

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

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the year ending 31 December 2021

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.

As in 2020, the Report for 2021 will inevitably be dominated, as was the year itself, by the continuing Coronavirus pandemic and St Botolph's response to it under the leadership of the Rector, 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, and St Botolph's reacted swiftly to every change in regulations and restrictions. More detail about the various phases of the pandemic and our response at each stage 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 Rector, 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, KSA Property, 6 Midland House, 109-113 Victoria Road, Romford, Essex RM1 2LX

AIMS AND PURPOSES

The Parochial Church Council of St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate has the responsibility of co-operating with the Rector 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 sacrament, music, prayer, and exegesis. 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, remained 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 have very much in mind the Diocese of London's collective 2030 Vision, with its aim 'for every Londoner to encounter the love of God in Christ' and its themes of Confident Disciples, Compassionate Communities and Creative Growth.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

We continued to respond rapidly to the challenges and changes 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'. We were delighted that our application to join Inclusive Church was accepted early in 2021 - this membership publicly affirms our belief that the Church should celebrate and affirm every person and does not discriminate in any way. Our 'open door' policy was maintained throughout the year, to ensure a ready welcome to all visitors, although opening hours remained restricted because of a shortage of caretaker cover. 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, and despite needing to rely on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which meant some time restrictions - 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 to 29 April 2021, thereafter Rector)

Mr Frank Curtiss (Churchwarden)

Ms Chris Watkins (Churchwarden)

Mrs Christine Ferris (Deanery Synod representative)

Mr Alex Coles (Deanery Synod representative)

Elected members

Mr Christopher Butten, Mr Nick Creswick Gough, Mr Simon Davis (from 20 May), Mr Alastair Harris, Ms Wendy Hyde CC, Mr Peter Kibble, Mr Christopher Lawrance (from 20 May), Mr David Lee (to 20 May) Miss Mary Moore, Mr David Westover (to 20 May)

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 Rector 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 the start of the pandemic in 2020 stepped up the frequency of its engagement, meeting monthly by Zoom to oversee the parish's finances, with meeting notes being regularly circulated to the full Council. This meeting pattern continued through 2021.

During 2021 the full Council met for business six times by Zoom. 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).

The Annual Meetings were able to take place in May, again by Zoom. The Churchwardens elected at the Annual Vestry Meeting were admitted to office by Fr David, acting as the Archdeacon of London's Commissary, in church at the beginning of the Patronal Festival Mass on 16 June, as it was not yet possible for the usual large gatherings for the Area Visitations to 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 prior to meetings reports on Finance, Fabric, and Services, Events and Activities, as well as 'Coronavirus updates'. The Independent Examiner, Mrs Julie Griggs, attended and address the April meeting, and the October meeting received an update on the organ rebuild project from our Organ Consultant, Professor David Titterington, and Iestyn Evans, our Organist and Director of Music.

Dates of meetings and attendance

The number of members of the Council throughout the year was 13.

Full business meeting, Wednesday 7 January	<i>Present 10, apologies 3</i>
Meeting concerning Fr David's presentation as Incumbent of the Benefice, Wednesday 3 February	<i>Present 11, apologies 1 (Fr David not permitted to be present)</i>
Full business meeting, Wednesday 28 April	<i>Present 9, apologies 4</i>
Meeting after the APCM, Thursday 20 May	<i>Present 10, apologies 3</i>
Full business meeting, Wednesday 28 July	<i>Present 10, apologies 3</i>
Full business meeting, Thursday 28 October	<i>Present 7, apologies 6</i>

