

THE PARISH AND WARD CHURCH OF ST BOTOLPH-WITHOUT-BISHOPSGATE

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the year ending 31 December 2020

Under the Church Representation Rules, the Parochial Church Council ('the PCC' or 'the Council') is required to prepare an Annual Report on its proceedings and on the activities of the parish generally. It is also required to prepare a financial statement for the financial year that gives a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the parish as at the end of the financial year and of its income and expenditure for that period.

The Report for 2020 will inevitably be dominated, as was the year itself, by the coronavirus pandemic and St Botolph's response to it under the leadership of the Parish Priest, Fr David Armstrong, with the support of the Wardens, the Council and the church staff. Government and Church of England guidelines were followed throughout the year, including the complete closure of the church for three months, and St Botolph's reacted swiftly to every change in regulations and in common with many churches moved services and meetings online. More detail about the various phases of the pandemic and our response at each stage will appear in the relevant sections of the Report.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The Parish and Ward Church of St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate is situated in Bishopsgate, in the City of London. It is part of the City of London Deanery, the Two Cities Area and the Diocese of London within the Church of England. The correspondence address is Bishopsgate, London EC2M 3TL. Day-to-day management is delegated to the Parish Priest, with the support of the Churchwardens.

The Verger, Hall and Court Manager is Mr Paul Gibson.

The Church Administrator, PCC Secretary and Parish Clerk is Miss Mhairi Ellis.

Bankers:

Allied Irish Bank, City Business Centre, 26 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1DS

Independent Examiner:

Mrs Julie Griggs, BSc Hons FCA, Levicks, West Hill, 61 London Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8TX

Inspecting Surveyor:

Mr Kevin Stephenson, BSc FRICS, Kevin Stephenson Associates, 9 Holgate Court, Western Road, Romford, Essex RM1 3JS

AIMS AND PURPOSES

The Parochial Church Council of St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate has the responsibility of co-operating with the Parish Priest in promoting the whole mission of the church, liturgical, pastoral, educational, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, in the ecclesiastical parish in its care in the City of London. It is also responsible for maintaining a fine (Grade II* Listed) Georgian church building—restored after bomb damage, and most recently refurbished in 2015-17—and the adjacent Church Hall, Churchyard, and Netball/Tennis Court.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community. The PCC maintains an overview of worship and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many people and groups within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer, scripture, music and sacrament.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of the church building, and to this end we undertook major refurbishment works during 2015-17; further works including repairs to the stonework of the Tower and an overhaul of the electrics were identified as a result of the 2018 Quinquennial Inspection, and undertaken during 2019. Sway tests on the bells necessary to complete the tower work, intended to be undertaken in 2020, were postponed by the pandemic.

When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable all people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through worship and prayer, and teaching about the Gospel; provision of pastoral care for people living and working in the parish; and missionary and outreach work.

We also continue to bear in mind the Diocese of London's collective initiative 'Capital Vision 2020' and strive to follow its mission statement: 'We share a vision of a Church for London that is Christ-centred and outward looking: we seek to be more confident in speaking and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ, more compassionate in serving communities with the love of God the Father, and more creative in reaching new people and places in the power of the Spirit'.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

At the start of 2020 St Botolph's was looking forward to a second full year under the leadership of a full-time priest, and the Council was enthusiastically discussing items on Fr David's Five-Year Plan. Nobody could have predicted that for over three-quarters of the year we, along with the rest of the country and the world, would be living under the threat of, and obliged to respond to the economic and human effects of, a global pandemic. But Fr David's work during 2019 in getting to know the Wardens, Trustees and staff and forging bonds with all our linked organisations meant that he, and we, were in a good place to respond rapidly to the challenges presented by the pandemic, and maintain St Botolph's as much as possible as 'a place of calm, sanctuary and God's love in the City'. Our 'open door' policy was maintained throughout the year, except during the time of enforced closure, to ensure a ready welcome to all visitors. We maintained, when permitted, a full programme of regular and special services, including some innovations. The staff continued to work hard – for the majority of the year, in the Verger's and Administrator's cases, from their remote outposts at home - to ensure that the day-to-day administration of the church, Hall and Court were kept up, and new ideas researched and developed where possible.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

St Botolph's Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England, and operates under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 (as amended). The Council is a charity, previously exempted from registration with the Charity Commission but registered in May 2010 (Charity Number 1135985).

All those who regularly attend our services are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules: members of the PCC are either *ex-officio* or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Rules.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

REPORT ON THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex-officio members

The Revd David Armstrong (Priest-in-Charge)

Mr Frank Curtiss (Churchwarden)

Ms Wendy Hyde (Churchwarden, to 19 October)

Ms Chris Watkins (Churchwarden, from 19 October)

Mrs Christine Ferris (Deanery Synod representative)

Mr John Marshall (Deanery Synod representative, to 19 October)

Mr Alex Coles (Deanery Synod representative, from 19 October)

Elected members

Mr Christopher Butten, Mr Nick Creswick Gough, Mr Alastair Harris,

Ms Wendy Hyde CC (from 19 October), Mr Peter Kibble, Mr David Lee, Miss Mary Moore,

Mr Ian Shadforth (to 19 October), Ms Chris Watkins (to 19 October), Mr David Westover

Notes

We are currently permitted to elect nine members to the Council.

