

Rector's Report

In some ways, 2019 has felt like a year of change within the Parish. In October we said our sad farewells to Helen Jary, as we sent her on her way with our love and best wishes to her new post as the first Team Rector of the Oulton Broad Team Ministry. During her eight years here in Thetford we have all been immensely blessed by Helen in the enthusiasm, sensitivity and faithfulness of her ministry and, whilst she will be sorely missed by myself and many others, we are also excited to see all that God will do through her in the years ahead.

I am hugely grateful to all those who have, once again, stepped up to take on extra responsibilities during this time of vacancy; amongst them Tony Heywood, the Authorised Worship Assistants (AWAs) based at Cloverfield (Geof Young and Shauna Peacock) and the Cloverfield Leadership Team. Please would you join us in praying for the process to appoint a new Team Vicar with particular responsibility for Cloverfield Church, and for God to bring along his choice of person to join the work here.

We also continue to be greatly appreciative of the ministries of our retired clergy (Ian White and Nigel Ransom), Readers (Alan Miller, Jean Rolph and Ruth Kightley) and other AWA (Margaret Back). Earlier in 2019, Gill Green decided that the time had come to take a step back from 'frontline ministry', and we're deeply thankful for her devoted service in the parish.

Of course, we are blessed with so 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, and we extend enormous thanks to Rod Back and also to John Richens (Treasurer) for all they have contributed over many years, as they both step down from their roles this year.

Some changes have been more painful, such as difficult relationships with the Parish of Wretham and the distancing, towards the end of the year, of Wretham from the rest of the benefice. We continue to pray for them and send them our very best wishes for their future flourishing as they operate, in effect, independently of the benefice. A 'Big Church Conversation', facilitated by The Revd Canon Keith James (from Norwich Cathedral), is being arranged for all those from across the churches who would like to discuss this or any other matters together. Final details will be communicated as soon as we have them.

2019 also saw the beginning of preliminary meetings to begin working out how the Diocese's new Church Planting and Revitalisation Programme will partner with us here in Thetford as one of its focus areas. The Programme has Sports Ministry and Youth Ministry as its two main strands; look out for further updates as plans continue to develop into 2020.

Of course, many other aspects of parish life continued in much the same vein, and we continue to rejoice in those things that are going well, even when they're not new! Amongst them were the repeat of the mission weekend in March (led by the team from St Helen's Church, Bishopsgate), the May mini-mission (with talks on the reliability of the New testament and on science and Christianity) and the continuation of our twinning partnership with Holmsund Parish in Sweden. With the latter, we enjoyed a happy twinning visit in September, welcoming four members of the Holmsund churches to Thetford (including Carina, their new Team Rector), and in October were delighted to once again welcome some of their Young Leaders for a programme of activities and ministry.

St Cuthbert's

The theme of change has been much in evidence at St Cuthbert's this year also. The first half of the year saw the builders move in for the long-planned work to relocate and extend the kitchen and renew the toilets and entrance areas. Thank you for all your patience during the building works!

The new facilities are very impressive, and we look forward to making great use of them in service of God's mission in the years ahead. It was with great sadness that, due to issues with the gas and broadband supplies, the planned opening of the café had to be postponed and, after much hard work, the café operations put on temporary hold. With both these issues now almost fully resolved we look forward with anticipation to finally being able to get the café properly off the ground. I am very grateful to Rod Back, Sandra Phillips, John Richens, Peter Thomson and Bob and Sue Hurle, along with everybody else who has worked so hard to bring the building works to fruition and to prepare for the café opening.

In November we were privileged to welcome our new Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Revd Graham Usher, to St Cuthbert's as we hosted one of four services of welcome held around the Diocese. It was a joyous occasion, even if a rather exhausting few weeks of preparations!

In December we trialled holding the Christingle Service on Christmas Eve. This proved to be a lovely occasion, with just over one hundred people (including a good number of families with children) joining together for this special service. We pray that we might be able to build on the connections made in the coming months and years.

