

2020 REPORT OF THE VICAR OF CHRIST CHURCH, THE REVEREND MICHAEL BURNS, FOR THE 2021 APCM

2020 and going on into 2021 will go down in history as a period of great uncertainty, anxiety and change for our whole world. Christ Church was no less seriously impacted. All churches were decreed to close in mid-March and all activities and worship were suspended. There were periods during 2020 when the restrictions were eased, only for them to be implemented once again. We are fortunate that so many of the congregation are on email and we tried to work hard at keeping everyone in touch through regular newsletters and so on. Thanks to the invaluable work of a small, dedicated team, we were able to worship online as well as, at times, in church. We are grateful to Tom Theakston who has kept our musical life going as far as we are currently permitted. Sadly though, many activities have had to be suspended – including our revived Toddler Group, which had enjoyed such a strong start, as well as our Junior Church, Together on Thursday group and KFH amongst others. It has also been very frustrating that our newly refurbished Hall has had to remain empty for so long – with thanks to Stefan Bown and Angelina Skelton for their ongoing supervision. In addition, many of those who support our church life have had to take unpaid ‘furlough’ – amongst them our altar servers, chalice assistants, refreshments servers, hall caretakers and children’s group leaders. Many other people have been able to contribute to the life of Christ Church when this has been possible. We are grateful to them all including our church cleaners, flower arrangers, the choir, readers, intercessors, stewards, study and prayer group convenors, gardening group, grass cutters and the social events committee amongst many others, as well as Bill Petch who does so many odd jobs for us. Thank you also to Paul Brazier for maintaining the website, which has been a crucial tool of communication to keep us all together.

We are enormously grateful to David Simpson for his constant help and support until he stepped down mid-year to be succeeded by Julie Grainger and Tish Mousell as our new Churchwardens. We remain grateful to Sarah Castle (our SPA) as well as our two Readers, Farhad Hedayati and Flis Banks for their support. The whole church continues to be hugely indebted to Sara Taylor our Administrator who continued to work behind the scenes ensuring so much runs smoothly. The PCC met 5 times in 2020 (4 on zoom) and all members have worked hard this past year: in particular we thank Judy Luddington for her work as PCC Secretary and John Davey for continuing in the role of PCC Treasurer working alongside our part-time paid bookkeeper, Margaret Hamps.

Safeguarding is a vital issue for every church to ensure proper and robust procedures are in place to care for our children and vulnerable adults and we are grateful to Jenny Tomlinson and Jane Simpson who look after this important aspect of our life for us – their formal report is below.

During 2020 we mourned the deaths of a number of significant members of Christ Church: amongst them Cynthia Aird, Rufus Crompton, Constance Durie, John Wilson, John Barrett and Mary Garrard. Our sadness was compounded because so few could attend their funerals. In addition, a number of members of Christ Church suffered personal family bereavements. We have also had to say farewell to members of the church who have moved away from the area: Gerald and Hazel Bate, Stewart and Judith Sanson, Richard Barker, Tom Rabar and Jane Stephenson.

On the positive side, thanks to some generous donors we have been able to transform the back garden – with enormous thanks to Karen Chinn and our garden team who have worked so hard on this project. Generally, our buildings remain in a good state of repair. Some things, such as our eco-church project, are ongoing and we are grateful to those who are taking the lead. This and other items will continue to be on the PCC agenda in the coming months.

But we should never forget that uniquely the local Church of England parish church also exists for those who are not its members. It has therefore been very painful not to be able to visit the schools and residential homes in the parish, undertake any pastoral visiting or to be free to conduct baptisms and weddings. We are also part of the Diocese of Southwark, the Deanery of Merton and Churches Together in West Wimbledon. What unites us together is our worship of God and our care for others. Despite all, we remain optimistic that the end is in sight. The time we spend together on Sundays in worship in whatever form it takes and the care and welcome we seek to offer, are crucial and we pray that we will faithfully continue to be active in *SHARING GOD’S LOVE* Sunday by Sunday and week by week in whatever way we can as 2021 continues to unfold.

Michael Burns – May 2021