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

- Fabric, including tower sway tests (final works resulting from 2018 Quinquennial Inspection), new sculpture in Churchyard
- Organ rebuild project – designs, chosen builders, funding options
- Planning for and opening of The Good Coffee Kiosk in the Bishopsgate porch of the church
- Homelessness, rough sleeping and mental health issues in the City – liaison with Corporation, Police and charities, Homeless Hubs in the Hall
- PCC policies – updated and reviewed during the year, and a new Investment Policy introduced
- Financial matters, including budget, Accounts, Voluntary Church Rate, Rectory rental, hire charges, sale of Property Fund investments at CCLA
- Common Fund, including decisions on top-ups in support of other churches for 2021
- 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, Veterans Aid, and for Afghan children at Aldgate School
- Church, Hall and Court running, including the implementation of Covid-19 safety measures
- Liturgy and music, including Director of Music's annual report, new forms of service and service books necessary as different pandemic restrictions were lifted
- IT and communications, including new website, regular communication with parishioners and wider community, new equipment to enable staff to work flexibly in office and at home
- 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 staff work patterns and furlough, and the search for a new caretaker to enable the church to return to full opening hours

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, and staffing matters.

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. The Safeguarding Officer is Chris Watkins, and the parish safeguarding audit has been regularly reviewed.

Data protection

The Rector 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

In normal times the church would be open every weekday from 7.30am to 5.30pm, but owing to the lack of caretaker cover opening hours had to be restricted during 2021 to 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, and it was good to see them all being used once again when restrictions began to be lifted. The Churchyard is a busy thoroughfare as well as a place of rest, reflection and recreation, and we are grateful to the Corporation's Open Spaces team who keep the garden and the Court so well maintained. 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.

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 underwent its annual revision in advance of the Annual Meetings on 20 May, and at the end of the year had 96 members, all of whom live outside the parish.

The temporary service schedule - established towards the end of 2020 to reflect the working patterns of those starting to come back to work in the City - of Said Masses on Tuesday and Thursday, and Choral Mass on Wednesday and Feast Days, all at 1.10pm, continued to attract both parishioners and visitors. Thanks to the audio-visual equipment installed late in 2020, many more were able to follow services from their homes, either live or at a later time.

The main changes to the liturgy as the restrictions began to be lifted were the return of congregational singing in July and the return of the Chalice in September, both of which were greeted with great joy. From October it was once again permitted to pass the collection plate through the congregation in services. New interim Mass books were produced to reflect each change. The highest standards of Covid hygiene were maintained, and clergy and congregation members were careful throughout the year to respect, and encourage others to respect, those who felt more vulnerable in gatherings and indoor spaces.

As well as the full programme of regular services, St Botolph's own 'special' services during the year included as a highlight Fr David's Institution by the Bishop of London and Induction by the Archdeacon of London as Rector of St Botolph's. In any other year this would have been marked by a full church and a suitably sparkling reception, but those present in church and following online were nonetheless able to enjoy a solemn occasion and splendid music.

The Patronal Festival was celebrated on 16 June, with Fr Chris Vipers of St Mary Moorfields proving a thought-provoking guest preacher. Following the initial and very successful St Francis Day Animal Blessing in 2019, a second attempt this October saw Fr David and Freddie the church dog welcoming many animals into church for a simple service of blessing followed by a social gathering. In among the many carol services put on by external organisations, our own December offerings of the Advent Carol Service, Parish Carol Service, an early evening Carols by Candlelight, and the Christmas Eve Mass and Crib Blessing, brought many people into church and had many online views.

It was a joy to welcome back our Priest Missioner, Fr Andrew Williams, to assist with services monthly from May. We are most grateful to him, and to other visiting clergy who were able to assist when necessary during the year.

We are also grateful to all those who give generously of their time to play particular roles in regular worship, although the normal rotas for sidesmen, readers, lay intercessors and servers had of necessity to be suppressed for the time being.

Weddings and baptisms planned for 2020 were moved to 2021 or further ahead, and Fr David kept in touch with the couples and families about plans for their postponed celebrations. The first marriage blessing service for many months took place on Friday 9 July, followed by another on 18 September, and the first wedding since 2019 took place in December. By the end of the year a more normal stream of requests was being considered for wedding and blessing services, several of which had come through the new enquiry form on the website.

From May 2021 a new system of marriage registration was introduced, modernising the process for the first time since the Marriage Act 1837. Registration is now electronic rather than paper-based, so couples no longer sign the register as part of the church ceremony. Clergy and administrators had received training on the new system, and we put it into effect, with success but not without some trepidation, with our December wedding couple.