The Churchwardens are Joint Treasurers.

The Church Administrator, Mhairi Ellis, also acts as PCC Secretary and Electoral Roll Officer.

The Council has a Standing Committee and a Finance Committee, both including the Priest-in-Charge and Wardens. The Standing Committee meets as necessary between Council meetings, and has power to transact the business of the Council between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council.

The Finance Committee meets to discuss the Accounts, budget, investments and other financial matters as necessary, but from April 2020 stepped up the frequency of its engagement, meeting monthly by Zoom to oversee the parish's finances during the pandemic, with meeting notes being regularly circulated to the full Council.

During 2020 the full Council met for business in person once, and three times by Zoom. Every effort was made to include members who were unfamiliar with virtual meeting platforms, although it was not possible in some cases, but Council members who could not be present at meetings were encouraged to ask questions and raise concerns in advance so their voices could be included. The Council was consulted electronically in between meetings as necessary (and the results of such consultations were ratified at the succeeding business meeting).

Following a change in the law to allow Annual Meetings to take place in the Autumn, the existing Wardens and Council members remained in office until the Annual Meetings in October. The Churchwardens elected at the Annual Vestry Meeting were admitted to office by Fr David at the beginning of the November Council meeting, as it was not possible for the usual large gatherings for the Area Admissions of Churchwardens to take place.

In addition to the elected members, Mhairi Ellis (Administrator, and Secretary to the PCC) and Paul Gibson (Verger, Hall and Court Manager) attended meetings as appropriate, and presented Finance, Fabric, and Services and Activities background papers as well as 'coronavirus updates' in advance of meetings. The January meeting received a presentation on the organ rebuild project from Iestyn Evans, our Organist and Director of Music, and the Organ Consultant, Professor David Titterington.

Dates of meetings and attendance

The number of members of the Council at the start of the year was 14. It decreased to 13 from the Annual Meeting in October, as good friend and long-time supporter of the Parish Ian Shadforth could no longer attend meetings on health grounds. The number at the end of the year was 13.

Full business meeting, Thursday 23 January in the Hall *Present 10, apologies 4*

A full business meeting scheduled to take place on Tuesday 19 March at All Hallows on the Wall was abandoned owing to the imminent Covid lockdown; the papers which had already been circulated were received/approved at the next meeting

Full business meeting, Wednesday 17 June (by Zoom) *Present 11, apologies 3*

Meeting after the APCM, Monday 19 October (by Zoom) *Present 10, apologies 3*

Full business meeting, Wednesday 13 November (by Zoom) *Present 11, apologies 2*

The Council was consulted electronically on 15 May, 30 July and 15 October.

The main matters discussed in the course of the year were:

- Fabric, including tower sway tests (final works resulting from 2018 Quinquennial Inspection), organ rebuild project
- Proposals for drinking fountains in the Churchyard, and a coffee kiosk in the Bishopsgate porch of the church, new sculpture in Churchyard
- Homelessness, rough sleeping and mental health issues in the City – liaison with Corporation, Police and charities, Homeless Hubs in the Hall
- PCC policies – all updated and reviewed during the year, and a Lone Worker Policy introduced
- Financial matters, including budget, Accounts, Voluntary Church Rate, Rectory rental, contactless and other methods of donation, hire charges, review of accounting arrangements, 'housekeeping' amendments to investments at CCLA
- Common Fund, including decisions on top-ups in support of other churches for 2020
- Charitable giving, including Lent and Advent charities, support for linked organisations including St Francis at the Engine Room, Christian Aid, St Mungo's, MIND in Haringey
- Church, Hall and Court running, including the implementation of Covid-19 safety measures
- Liturgy and music, including organ rebuild project, Director of Music's annual report, new forms of service and service books necessary at different stages of the pandemic, support for the church's musicians during the pandemic
- IT and communications, including refreshed website, new platforms for communication during the pandemic, regular communication with parishioners and wider community

- Outreach, and reinforcing existing relationships with neighbouring organisations and charities including St Botolph's representation on the boards of the Bishopsgate Institute, Central Foundation Schools and the Samuel Butler Foundation
- Staffing and security, including Living Wage accreditation, workplace pensions scheme review

The Finance Committee's regular items for discussion at its monthly meetings included income, expenditure and cashflow, investment valuations and market performance, Rectory income and expenditure, charitable donations, staffing matters and support for musicians.

Safeguarding

The Council takes seriously its role in the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults: it annually renews its adherence to the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy, and is thus compliant with its duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 in relation to having due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding. During the year the safeguarding information on the church website and noticeboards was brought up to date in line with the most recent guidance from the Area Office, and continues to be monitored. The Safeguarding Officer is Chris Watkins, and the parish safeguarding audit is regularly reviewed.

