

Rector's Report

As we began 2020, we couldn't have imagined what the year would have in store for us – not just as churches but for each of us individually and in every corner of life and society. Looming over any report of last year is, of course, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. Uppermost in our thoughts are the losses, griefs and sadness felt within our church families in various ways, in the lives and families of church members, and within our wider communities, country and world. Last year was a torrid time for so many (whether for COVID-related reasons or because of other causes), and we need to continue to pray for those who still walk the paths of suffering, pain or despair.

In terms of parish life, an early casualty of the pandemic was the cancellation of the mini-mission planned for the end of March, with the team from St Helen's church in London due to come once again. Hot on the heels of this came the sadness of not being able to mark Holy Week and celebrate Easter together and in-person. As the year progressed, further occasions that we would ordinarily have marked together were swallowed up by lockdowns and restrictions.

In their place came the steep learning curve of online church, whether trying to master YouTube livestreaming or unpick the subtleties of Zoom and Mailchimp – and all the while doing our best to cater for those who are not online via hard copy emails, 'phone calls and all the rest of it. Thank you for your patience with the clergy during those periods when the demands of online provision coupled with constant changes to guidance and regulations (with the ensuring constant changes to our plans) prevented us from being in as much pastoral contact as we would have liked. Huge thanks, also, to those who have worked so hard and creatively behind the scenes to enable the online provision in all manner of ways.

In spite of the pandemic, our partnership with the Diocese's Church Planting and Revitalisation Programme has continued to develop and take shape. In particular, it was a delight to welcome Daniel (with Toni) to the team in September as Trainee Youth Minister followed by Susie in November as our Trainee Sports Minister, and to see them beginning to engage with people across the town in a variety of ways.

We were also delighted to welcome Matt, Kirsty, Reuben and Hannah to Thetford, as Matt began as Team Vicar with particular responsibility for Cloverfield Community Church. The pandemic delayed the appointment rather longer than we'd hoped, but it's great to now have Matt and the family here and getting stuck in with life in Thetford and ministry at Cloverfield and across the benefice.

We remain greatly appreciative of the ministries of the retired clergy, readers and AWAs – as well as, of course, the many other volunteers who contribute in a myriad of ways to the lives of our three churches. To you, as well as to all those who contribute financially to the mission and ministry in this parish and beyond, our sincere thanks.

Particular mention goes to our churchwardens, Rod Back and Sandra Phillips, for their unstinting service. We extend enormous thanks to Rod Back as he steps down from the role this year, as well as to John Richens who retired as the PCC Treasurer in September.

St Cuthbert's

As with the parish as a whole, the coronavirus pandemic dominated the life of St Cuthbert's last year in all manner of ways. We were in and out, and in and out, and in again for services

in-person. Thank you to the wardens and others who worked so diligently to ensure that everything was COVID-secure for those seasons when we were permitted to meet together.

At times the restrictions prompted us to try new things in new ways. Whilst it was a huge shame not to be able to celebrate Christmas as we usually would, for example, it was great to be able to connect with new people through 'Christingle in a Bag', to welcome people into St Cuthbert's to listen to carols and engage with Christmas prayer stations, and to enjoy the performance of 'A Christmas Carol' together.

It has been a year which has reminded us to rely on God, not on ourselves, and to find our sure and certain hope in him – even as we look forward with, we trust, greater hope for the future.

*Peter Herbert
Team Rector
April 2021*

Cloverfield Community Church

Arriving as I did in the midst of a pandemic has been challenging especially with getting to know folk across the team. I was also aware that for Cloverfield church, there has been quite a length of time that extended back beyond the pandemic when the Rev Helen Jary left as minister.

January and the start of the new year was meant to be a time for envisioning and looking forward to what God has for Cloverfield and I was keen to involve every person in this process of forming a vision for the future. This has now been put on hold for later this year.

In the meantime the Christingle event at Christmas although limited in numbers we could reach was a success and gave me a glimpse of the wonderful way Cloverfield work's together to serve the community. This year it has been great to connect with our families in the Sunday Mix services and Kids live online. I know this service particularly has much potential for growth and I look forward to seeing how we can develop this work in the future.

I am enormously grateful and aware for all the work that Shauna Peacock (as Church secretary) and Tim Peacock (Buildings, audio visuals, website and worship leader!) have done in leading and resourcing the church over the last two years. I know this burden has not been easy for them and a re-balancing of responsibilities is required as well as bringing new folk onto the leadership team.

