



**ST MARY'S CHURCH
BLETSOE**

**ANNUAL REPORTS
2020-21**

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RECTOR'S REPORT

Dear Friends,

In 1 Chronicles 12:23-37, the writer of this book gives us the details of all the people who came to help David defeat Saul at Hebron. Amongst this list in verse 32, are included "the men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do."

I wonder how many amongst us can claim to understand the times right now? What a strange year this has been! Lockdowns; facemasks; hand sanitiser; social distancing; Coronavirus. It really has been an incredibly challenging time, which has maybe left us feeling uprooted and confused as we have had to adjust to a new way of doing things. Freedoms and opportunities that we took for granted suddenly look different, and this has undoubtedly impacted us all to varying degrees. This past year has been one of cancelled plans, isolation, anxiety, fear, sadness, disappointment, financial trouble, personal loss and concern for many, and I know that lots of people are just generally feeling quite tired and worn out.

The situation has been compounded by the fact that our church meetings have been caught up in this disruption too, resulting in them predominantly taking place online through our weekly pre-recorded YouTube services, supplemented with regular ZOOM meetings. As has been the case with our immediate families, the physical separation from our church family has been incredibly painful and no doubt costly. However there appears to be some light at the end of the tunnel with the roll-out of the vaccination programme and what are currently (when writing this) falling infection rates. As soon as we are safely able to, we intend to re-open our buildings for church services and meetings once again, although anticipate that this may potentially be a long journey of small steps, before everything is fully 'back to normal'.

One of the challenges of navigating this tricky road, has been remaining united in love. As with many other important issues of recent times, the country has been widely divided on what our approach to responding to the COVID pandemic should look like. This debate has understandably been part of the conversation in the discussions surrounding church life too. Something I have been greatly encouraged by this year, is that although there may have been personal disagreements with decisions that have been undertaken, as to which route we take, we have been a community that has been incredibly gracious and patient, bearing with one another with Christ-like love.

This love has also been borne out in our care and service to one another. From the first days of lockdown, people have been seeking to care for and support others across our community, ensuring that nobody has gone without or been forgotten. I pray that this love and practical service will continue to play a full part in the life of our church going forward and that our good deeds may be visible for all to see resulting in God's glory (1 Peter 2:12).

Despite the challenges, we continue to have much to be thankful for. The lockdowns have prompted us to engage with technology in new ways, which has allowed us to reach more people with the gospel than before. Whilst we do not know the full story behind the viewing figures of our online services, the numbers suggest that many others have been joining us online across this past year. In fact, a number of people unbeknown to me before lockdown have let me know how they have enjoyed accessing our services - an encouraging sign of how God is at work.

But of course, church is not about numbers, even though news of new people joining us is encouraging. Church is about us as the body of Christ, growing in our love for Jesus and one another. Again, this is something that our online services have hopefully encouraged us to do, as we have enjoyed getting to know Jesus better through listening to his word, singing his praises and praying to him together each

week. Whilst, we have not been able to do these things together in person, technology (and paper!) has enabled us to continue our togetherness in the Spirit as we have sung the same songs, prayed the same prayers, listened to the same passages of the Bible being read and reflected on the same sermons each week. The invention of ZOOM has meant we have been able to see and talk to one another for prayer meetings and communion services, for homegroup studies and for Christianity Explored Courses, whilst not been allowed to meet in person. Praise God for technology!

Whilst many of the things we enjoy have not been able to take place this year, there have continued to be a number of attempts at reaching out to our community with the love of Christ. The Star of Hope on top on the Christmas tree in the churchyard inspired many people to decorate and display their own stars of hope in their homes; whilst the Cross of Glory (to which the star of hope ultimately leads) stood boldly whilst Palm Crosses and Easter cards were delivered to every home in the parish inviting everyone to join us for our Easter services. We've held two collections of produce for the local women's refuge, which have been really well supported and gratefully received; the trial of the Parish pantry which although popular is currently under review; and a number of people have had other involvement in many notable and really important causes.

Another great encouragement has been the generosity of so many which has seen us able to cover the costs of church life for the first time in a few years, despite the challenges presented by COVID. A huge thank you to everybody who has contributed financially to the life and ministry of St Mary's across this past year – I thank God for his provision through the generosity of so many.

Yet of course there have been moments of profound sadness too. Many of us will know of people who have died during the pandemic with the inability to grieve alongside others making it all so much harder. I have conducted 12 funerals during this time (across Bletsoe and Riseley), each person made in the image of God and precious to him.

