



St Botolph's Church, Trumpington Street, CB2 1RG

Report given to the APCM by Fr Stephen Anderson on 25th October 2020

Our previous Annual Meetings were some 18 months ago on 17th March 2019. Of course, the world now seems to have been a different place then. What has happened subsequently and the effect on our lives, including our church life together as the body of Christ in this place, was simply unimaginable then.

Who would have thought that our churches would have been closed for months this year and the clergy banned from entering them – something not seen since the reign of King John.

Who would have thought that the Abp of Canterbury would celebrate Easter from his kitchen table rather than the Chapel at Lambeth Palace, let alone his Cathedral.

Who would have thought that churches in Wales would have been closed again now, although thankfully clergy this time are still allowed to enter them to broadcast services remotely.

I have preached about why place matters. Why this church of St Botolph matters. And why online worship, which we continue in our fortnightly services of Compline by Zoom and which plays a useful subsidiary support role, cannot be an effective substitute for our principal act of worship centred on the Holy Communion.

That is why it has been my policy to reopen this church at the earliest possible opportunity after the ending of lockdown on 4th July. Indeed, I believe that we were the only church here in the centre of Cambridge to do so on 5th July, at least in any significant way.

Of course, we still have many restrictions placed upon us that are thought to be useful in containing the spread of the awful Coronavirus. We must play our part to. But I have done my best to maintain as much normality as the restrictions permit to maintain our spiritual life here.

Going to church is not a leisure activity, it is not a members only enterprise, but an essential feature of being human. It has to do with upholding the spiritual health and spiritual well being of all the people.

The purpose of an Established Church is to be open and available for everyone, to maintain a pattern and continuity of worship that is open to all and makes provision for all.

What takes place here matters. Acknowledging that we have a cherished and unique place in the church provision here in Cambridge, I am keen that we should offer a structured, ordered and dignified liturgy in the richness of the Anglican tradition based on the Prayer Book and Authorised Version of the Bible, having a foundation in the sacraments, uplifted by music (or as such as we are allowed currently) and strengthened by orthodox preaching.

One of my purposes here as your Priest is to ensure that our worship inspires, enriches and uplifts us. That it shows something of the greatness and mystery of God; and proclaims, in what we hear,

say and do, the redemption of the world by His Son Jesus Christ. And that it so nourishes and transforms us by that encounter, that we go out and live lives for God and others better than when we came in.

In our worship, it is a particular delight to give as much encouragement and support as I can (in the current circumstances) to the development of the music here. We were fortunate to recruit Adam McDonagh, as our first Director of Music in recent times, from January until his return to Dublin in October last year.

Since then it has been a real joy to have had Tim Brown with us for the past year and to have appointed him recently as our Interim Director of Music.

I very much hope that Tim might be one of those people who are recruited into a role on a temporary basis, but still somehow continue to find themselves in post some years later.

Under his stewardship and guidance, the Choir has come on enormously, both in numbers, repertoire and capability. Tim will give a report on the Choir shortly and I don't want to pre-empt what he has to say, save only to acknowledge that St Botolph's is very fortunate not just to have someone of his calibre and experience, but someone of his energy and enthusiasm too.

I want also to thank those of you who actually sing in the Choir, week after week, for your loyalty and commitment and for giving us your voices to lift our worship in praise too. Indeed, these past months, we have had to rely on you to sing for us.

Throughout this period, Tim has been supported by Peter Harland on the organ, who increased his commitment to us on the retirement of Andrew Morris from playing regularly on Maundy Thursday last year, although he returns on All Souls Day to play for the Faure Requiem.

I know how much Peter's voluntaries are appreciated and it is a mark of his playing that so many of you stay on after the service has ended to listen to his closing organ voluntary.

I am indebted to Tim too for working so closely with me to ensure that a weekly Order of Service is produced in the current circumstances and I know that these are widely appreciated. I am grateful to Tim too for printing off some copies each Sunday morning for the use of visitors primarily.

It is, I know, both a blessing and a curse for him to have someone as interested in the music as I am, who knows their way around the hymn book and is quite prepared to set hymns that, apparently, have never been sung previously in this church, if they fit the liturgy.

Another aspect of our spiritual life together here is the opportunity to encourage and foster vocations both to the priesthood and other aspects of licensed or authorised ministry.

It has been wonderful and Spirit filled to see David Berry progress to the point where he is considering offering himself to the priesthood. I am so glad that you could be with us again this morning David and I want you to know that we all thank you for what you have done here as server, reader, sides person, general helper outer, whenever needed, as well as your more formal roles as PCC Secretary and Electoral Roll Officer, a position now taken up by Kit Helps.

Thank you for all that you have done here. We wish you well with your studies at Oxford, look forward to hearing of further educational attainments and very much hope that we might see you back again in Cambridge next year.

It was a joy too to welcome Dan into our midst over a year ago, to prepare him for Baptism and Confirmation at the Cathedral on the 23rd of November last year and then more recently encourage his interest in developing discipleship, perhaps with a view to authorised lay ministry, and for him now to attend the Foundations for Ministry course with ERMIC and the Diocese's Vocations course.