Data protection

The Priest-in-Charge and Council take seriously their roles as Data Controllers in complying with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR), and the parish is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. The parish's General Privacy Notice is clearly signposted from the website and from staff emails, and consent forms are collected as necessary. Trustees and members of staff refreshed their GDPR training during the course of the year.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR—OUR MISSION AND ITS PUBLIC BENEFIT

A church open to all

The church is normally open every weekday from 7.00am to 5.30pm, and at every stage of the pandemic consideration was given to how to keep it open safely for as long as possible. There was a forced complete closure for three months during the first lockdown from March to June 2020, and for much of that time the windows on the garden side of the church were covered with protective boards provided by the Diocesan Property Department. When the church re-opened on 22 June it was initially for private prayer only and for shorter hours, firstly from 12.00 noon to 3.00 pm but later from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm. When open, the church is much used and appreciated by people from the surrounding businesses and by commuters from Liverpool Street Station.

Additionally, the Church Hall, Netball/Tennis Court and Churchyard normally occupy a central place in the life of many who work around Bishopsgate. The Churchyard is a busy thoroughfare as well as a place of rest, reflection and recreation and continued to be so when the church, Hall and Court were not permitted to be used. We see this as the provision of a most useful service to the public—all are welcome on our premises regardless of belief or opinion, and we strive to make everything we do in and around the church and Churchyard accessible to all in the area, including the local homeless community.

When it was possible to open the church for private prayer once more the Verger swung into action ordering signage, hygiene products and PPE, and continued to react swiftly to the subsequent changes in regulations. Our professional seamstress friend, Sue Young, offered some beautiful hand-made face coverings for the use of the staff. The Administrator registered St Botolph's for Visit England's 'Good to Go' scheme and we received regular updates as the guidance changed.

Throughout the pandemic period Fr David kept in close touch with members of the congregation and the wider St Botolph's 'family' with email updates and offers of pastoral support and telephone calls, and received many messages expressing gratitude for these encouraging emails and for keeping services going online from home and in church when permitted. A larger than usual number of Easter cards were sent, and Christmas cards, with a wonderfully uplifting photograph of Fr David and Freddie the church dog taken by Alastair Fyfe, the photographer who had taken professional photographs for the new website, were circulated to a wide range of friends and contacts.

An active and inclusive church

The Electoral Roll

In 2020 the Electoral Roll underwent its annual revision later in the year than usual, in advance of the delayed Annual Meetings on 19 October, and at the end of the year had 96 members, all of whom live outside the parish.

Worship in the first half of the year

In the first quarter of the year the lunchtime liturgies on Wednesday (1.10 pm Choral Mass) and Thursday (12.10 pm Said Mass) continued to attract both parishioners and visitors, as did the third regular weekday service introduced by Fr David from Advent 2019, a short Said Mass at 8.10 am on Tuesday to attract local workers who would benefit from a said service before work.

Ash Wednesday on 26 February saw an historic moment as St Botolph's welcomed Bishop Sarah to celebrate at the main lunchtime Choral Mass with Imposition of Ashes. There were good numbers at that service, and in addition Fr David offered early morning and early evening services with Imposition of Ashes, and made himself available for private ashing throughout the day. After this, however, there were only two more weeks of services before the first lockdown was announced.

During the pandemic, with fewer workers in the City, Fr David varied the services offered from time to time, but towards the end of the year settled on 1.10 services on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. St Botolph's acted quickly when it became clear that the churches were to be closed, and Fr David with Paul's assistance recorded several services to be streamed on the Tuesdays and Wednesdays of the first weeks of lockdown. After that, with clergy not allowed to enter their churches, Fr David continued to record services from home, and these were uploaded to our YouTube channel via our website, and added to our page on A Church Near You. Fr David, along with other like-minded priests, lobbied the Church of England and Government for the lifting of the ban on entering churches. In mid-May the ban was lifted, and Fr David was able to return to church weekly and record services for streaming on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. He has received many messages from parishioners and members of our wider 'family' to say how comforting and helpful they have found these while in isolation at home.

Services were given an additional boost from Ascension Day when we were able to include hymns and solo motets, recorded by soprano Rebecca Hardwick and our organist Iestyn Evans off-site. Mhairi enjoyed writing simple orders of service so the congregation could follow the music and hymns, and selecting appropriate artworks matching the themes and lessons of each service to help cover the musical selections, and Paul's video-editing skills were enhanced as he worked quickly to splice the musical items, the sound of our bells, the artworks and photographs of the church into a pleasing whole.

Our most ambitious service in this part of the year was the Patronal Festival on St Botolph's Day, Wednesday 17 June, when as well as glorious music we also incorporated video segments of the Senior Churchwarden and the Priest Missioner reading lessons, and the sermon from the distinguished guest preacher Lord Griffiths of Burry Port. The service was followed by a Zoom social gathering.

Worship in the second half of the year

Services in church began again from 15 July and were livestreamed as well, with single-use Mass books being produced for both Said and Choral Masses for use in church and for those watching online to follow. Once choral singing was permitted once more, the Choir were welcomed back with open arms from 9 September, when the service was celebrated as the Nativity of Our Lady with wonderful music. Mhairi was able to revert to producing a more normal style of service sheet to supplement the new interim Mass books. It became apparent that the equipment being used was not of sufficiently high quality for the broadcasts of services, and in order to be able to offer streamed and hybrid services to organisations and charities for Christmas more research was done into suitable equipment and firms to install it, with DK Systems being chosen.