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. The other congregation which usually uses the Hall on Sundays, the Ethiopian Lutheran community of Mekane Yesus, felt more comfortable continuing to worship from home throughout 2021.

A musical church, supporting the young

St Botolph's has an enviable reputation for the high standard of musical liturgy which is consistently delivered. 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. Especially in the first part of the year when not many members of the congregation were able to be present in church, Iestyn and the singers remained happy to add another string to their bow by reading lessons at services.

During the first part of the year Iestyn and our distinguished organ consultant Professor David Titterton continued to work on the plans for a rebuild of St Botolph's pipe organ, unplayable since the 1990s. The US firm C B Fisk Inc, who had been due to visit to test the church acoustics in March 2020, were finally able to rebook their visit in September, and their delegation was welcomed with warmth and hospitality. The Fisk team approached their task with thoroughness and efficiency: every corner of the church was measured closely, and they asked for singers and musicians to be present to sing and play from various places in the building, including somewhat precariously up ladders! When the party returned to the States the firm got busy on the production of designs which were presented to the PCC's October meeting, resulting in the enthusiastic aspiration that St Botolph's firmly wished to rebuild its pipe organ within the historic case, and that they wanted C B Fisk Inc to be the builders. The costs of the preliminary stages of this project have been 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, led by our Tower Captain, John Adams. Ringers were permitted to gather in groups once again in the summer, and regular lunchtime ringing began at St Botolph's on 21 July. This was closely followed by a Festival of Bells on 31 July when in an initiative of the Lord Mayor all the City's bells rang out to mark the re-opening of the City.

We were delighted as usual to be able to make church and Hall available to visiting musical groups for concerts and rehearsals. Many planned concerts and events continued to be postponed, but from the Autumn it was wonderful to see the joy of choirs who were able once again to come together to make music.

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.

Livery company services planned for May (Parish Clerks) and June (Leathersellers) were cancelled because of the ongoing difficulty of getting people together in large numbers for church services followed by hospitality, but we invited these Companies to join us online for our regular worship on the days in question, which was appreciated. The Bowyers' Company did come to church for a one-off special service in late May to mark the 400th anniversary of the granting of their Charter: Mhairi took great pleasure in devising a programme of music to mark each century of the Company's history since the Charter, and hearing it performed with their usual verve by Iestyn and the Choir.

It was a pleasure to welcome the Fan Makers back to St Botolph's for a Service of Reflection and Hope on 23 September, and the Coopers held their Henry Cloker Service in October as usual, albeit in the morning rather than the evening as an experiment to see if more people might attend. The Bowyers and Leathersellers held their traditional carol services, and the Coopers joined as usual for the Parish Carol Service, although sadly the Coopers' School Choir withdrew at the last minute as the Omicron variant of Coronavirus started to spread.

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. It can sometimes be difficult for a member of the clergy to gain access to businesses in the parish, so Fr David was pleased that, from its opening in September, management of the new Pan Pacific Hotel opposite the church on Bishopsgate have been keen to engage with St Botolph's. Following Fr David's pastoral circulation to the parish ratepayers in 2020, there was a reasonable return on the Voluntary Church Rate requests in 2021, and 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.

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. The fortnightly Homeless Hubs hosted in our Hall and run jointly by the Corporation, the Police and homeless agencies were put on a firmer footing with substantial financial support, resulting in many homeless people being given accommodation and being able to access other services. Fr David has also developed a working relationship with the Chair of the Corporation's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee, Marianne Fredericks CC. In December the Hall also hosted Night Hubs for vulnerable people, particularly women, on the City streets on fourteen weekend nights during December, funded by a Government grant via the Corporation.

Wendy Hyde CC, PCC member and sometime Churchwarden, 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 2021 as the Keats200 commemorations drew to a close. As the church where the poet was baptised, St Botolph's was selected to host one of the 2021 events, but the upsurge in Covid infections towards the end of the year meant that it was postponed.

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 replaced in the Summer by 'Burial' by Alice Channer, which has received much comment.

