

Assistant Curate's Report for 2020 APCM - Reporting on 2019

2019 has been another full year for the United Parish, there has been consolidation of that which is good and the beginnings of developing new activities and approaches to help us as God's church in this place reach out with the good news to those in our communities who do not currently connect with our churches. This report captures a small snapshot of the many activities the church is engaged with in our five villages but there are many other things which there was not room to include.

Mission and Outreach

As the church we are continually seeking ways to connect with our wider communities and share something of the love, comfort and support we find in our Christian faith. Over the last year we have continued monthly visits to our three local nursing homes: Crossways, Heatherside and Rowan Lodge. Rev Helen was invited to lead a special act of remembrance in Heatherside on 11th November and was asked to bless their new arrival of two micro-pigs. Rev Helen also goes monthly to Heather Rabbits and Little Crickets pre-school as well as visiting Sunshine Daisy's in Andwell for special festivals. During 2019 it has been wonderful to have Camilla Douglas beginning to get involved in the pre-school visits and Malcolm Douglas beginning to build pastoral relationships with our nursing homes. If anyone else would be interested in getting involved in these important ministries, please let Rev Helen know.

Other local events have continued this year and which, while not directly church run, offer the opportunity for us to be salt and light in our local community. These include monthly tea parties, churchyard working parties, safari suppers and quiz nights. Many church members are involved in these events in one way or another and when possible Rev Helen tries to attend as many as she can, although you may not want her on your quiz team!

Across our five churches we are always seeking ways to help our congregations deepen and grow in their own faith. Sadly the home group that was running in the United Parish has come to an end for the time being but many of the members have started attending the 'Explore Theology' sessions that Rev Helen runs for anyone interested in a more in-depth study of the Bible. These sessions are for the whole Network of 12 churches but the United Parish contributes a large number of the attendees which is very encouraging. In 2019 we also ran a Lent Course looking at the book 'Reconciliation' but Muthuraj Swamy which was a challenging but very interesting book to reflect on. An average of 10 people gathered weekly during Lent for great conversations and some wonderful cake.

Many other events were held throughout the year including Lent Lunches in each village, a wonderful harvest supper in Newnham and a harvest tea party in Greywell along with an art competition. We held a successful Messy Church at St Swithun's and Miller's Ark at the end of August although a trial to hold a combined Christingle/Messy Church event at Greywell was not the success we hoped it to be and we plan to try something different in 2020. Finally we had a large number of volunteers from the United Parish to help with the Network Holiday Club in August and encouragingly a larger number of children from the United Parish attended this year.

Worship

In 2019 we continued our usual pattern of services including our regular United Parish services such as Plough Sunday at Mapledurwell, Rogation at Greywell, Remembrance Sunday at Nately Scures and our popular In Loving Memory service at Newnham. We also held our annual services in Holy Week, Pet services, Harvest Festivals and successful Christingle and Carol Services. Our weekly service pattern remained largely unchanged from 2018 but with the addition of a monthly Evensong service at Nately Scures when it reopened in July.

The worship in our churches is made possible by a loyal group of visible and hidden faithful people who clean, arrange flowers, read, offer intercessions, prepare the communion table for service, welcome and provide hospitality. Our services are also enhanced by our community choir Sing UP. In 2019 they wonderfully supported some of our key services including Good Friday, the celebration Evensong at Nately Scures, Remembrance Sunday and Nately Scures Carol Service. They also sang at several Sunday services across the five churches.

Buildings and Finance

The big event in 2019 was the re-opening of St Swithun's Nately Scures after an extended period of closure due to ceiling and bell repairs. A wonderful re-opening celebration Evensong and social event was held in July 2019 complete with a mobile bell tower which the vicar very much enjoyed and a wonderful feast of musical and edible delights for the many people who attended.

In September part of the ceiling at St Stephen's Up Nately fell in and we were grateful for the local support and the fast work of Hugo Cubitt's builders which enabled the church to reopen in time for Christmas and a December wedding. Meanwhile Newnham had new double glazing fitted which has been a great success and blends in very well with the overall appearance of the church. Greywell began a large scale project of renovation and repair and we are very grateful to Simon Wells who worked in such a way that the church only had to be closed for one Sunday when we moved worship into the village hall.



While there are many successes in our parish an ongoing concern is our financial position. While we are fortunate to have some investments the PCC is having to make increasingly difficult decisions about how best to steward them in light of our increasing expenditure and decreasing income. We are grateful that our fabric and some running costs are supported by five Friend's organisations however our primary purpose is the

mission of the church in our communities and the raising of the funds to cover this work is the responsibility of our worshipping communities and those who want to be able to use the church for baptisms, weddings and funerals. The PCC ended 2019 exploring some creative ways we can provide some stability to our financial situation and we will be exploring these further in 2020.

Other Events

At the end of 2018 three members of our United Parish community completed their training for the Bishop's Commission for Mission, a Winchester Diocese initiative that trains local congregation members to take on some roles in parishes. We were blessed to have Camilla Douglas and Charlie Maxlow-Tomlinson train on the Leading Worship course and Malcolm Douglas on the Pastoral course. During 2019 both Camilla and Charlie began to lead some services and have begun to develop their preaching which they are allowed to do four times a year. Malcolm has begun some pastoral visiting and is building relationships with our nursing homes. It was a joy to join them and their family and friends in Winchester Cathedral in October for their formal commissioning by Bishop Tim.

In April 2019 Rev Linda Scard stepped back from leadership of the United Parish to focus on supporting the ministry of the Benefice office. Rev Helen O'Sullivan took on the leadership role for the five churches after the 2019 APCM although we have been very glad and grateful that Linda has continued to cover some services and occasional offices. Linda has been involved with the United Parish for many years and has had a wonderful impact and influence here.

Finally in July many people from the United Parish gathered at Winchester Cathedral on a hot Saturday in July to celebrate Rev Helen O'Sullivan's ordination to the priesthood. It was wonderful to share this special occasion with so many people and a real privilege to celebrate my first communion services in the parish in the coming weeks.

As always this report skims the surface of the many things that have happened this year and the many people whose tireless hard work enables our churches to continue glorifying God and serving our communities. I must give a special thanks to the churchwardens and those who support them for the way in which they have supported me this year and for their generous desire to serve their local church. Many people will not know the half of what they do, so if you see them, please be sure to thank them. I am also very grateful to Joyce Roberts and Jon Webster our PCC Secretary and Treasurer who handle so much of the admin which keeps any parish moving. Our small churches all rely on the generosity of so many people, there is rarely anyone who has not played a supporting role at some point in the year. So whether you have cleaned some brass, arranged flowers, cut the grass in the churchyard, baked a cake, played music, read a lesson, prayed for your community, handed out wine, washed linen or helped out in any capacity, thank you for enabling the church to continue as a witness to the one is worthy to be glorified in all times and all places. Amen.

Rev Helen O'Sullivan
March 2020