*Peter Herbert
March 2020*

Cloverfield Community Church

Our year at Cloverfield has seen a number of changes, people moving away and of course our minister Helen Jary moving on to Oulton Broad. A coach load of people from across the Thetford congregations went over to her licencing by Bishop Alan last November. It was great to see her receive such a warm welcome from her new congregation and we were all made very welcome also.

During the year we have continued to have regular events including two housegroups, one in the afternoon and an evening group. A Men's Discipleship group meet once a month and prayer meetings are held every other month. The Leadership Team and AWAs have regular meetings throughout the year. We have continued to hold regular services including The Sunday Mix Café Church and Abide held in the evening of the Sunday Mix day, this is a short service with worship songs and time of reflection and testimonies. We again hosted a 24/7 Prayer week for people from across all the Thetford churches and this was launched by a well-attended service held on the Friday evening lead by TCT. The Prayer Ministry Team continues to be very active and there is an opportunity after each service for people to receive prayer. We continue to pray for the whole Cloverfield Estate. A Candlelit Carol Service and Crib service were also held.

The worship group continues to be a blessing each week leading and enriching our services.

Children's work continues with two groups, a Creche and 4-11 year-olds. They enjoy crafts and learning.

We continue to hold a church 'Jobs Day' on the first Thursday of each month which allows gardening, tidying and maintenance issues to be dealt with, this is regularly supported by a small band of willing people!

We held two main Mission events in 2019, an Easter Egg Hunt including crafts and a Light Party. This was held on 31 October as an alternative to Halloween. The Youth for Christ team together with Cloverfield members assisted by young people visiting from our twin parish in Holmsund ran activities. Refreshments were provided and the evening proved to be very popular!

In September 4 visitors from Holmsund came, stayed with members and had a very busy visit including a visit to a Cold War bunker and a behind the scenes visit to Norwich Cathedral which gave an opportunity to climb up to the organ and hear it being played and to have a guided tour led by Rev Peter Doll, Canon Librarian. We also met the Cathedral cat, Budge! We held a Beetle Drive which our Swedish visitors thoroughly enjoyed, it turned out to be a very competitive game!

Two young leaders visited with their Leader in October and enjoyed a Town Trail, helping at the TADDS, the Dementia Café, assisting with the activities at the Light Party, visiting Kilverstone Church and Kilverstone Hall and spending time crafting items to go in our Samaritan's Purse Shoeboxes.

The Samaritan's Purse Shoeboxes, which we have supported over the years, became a larger project this year largely due to one of our church members who made it her mission for the year. From January 2019 together with two other members of Cloverfield, pop up shops were held each month where goods made were available for donations. The donations were then used to help towards transport costs. In all 334 boxes were collected in November and we have recently heard that these were shipped to Central Asia.

We have continued to enjoy fellowship with our Church family with breakfasts, bring and share lunches and picnics enjoyed by all.

We hope and pray that the right person will apply for our vacant minister position but there is a good team spirit within the church and members are supporting each other and our church continues to run smoothly during this time.

Grace Church

There are several things to give thanks to God for as I reflect on the life of Grace Church.

Baptisms: In the Autumn we had our first adult baptism! It was a young man in his mid-20s who, by God's grace, is making big changes to his lifestyle as he starts to follow Jesus. Also, one of our younger members, an eight year-old, for whom we had a service of Thanksgiving and Blessing back in 2012 when she was an infant, has now asked to be baptised.

There is a growing **hunger for God's Word**; seen in the congregation's warm appreciation for expository preaching and in their humility before Scripture - letting it challenge, correct and rebuke them. We have been blessed through members of the occasional preaching group at St Andrew the Great Church in Cambridge coming on a dozen or so occasions as guest speakers.

Prayer: Several of the church family have appreciated the opportunity of the monthly Team Prayer Night at St Cuthbert's, to get together with folk from across Thetford Parish to pray for our mission partners and needs across the benefice. We have also recently started a monthly prayer walk around the Abbey Estate to keep us focussed on the particular mission field that the Lord has given us at Grace Church.

Toddler Group has grown in recent months so that we now have been 12-20 toddlers and babies with their parents (mostly mums but with the occasional dad and grandparent!). Helen does a wonderful job at organising this group and often burns the midnight oil preparing crafts on Wednesday nights!