Dan, our hopes and prayers are with you as you consider where the Spirit may be leading you.

I very much regret that it has not been possible to have Ordinands on placement here, but where I have encountered them in Ben O'Neill and Will Lyon Tupman, I have been keen to offer them preaching and other formational opportunities and again I know that their ministries here are held in high regard.

Our preaching during the year has been augmented on a number of occasions by visiting preachers, not the least by Bp Rowan Williams on 5 -6 occasions in the past 18 months.

Sadly, for us, he has now left Cambridge to return to his beloved Wales, but before he went I had email exchange with him. He sends us his greetings, hopes to be able to say in touch and wishes us every blessing for the time ahead.

On 10th June last year, we held, in conjunction with the Prayer Book Society, an Old Wine evening here to explore the usage of the Prayer Book. It was, on every count, very successful.

Hosted by Bp Rowan, it attracted an audience of 100 people and a quarter 25% contacted me afterwards to say how much they had enjoyed it, not the least Sarah's still memorable chicken supper.

The real joy was to have upwards of 20 people from the congregation and other supporters all work incredibly well together to deliver a seamless production, notwithstanding the considerable constraints of our own domestic kitchen capabilities. Thank you to everyone who made that evening so special.

Incidentally, I am in discussion with Tim about a similar event next year. So, watch this space.

Another preacher that we did have on a couple of occasions (and might have had more) was Fr Peter Huckle, Superior of SSJE, who was subsequently found to have cancer and deteriorated very quickly, dying last December. It was a privilege to be able to visit him regularly while he was in Addenbrookes and to pray with him, his firm faith sustaining him to the end.

It was a particular delight to have half a dozen members of the congregation (as well as Fr Peter) accompany me on the 3rd August last year on a Day Pilgrimage to the Anglican Shrine at Walsingham. For those of you who don't know it, it is deep in the Norfolk countryside and one of those thin places where the gap between earth and heaven seems narrow.

It is deeply rooted as a place of pilgrimage in the fabric of English spirituality since pre Reformation times. It was a great privilege for me personally to concelebrate the Eucharist and preside at Benediction.

I have tried to confine my report to those matters affecting our spiritual life together and not intrude, at least not too much, on the more tangible and practical matters that will be reported on shortly by our church officers.

You will hear about our stewardship of the building and its upkeep, the state of our finances, but let us not lose sight that we exist first and foremost to be the Body of Christ in this place, to know Christ and make Christ known.

The church here has been doing that for 700 years. A programme of events to mark and celebrate that was arranged for June this year around our Patronal Festival. Sadly, the country was in complete lockdown then and they all had to be cancelled.

However, the PCC has decided to roll the Anniversary into next year and so we shall be resurrecting all that we can from our planned events this year so we can mark our 700th properly next June instead, restrictions permitting.

I want to thank all of you who have contributed to our common life together during the past 18 months, the CWs, officers & members of the PCC,

- especially the Treasurer, David Eastwood, who with Tamara Sword has also provided us with a super new website and done much to integrate our social media presence.
- our patron Queens for the provision of rooms for PCC meetings and for letting us use their Chapel for weekday services around this time last year when the church here was having the rewiring and new heating installed
- Sarah and David for letting us have various meetings at their house, for arranging and funding the cleaning of the church periodically and for the garden to receive some attention. I'd like also to say it was marvellous to have had the windows cleaned during the year.
- The church has a long practice of being open during the day. Sadly, we have had to curtail that in the current circumstances. But I want to thank those who have been prepared to be in attendance for a few hours on 3 lunchtimes during the week.
- Now, one of the features of this church is the very talented group of flower arrangers that we have. The flowers which they provide and arrange speak to the glory of God and provide a welcome that is full of colour, vibrancy and warmth. I am most grateful to you all.
- From earlier times, I must thank too those who provided refreshments after our services, washed up, swept up, cleared away, kept the church tidy, emptied the bins, delivered a hard copy Newsletter around the parish, or did one of the other essential jobs to keep the church functioning properly. I am grateful to you all.
- Those who I have somehow forgotten to mention by name, for which I apologize, but who help out in other ways known to them and God.

I want to thank too the retired clergy who have regularly assisted here – Patrick Cotton, Jonathan Holmes, Vivienne Lake previously and Ank Rigalsford. I am very fortunate to be able to continue to call upon some of them for support in preaching or taking services.

Without each and all of you our common life together would be much diminished and impoverished. I thank you all for the contribution you have made.

Can I leave you with one final thought, from scripture, looking back over these past 18 months, considering our current situation and our hopes for the future.

Some words from the Epistle to the Hebrews 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

Hold fast to that faith. Our world may have changed in ways that 18 months ago were quite unimaginable, but Jesus does not change. He is our rock, our point of stability, our hope, our joy, our life giver and life sustainer. He is the reason why we are here today. He is our God and dwells with us in this holy place - and beyond – in all fullness. May we ever sing His praises.

*Fr Stephen Anderson
Priest in Charge
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25th October 2020*