 as part of a four-year review. Between us we have a wide combination of skills, experience and talents to offer our congregations, a rewarding experience for members of our Parish.

Dawn continues to serve her Parish with vigour and enthusiasm, spending many hours visiting parishioners and attending a wide variety of meetings. The introduction of anniversary cards sent to Brides and Grooms, Baptised Children and Adults and close Family Relatives following the death of a loved one are much appreciated from feedback that has been received. Cards are sent for five years and although time consuming, it is a clear demonstration of a caring Christian Community.

After several years of experimenting with different types and timings of services, we have now settled down to a regular pattern with a service nearly every week at Whitbourne and monthly at Upper Sapey, Tedstone Delamere and Edvin Loach. Whitbourne holds a wide range of services each week from Morning Praise on the first Sunday to Choral Eucharist on the fourth Sunday of each month. Growth of the choir has been very encouraging, helped immensely by the repair of the damaged organ. Olly’s Friendship Room at Upper Sapey continues to be well used by both the church and wider community.

Church Wardens and all Church Officials and helpers must be thanked and praised for their efficient, effective and time-consuming efforts to keep our four churches in good repair and functioning well. Few people realise the dedication, time and effort which is willingly given by volunteers to enhance the development of our Parish. Where would we be without them?

Financial Report for the Parish of Greater Whitbourne:

The consolidated accounts for the whole parish show a combined cash deficit of just over £14,500. Against this can be set major repairs and other non-repeatable investments of over £30,000. Therefore the cash deficit represents a high level of investment in the fabric of each of the four churches during the year.

Most prominent in this has been the now completed repairs to the organ and the dry rot in Tedstone Delamere church. In 2018 and 2019 this work has so far cost £17,700, with final payments still to be made in 2020. It has been a great effort and achievement by a small congregation, in a church with few reserves. The PCC agreed to cover the Parish Offer which would in normal circumstances have been paid to the Diocese by Tedstone Delamere, out of the income and reserves of the Common Purse.

2019 has been the first year in which the Parish magazine was distributed free to all homes, rather than using a subscription model. A big increase in printing costs was involved in doubling the circulation – the current print run is 685 copies – as well as the loss of subscription income. This was offset by an 80% increase in advertising income, which meant that the magazine just covered its costs with £109 to spare.

Free-will donations of all kinds fell very slightly to £43,001 (2018 - £43,486), while the proceeds of fundraising events rose to £5,683 (2018 - £2,772)

The PCC would like to thank warmly all those whose generosity and efforts have supported the churches in this and other ways.

The [consolidated accounts](#) will be posted at all four churches after the AGM.

Local Ministry Development Group (LMDG):

The term of office for the original members of the LMDG which was for four years, expired in 2019. We are indebted to this group consisting of Brenda Allan, Dr Gordon Bailey, John Bland, Sylvia Bland, Chris Evans and William North, who performed heroically to keep things together when our then Vicar left to work in another parish. Following recent consultation with our church community a new group of members came together to form the next LMDG. As additional retired clergy have joined the team at Greater Whitbourne, their role and function will differ considerably to that of the inaugural group, the focus being on specific projects and objectives. Members of

the new LMDG are Anne Evans, Louisa Wyatt, Carol Wilde, William North and Clive Pickering.

Parish Magazine:

The Parish Magazine underwent a radical change at the beginning of 2019, engineered by a group consisting of Chris Evans, Kate Lack, Mark Powell, Myrtle Kneen and Clive Pickering. The magazine is now free and delivered to every household in the parish, with eleven issues per year (none in January). It is hoped that donations, plus an increase in advertising revenue will pay the extra production costs. The emphasis is more on community with articles of specific local interest. This was a trial exercise which was reviewed in September 2019 and the decision was to continue with this arrangement as it was perceived to be a great success.

Website:

John Bland continues to do an excellent job as Webmaster: our website includes current service rotas as well as copies past and present of the Parish Magazine. Each of our four churches has a section and the website also caters for other village organisations.

Anniversary Cards:

Thanks to the effort of Averil Pickering, we now send an anniversary card to every couple married in the Parish of Greater Whitbourne and to all those who are baptised. We are also now sending cards to close family relatives (where this is known) of Parishioners who have passed on.