By the time of the second lockdown in November the quality of the livestream was much higher, resulting in many more views online. Carol services were held with congregations both in church and following online for the Haemophilia Society, the Bishopsgate Ward Club, and the Honourable Artillery Company. Another carol service planned for 8 December had to be cancelled at short notice, but as the singers were already booked for it, Iestyn suggested that disappointment could be turned into opportunity by putting on a service of music and readings for Feast of the Conception of Our Lady.

This, as well as St Botolph's other December offerings of the Advent Carol Service, Parish Carol Service, an early evening Carols by Candlelight, and the Christmas Eve Mass and Crib Blessing, had many more online views than usual. The Choir and Fr David recorded a musical 'Christmas card' which was put out on YouTube and viewed by hundreds of friends and contacts.

Assisting clergy and service helpers

Our Priest Missioner, Fr Andrew Williams, continued to assist with services monthly until the pandemic struck, after which he was not able to come to St Botolph's until the Parish Carol Service, when he read the final lesson. We are most grateful to him, and to other visiting clergy who were able to assist when Fr David attended a New Incumbents' residential course in February.

We are also grateful to all those who give so generously of their time to play particular roles in regular worship, and would like to record our gratitude to the following people for their contributions in the first part of the year when services could take place as normal:

- our altar servers: David Lee and Ian Shadforth
- our additional assistants at Holy Communion: Chris Butten, Paul Gibson, Alastair Harris, Tommy Lacken and Chris Watkins
- our teams of readers and sidesmen
- our lay intercessors: Chris Butten and Christine Ferris
- our Tower Captain, John Adams, and his team of bellringers who usually ring for every Wednesday service

Sharing the church

On Sundays, St Botolph's continued to offer the hospitality of its fabric and space – when the pandemic regulations allowed – to the worshipping community of the Antiochian Orthodox Church of Great Britain. We also continued to welcome the Ethiopian Lutheran community of Mekane Yesus into our Church Hall on Sunday evenings until the time of the first lockdown.

A musical church, supporting the young

St Botolph's has an enviable reputation for the high standard of musical liturgy which it consistently delivers. As has been seen in the previous section of this report, the pattern of a variety of choral music at every Wednesday and major Feast Day service continued when guidance permitted. The Council would like to take this opportunity to thank Iestyn Evans, who together with his team of singers and deputy organists has provided such a high standard of music. At times when not many members of the congregation were able to be present in church, Iestyn and the singers were happy to add another string to their bow by reading lessons at services.

The Council was concerned to ensure that St Botolph's core group of singers was supported throughout the pandemic when most work for freelance musicians was inevitably cancelled, and financial support was offered to one singer who requested it.

During the first part of the year Iestyn and our organ consultant Professor David Titterington continued to work with enthusiasm on the plans for a rebuild of St Botolph's pipe organ, unplayable since the 1990s. A presentation was made to the January meeting of the Council, and distinguished firms of organ builders were invited to tender for the work, with the Swiss firm Kuhn being first with a proposal. The US firm C B Fisk welcomed Iestyn and Professor Titterington on a visit to view and play some of their organs in the USA, and had agreed to send representatives over in return to test the church acoustics on 23 March. Hotel rooms had been booked for the party but had to be cancelled when it became apparent that it would not be safe for them to travel. The third firm, Flentrop, had also been due to make a site visit in March, but the project had to be put on hold for the remainder of the year. The costs of the initial stages of this project are covered by a grant from the Bishopsgate Church Foundation.

Additional music is brought to our Wednesday services, weddings and occasionally memorial services by our loyal team of bellringers. After a long period of silence in 2019, during the period of work on the tower stonework, it was a further blow to the team that ringing in small spaces was not permitted from the start of the first lockdown, although some online footage of the bells being rung was found to introduce service videos over the Summer.

We were delighted as usual to be able to make church and Hall available to many visiting musical groups for concerts and rehearsals, although many planned concerts and events had inevitably to be postponed.

A highlight in February was the return of Lunchbreak Opera for another production in the Hall, this time of Lennox Berkeley's short comic opera *A Dinner Engagement*. Seven one-hour performances with rising young singers and players from the London conservatoires took place in the space of a week, and were well attended and received.

St Botolph's continued, when regulations permitted, to facilitate music-makers within local firms by providing a venue for the rehearsal and performance of their 'in-house' choirs and orchestras, and occasionally staff members practising the organ in the church, or solo singing in the Hall.