Family: It is heart-warming to see a growing family love at church, with people taking a genuine interest in and serving one another. Many people have very real and pressing needs and, whilst there's undoubtedly room for growth, it is a church family where we can be open about our struggles, bear one another's burdens and offer loving, prayerful and practical support. It's been encouraging to have a new family and a couple of others join us the last few months.

Home Group now meets either at 12 Gloucester Way or 38 Ripon Way and is a much-valued source of fellowship and discipleship for those that can make it on a Tuesday evening.

Elders: I remain so thankful to God for my fellow elders - Sarah Leggett and Steve Harewood; for all their godly example, wise counsel, prayerful support, servant-heartedness and undimmed gospel focus.

Mission: At the time of writing we are excited at the prospect of a team of six missionaries from St Helen's Bishopsgate coming to assist us for the third year in a row in making Christ known. They will be answering questions on Christianity in various classes at Bishop's School on the Friday, hosting and giving a talk at a quiz that evening, before speaking at a men's breakfast and family fun day on the Saturday.

Points for Prayer

1. For the Lord to grow us in knowledge and depth of insight and to add to our numbers.
2. For more helpers and leaders at both the toddler group (Thursday mornings) and the children's group (at church on Sunday afternoons).
3. For spiritual fruit from the mission.
4. For wisdom, energy and creativity about how best to build bridges to folk on the Abbey Estate and then to share the gospel with them.
5. For on-going good relations with the school.

*Tony Heywood
March 2020*

PCC Report

At the first meeting of PCC in 2019, the following priorities were agreed (based on the benefice mission statement and priorities from the parish profile) along with the need to bear in mind future stages of redevelopment of St. Cuthbert's:

- Deepening personal discipleship and evangelism; equipping everyone for ministry.
- Making St Cuthbert's more accessible to children, youth and younger families (as well as other unchurched people).
- New initiatives for St Cuthbert's to reach children and young people – or working more closely with existing Cloverfield, Grace Church and Thetford Youth Project initiatives.
- Oversee successful completion of the first stage of the redevelopment project and put evangelism and discipleship at the heart of what it's used for.
- Reaching both Christians and non-Christians in Kingsfleet.

The following were seen essential to serve these priorities:

- Committed to corporate prayer.
- Structures that serve our mission and enable the clergy to equip everybody for service – and getting the right people into the right holes.

PCC began to address these priorities by discussing how to encourage corporate prayer, and the desired format of the monthly Team Prayer Nights, which launched in the autumn.

Throughout the year, PCC received regular updates on the redevelopment work and the evolving plans for the café. PCC agreed to a proposal to replace the lighting in the Nave and Chancel with LED lights. It was agreed to explore the possibility of selling redundant silver from the churches of St. Peter and St. Mary the Less, and a faculty for this will be applied for in 2020.

Discussions were started on replacing and improving the signage for St. Cuthbert's. In response to a request at the APCM, PCC discussed various options for making a church or team calendar available, but it has not been possible to progress this to a fully satisfactory conclusion.

PCC agreed to trial Evensong at the earlier time of 4 p.m. during winter months, in the hope that this would enable more people to attend. PCC also agreed that we should seek to develop baptism follow-up, to encourage families to continue their involvement in church. The Rector confirmed that families were offered the choice of a baptism or thanksgiving service, depending on what they felt was right for them.

Minutes of PCC meetings are always made available at the back of St Cuthbert's once they have been approved.

*Caroline Herbert
PCC Secretary
March 2020*

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.

With the departure of the Revd Helen Jary in October 2019, the Revd Dr Peter Herbert was appointed by the PCC as the Parish Safeguarding Officer (Children and Young People).

Deanery Synod Report

Thetford & Rockland Deanery Synod held three regular meetings in 2019, with invited speakers each time. In January, Simon Coward (Managing Director of the Hethel Innovation Centre) spoke on a Christian attitude to business. In September, Anne Aves spoke on the John Aves Education Project, which sponsors students from Dheisheh Palestinian Refugee Camp through university courses. It was subsequently agreed that the Deanery would seek to sponsor a student through this project. In November, Michele O'Keefe (Parish Funding Support Officer) spoke about the support the Diocese can provide for parishes in raising funds for projects. The meetings also received reports on Diocesan Synod and General Synod.