This is our third year and although this is an exercise that increases year on year (cards are sent for five years) we know from feedback received that the recipients greatly appreciate the sincerity of our communication.

Electoral Roll:

The Electoral Roll is renewed every six years and 2019 was one such year. This was another significant administrative task which was undertaken by Brenda Allan. We now have 100 people on the Parish Electoral Roll.

All are welcome to attend our regular services which are held every Sunday in Whitbourne and at least once a month in Upper Sapey, Tedstone Delamere and Edvin Loach. The Holy Eucharist is offered at home on request. The average attendance at our Sunday services in 2019 (2018 in brackets) was Whitbourne 29 (28), Edvin Loach 13 (20), Tedstone Delamere 11 (12) and Upper Sapey 9 (10).

These figures do not include attendances at Christmas, Easter and special services. Our 2019 Christmas services were attended by 320 people.

Music:

Our organists, Kate Cheetham, Lizzie Lane and David Harington continue to do excellent work and we are grateful to them for their contribution. When we cannot obtain the services of an organist at Upper Sapey, John Bland's "Music Box" provides a useful alternative.

Safeguarding:

This is a major consideration for the Diocese. Clergy, Churchwardens and anyone else likely to be involved with children and vulnerable adults have undertaken training, normally a half or full day with Mandy McPhee, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. Mandy is a great person and makes the training fun, whilst getting across the key messages.

Tanga in Touch:

We have continued to move towards winding ourselves up. We are in the same position as many other Herefordshire – TZ Links – a shortage of new volunteers, burgeoning problems in our own country and increasing prosperity in Tanzania combining to make life difficult.

We have now sold all our investments, making a nice profit on the George Walker Fund, as the £15,000 invested miraculously turned into over £27,000. This means we can send money out to feed the street children of Tanga for at least another year.

We did have a visit to Tanga scheduled for Revd David Howell and myself in September 2019, but as it happened, I did something silly and hurt my back, preventing me going, so David went alone. He was met by Hosea who drove him around. They had a day in Arusha, including a camel ride, before travelling to Tanga the next day. While there, David preached in the new church at Japani. This is an area of residential development: congregations have grown from five people meeting in a sitting room, to thirty in a lean-to, to almost 300 in the partly-built church. We have been helping them from time to time and David has promised to send them another £5,000.

David is still hoping to get more people in his new parish interested. If this comes to fruition, we hope a new committee will take over, but this will probably not happen until 2020 or beyond.

Our Christmas Appeal for 2019 made an amazing £750 (including around £300 raised by David in his parish near Ross. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed. Thanks also to Hosea and Martin in Tanga who organise the distribution of food and to our own Chris Evans for auditing the accounts.

Brenda Allan, Trustee and Secretary

Parish Churches:

St John the Baptist, Whitbourne:

The monthly 'friendship lunches' for the community of Whitbourne continued throughout the year, with between 30 to 50 people attending. In February Reverend Dawn Hyett welcomed the 2019 Greater Whitbourne Parish bridal couples for a wedding preparation morning and sandwich lunch. This time is hugely appreciated by the couples as a chance to ask many questions and to focus on the significance of marrying in church as well as the organisation and details of the day.

The annual Harvest Thanksgiving supper and fundraiser was again a success. In May Whitbourne church welcomed a group of 12 visitors from the Clifton Road Mosque in Birmingham for a friendly visit. The visitors wanted to understand more about the history and activities of a rural church and also heard about the community shop. The contact with the Mosque continues. After a trial of 9 months the DCC decided that the monthly Sung Eucharist service, while appreciated by many, was not drawing in any new people. It was therefore decided to bring the experiment to an end. In October, a 'Pets Service' was held in the Village Hall which was well attended and appreciated.

The Diocesan Quinquennial inspection of St John's church building and churchyards took place in August with the Archdeacon commending the detailed preparation and accuracy of all aspects of the inspection. No outstanding issues were raised. The next Quinquennial inspection is in three years. At this year's annual parish meeting the decision to form a collegiate style of responsibility for the role of churchwarden was agreed. DCC members Jerry Cummins, Clive and Averil Pickering, Richard Freeman, Angus Stormonth Darling and Anne Evans attended the annual Archdeacon's Visitation service and were sworn in.