All these departures bring in to focus the urgency of the gospel we profess, that Jesus has come to rescue us from the darkness of death and to bring us into his glorious kingdom of light. He brought himself through death and he promises the same to all who believe in him. This is the good news of the Saviour who came down to rescue us as he suffered and died upon the cross. This is why we can be confident about the future.

And so as I draw to a close, I for one do not pretend to fully understand these times. Yet one thing I do know: God is both good and faithful and he is working in all things for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28). God is powerful and in control of all things, he loves us dearly as his own children, so much so that he laid down his life for us, and so whatever this coming year may hold, may we all keep looking to and trusting in Jesus – the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). Continue to stand firm dear brothers and sisters and let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

With much love in our risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
James Isaacs

P.S. A very big thank you to everybody who has been involved in contributing to this report, and especially to Ann Gibbons for compiling it.

Revd James Isaacs

FINANCE REPORT

ST. MARY, BLETSOE 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

Although it has been a tough financial year for the PCC, we still ended on a positive note.

The parish financial accounts ending 31st December 2020 have been agreed and signed off by Bill Rowlands. No changes were made to the draft accounts presented at the PCC zoom meeting in January 2021.

SUMMARY

The accounts showed a surplus balance of £7,456.08 consisting of General Fund £4,792.90. Deposit Account £1,326.22, Restricted Funds £1,336.96.

INCOME

Income came in at £26,235 compared to £22,021 in 2019 (not including amounts received for VAT refund). The increase is mainly due to a donation from the Friends of St. Mary's and an increase in fees.

The total for the restricted funds stands at £1,336 made up as follows:

Curtains/Linen £388, Bell Fund £798, donation to be paid to India £100 and Gods Acre £50.

The pew cushion project has now been completed.

Donations received totalled £12,162 with £11,297 paid to the General Fund.

Donations made through the Gift Aid Small Donations scheme £1,323 (£2,715 2019). This reduction is due the restrictions on church services due to Covid 19.

Weekly envelope donations £619 (£1,520 2019), again due to Covid restrictions on Sunday services.

Automated donations £8,590 (£6,985 2019).

Cheque and misc. donations £1,350 (£1,715 2019).

Donations not eligible for Gift Aid £280 (£300 2019).

The above figures represent the general and restricted funds.

Gift aid reclaimed £3,097.

Other significant income:

Bletsoe Church land £3,741.

Fees paid to the PCC £2,895 out of which £739 paid to the Diocese.

Bletsoe Parish Council £500 towards the costs of keeping the churchyard mowed.

Friends of St. Mary's donated £3,504 to pay for the annual insurance premium and

Quinquennial Inspection.

EXPENSES

Expenses came in at £27,195 compared to £18,862 in 2019 (not including amounts paid for VAT refund). The increase in expenses is due to an additional £3,000 paid to the Parish Share compared to 2019. Quinquennial inspection £1,412. New pew cushions £3,072.

Purchase of new altar table £250 and removal of horse chestnut tree £450. Altar linen and dust covers £263.

Other significant expenses:

The Parish Share £15,474. Despite the very difficult year due to the pandemic, the parish share was paid in full for the first time in two years. This would have been a real struggle to achieve without the donation for the insurance premium (£2,092) and Quinquennial

Inspection (£1,412) from the Friends of St. Mary's for which we are very grateful. A letter of thanks has been sent to the Treasurer of the Friends.

Electricity £1,730 (£1,492 2019).

Trish Vine
Treasurer

BLETSOE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Balance Sheet detailed as at 31st December 2020

	As at 31/12/2020	As at 31/12/2019
Current Assets		
NATWEST BANK		
Z06: ACCOUNT	6,129.86	15,560.33
Z07: CASH IN HAND	0.00	0.00
CCLA DEPOSIT		
Z08: ACCOUNT	1,326.22	1,320.60
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Current Assets	7,456.08	16,880.93
Excess/(Deficit) to date	-9,424.85	-12,410.27
Z01: Starting Balances	16,880.93	29,291.20
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Reserves	7,456.08	16,880.93

Represented by Funds		
Unrestricted	6,119.12	12,846.70
Designated	0.00	100.00
Restricted	1,336.96	3,934.23
Endowment	0.00	0.00
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	7,456.08	16,880.93

**UNRESTRICTED AS AT
31/12/2020**

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT	1,326.22
GENERAL FUND	4,792.90
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 6,119.12

RESTRICTED FUNDS AS AT 31/12/2020

BELL FUND	798.43
CURTAINS/LINEN	388.53
INDIA	100.00
GODS ACRE	50.00
DESIGNATED	0.00
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 1,336.96

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Electoral Roll – the number for 2021-22 is **29**

For the first time ever we have had a very quiet year in the church in respect of live Services and activities. But on the other hand, and especially for James, it has been an extremely busy year having to deal with lots of technology and logistical issues!