The Deanery hosted Bishop Jonathan for a Deanery Prayer Pilgrimage in May, which was followed by a social at the Rectory in Thetford. The annual Deanery Eucharist for Ascension Day was held at St. Mary's Church, Attleborough.

*Caroline Herbert
March 2020*

St Cuthbert's Maintenance & Fabric Report 2019

St Cuthbert's Church saw major improvements to the fabric of the building in 2019. The long awaited development started in February and was completed in September

The toilets have been redesigned so that they are suitable for disabled use and nappy changing facilities have been fitted. The old kitchen was demolished to make a new entrance enabling wheelchair access to the toilets, hall and kitchen.

The old meeting room was redesigned to provide a well equipped kitchen and a smaller refurbished meeting room.

A fire detection system has been installed in the new refurbished areas.

Major repairs have been completed to the leaking roof above the hall and kitchen and new skylights fitted.

Pews were removed from the side aisles and replaced with chairs. Four pews were retained and placed against the walls in the aisles. The floor was repaired and stained. Some of the pews were sold and some of the broken ones were used to box in the water pipes at the rear of the church. We are thankful for the skill of Alan Miller who worked so hard to complete this job at no cost to the church.

We have purchased 25 new chairs for use in the meeting room and church.

We now have a more flexible interior, suitable for both worship and community use.

We are thankful for the work of Peter Thomson and John Richens who have worked so hard last year to make all this happen.

Keith and Sue Goldsmith continued the great work of last year by maintaining and adding pots and plants to the area outside the Well Street entrance. We receive constant feedback on how much better this area looks. Keith also completely refurbished an altar cross that had been stored for many years. The look of this has been transformed and the cross is now used on the altar table.

We are thankful for all who volunteer to clean our church and we give particular thanks to Sandra Phillips who works tirelessly to clean and maintain everything including the toilets.

A telephone line has been installed in the church providing telephone and internet connection.

The church has been tidied up and cupboards cleaned, rubbish removed and unwanted items sold or donated. We have had very positive feedback from visitors about the new development and the look and feel of the church.

Sandra Phillips & Rod Back

Redevelopment Update

At the last APCM I was able to report that the building work had started and to outline our plans for the cafe to be open and running by the autumn. Unfortunately, we ran into some unexpected problems and although the building work was completed on time we were not able to open the cafe as planned in September of last year.

On the positive side, we now have splendid new toilets, one fully accessible and the other with baby changing facilities, a wheelchair ramp giving access from the church, a fine meeting room and last but not least a state of the art kitchen. The rear part of the church has been cleared to provide an area for tables to serve up the 50 covers. Our new meeting room has attracted use from groups outside of the church and "The University of the Third Age" holds regular meetings. Also, a Residents Housing Group has started to use the room and a new community group has also begun to use the facilities. The "Parkinson Voices" is a social activity for those suffering from the disease. It meets to improve and enhance the lives of Parkinson sufferers by social activity and music. After these sessions, refreshments are provided in the cafe area of the church to promote social inclusion.

These facilities have enabled us to put on Clergy lunches including the Deanery lunch for Bishop Graham. We have also hosted a lunch for our twin church in Sweden. We have hosted a Men's Breakfast when 46 men attended. We recently held a well-supported and enjoyable Lenten Lunch for the Bishop's Lent Appeal. These events would have been very difficult to host before the redevelopment and we now have the facilities to host regular social events for our congregation in the years ahead.

However, on the negative side we were obliged to cancel the proposed opening of the cafe in September and had to put off the staff whom we had already engaged. This decision was taken extremely reluctantly and was mainly due to the realisation that neither the supply of gas or electricity were going to meet the needs of the kitchen and heat the main body of the church. Another factor was that the staff were needing more support than we were able to guarantee at that time. A further factor was the absence of an internet connection without which it would make taking credit/credit card payments very difficult which could result in a major downturn in the projected cafe sales. Openreach has taken much longer than expected to provide a telephone line into the church and we are still waiting for the broadband to be connected.