Heated seat pads were installed in January to the majority of the pew seating in the Nave and choir stalls. LED light bulbs are now used throughout the church. Six pews were removed from the North Aisle to make space for 20 newly donated chairs, thus enabling a new focus in that area for a small service or individual prayer space.

St James, Tedstone Delamere:

In 2017, St James suffered from a severe outbreak of dry rot which had started at the base of the West wall, moved into the organ and then into the surrounding floor which was the point at which it became visible. In 2018 the damaged organ and surrounding floor was removed. This enabled a detailed survey to be undertaken and the specification for the repair work to be assembled by Hook Mason Architects.

The West wall had not been subject to a detailed inspection at the time of the quinquennials because of the closeness of the organ to the West wall. Having

removed the organ, it became apparent that the West wall was covered with cement facing on to which was placed galvanised sheeting which in turn was covered in soft wood. It was thought that this combination allowed condensation to form which led to the environment for dry rot to become active.

In carrying out the repair work to the floors and surrounding walls, all of the covering material on the West wall was replaced with a plasterbased material. The other major change was to construct a concrete base plate for the organ so that if ever another case of dry rot should occur in the floor, the organ would be isolated from it. An additional 20 ventilation holes were installed at locations throughout the nave floor. All this work was completed by Mike Gammon in the period of April to June. Whilst on site the contractor also repaired a bell mechanism in the belfry and made cosmetic improvements to nave plasterwork.

The restoration work on the organ was undertaken by David Gallichan during the year and had progressed sufficiently to enable the organ to be used again for the first time at the Christmas Eve carol service.

None of the above work would have been possible without the support of many grants. The organisations concerned were:

Herefordshire Historic Churches Trust

All Churches Trust

Edward Cadbury

Church Care

Garfield Weston Foundation

One-organ Fund

Other funds were obtained from a major fundraising event which consisted of a concert, given by a Russian Group called Lyra, in the church, followed by dinner in the Saltmarshe and District Hall. An excellent response was also received from an appeal letter. The PCC also agreed to provide support by allowing St James not to contribute to the Parish share for 2019.

The pattern of church services continued as in previous years but a significant development was the introduction of a children focused Christingle service which was well received with approximately 36 attendees.

St Michael and All Angels, Upper Sapey:

This year we have been lucky, as our church needed very little repair work beyond maintenance.

We held our Summer Fete this year in early September and the Christmas Fair in early December followed by the Carol service the next day.

We plan to make these annual events at these times so as to fix them in everyone's memory! Both were very enjoyable events.

We would like to pay tribute to Roland Amphlett who died this year. He spent much of his time tending the Churchyard and he is sadly missed. A bench seat has been dedicated to him and put at the back of the Churchyard in the quiet garden we are creating.

The activities in Olly's Friendship Room – the coffee mornings, film nights and the fairs are well supported by the Community, but the regular services, apart from the festivals are poorly attended.

The rising cost of electricity, particularly the very high daily standing charge for small usage is an issue for churches that will soon need to be addressed. Ultimately, the provision of PV panels in the future to offset these costs has to be the way forward. We just need a grant or donation.

We had a surprise refund from some lost accounts located by the Diocese and these were used to provide a much needed shed for outside storage.

Our thanks to all those in our Community who help to maintain and run our church and its community activities. In particular we would like to thank Andy Wilde.

St Mary's, Edvin Loach:

Further to our last quinquennial report, some housekeeping works were carried out in 2019 by Simon Berry at a total cost of £6518.40. Staying abreast of church upkeep is an ongoing challenge. Looking to the future we are exploring ways of making access easier to the Bell Tower, which will need to have a full inspection when the next quinquennial takes place. All of the usual annual checks, fire extinguishers, etc. took place and everything passed! We welcomed some new regular worshippers to our services who are most happy to help out with readings and church upkeep. We had a successful Harvest Lunch held at Saltmarshe and District Hall, once again our thanks to all our supporters. Looking forward into 2020, the lightning conductor will need testing, we have a local family wedding booked for July and hopefully another Harvest Lunch in October.

Mission Action Plan:

Following extensive consultation, the Mission Action Plan was introduced in 2019. It contained the ambition to seek the inclusion of Saltmarshe Caravan Park, currently not part of any existing church boundary, into our Parish of Edvin Loach. Much progress was made in 2019 and we look forward to continue to develop greater integration.