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 (now with additional responsibility for the future strategy of the charity), 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 had been replaced from the time of the first lockdown in 2020 with regular emails from Fr David to a wider range of contacts, and towards the end of the year a monthly electronic newsletter was successfully moved on to the MailChimp platform. After many months of research and hard work our new website was launched early in 2021, and has been much admired.

We are lucky to have the Hall and Court as additional facilities to offer our community, and it was good when restrictions began to be lifted to see users coming back to both, and changes in working patterns as the City re-opened for business inevitably had an impact on the way they were both used. The lunchtime netball league was not able to operate, but the ability to book and pay for Court use directly through the new website resulted in an upsurge of casual bookings, and the main evening hirers PowerPlay came back from the Spring, initially for two evenings and then extending to their normal four towards the end of the year. Some regular Hall users had during the lockdown periods moved their business to new online models rather than meeting in person – these included WeightWatchers, who had hired the Lower Hall daily for many years, and who brought their tenure to an end during 2021, leaving the church staff actively seeking new uses for the Lower Hall to replace the reliable WeightWatchers income. Negotiations took place for the hire of the Upper Hall for a summer school for primary school children who had suffered from a lack of teaching due to successive lockdown periods, but unfortunately this was not able to go ahead in the end due to lack of funding support. All hirers were made welcome by our team of diligent caretakers, supported by our efficient and ethical cleaning firm Clean for Good.

As City workers began to return in greater numbers in the Autumn they were greeted by a new independent and ethical takeaway drinks outlet – the Good Coffee Kiosk, which opened in mid-September in the Bishopsgate entrance of St Botolph's. Preparations for the kiosk had been under way throughout the year, with the start-up and initial operating costs supported by a generous loan from the Bishopsgate Church Foundation. Once Faculty permission had been obtained from the Diocese, the kiosk itself was constructed by the social enterprise Goldfinch using sustainable materials, and other friendly suppliers rallied round with ethically sourced equipment and supplies. Our charming and enthusiastic barista Jose opened the kiosk from 7.00 am to 2.00 pm daily offering Fairtrade hot drinks to City workers and visitors, and has already attracted a good number of loyal regulars.

A church that remembers

We continued to hear during the year of the deaths of people both closely connected to the church and among its wider family, whether from Coronavirus or other causes, and we are aware that more several memorial services will be requested in due course. 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.

We were saddened to learn the news of the death on 9 April of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, and our regular Wednesday service on 14 April was transformed into a solemn Choral Requiem in his memory.

As soon as it seemed safe to gather in large numbers once more, memorial services appeared, and several large services were held in the autumn months. Our first memorial service in church for eighteen months took place in early September with a packed church, and the collection at that service included the first income for the Organ Rebuild Appeal, partly through the intervention of Alderman Sir Andrew Parmley, who appeared that day as the distinguished guest organist. By chance the electronic organ failed that day and he had to accompany the choir and the hymn-singing of the capacity congregation on our stage piano, giving Fr David an excellent reason to plug the organ rebuild project! Shortly after that another memorial service took place for a former treasurer of Veterans Aid, a charity working with former service personnel who have become homeless. We had not previously encountered the work of this charity but were very impressed with what we learned about them - and they apparently with us, as they expressed a wish for St Botolph's to become 'their church'.

In October we welcomed the Haemophilia Society for their annual Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance for those who have died as a result of the contaminated blood tragedy. This moving service was closely followed by our own Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (All Souls) on 3 November which included the ritual, which many find so helpful, of the solemn reading out of the names of the departed while their relatives light candles in their memory. Fr David led the Armistice Day Commemoration at Liverpool Street Station on 11 November; for the first time St Botolph's provided a singer for this short ceremony as well as a keyboard player. The following day we welcomed the Honourable Artillery Company, their Royal Colonel, HRH Prince Michael of Kent, and their Padre for the regimental Service of Remembrance. Two other large memorial services for City figures took place in church during November.

Services in memory of Prebendary David Paton, our former Rector, who died in December 2019, had been planned in the Spring of 2020 but were inevitably postponed. They were finally able to take place in December: an evening Requiem Mass at All Saints Margaret Street (the church from where he went to ordination training) on Tuesday 14 December and a lunchtime Requiem Mass at St Botolph's (his final parish post) the following day. Both services were livestreamed and have been much appreciated by Fr David's family and his friends including those in the village in France where he spent his final years.