After a good deal of discussion it was decided that the best course of action was to bite the bullet and get an increased gas supply to the church which will meet all our needs for the foreseeable future. Therefore Cadent were engaged to supply a new larger gas pipe into the church which has now been done. Then having everything in place, we reviewed what was needed to make the Cafe Cuthbert fully operational. It was also acknowledged that the potential income from the cafe was necessary to ensure that St Cuthbert is financially sound. On this basis the PCC were asked to consider two viable options: the first to seek for a cafe manager capable of running all aspects of the operation with an assistant manager and employing apprentices. To run successfully we will also require volunteers but this would be on a limited scale. The alternative option is to find a suitable Social Enterprise group to run all aspects of the cafe on our behalf. The possible downside of this second option is that we are likely to lose some control over the way the cafe is run. We have produced a business plan covering both options and the PCC decided to support the Senior Manager option assuming we are successful in finding the right candidate. We are now going ahead with the search for this skilled and experienced person. The Directors of the Cafe (John Richens, Sue Goldsmith and Peter Thomson) will have a vital role to oversee the operation and reporting back to the PCC.

The year 2019 was a time of success and disappointment, but we believe that we have tackled the problems as best we could and now believe that our hopes, aspirations and prayers for St Cuthbert's will be fulfilled in 2020.

Peter Thomson, 10.03.2020

Report on Mission and Charity giving

Our Mission giving has suffered over the past few years and the PCC decided at the end of 2018 that we would make two sets of payments, each of £3,000, in 2019.

As 2019 went on the pressures of dealing with the kitchen work meant that I overlooked the early set of payments and it was only as we neared the end of the year that I managed to make the following payments, which had been agreed earlier by the PCC:

To Christian Pastoral Aid Society, £900. Their aim is “to enable all churches to help people to hear and discover the good news about Jesus”;

To Interserve, for Graham and Nicola Aylett, £900. Their aim is “to make Jesus known amongst the neediest peoples of Asia and the Arab world”;

To Saint Barnabas Church in Cape Town, for Simon and Gillian Clegg.

Simon and Gillian, Graham and Nicola have been named as Mission Partners of Thetford PCC and they will be joined by Sol and Anna Anjum when they leave for Asia later in the year.

We had also planned to send £300 to a charity called Finchams Farm, who support vulnerable men, helping them to move their lives forward, but they have not responded to my attempts to make contact regarding the sending of the money to them.

It is to be hoped that the new PCC will be able to pay the remaining £3,300, which will bring our payments up to date to the end of 2019, and then to continue paying 10% of each year's giving to chosen charities in the future.

John Richens

Treasurer's Report

Before I commence my report, may I say that this, my seventeenth report as Treasurer has been the most difficult which I have had to compile, for a number of reasons: firstly, 2019 was a complicated year, with large numbers of transactions generated as a result of the redevelopment of the church building, as well as ongoing meetings with the Contractors and the Architect and further grant applications; then there were changes to our finances which were set in motion during the year, the registration for VAT and the setting up of the Café business. The former proceeded satisfactorily, with registration occurring on June 1st. There was a difficulty with the Café, in that, although the business was registered successfully, for reasons beyond our control, the dedicated bank account which was promised in the autumn was not created before the end of the year. I had decided to delay processing of all financial records in the anticipation of having a Café bank account, but as the end of the year approached, I had to start to make the entries, putting all Café transactions into the General Fund with an expectation of making adjustments in 2020 once the new account is available – this resulted in a large amount of work being done in a short period, resulting in some inconsistencies in the records, for which I apologize. We decided to trust the handling of the business accounts to Lovewell Blake, the accountants and they produced the first, major, VAT claim, dated 30th November, but dating back over a four-year period. The software programme which I use for the accounts doesn't contain any dedicated systems for dealing with VAT as it is designed for church use, so I needed to learn how to handle these figures and then to enter every VAT item in addition to all of the earlier transactions. I am now satisfied that you have here a correct and complete record of the accounts.