A church working in partnership with others

Close and fruitful liaison continued with our Livery Companies (the Worshipful Companies of Leathersellers, Coopers, Bowyers, and Fan Makers), with the Bishopsgate Ward Club, the Bishopsgate Institute, and with our linked regiments the Honourable Artillery Company (the HAC) and the Rifles, although inevitably some of the annual and carol services of these organisations had to be cancelled or postponed. The Bowyers were keen to hold their Master's Day Service in July: this turned out to be the first service to be held in church after the first lockdown, and an interesting experiment in technology as it was conducted by Zoom. The Coopers' Company Cloker Service was conducted by the same method. By the time of the carol service season the new audio-visual equipment was installed, and the clarity and quality of transmission were much appreciated by those who followed the services by livestream or the recording afterwards. Carol services were hosted for the Haemophilia Society, the Honourable Artillery Company and the Bishopsgate Ward Club: the HAC and the Ward Club offered donations towards the cost of the audio-visual equipment which had enhanced the quality of their services, and some of the other organisations which decided to cancel their carol services kindly made donations to church funds.

We are grateful for our links with, and the moral, financial and corporate support of, all these organisations - as well as that of many local businesses. Fr David contacted all the ratepayers in the parish in May with a pastoral letter offering support in difficult times and letting them know that the normal request for Voluntary Church Rate was being deferred in the circumstances. Encouraged by reports from other City churches of a reasonable return on their rate requests, it was decided that we should send a single rate request in the Autumn. There were delays in getting the necessary information from the Corporation, but the impasse was at length broken by an intervention from Churchwarden and Common Councillor Wendy Hyde, and in November another letter went out from Fr David, again offering his and the church's support to the local business community, but this time with a request that businesses would consider paying the full amount of their 2020 rate, or at least making a contribution towards it. A good many firms responded with payment and good wishes. Our thanks go to our Voluntary Church Rate Officer, Andy Newman, for his diligence and attention to detail in all aspects of the rate administration.

Members of St Botolph's Choir crossed the road to St Ethelburga's in October to continue a neighbourly tradition by providing the music for their patronal festival celebration, at which the Bishop of London officiated.

We continued to work in collaboration with the City of London Corporation and the Ward of Bishopsgate, with regular liaison with various departments of the Corporation, our local Common Councillors in Bishopsgate, and the City Police. When regulations allowed, the experiment begun in 2019 continued in the Hall of hosting a series of Homeless Hubs run jointly by the Corporation, the Police and agencies including St Mungo's (and subsequently Thames Reach): these had formerly been held under canvas in various parts of the City, including in Alderman's Walk in the parish. These resulted in several homeless people being given accommodation and being able to access other services.

Wendy Hyde CC, Churchwarden until October, continued to be an enthusiastic and valuable link between St Botolph's and the Corporation, and our thanks go to her for this helpful liaison. In her capacity as Chairman of the Keats House Consultative Committee she had introduced Fr David and Mhairi to the Curator of Keats House in 2019, and further liaison continued in 2020 as part of the ongoing Keats200 commemorations. As the church where the poet was baptised, St Botolph's had been delighted to host a successful evening of poetry and music marking the his birthday in 2019; a repetition of that event which had been planned for October 2020 was cancelled, but recordings of settings of Keats poems were made by Iestyn and one of the St Botolph's singers for broadcast on future significant anniversaries of the poet's life and death.

The Churchyard continued to host for the first part of the year the sculpture 'Reclining Nude 1' by Kevin Francis Gray as part of the City of London's 'Sculpture in the City' initiative. It was due to be replaced in the Summer by 'Burial' by Alice Channer, but the changeover was postponed due to the pandemic and the Gray piece remained in place to the end of the year.

St Botolph's was selected in 2018 as one of the City Churchyards to benefit from the City Churchyards Enhancement Programme, a joint initiative of the Corporation and the Diocese of London. Paul Gibson represented the church as part of the consultation process, and we look forward to hearing more about the plans in due course.

Fr David's *ex-officio* roles on the Boards of the Bishopsgate Institute, The Central Foundation Schools of London, and the Samuel Butler Foundation continued. The church's presence in these governance *fora* is an important part of our contribution to our area, and a further example of our acting to enable public benefit.

A church engaging with its community

Our website and social media pages are regularly updated with the latest news and have continued to attract new people to church, as have our regular advertisements in City Events. We publish full lists of services and events monthly online; special services and events are also advertised on A Church Near You and Eventbrite, with postings on the latter proving particularly successful in bringing new congregation members to carol services and raising awareness of our presence among different demographics. Our paper bulletin was replaced from the time of the first lockdown with regular emails from Fr David to a wider range of contacts. During the year the staff continued to work on plans for a refreshed website.

We are lucky to have the Hall and Court as additional facilities to offer our community, and for the first part of the year Paul Gibson made sure that both were booked to the highest capacity by firms, charities and other organisations both local and from further afield. Hall users from WeightWatchers to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Heroes Band to the City Historical Society, were made welcome by our team of diligent caretakers, supported by our efficient new cleaning firm Clean for Good.

A church that remembers

The year 2020 was bookended with the news of the deaths of two distinguished former members of the clergy at St Botolph's. The PCC noted with sadness in January the death of St Botolph's Rector from 1997 to 2006, The Revd Prebendary David Paton, in December 2019. His funeral had taken place near his home in France, but plans were made for a memorial service at All Saints Margaret Street in late March, followed by a City commemoration at St Botolph's on Wednesday 1 April. Both these services had to be postponed because of the pandemic, but with the firm intention that they will proceed when larger services are once again permitted. Towards the end of the year we learned that our former Honorary Assistant Priest, The Revd Dr John Turner, who had served the church faithfully over 30 years until his retirement in 2017, had died in May 2020. Again we hope to be able to hold a memorial service for him in due course. May they rest in peace.

