

ST MARY THE VIRGIN, RIVERHEAD WITH DUNTON GREEN

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT 2020/2021

An end to the interregnum

January 2021 saw the end of the interregnum with the very welcome appointment and licensing of Rev Andy Finn as Team Vicar with special responsibility for St Mary the Virgin Riverhead with Dunton Green. We are thankful that God helped steer Andy and his family towards us and hope that they settle in quickly and find their lives here fulfilling.

We would like to say a big thank you to the PCC and Bennet Smith, Charlotte Rakhit and Susan Allender in particular for their time in producing our parish profile and the recruitment process generally.

Team ministry

We are a member, together with St Luke and St Mary Kippington, of the benefice of the West Sevenoaks Team Ministry which was established in December 2019. The three parishes will remain distinct but will look to ways in which they can work collaboratively in bringing the love of God to the people of Sevenoaks, Riverhead and Dunton Green.

In August 2020 the Rev Mark Bridgen was installed as Team Rector at St Mary Kippington and in February 2021 Rev Anne Bourne was installed as Team Vicar at St Luke.

We thank Mark and Anne for their unstinting support, much of which has been behind the scenes, during this period.

We feel blessed to have such a strong clergy team in the Team Ministry and we look forward to a further strengthening of the team with the expected arrival of Steve Osei-Mensah as curate in September 2021.

Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic continued (indeed continues) to challenge us all. After significant planning to ensure the church could be open in a Covid-19 safe manner, we opened for private prayer on Saturdays in July, followed by All Age Worship from September, whilst still holding services on Zoom on Sundays. We returned to in-church Sunday services in October. Unfortunately, due to rising case numbers and the high risk associated with the 'Kent' variant, services returned to Zoom only in mid-December.

We have been thankful that we have been able to host Sunday services on Zoom, as well as mid-week Compline, Bible Study and Team Prayers. We have been blessed that Daphne, our Licensed Lay Minister, has been able to lead these services as well as a number of other clergy and retired clergy. Janet Sharp has done a great job in providing music for these services. We thank all those who work together with us to deliver a church presence during this difficult time.

Fabric report

The clock regulator was installed and the clock restarted. All went well for a short time and then, unfortunately the clock stopped. Stuart has been liaising with the clock mechanic and the firm who installed the regulator and hopes a solution will be found soon.

The PCC has appointed a firm to produce a report as to what work is required to clean the mosaics in the Chancel and how this should be done. This report will form the basis of an application for a Faculty to do the work. The plan is that work is also carried out at the same time to install new lighting in the Chancel as well as undertaking routine painting. We expect a number of Faculties will be needed and we are hoping to put together a team to work on this project given the scale and complexity (not least of which will be the scaffolding needed).

The 5-yearly inspection of the church (the Quinquennial) is underway.

Work has been undertaken on the roof – particularly in the area of the organ vestry. This seems to be an intractable problem and we will keep trying, with the help of our builder, to resolve it.

Due to the strong winds recently, our church sign blew over. We will be organising a replacement, as well as ensuring Andy's name is included on it (and on the board inside church).

Looking forward

We plan, subject to Government rules and following appropriate guidance for holding services in church in a Covid-19 safe way, to bring both the 8am and 9.30am services back into church from Easter. We have been trialling a way of also sharing the 9.30am service on Zoom in a way in which Zoom participants can contribute to the service – for example by reading or leading intercessions. We are excited about this prospect and thank Stuart for all his time and efforts in setting this up.

We will continue our Wednesday Compline service on Zoom. Bible study and Thursday morning coffee will continue on Zoom for the time being.

Thank you

As always we are very grateful for the many people who give up their time to work for our church, seen and often unseen. We won't try and list everyone for fear of missing someone out but please consider yourselves very gratefully thanked! We will make a few exceptions however. John and Margaret Curtis who look after the churchyard and the Garden of Remembrance. Robert McLintock who manages the website and whose knowledge and expertise are invaluable together with Stuart for all things to do with the Fabric of the church. Margaret Nicholas for her unstinting support and guidance. Christine Smith and the flower team who ensure the church is always decorated appropriately. Margaret Holman

who manages the hall booking and Kathryn Woodward who cleaned it prior to lockdown. Our huge thanks go Daphne, our wonderful Licensed Lay Minister for all her encouragement and enthusiasm, especially during this difficult time and also to our new vicar Andy for wanting to join us.

Safeguarding

We consider that safeguarding is a matter for everyone and work closely with our safeguarding officer. We follow safeguarding procedures and guidelines set out by the Diocese and have undertaken the DBS checks and training required. Safeguarding is a standing item at PCC meetings and members are required to undertake DBS checks and relevant training.

Plea for help

This is YOUR church and YOU make it what it is. So a special plea to every member of our church family, new and not so new – please do offer yourself in some way. You would be more than welcome and will find it fascinating and fulfilling to take a role, no matter how small, in a place that means so much to so many. Please think and pray over the next few **weeks** about getting involved, we would be happy to answer any queries or discuss with you any support you can offer us.

Churchwardens
March 2021