I am also grateful for the church's pastoral groups which offer a level of care and support I have not found in most churches I have been a part of. And thanks go out to Heather Nicholls for her management of these groups and leaders with the many changes that have been required. And also Moya Brown leader of Silverthreads for her care and support of our older persons community.

As a leadership we have been exploring updating our Constitution (the church's legal governing document). It is clear this has discrepancies and certain sections need clarifying. We continue to seek advice on this and consult with ecumenical officers and advisors and are awaiting new model documents to be published from the national church.

In a time when we cannot open the church building and take hall bookings, the church's level of income has dropped massively. Neil Glen as treasurer has had a difficult task balancing the books. We were grateful to have the loan repaid from St. Cuthbert's at the end of last year but I am aware that Neil is projecting a deficit for the year ahead and beyond. I appreciate the challenges many face with regard to insecurity and finances and am grateful for the pledges in giving each of us have made during this difficult time.

On a sad note Pete and Jean Vale made the decision to leave the church in the new year. I met with them before Christmas and learned of their important work providing prayer ministry. I know Pete and Jean had a real heart for the Lord's work and they will be sorely missed. I would like to thank them for the passion and prayerful support they have given to the church.

Finally I am grateful for Geof Young our church warden for his continued help in the church and his AWA role in leading worship and Gill Baker as our URC link person in the congregation.

Safeguarding is also an area I want to mention as something that is of the utmost importance. Churches need to be places of safety and this is our shared duty of care. I am grateful for all those whose roles require safeguarding training, DBS checks and filling out confidential forms.

On a personal level I am grateful that I am part of the fellowship, support and resources of the wider Thetford team. I am very much looking forward to continuing opportunities to work collaboratively as we look to make Jesus' name known here in Thetford.

*Rev Matt Houghton
Team Vicar
April 2021*

Grace Church

At the start of 2020 we had been looking forward to a team of six missionaries from St Helen's Bishopsgate coming in late March to assist us in making Christ known on the Abbey Estate and across Thetford. We had planned several outreach events but these, along with all our regular church events, had to be put on hold as Coronavirus hit. Whilst it was disappointing, it was also an opportunity to trust in our sovereign, loving and all wise God.

As Grace Church meets at the Bishop's School for our Sunday services we haven't been able to meet in person for over a year now. This has been really hard. However, several of the congregation have enjoyed the YouTube services and we have also been able to minister and support one another via Zoom gatherings, telephone calls, doorstep visits, group emails, 1-2-1 walks etc. We have tried to connect with our families through things like delivering 'Light Party' bags to our church families and organising a Zoom meeting to support those home-schooling. I have recently heard positive noises from the school re our return to regular Sunday services and God-willing we aim to re-start from mid-June.

Whilst there was so much we were not able to do in 2020, other new areas of ministry opened up. For example, in the Christmas holidays Susie Bratby and I were able to deliver two food boxes to 25 families on the Abbey Estate. This 'Filling the Gap' project was in partnership with Norwich Diocese and Bishop's School. Also, whilst we haven't been able to go into the school to take assemblies, we have been able to send in assembly videos and in December I was able to visit two year 5 classes to speak and answer questions on the topic

of 'How do Christians bring hope at Christmas?' As ever the children had some great questions and it was a wonderful opportunity to explore the heart of the Christian faith with them. Another encouragement was hearing from a non-church goer on the estate who had started watching the YouTube services and had been very positive about the Bible teaching. She then attended the Christianity Explored Course that we ran via Zoom in the autumn.

In September Pauline Macro, a regular at Grace Church over the last 8 years, died and went to be with the Lord she loved and trusted in. She will be greatly missed as will Gill Green, who led several memorable and creative all age services at Grace Church and who was a great support to me with the assemblies. We will also miss a family, who have moved house to another part of the country. As a small congregation we feel these losses all the more keenly. Our eyes are upon Him though, who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

In last year's report I asked for prayer for wisdom and help in bridge-building into the community. With that in mind praise God for the opportunity to serve the school as a governor again and for all the sports ministry that Susie is starting at the school and through different events on the estate. Pray too for the toddler group as we begin to make plans for that to re-open. It's been encouraging to hear from several families who have really missed it! We also hope to organise some litter picks, carry on with the Filling the Gap project and consider other ways we can be a practical blessing to folk.

*Tony Heywood
Team Vicar
April 2021*

PCC Report

PCC meetings regularly include reports on the parish finances and on fabric matters, as well as a standing item on safeguarding.