Our AGM in 2020 was held in the church on a cold evening and lasted the shortest length of time ever! We were done and dusted in half an hour! No freezing in the vestry till after 10.00pm! Despite the brevity of the meeting all the necessary business was conducted.

After the AGM we went into lockdown! The church building was closed but the church community still came together in virtual format and in paper copies circulated to those without the technology. What a magnificent job James has done throughout! He, I am sure, did not envisage his early years of ministry would be anything like it has been!

Those without the technology had the opportunity during some of the summer weeks to watch in church on the big screen but once we went into a further lockdown even the private prayer sessions had to stop.

Sadly we were unable to celebrate Christmas together but again James did a brilliant job of ensuring that Christmas was not forgotten and even the youngsters put readings together for a short video and were given Christingle equipment for making their own for the virtual service.

James' regular weekly services on YouTube have undoubtedly increased our outreach and with the Facebook page and the new website there are great opportunities to continue to spread and increase the congregation even if it is not always in person.

Ann Gibbons
PCC Secretary

EVENTS REPORT

Due to the national COVID virus outbreak the church was locked down for services from 23 Mar 20 to 31 Aug 21, open from 06 Sep 20 to 1 Nov 20 and then closed again for services until the present date.

Consequently only 9 services Sunday services were held in the church between 06 Sep 20 and 01 Nov 20 (average attendance 14 persons) subject to preventative health measures (masks to be worn, people to sit 2 metres apart, no bibles or hymn books, no singing, no communion and no opportunity for socialising before or after the service)

The church was open for private prayer initially twice a week prior to Sep 20 but due to the winter was not reinstated.

The Rector successfully introduced YouTube Sunday Services for Riseley and Bletsoe which parishioners could view online (receiving 120-140 views) and started monthly ZOOM prayer meetings .

No harvest festival, Christmas or Easter services have been held in the last 12 months.

No baptisms or weddings in the last 12 months. Five funerals/interment of ashes.

No funds were raised for external charities during the last year. There was no door-to-door collection for Christian Aid in May 20 due to COVID restrictions

Further collections of toiletries and foods stuffs were made for Bedford Women Refuge and between October 20 and January 21, a parish table was held in the church porch where parishioners could gift food items and collect food stuffs in exchange.

No church coffee mornings have been held in the last 12 months.

Weekly bible groups have continued, the latest subject being on COVID and how to respond to it as a Christian.

Following the Chancel rebuild, there was a lot of rubble, dips in the ground and a disordered array of gravestone. Over the last 6 months, gravestones that are legible have been re-erected at the west end of the churchyard, and any others have been laid along the walls. The rubble has been dispersed, the dips filled, the elderberry saplings removed, privet hedges cut back and collections of bulbs planted. Ivy has been removed from the church yard walls. Other piles of stone by the church wall behind School House have been reorganised with the intention of establishing a natural hedgerow for the benefit of wildlife.

A Christmas tree with decorations and lights was erected in the church yard during Christmas 20 and a crucifix during Easter 21.

Andrew Fyvie
Events Member

FABRIC REPORT

The Covid-19 hiatus largely stalled all work on the fabric beyond the formal completion of remaining residual work from the Chancel Restoration. The work undertaken, however, included the final tasks by the contractor leading to the settlement payment in January 2021 and almost all of the work to install the 13th century grave marker in its protected display space which is now due for completion. There remains one outstanding item which needs further exploration, namely how important is stabilising work to the reredos? If needed, then this will be a priority.