We heard during the year of the deaths of several other people closely connected to St Botolph's, whether from coronavirus or other causes, and we are aware that when larger services are eventually allowed once more several memorial services will be requested. In the meantime we continue to pray for all those affected by the virus, for those caring for them, and for those who have died.

On Sunday 14 June we joined willingly in the Bishop of Kensington's 'Ring for Grenfell' initiative to ring the bells of as many churches as possible in the Diocese to mark the third anniversary of the 72 deaths in the Grenfell Tower fire. Tommy came in specially to the closed church, valiantly tolled the bell 72 times, and was thanked on behalf of the Grenfell families in an email from the Bishop after the commemoration.

In late October, we welcomed back the Haemophilia Society for their Annual Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance for those who have died as a result of treatment with contaminated blood products. Among many moving readings and musical items, Iestyn and the Choir gave a further performance of an anthem specially written for the service by members of the haemophiliac community. This was one of the first services using the new audio-visual equipment, so as well as the congregation in church hundreds were enabled to follow the service online.

Continuing the theme of Remembrance, our own Choral Requiem for the Commemoration of All Souls, including beautiful music and the ceremonies of the solemn reading out the names of the deceased and lighting of candles in their memory, was additionally poignant because of the weight of knowledge of all the additional deaths due to the coronavirus pandemic.

On Friday 6 November only the principal officers of the Honourable Artillery Company attended St Botolph's in person for their Remembrance Service, but nearly 500 viewed the service online. During the service a new wreath was laid by the HAC memorials; prior to the main service the old wreath was placed outside at the memorial Cross in the Churchyard (the first memorial to the Great War to be erected in London) with a short act of remembrance.

Fr David once again prepared to assist the Railway Chaplain with the leading of Remembrance prayers by the vast war memorial on Liverpool Street Station on Armistice Day, but sadly alterations to Government guidance concerning Remembrance services did not permit this commemoration to take place.

A church working charitably at home and abroad

We are deeply grateful that charitable giving of £11,350 has been possible in 2020—the PCC is committed to its role in assisting in a small way other charities wherever possible, and in 2020, despite the downturn in income, continued its deliberate policy of supporting charities already linked in some way with us.

During the year we continued our partnership with St Francis at the Engine Room in Tottenham Hale, and while this partnership continues the support of the Priest Missioner will continue to be the object of our Lenten collections and almsgiving. As in previous years (when they were seen as Common Fund top-ups) it was agreed to make grants towards parishes less well off: St Francis at the Engine Room and St Mary's Cable Street both received support in this way. In addition, grants were made among others to Christian Aid, and to St Mungo's for its work with the homeless. St Mungo's was also one of the chosen charities for which we raised funds during Advent, along with MIND in Haringey.

We continued our close relationship with XLP (the ExCeL Project) based at All Hallows on the Wall in the parish. In the course of the year the PCC received XLP's report on the final year's tranche of the Section 106 funding earmarked for youth work from the Heron Tower, which St Botolph's had channelled for the support of their 'Ready to Work' programme.

We were pleased to be able to act as agents in the processing of further charitable donations, and also, at times when bookings were permitted, to be able to offer our premises at greatly discounted rates for the use of local, national and international charities.

The Bishopsgate Ward Club, wishing to make further charitable donations to local causes during the pandemic, approached Fr David for advice on the distribution of £1,000, and agreed with his proposal that it be divided between St Mungo's and XLP. St Botolph's then received and passed on these grants, which were gratefully received by the charities.

The school which we built in 2012 in the parish of St Barnabas, Songo, Uige, Angola (in conjunction with our former US partner church St Barnabas, Greenwich, CT) continues to overflow with many hundreds of local pupils. During the year we exchanged seasonal greetings with the parish (with the help of Portuguese-speaking translators) and received an update from Songo in the form of a video showing the creation of clean water wells in the region. Happily this featured Archdeacon Garcia Kazayilawoko, the parish priest of St Barnabas, enabling Council members to put a face and voice to his name.

A church playing its part in the Diocese, and beyond

St Botolph's has continued to pay its full share of Common Fund – at a significantly higher level now we have a full-time priest – and so support the wider charitable work of the Diocese.

St Botolph's once again supported 'Thy Kingdom Come', the annual Week of Prayer from Ascension to Pentecost, in conjunction with the Diocesan initiative 'Capital Vision 2020'.

We continued our membership of the Society of St Botolph, an informal linking of all the parishes in the UK and abroad dedicated to our patron saint.

Christine Ferris continued to sit on the City Deanery Synod, partnered until October by John Marshall and, from his election at the Annual Meeting, Alex Coles. We are grateful to them for their faithful attendance at meetings, and for their report on the Synod's proceedings, presented to the Annual Meeting at the same time as this Report. This provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the Church.