As usual I am writing this from the point of view of St Cuthbert's only - there is a separate report dealing with Cloverfield although a summary of their accounts is available here. There may be a separation of the two sets in the future, as mentioned last year, but nothing is yet confirmed. What

has happened, however, is that the Cloverfield building has been removed from these accounts as it is owned by the Diocese of Norwich, not by us.

This year's finances must be considered in the light of a very large VAT claim, mainly caused by the large amounts spent on the Redevelopment. This figure is some £48,000 and should be received in February 2020. When that happens, the Barclays Current Account will reach a more reasonable value and at the same time the Development Fund, now languishing at more than £30,000 in deficit will return to a surplus.

Parish Share and Gift Aid: to repeat once more the PCC's position: we want to be able to pay what is asked of us. Although we have not managed to pay in full in the last few years, we have exceeded 90% of what has been requested and in 2014 and 2015 we did pay in full. You may remember that I commented about the difficulty I expected to experience in paying the increased amount in 2019, well, as it happened, we had to stop our payments after June in advance of cash-flow problems which were anticipated as a result of the VAT which would not be refunded until 2020.

I have continued to claim Gift Aid repayments and most is dealt with up to the end of 2019, although some will not be received until 2020.

Our story concerning Mission and Charity giving continues much as in 2018 when we had planned to make double payments to make up for the missing payments from 2017. In the end we made only one set of payments, so once again we planned to make double payments in 2019, but again we did not achieve this and only one set was made. The various charities which received giving are listed in one of the other reports. I repeat that we believe that supporting other charities is an important aspect of our mission, both locally and nationally.

The amount that we give to Mission and Charity is calculated as 10% of the total giving from the previous year and I wanted to say a few words about our giving. This is not a detailed analysis, but is designed to let you know about the trends in our giving as congregation numbers drop. The total of "giving" has dropped by 12% compared with 2018, but within that Gift Aid giving is up 7%, making it simpler for myself and my assistants by reducing envelope opening and counting. Plate collections are down by 9%, suggesting a gradual transfer to more tax-efficient giving, like envelopes and bank transfers. One other figure which stands out is the drop of income for the magazine, a fall of 28%.

The financial position in this report is considerably different from what I have described over recent years (not including 2018, when the revaluation of the Cloverfield building caused a huge inflation of our assets, falsely, as it subsequently appeared). Previously the total assets were around £0.5 million and we were comfortable in thinking that we had sufficient reserves available to be able to cope with any reasonable emergency. Now this report shows that the total assets are some £167,000, of which over £40,000 belong to Cloverfield. This means that we hold some £120,000, of which around £64,000 is tied up in the two Share Funds, leaving only around £55,000 in liquid assets, a sum which would disappear in around one year of Parish Share payments at the rate currently being requested.

In conclusion, may I make the following points?

- a) There needs to be a full discussion of finance at the first meeting of the new PCC, to discuss how to budget for 2020;
 - b) There needs to be a realistic consideration of the Parish Share payments in view of the Diocese's increased requests and our falling income;
 - c) For too many years it has fallen to the Treasurer to instigate the payment of our Mission and Charity payments – I would recommend the creation of a committee for this purpose;
- Finally, to quote from last year's report: "... there seems to be no other way to balance our books apart from setting up the cafe. We believe that there will be other community benefits as well from this enterprise."

Now I must thank all of you who make donations directly, in envelopes, in the collection plate, or in any other way and I must also express my thanks to Rod, Margaret and Sandra for their continued help in handling the money received each week. Finally love and thanks to Sylvia for her help and for putting up with all of it – it doesn't get easier from year to year.

John Richens
Treasurer

Electoral Roll Report

At the time of the 2019 Annual Meetings, the number on Roll was 93.

No-one has come off Roll during the year and there have been no fresh applications, so the number remains at 93

However, I am aware that some people are preparing to leave Thetford for good and that some others may have to move away because of age and infirmity or poor health, meaning that they would have to come off the Roll.

Colin Orbell
Electoral Roll Officer
March 2020