In fact many more people were enabled to join *all* these services online, and we have received many messages of thanks for offering the facility of livestreaming and recording the services. During the year the audio-visual equipment was enhanced by the purchase of a second microphone which proved helpful for services where more than one priest was present.

A church working charitably at home and abroad

We are grateful that, despite the ongoing depression in income, a small amount of charitable giving was possible in 2021. The PCC is committed to its role in assisting in a small way other charities wherever possible, and in 2021 continued its policy of supporting organisations 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 Vicar, our Priest Missioner Fr Andrew Williams, 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. MIND in Haringey was once again also one of the chosen charities for which we raised funds during Advent, along with our new friends at Veterans Aid. We also responded strongly to an appeal to the City churches for funding for school uniforms for a group of Afghan children, from among the families who had been airlifted out of the country, who had started at the Aldgate School in the autumn.

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. We continued our close relationship with XLP (the ExCeL Project) based at All Hallows on the Wall in the parish.

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 Fr David was delighted to be asked to record the Morning Prayer service organised by ALMA (the Angola, London Mozambique Association), the Diocese's link group with our partner dioceses in Lusophone Africa, on the very day in October that our own linked parish was being prayed for across the Diocese of London and beyond.

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 as we now have a full-time priest - and so support the wider charitable work of the Diocese.

Christine Ferris and Alex Coles continued to represent St Botolph's on the City Deanery Synod. 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 with the wider structures of the Church.

During the year Fr David was elected as one of the clergy representatives on the City Deanery Synod Standing Committee, and he continues regularly to attend Deanery Chapter.

St Botolph's once again supported 'Thy Kingdom Come', the annual Week of Prayer from Ascension to Pentecost, in conjunction with the Diocesan initiative '2030 Vision'.

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.

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 remained 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 frequently changing working practices which have been necessary during the ongoing pandemic.

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, but during the greater part of the year the pattern of twice-weekly Zoom staff meetings initiated during 2020 continued.

Mhairi and Paul had to be furloughed for a day and a half each week from January to September. They continued to work entirely from home until the end of August, but from September returned to working at the church for one or two days a week. New IT equipment was necessary to support this new working pattern, and we are as ever grateful to Andy Newman for his expertise, and for his willingness to spend the additional time necessary to visit St Botolph's remote outposts to upgrade and replace equipment and software.

The staff proved themselves willing and able to take on new roles and learn new skills whilst working from home and then working in the new hybrid pattern, and continued to take advantage of online training sessions run at no or little cost by various organisations and charities to extend their knowledge in various areas relevant to their work.

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 2021 with attendance at the Company's services and functions, still mostly online.

Our main caretaker, Tommy Lacken, continued to work cheerfully and efficiently at church, remaining Fr David's constant companion in the building and in services for the greater part of the year until the other staff returned, and welcoming hirers and visitors to the church. Tommy has remained willing to turn his hand to any new and unusual tasks demanded by the ongoing pandemic situation. He has acted as server for all the Masses, and has become expert in the complexities of the audio-visual equipment. His willingness and enthusiasm has been greatly appreciated by all. When the Antiochians returned on Sundays, and the Heroes Band on Mondays to use the Hall, assistant caretaker Jeff Parkinson returned to his role as well. However, with Tommy working full time from early in the morning – even earlier when the coffee kiosk opened – it was apparent that further caretaking assistance would be necessary to allow the church to return to its former normal opening hours, and a suitable candidate was being actively sought in many quarters as the year came to a close.

Caretaker pay was once again increased in line with the London Living Wage.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The 2021 financial year has seen an improvement from the dire position in 2020 but not a full recovery to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019, and consequently 2021 continued to be an extremely challenging year for the parish with income still substantially below that of pre-pandemic years as a result of remaining restrictions arising from the Covid pandemic, which continued in some form throughout the year, and the slow return of people to the Bishopsgate area. Expenditure increased in 2021 resulting in an operating deficit of £52,715 representing an improvement on the 2020 deficit of £94,467 but still significantly worse than the modest deficit of £8,422 in 2019.

