



Diocese of Chelmsford
St Mary The Virgin
North Shoebury

Annual Report and
Financial Statement 2020

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Report approved by the Parochial Church Council at its meeting
on Tuesday 27th April 2021

Vestry Meeting Agenda

1. To Appoint Churchwardens

APCM AGENDA

1. Election of representatives of the laity to
The Parochial Church Council (3 reps for 3 years plus reps to fill other spaces)
2. Appointment of Sidesmen and the Independent Examiner
3. Appointment of Deanery Synod Representative(s)
4. Consideration of:
 - a) A Report on changes in the Roll since that last annual parochial meeting
 - b) An Annual Report of the proceedings of the council which includes
 - c) The independently examined Financial Statement of the Council for the year ending 31st December 2020
 - d) A Report upon the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Parish Church (Church Warden's Report)
 - e) A Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
 - f) Any other matters of Parochial or general Church interest.

Parochial Church Council Membership

The Parochial Church Council is required, as stated in the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956, to co-operate with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelist, social and ecumenical.

The following have served as members of the Parochial Church Council in the period 1st January 2020 (beginning of the financial year) to 31st December 2020.

Revd David Pierce	Lead Minister
Pat Fitch	Churchwarden (to July 2020), Safeguarding Officer (Oct.2020)
Craig Hunter	Churchwarden, Church Magazine
Michelle Waters	PCC Secretary
Denis Garne	PCC Member, Acting Organist
Tony Pond	PCC Member, Churchyard maintenance
Kym Hazzard-Garne	Pastoral Assistant (until January 2020)
Phyl Wickenden	Social Rep, Hall
Francine Johnson	Social and Deanery Synod Rep, Church Finance, Hall
Sue Arnold	PCC member, Lay Chair & Electoral Roll Officer (Oct.2020)
Wendy Shipperley	PCC member (to November 2020)
Keith Spenceley-	PCC member (to January 2020)

Church Statistics

Occasional Offices		2019	2020
Baptisms	Children under 1 year	1	2
	Children age 1-12	0	0
	Over 13	0	0
First Communions		0	0
Confirmations		0	0
Weddings		0	0
Service of Prayer & Dedication after Civil Marriage		0	0
Service of Thanksgiving for Marriage		0	0
Service of Renewal of Vows			1
Funerals			
		2	
Burials	Full	1	0
	Ashes	8	4

Attendance	2019	2020
Average Sunday Attendance	25	16*
Average Sunday Communicants	20	15*
Easter Attendance	37	Not held
Easter Communicants	25	n/a
Christmas (inc Eve) Attendance	214	20*
Christmas (inc Eve) Communicants	34	20*

* Average attendance, Christmas attendance & Communicants impacted by compliance with Coronavirus restrictions

Electoral Roll as of 31st December 2020 - 29

Activities of the PCC

(PCC Secretary)

More details of Committees are given below.

Social and Fundraising

(Social Representatives)

Finance and Fabric Committee

(Treasurer)

Church Hall

(Hall Representatives)

Church Wardens' Report

(Church Warden)

Deanery Synod Report

(Deanery Synod Representative)

Incumbent's Report

(Lead Minister)

Activities of the PCC

Fabric and Finance Report 2020 (Examined Accounts followed by commentary)

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

ST MARY THE VIRGIN NORTH SHOEBURY

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT – YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

		INCOMING RESOURCES		
2019		FUNDS	RESTRICTED	TOTAL
TOTAL		UNRESTRICTED	FUNDS	FUNDS
	Voluntary Income			
	Planned giving -			
11,335	Stewardship Donations	11,314		11,314
1,933	Plate Collections	225		225
150	Flower Fund Donations		50	50
426	Sundry Donations		1,350	1,350
3,390	Gift Aid and Small Donation Tax Recoveries	3,034	350	3,384
	Income from Church Activities –			
676	Fundraising	946	321	1,267
4,967	Church Hall lettings	1,440		1,440
250	Magazines (including advertisements)	465		465
1,726	Occasional offices	868		868
	Interregnum Fees			
	Other Income			
11,109	VAT refund	339	339	678
	Interest			
411	Interest receivable	69		69
£36,373	TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	£18,700	£2,410	£21,110

		RESOURCES EXPENDED		
		FUNDS	RESTRICTED	TOTAL
		UNRESTRICTED	FUNDS	FUNDS
527	Charitable Donations			
187	Stewardship costs			
	Church Activities			
12,157	Diocesan quota	10,409		10,409
486	Clergy & Pastoral assistant	60		60
	Church Running Expenses –			
803	General Maintenance	257	160	417
71,720	Major Repairs	2,034	6,894	8,928
2,549	Utilities & Insurance	2,471		2,471
443	Cost of services	338		338
1,216	Musical Director			
186	Cost of Flowers		55	55
2,686	Churchyard Upkeep		2,796	2,796
350	Parish Magazine Costs	223		223
5,291	Church Hall - Running expenses	4,148		4,148
2,940	Church Hall Major Repairs			
174	Fundraising Expenses			
1,019	General Administration	559		559
£102,734	TOTAL OUTGOING RESOURCES	£20,499	£9,905	£30,404
(66,361)	NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	(1,799)	(7,495)	(9,294)
569	UNREALISED GAINS ON INVESTMENT		313	313
	UPLIFT IN HALL VALUATION		154,839	154,839
	TRANSFER BETWEEN FUNDS			
357,664	BALANCES AT 1ST JANUARY 2020	12,286	279,586	291,872
£291,872	BALANCES AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020	£10,487	£427,243	£437,730