Whilst the major restoration of the reredos remains, alongside the installation of a new heating system and the plan for a new external lobby, those three items are for further consideration alongside other priorities. These will come from the results of the 2020 Quinquennial Inspection that took place at the end of lockdown in summer last year. As always, there is a list of largely small-scale work to be considered within the timescales set and after discussion with the architect. Other than some remedial work to the limewash on the old plaster in the chancel which has shown some degradation over winter, almost all of the work is general maintenance or, as in the case of a potential windows project, a refurbishment task which may now be tackled. Currently, a list of 'self-help' tasks is being compiled for discussion with the architect along with some items that have arisen during the cold, damp winter during lockdown 3. The PCC will want to note its thanks to Michael Dales, its architect, for his team's considerable and continuing support through the Chancel Restoration period and beyond.

It is important to also note that the church interior has been much enhanced by the efforts of parishioners and PCC members over the course of this year and since the chancel was reopened. The inevitable clutter from a two-year period when the inside of the church was, to a large extent, a building site is largely gone due to a lot of hard work for which everyone must be very grateful. Deciding on the use of the various spaces is now paramount and, with the prospect of both new uses for the building allied to likely new projects to continue the restoration work, then the PCC will want to forge new plans involving the various partners especially the Friends of St Mary's which has committed to fundraising and project management for over thirty years benefitting St Mary's by some £500,000 over that period. The PCC remains very grateful for the long term support. Whilst that sort of total is, hopefully, not required again in the near future, the outstanding work plan over the next five years may well need in excess of £100,000 depending on what plans are put in place.

Mike Gibbons & Paul Laws
Church Wardens

ST. MARY, BLETSOE BELLS REPORT

Due to Covid-19, 2020 has been a very quiet year for the Bletsoe Bell Ringers. All ringing was cancelled in March 2020, until further notice.

Regular maintenance of the bells etc still took place following the guidelines set down.

The Bedfordshire Association of Bell Ringers were booked to hold their annual striking competition at St. Mary's, in September 2020 but sadly this had to be cancelled.

The handbells were put to good use on Christmas Eve at 6pm when the country came together to ring a bell on their doorstep to spread "togetherness".

The following chime of a single bell took place on:

8th May 2020 to mark the 75th Anniversary of VE day.

15th November 2020 to mark Armistice Day.

7th February 2021, 100 chimes by Mary Laws to pay tribute to Captain Sir Tom Moore who died on the 2nd February.

27th February 2021, 100 chimes by Paul Vine at midday to mark Captain Sir Tom Moore whose funeral took place this day.

10 April 2021, 99 chimes by Paul Vine at midday to mark the death of the Duke of Edinburgh.

Hopefully, ringing will resume at some point in 2021!

Paul Vine
Tower Captain

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

There have been no safeguarding incidents reported or recorded within the last 12 months.

Following diocesan advice, all PCC members who are involved in the organisation and management of events which include children and/or vulnerable adults require three yearly DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks.

Arrangements are currently in hand to register with a DBS clearing service. Anyone applying to join the PCC needs to be aware that they will be obliged to have a DBS check if their application is successful.

Andrew Fyvie
Safeguarding Officer

Deanery Synod Report

Based on Sharnbrook Deanery Zoom Meetings held on 15/06/20, 14/09/2020, 16.11.20, 15/02/21

A survey taken during lockdown by BritainThinks (a research institute which presented to CofE representatives on 3rd June 2020), only 9% of people want to return to how things were before Covid 19.

1. The Parish Share Update

The Parish Share is the contribution each church makes towards mission & ministry across the Diocese. In 2020, the Diocese could face a potential shortfall of £2m-£3m in total income.

Around a third of our parishes have paid in full, with another third having paid over 75% so far of what has been requested which is really encouraging.

However, it is apparent that around a third of our parishes are struggling very significantly and we need to understand the reasons for this. Some help may be available through the annual Pastoral Aid Support Grants – applications for 2021 with guidelines on how to apply, were recently sent to Treasurers.

- In 2018, of the half £1m requested from the 30 churches in our Deanery, the shortfall at the end of the year was £55,000.
- In 2019, the shortfall at the end of the year was £35,000
the total Parish Share requested is £532,251 made up of
Stipend Contribution - £286,501 (8.5 clergy x £33,787)
Ministry Support Contribution - £255,801
- In 2020, the amount requested from our Deanery for 2020 is £551,000, of which £289,000 has been paid so far (ie. end of August 2020) representing a potential **shortfall of £78,000**

2. Elections

Vacancies 6 clergy and 6 lay members to Deanery Standing/Pastoral Committee
3 clergy and 3 lay members to Diocesan Synod
Lay Co-Chair

The following were elected to Deanery Standing Committee – Rev'd James Isaacs, Rev'd Paolo di Leo, Rev'd Jane Bass, Rev'd Stephen Holroyd; Rev'd Tim Wilson; plus Lisa Mitchell, and Jane Templeman. Rev'd Stephen Liley, Rural Dean, Christine Clark, Assistant Rural Dean and the Lay Co-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer automatically serve as part of the Committee.