Income

In general, parish income was significantly higher in 2021 at £303,638 over the 2020 figure of £201,790 but still well below the 2019 figure of £407,151. The continuing closure for part of the year of the church and its facilities had a major impact on the commercial income generated from Church Hall lettings, Netball and Tennis Court receipts and the hire of the church which recovered to £53,659 in 2021 from £31,904 in 2020 but still far short of the figure of £115,872 in 2019 which represents a more typical year in the pre-pandemic period.

Income from General Fund donations recovered to £37,665 in 2021 from £16,698 in 2020 and close to the 2019 figure of £39,838. Service collections also recovered as the Church reopened for regular services to £4,193 in 2021 from just £448 in 2020 but still below the figure of £8,902 in 2019. However, these service collection figures only capture collections actually taken in services which were only permitted from October 2021 onwards and donations were made in other ways and recorded under other headings which partly accounts for the increase in the other donations category which recovered to £24,477 in 2021, representing a substantial improvement over the 2020 figure of £12,705 and actually ahead of the figure of £22,813 in 2019.

Income tax recovery also saw a significant recovery to £7,617 in 2021 from £2,807 in 2020, reflecting the increased eligible income on which to make Gift Aid claims.

The grant received from the Bishopsgate Church Foundation was £52,348 for 2021 against £35,035 in 2020 in part to assist with minor works expenditure in relation to unexpected fabric expenditure, including the replacement of the church alarm system, and the organ project expenses.

The Parish Voluntary Rate in 2021 increased to £41,659, including one very substantial donation of £20,683, from £28,126 in 2020 and ahead of the 2019 figure of £39,087 which is very encouraging at a time when most other businesses in the City are also facing major financial challenges and reflects the strong support of our local business community and our continuing outreach to business.

In contrast, investment income arising from the unrestricted funds fell slightly from £31,419 in 2020 to £29,620 reflecting the disposal of some units in the CCLA CBF Investment Fund and the CCLA CBF Property Fund. However, the resilient income distribution policy and performance of the CCLA CBF Investment Fund has seen a slightly higher distribution per unit which has served us well.

Expenditure

The total expenditure figure for 2021 of £356,353 was higher than the corresponding figure of £296,155 for 2020 and is below the far higher 2019 figure of £415,573, and reflects lower costs as a result of reduced operational activity in 2021 as a result of the pandemic although at a higher level than 2020. We were able to reduce employment costs and to protect staff through our continuing participation in the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which ended on 30 September 2021 which enabled us to furlough staff for a significant part of the year with total financial support of £10,004.68.

Overall, total expenditure in 2021 of £356,353 exceeded total income of £303,638 giving rise to a still significant deficit of £52,715 for the year compared with a much bigger previous year deficit of £94,467 in 2020.

Investments

Investment performance during 2021 remained volatile with downturns in the first quarter of 2021 and again in October but with an overall continuing recovery from the opening position at the beginning of the year to the closing position at the year end. The valuation of investments managed by CCLA benefited from improving markets during 2021 which led to unrealised gains of around £210,000 or an increase of around 13.9% over the year from an opening balance of £1,517,162 to a closing balance of £1,727,820. 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 £655,000.

The Finance Committee continues to monitor investment performance and conducted a thorough review in 2021 resulting in the production of a new detailed investment policy and some asset allocation changes. In particular it was decided to disinvest the holding in the CCLA CBF Property Fund, which had been subject to suspended trading during 2020, to reinvest in the more liquid CCLA CBF Investment Fund. Since the financial year end on 31 December 2021, there have been significant effects on investment markets with rising inflation and geopolitical events leading to great volatility in markets in the first quarter of 2022 and in particular since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 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 Events: Covid-19

Since the financial year end on 31 December 2021 the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions imposed by the Government have been largely lifted but the potential for income generation 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. Market turbulence as a result of geopolitical events and macro-economic developments since the year end may affect the capital value of our unrealised investments with CCLA. 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. Rising inflation and increasing costs also pose a challenge. However, notwithstanding these developments, the Parish has sufficient reserves to continue operating. Hence 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 re-building 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

The church's income continued to be depressed both by the lower levels of bookings of church, Hall, and Court, and by the lack of service collections, which were not permitted until October.