At the start of the year, proposals from the café review group were agreed and the name of the charity as registered with the Charity Commission was changed from 'The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Thetford' to 'Thetford Parochial Church Council' in order to facilitate the opening of the café bank account. However, further progress on opening the café has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For several months it was not possible to meet in person, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so necessary business was conducted by correspondence according to the Church Representation Rules.

In the autumn, PCC focused on looking forward, with discussions at the October meeting on social and pastoral care and on worship and services, in particular the vision of starting a new inter-generational service at St. Cuthbert's. In November, members of the PCC and others joined a special meeting with Revd Peter Leech to discuss the Church Planting and Revitalisation Programme. Revd Peter Leech introduced the 4 P's of church growth: Prayer, Presence, Proclamation, Probing. There was a discussion around the first two of these in our context, which was followed up at the next PCC meeting.

*Caroline Herbert
PCC Secretary
April 2021*

Safeguarding

The PCC has complied with its duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Throughout 2020, the Revd Dr Peter Herbert served as the Parish Safeguarding Officer for Children and Young People and Margaret Back as the Parish Safeguarding Officer for Vulnerable Adults.

Peter Herbert
April 2021

Deanery Synod Report

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Thetford & Rockland Deanery Synod did not meet during 2020. The Deanery Service for Ascension Day was streamed online from St. Mary's, Attleborough.

Caroline Herbert
April 2021

St Cuthbert's Maintenance & Fabric Report 2020

The first major stage of the development of St Cuthbert's was completed in 2019 and saw significant improvement to the fabric of our building. Other significant work was undertaken in 2020 to improve our facilities and to keep our Church buildings in good repair.

Due to an insufficient supply of gas to the church we had a new larger gas pipe installed which now has the capacity to operate all of our gas appliances. We also had the electrical supply requirement checked to ensure we had enough electricity for all our needs.

We were required to purchase various items in order to reopen the church in July following the first lockdown. We installed hands free sanitises at the entrance and exit doors and placed directional signs on the floor. We conducted Covid risk assessments during the year and put control measures in place to minimise the risk of infection. Our thanks to all who helped get the church ready and particular thanks to Alan Miller and John Richens who worked tirelessly to achieve this.

During the summer months we sold and removed all the pews in the centre isles. Our grateful thanks to Alan Miller who worked hard removing the pews and repairing the floor. We are thankful for the work that Alan Miller does for us to keep our Church in good order including things that are unseen.

Our thanks to Rachel Woods for coordinating the sale of the pews which raised valuable funds.

We received the Quinquennial report from our architect and undertook some of the more urgent recommendations such as gutter repairs and cleaning. The Quinquennial report is a very detailed document that provides vital information on the condition of the building. It

prioritises the work needed to be done over a period of five years and should be regularly reviewed.

The report highlighted a concern regarding the condition of part of the external wall at the east end of the church. This is the subject of further investigation and detailed report.

The door access system had to be replaced on the Well Street door as it had failed and could not be repaired. This has been replaced with a more modern and more secure system.

A fire risk assessment was commissioned in late 2019 and certain recommendations from this report were discussed and approved by the PCC and a faculty sought. Work will commence as soon as the faculty is approved and Covid restrictions are relaxed

Our special thanks to Keith and Sue who have transformed and maintained the area outside providing attractive flowering tubs. They have taken on the extra responsibility of looking after the plants in the new refurbished garden area outside the west door. We have received very good feedback from the Church family and others such as Thetford Town Council.

We should say a special thank you to Sandra's daughter Maria who has been doing virus cleans for the last year to keep us all safe.

There are numerous people who contribute to the upkeep of our church and buildings. Our heartfelt thanks are due to everyone who has answered their particular call to serve this Church – your gifts are not going unnoticed.

*Sandra Phillips & Rod Back
Churchwardens
April 2021*

Mission Giving

The policy of the PCC is to give 10% of the giving received in the previous year to external mission and charitable causes. In recent years, our mission giving has been a year behind. Thus in 2020 we were due to give £3000 in respect of our 2019 mission and charity giving plus £2680 in respect of our 2020 outward giving.

Mission giving payments of £50 per month commenced in October 2020 to support our parish mission partners working in South Asia (who moved to the country and commenced work in September 2020). These payments will continue until further notice, with an annual review.

The remaining allocated mission giving in respect of both 2019 and 2020 was given equally between CPAS (our patron), our mission partners Graham and Nicola Aylett, and our mission partners Simon and Gillian Clegg. These payments were completed in early 2021.

*Peter Herbert
April 2021*