The following were elected to Diocesan Synod – in addition to the Rural Dean, Rev'd Jacqueline Curtis, Rev'd Tim Wilson and Rev'd Stephen Holroyd, plus Lynda Simister and David Clark as lay reps.

Keith Williams was willing to continue as Deanery Lay-Co Chair , Geraldine Skinner as Treasurer,

No other nominations were received both were elected and automatically serve on the Standing/Pastoral Committee.

The position of Deanery Secretary remained unfilled. We are most grateful to Sarah Smale, Bromham Benefice Administrator who is providing invaluable help and support but remain concerned that no-one has come forward to fill this vital post.

Everyone – please consider who in your parish might be willing to consider this role of Deanery Secretary.

Minimum requirement is to take minutes at Synod and Standing Committee meetings.

3. Re-Imagining the Deanery

Bishop Richard and Archdeacon Dave who are supporting the Deanery along with others from the Flourishing Churches team

Exciting? visionary? or unsettling?

There is broad agreement on why we need to do it – ageing and declining congregations, challenges in remaining financially viable, maintenance of our historic buildings, difficulties in recruiting churchwardens and potential problems in filling vacancies when they arise.

Covid 19 has brought fresh challenges as well as opportunities, all taking up time and energy in the parish. That said, we need to continue thinking, praying and discerning what God is doing already, and how to build on that so we can move forward in accordance with his will. Listening to Young People Project went on the diocesan Reaching New People's Vision Day. There are 3 individual day-long courses.

As a first step for parishes in our Re-imagining of the Deanery, Stephen invited us all to take this fundamental question back to our PCCs for consideration and discussion:

What is the purpose of your church? What is the mission of your church?

and to bring those collective thoughts back to our November meeting for us to reflect on together and use them as a further focus for prayer and planning.

Next Steps - (1) to involve a wider group of people now, including each PCC.

Copies of the Purpose & Mission and Exploratory Conversation Summaries had been circulated to PCC members - and other church members to encourage wide discussion.

We will be asking each PCC to use the P&M summary as a mirror to look ourselves, and to look at all the summaries to **identify what they feel are the 3 most important/urgent things for the deanery to take forward in the months ahead.**

Please let us know - who are the people in your church who have a passion for taking those things forward?

Next Steps – (2) to initiate cross-deanery workshops to share ideas and work on plans for future developments along particular themes. The first of these will focus on ‘Digital Enablement’ - maximising opportunities across the deanery using technology to develop and sustain ministry and mission. Rev’d Paolo Di Leo has kindly offered to take a lead on this.

Ideas for Re-Imagining the Deanery in Break-out groups

To discuss good things that have happened over the Summer.

- Ability to keep things going in the parish – though good to be able to stop some things to give opportunity to reflect on what is actually needed
- Some young people’s activities continued, including holiday clubs
- New faces/people joining, particularly on-line; Christianity Explored course started
- Zoom services have been welcomed; been able to restart some schoolwork
- Mid-week outdoor services proved popular over the summer
- People not on zoom have appreciated the Hope line started by Archbishop of Canterbury
- Food Bank collections continuing – and will continue in Yelden Church porch
- Socially-distanced ‘Time 4 You’ pop-up café met outside 4 times in the summer holidays.
- Bromham’s new church room, adjoining the church, which will enable them to host and engage with a variety of people in different ways, through Messy Church (now with proper facilities!) and through the church’s unique position in a natural park area popular with walkers and families
- All Saints’ Riseley have appointed a part-time children & families worker, Sam Toseland, for 12 hours a week in faith that God would provide the necessary finance. In fact the church has now moved from a deficit into a surplus, an example of God’s faithfulness.
- Souldrop’s PCC want to make the church available for others to use, an ‘event church’ that others in the deanery and elsewhere could use as a beneficial resource

4. Other Matters

- Metal Theft -There are 11 churches in our deanery who are still without roof alarms or Smartwater protection, so particularly vulnerable to metal theft.
- Ideas during lockdown from Covid 19 –
- On-line at home via Zoom, YouTube or Facebook,
- On-line prayer & bible study groups, school assemblies,
- Junior or other Choir,
- “Just reading a story from the Children’s Bible (and smiling)
- “Hall of Friends” open to anyone for social chat.
- Yelden church porch has become the (socially distanced) community hub where each week local people bring bags of non-perishable food for Rushden food bank.