Throughout the year 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 own financial circumstances permitted, making a regular or one-off donation to support St Botolph's, and this approach bore some fruit.

The Council 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. Following further research by the Verger, a new static contactless device was installed in church in February, and its use increased steadily throughout the rest of the year.

Since the launch of the new website it has been very easy for donors to make credit card payments online via the Stripe platform.

The Administrator had registered St Botolph's with Amazon Smile during 2020, and in 2021 added two further organisations which facilitate charitable donations during online shopping: Give as you Live and Easy Fundraising. Sadly there has been very little take-up on these, although some small donations have resulted.

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 2021. 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 2021

The year 2021 has been a time of picking up. Picking up where we left off. The onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in early 2020 threw everyone's plans and hopes up in the air. As they slowly started to land when lockdowns and restrictions were gradually lifted, we all began to pick up where we left off. We did the same here at St Botolph's, and as we started to pick up again, we have reflected on what we have missed and what we have learned.

If there is one over-riding theme to 2021 here at St Botolph's it is relationship, that is the importance of relationships. From when it became legal and possible to meet in person again, I have endeavoured to re-establish the church's presence amongst the community here in Bishopsgate and beyond. We now have a closer and deeper working relationship with our associated organisations including Livery Companies – the Bowyers, the Leathersellers, the Coopers, and the Fan Makers – the Honourable Artillery Company and the London Rifles, the Haemophilia Society and many others.

I have become more directly involved with the Central Foundation School for Boys, and School for Girls as a trustee on their board, as well as taking on a more strategic role with the Bishopsgate Institute of which I am also a board member. In addition, we have had closer involvement with the youth charity XLP, with the Ward Club, and our Common Councillors for Bishopsgate.

During 2021, after we held a memorial service for a senior member of the board of Veterans Aid, we have developed a close relationship with the organisation and have officially become the charity's church. This reinforces our role with the military and with relief of homelessness. Veterans Aid runs a large and comfortable hostel in east London providing a temporary home for homeless ex-service men and women. The charity helps its clients find their feet again and assists in finding them permanent accommodation and jobs. It is successful in finding suitable and permanent housing in 90 per cent of cases. The charity went on to hold a successful first carol service at St Botolph's in 2021, and by the end of the year we were discussing plans for another carol service in 2022 and a special service to mark Veterans Aid's 90th anniversary.

Broadening our outreach, we have officially become a member of Inclusive church. Our Good Coffee Kiosk, which opened in the Bishopsgate porch of the church in September, is growing in popularity and drawing local office workers and tourists into the church.

We have picked up our working relationship with other neighbours including Fr Chris Vipers, the Roman Catholic priest at St Mary Moorfields, who preached at our St Botolph's Day service, Liverpool Street Station, the management of the Andaz Hotel next to Liverpool Street Station, and the newly opened Pan Pacific Hotel opposite the church. A plethora of delayed memorial services has brought hundreds of new visitors to St Botolph's, as too have postponed weddings and marriage blessings, all of which are important relationship-building events.

I am conscious that this enthusiastic drive to pick up and revive existing relationships post pandemic, and forge new partnerships, has meant a significant increase in workload for St Botolph's staff, all of whom deserve a special mention and thanks. Without our staff's dedication and commitment, St Botolph's would not have the presence and strong and friendly relationships which are so valuable to our Christian existence. I am extraordinarily fortunate to have such able and supportive people around me and am immensely grateful for the work they do and for their friendship. All of the above is achieved whilst we continue to hold nearly 200 Masses and services a year, livestreaming the majority to an increasingly growing online audience.

Thank you too to the loyal Churchwardens, members of the PCC and regular members of our congregation for your support and fellowship throughout the year. I pray that together we will work to continue to enhance St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate's presence and relevance to the various communities we serve.

In fellowship with Christ and 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 Rector, 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
May 2022