The network of City church administrators and church workers, inaugurated in the early 2000s by Mhairi Ellis when she was Area Dean's Assistant (and more recently enhanced by the addition of the administrators from the Westminster Deaneries) continues to operate. Now with Katrina Bradley, Administrator at St Lawrence Jewry and a former member of St Botolph's congregation and PCC, at the helm, this network allows encouragement and support, assistance in need, and sharing of information across the Two Cities Area, although inevitably the liaison had to be virtual for the larger part of the year.

A well-staffed church

St Botolph's benefits greatly from knowledgeable and dedicated staff. Paul Gibson and Mhairi Ellis have contributed greatly to the success of St Botolph's for many years, yet remain innovative and focused in their work. Fr David and the Churchwardens are particularly thankful to the staff for adapting with good grace and flexibility to the unusual, and at times, trying working practices inflected due to the pandemic and lockdown regulations.

In all that we do at St Botolph's, we endeavour to reflect the Christian ethics by which we live. In this respect we are very fortunate to have staff who openly share the ethos and aims of the church. When the staff are all working from the church, formal staff meetings are held each Monday morning, and from the time of the first lockdown, when Mhairi and Paul had to pack up necessary equipment and paperwork and start working from home, a pattern quickly developed of twice-weekly Zoom staff meetings.

Mhairi and Paul proved themselves willing and able to take on new roles and learn new skills whilst working from home and, taking advantage of sessions run at no or little cost by organisations and charities, between them they have notched up many hours of attendance at webinars covering digital media, website editing, property management, financial matters, fundraising and the future of church music.

Throughout the year the staff deal with many genealogical and historical queries, both from visitors to the church and in enquiries by email and telephone. They are always learning something new about the fascinating buildings in which they have the privilege to work. Occasionally we are offered gifts of historical items relating to the church which are gratefully received and carefully looked after.

Mhairi, having been appointed Parish Clerk of St Botolph's following the resignation of John Hughesdon in 2017 and elected to membership of the Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks in 2018, continued to represent St Botolph's during 2020 with attendance at the Company's services and functions, mostly online.

Our caretaking team, Tommy Lacken, Jeff Parkinson and Ade Salau, for their part continued to work happily and efficiently, welcoming church, Hall and Court users for the first part of the year.

During the first lockdown Tommy made regular visits to the church to check that all was secure and in order. When the church was able to open again, he became Fr David's constant companion in the building and in services, and as he had to open early in the morning for the cleaner his hours became full time, with more hours added when the Antiochian community were able to return, necessitating another visit on Saturday morning to open up for the cleaner again. Tommy has been willing to turn his hand to any new and unusual tasks demanded by the pandemic and lockdowns. He has acted as server for all the Masses, and has become a technical expert in learning the complexities of the new online streaming equipment. His willingness and enthusiasm has been greatly appreciated.

For much of the remainder of the year there was little for Jeff and Ade to do. We were pleased to hear in October that Ade had been successful in securing full-time work elsewhere, although sad to see him leave as he had been a real asset to the team, and the PCC sent him on his way with a farewell bonus. This meant that Jeff was now asked to cover all the hours he and Ade formerly shared on Sundays – but not for long, as the second lockdown period in November meant that the Antiochians were not permitted to use the church on Sundays. We were, however, able to claim for Jeff under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for this period.

Caretaker pay was once again increased in line with the London Living Wage, and towards the end of 2020 St Botolph's was proud to become an employer accredited by the Living Wage Foundation.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The 2020 financial year has been an extremely challenging year for the parish with a substantial drop in income as a result of restrictions arising from the COVID pandemic including the closure of the church with total income less than half of that in 2019. Expenditure also fell somewhat as a consequence of these restrictions but not to the same extent as income, resulting in a net deficit of £94,467 of income over expenditure. These developments are discussed in more detail below.

Income

In general, parish income was considerably lower in 2020 at £201,790 than the much higher figure of £407,151 in 2019. The closure of the church and its facilities had a major impact on the commercial income generated from Church Hall lettings, Netball/Tennis Court receipts and the hire of the church which fell to £31,904 in 2020 from £115,872 in 2019. Income from General Fund donations fell from £39,838 in 2019 to £16,698 in 2020. Service collections also fell during the same period from £8,902 to just £448 reflecting the closure of the church for much of the time and the very small attendance in between periods of lockdown. Other donations fell from £22,813 in 2019 to £12,705 in 2020. Income tax recovery was lower too, falling from £6,565 to £2,807 reflecting the smaller eligible income on which to make eligible Gift Aid claims. The grant received from the Bishopsgate Church Foundation was £35,035 against a higher grant of £108,416 in 2019 in part to assist with Quinquennial works expenditure. The Voluntary Church Rate fell by 28% over the year from £39,087 to £28,126, but to retain as much as this at a time when most other businesses in the City are also facing major financial challenges reflects the earlier good work done in communicating with our business community. Investment income arising from the unrestricted funds fell slightly from £31,419 in 2019 to £30,242 in 2020 due to the reduction in the capital value of funds invested after the realisation of £60k of CCLA investments during the course of the year to meet cash flow commitments. However, the distribution income per unit actually increased over the year reflecting the resilient income distribution policy and underlying performance of the CCLA CBF Investment Fund.