- Multi-parish benefices have grown closer to each other – Chellington Team share the Daily Office together “prayer at the centre” (Jacqueline)
- Elderly have learned how to use an I-pad.
- Several churches have delivered or e-mailed weekly bulletins of prayers, reflections and information throughout lockdown - some have delivered extra material, eg. the CofE ‘blue booklet’ of prayers –
- Keeping in regular contact by phone.
- What help could we give to older people to help them join in on-line? “Perhaps small gatherings of older people could meet together in someone’s home to join in with an on-line service?”
- Annual Pastoral Aid Support Grants for Struggling Parishes- Some help may be available through the annual Pastoral Aid Support Grants – applications for 2021 with guidelines on how to apply, were recently sent to Treasurers.
- Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charities
- **The Rural Development Team** supports the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership, raising awareness of and protecting the heritage value of the Greensand area as well as providing EU Leader funding to small businesses, farmers, community groups and charities to develop the rural economy.
- **BRCC Community Transport** provides wheelchair accessible minibuses for those unable to use public transport due to temporary or permanent disability.
- **The Community Support Team** enables communities to have a voice in local development Neighbourhood Plans and works with local authorities and housing associations to identify and progress affordable housing for local people. Green Infrastructure Planning helps to enhance and protect local areas.
- **Community Agents** help isolated and vulnerable people living in Bedford Borough villages access information and support to increase their independence, choice and better quality of life. **Just Ask! – call FREE on 0800 039 1234. More information at www.bedsrcc.org.uk.**

“What is the Purpose and Mission of the Church” - Deanery Synod Feedback

From meeting held on Mon 16th Nov 2020

Light in darkness

Relationships

Pastoral Relational

Hope

Caring and love

Fellowship

Care Worship

Praying community

Community

To enable the love and peace of God in everyone

Love our neighbours

Hope

Serving our communities

Enabling paths to peace

Know and share Christ
Friendship
Togetherness in Christ
Hope and community
Growth
Study the word
Teach God's Word
Worship & Fellowship
Reflecting Love
Establish a creative digital identity
Gathering community
Community support
To transform our Worship, Prayer
Share the Gospel
To be Christ to the world
Make Christ known
Care of have-nots/creation
Excluding no-one, inviting and welcoming all, defending and supporting the
vulnerable sharing the Gospel, and demonstrating what it means to follow Christ
Togetherness
Outreach

L Bubbins
Deanery Synod Representative

Friends of St Mary's Report

Unsurprisingly, this has been a quiet year. The expected and planned events were all cancelled or deferred which means that the regular income from concerts, Plant Sale, Fete, Breakfast and other varied activities was all lost. There are some financial donations on a yearly basis for which the Friends are very grateful at any time but their arrival, especially in this fallow period, was very welcome.

From the perspective of outgoings, fortunately the commitments were minor and accounted for by the previous fundraising to enable the reopening of the chancel after restoration. Principally this covered the final payments to contractor and architect following the end of the 12 month retention period to correct any issues which has recently been completed. The only other costs were to support, for 2020, the ongoing maintenance charges for electricity, insurance and the five yearly costs of the Quinquennial Inspection. The one outstanding task and final bill before taking stock is the installation of the 13th century grave marker in its new display 'home' and that has now taken place.

There remain three major (and one minor) segments of the planned Chancel Restoration which were not completed because of the funding gap namely the restoration of the reredos, the construction of the new-build lobby to enable external & separate use of the chancel space and the installation of either partial or complete gas central heating. The minor task is the potential need to stabilise the reredos without full restoration which may or may not be needed. This will be externally assessed and repriced so that when the Friends Committee has the final accounts an informed decision can be made whether this should be prioritised or not. Given some monies are committed to specific work and that there are going to be tasks that have come from the Quinquennial Inspection, at some point in this year the Friends will need to report on options for any reprioritisation of work to allow for the targeted intentions of the PCC for the use of the building in the near future.

Mike Gibbons
Chair
Friends of St Mary