Expenditure

The total expenditure figure for 2020 of £296,257 contrasts with the far higher 2019 figure of £415,573 and reflects reduced operational activity in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. Overall, total expenditure in 2020 of £296,257 exceeded total income of £201,790 giving rise to a significant deficit of £94,467 for the year compared with a much smaller deficit of £8,422 in 2019.

Investments

Investment performance during 2020 was extremely volatile with a significant downturn in the first half of the year and a major recovery in the second half of the year. The valuation of investments managed by CCLA benefited from improving markets during 2020 which led to unrealised gains of just over £84k or an increase of around 5.6% over the year from an opening balance of £1,493,035 to a closing balance of £1,517,162. The Rectory whose acquisition was funded by the realisation of investments assets in 2018 is shown in the balance sheet under tangible fixed assets at an original acquisition cost of £655k.

Since the financial year end on 31 December 2020, there have been significant effects on investment markets as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic with great volatility in markets from March 2020 onwards with implications for the valuation of investments managed by CCLA and income arising from those investments. Our investment strategy and asset allocation will be kept under review in the light of further developments.

Significant Post Balance Sheet Event: COVID-19

Since the financial year end on 31 December 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing restrictions imposed by Government continue to depress the potential for income and it is still unclear as to when our commercial income is likely to recover fully although income from our CCLA investments and the letting income from the Rectory remain resilient. Our activities as a parish together with our investment strategy and asset allocation are being kept under continuous review in the light of further developments. However, notwithstanding these developments, the Parish has sufficient reserves to continue operating. The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the PCC's ability to continue as a going concern.

Reserves policy

During 2017 the Council approved the Finance Committee's proposal that £70,000, representing three months' salary and essential running costs, should be borne in mind as a basic reserve fund, although it was not necessary to set it aside separately as the General Fund already had substantial reserves in investments which could be readily called upon. The Council remained committed to rebuilding the Fabric Fund which had been depleted by the Quinquennial works in 2015-17.

Stewardship

St Botolph's operates a planned giving envelope scheme into which several congregation members have entered, and others give regularly by standing order. Gift Aid is reclaimed wherever applicable.

Alternative methods of donation and support

As the first lockdown went on, the church's income continued to be depressed both by the lack of bookings of church, Hall, and Court, and by the lack of service collections which were not permitted during the pandemic period. From the time of the Patronal Festival in June service sheets, email circulations and website announcements gave gentle encouragement to those who would normally give regularly in services or occasionally by other means, to consider, if their financial circumstances permitted, making a regular or one-off donation to support St Botolph's, and this approach bore some fruit.

The Council had entered into a contract with the contactless and mobile payment company SumUp in 2019, and contactless payment as an alternative to cash donations in services became more common as awareness was raised. Towards the end of 2020 the Verger undertook further research into a possible additional static device which would remove the need for interaction with a member of staff.

The Administrator researched organisations which facilitate charitable donations during online shopping, and by the end of the year had registered St Botolph's with Amazon Smile and was investigating Give as you Live and Easy Fundraising.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Council is responsible for keeping proper accounting records, for taking reasonable steps to safeguard the assets of the Parish and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities. The Council confirms that suitable accounting policies have been used and applied consistently, and reasonable and prudent judgements and estimates have been made in the preparation of the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2020. The Council also confirms that applicable accounting standards have been followed and that the financial statements which appear with this Annual Report have been prepared on a going concern basis.

FR DAVID REFLECTS ON THE YEAR 2020

The past year has presented St Botolph's with very many challenges and opportunities. Despite the strangeness of the situation, we have been given the opportunity to reach out afresh to existing and new congregations. As the majority of our regular congregation members were unable to attend services in person, our investment in professional quality livestreaming equipment has proved invaluable. It is appreciated especially by those, such as Livery Companies and the Honourable Artillery Company, for whom we hold occasional services in the church.

Whilst working from home meant absence from St Botolph's for usual regular attendees, it meant we welcomed new faces to our services. During lockdown we attracted many new people from across London. Many had found us online and many came because we were one of the few churches to maintain as full a schedule of Masses as was possible throughout lockdown. All of this I could not do without the support of such dedicated staff. Thank you to the staff, Churchwardens, PCC and members of our congregations for all your advice and support during 2020, and most of all for your Christian friendship.

St Botolph's is a place of God's love and sanctuary in a busy and sometimes hostile world. I promise to endeavour as best I can to maintain and enhance that legacy which I, thank God, have inherited.

With God's love and blessings, Fr David

OUR THANKS

St Botolph's continues to flourish due to the dedication and support of many people: those who have been named in this report and countless other parishioners, friends and organisations who support us with their resources and their prayers.

The Parish Priest, Churchwardens and PCC continue to give thanks to Almighty God for his many mercies in the life of St Botolph's, and for the increase of God's Kingdom in this place.

On behalf of the PCC



The Revd David Armstrong, Rector, Chairman

13 May 2021