(1)

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
ST MARY THE VIRGIN NORTH SHOEBURY
BALANCE SHEET AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020

2019 TOTAL FUNDS		FUNDS UNRESTRICTED	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS
TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS				
200,000	Church Hall at valuation		354,839	354,839
CURRENT ASSETS				
3,109	Investment at Market Value		3,422	3,422
88,763	Bank Balances	10,487	69,982	79,469
£291,872		£10,487	£427,243	£437,730

REPRESENTED AS FOLLOWS

Funds				
12,206	Unrestricted		10,487	
3,109	Restricted - Chancel Repair Fund	3,422		
53,474	Fabric Fund	48,419		
21,683	Churchyard	19,075		
846	Music	686		
148	Flower Fund	155		
326	Fundraising Projects	326		
	Hall Repair Fund	321		
200,000	Church Hall	354,839	427,243	
£291,792			£437,730	

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on

2021 and signed on its behalf

(CHAIRMAN)

(CHURCHWARDEN)

The notes on page 3 form part of these accounts

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
ST MARY THE VIRGIN NORTH SHOEBURY
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared under the current Church Accounting Regulations.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention except for the Church Hall which is shown in the balance sheet at its value for insurance purposes. The financial statements include all transactions, assets, and liabilities for which the PCC is responsible in law. They do not include the accounts of church groups that owe their main affiliation to another body nor those that are informal gatherings of church members.

FUNDS

Restricted Funds represent (a) income from trusts or endowments which may be expended only on those restricted objects provided in the terms of the trust or bequest, and (b) donations or grants received for a specific object, or invited by the PCC for a specific object. The funds may only be expended on the specific object for which they were given. Any balance remaining unspent at the end of each year is carried forward as a balance on that fund. The PCC does not usually invest separately for each fund. Where there is no separate investment, interest is apportioned to individual funds on an average balance basis.

Unrestricted Funds are general funds which can be used by the PCC for ordinary purposes.

INCOMING RESOURCES

All income is recognised when received and accounted for gross.

RESOURCES USED

All expenditure is recognised when it is incurred and is accounted for gross.

TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

Consecrated land and buildings are excluded from the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act.

Movable church furnishings held by the vicar and churchwardens on special trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal are inalienable property, listed in the church's inventory which can be inspected. Equipment used in the church and church hall is written off when purchased.

The value of the Church Hall as stated represents its insurance cover value as following an insurance review during the year.

CURRENT ASSETS

Investment is the market value 162.18 shares standing to the credit of the PCC in the Central Board of Finance Investment Fund.

Finance

At the beginning of 2020 we were very optimistic about the prospects of growing our Church, building on the improvement in 2019, and with that growth improving our finances.

However, as we all now know, that was not to be. The Covid pandemic has disrupted many areas of life and Church is one of them. But we adjusted financially and many who previously had used the envelope system for their regular giving switched to online banking payments or made one off donations instead. Our income from regular giving was remarkably consistent as a result and a big thank you to everyone.

The areas where we were most affected were in Plate Giving with no possibility to conduct services of any kind and especially not weddings or baptisms and only limited funerals. We missed the fees from these occasional services as well as the plate. The other area affected was our hall income.

We have taken steps to reduce our outgoings where we can, electricity for example, but some costs are incurred whether we are able to use our buildings or not.

We covered our day to day running costs but were not able to pay our full Parish Share again. We were asked to pay £24,000 for 2020, a big increase on 2019 because we no longer benefitted from a special grant of £8,000 authorised by the Archdeacon. We actually paid £10,409 which doesn't look very good. We must make every effort in 2021 to improve that situation.

Rewire, Lighting and review of heating

The PCC continued to discuss the rewiring of the church with the aim of reviewing the lighting at the same time. It is hoped that this project will come to fruition in 2021.

Churchyard

Two gardeners maintained the churchyard for us and we would like to thank them but also Tony Pond who as well as carrying out additional major projects has organised Churchyard Working Parties that take place once a month (2nd Saturday, 2-4pm). His oversight of the churchyard and recommendations have been crucial to our efforts to bring the churchyard maintenance back up to a very good standard.

Francine Johnson, Treasurer

Hall Report 2020

The hire fees for 2020 were as follows: All hirers £1,580

The marked decrease in our revenue is entirely due to the Covid pandemic which meant that we closed the hall to regular and casual hirers with effect from 16th March 2020. Our timetable was full and casual bookings were increasing. Our stance regarding re-opening was cautious and we were perhaps open for only a few other weeks during 2020 as a result.

The hall cost us £3,300 in general running costs and in addition we spent £838 on decoration and renovation. During the first lockdown a number of people were involved in completing the decoration of the refurbished toilets and whilst there the kitchen and lobby were also cleaned up. Kitchen cupboards were emptied, washed out and cleaned. Broken crockery disposed of. All ready for a restart which didn't really happen to any great extent. This work will stand us in good stead moving forward.

Many of our hall costs such as insurance are fixed whether we are using the hall or not but we have taken steps to reduce those we can, our monthly electricity payment for example.

We carried out Covid-secure re-opening planning and the hall is still in that situation, awaiting a 2021 full re-opening. Whilst we have lost a couple of hirers due to knock on effects of the pandemic, we are still receiving enquiries from new regular hirers.

Our thanks to all involved in maintaining the hall, helping to plan for the re-opening and doing such a good job with the decorating. Particular thanks as always to Steve Joy, our Caretaker, without whom we wouldn't be able to operate the hall.

Phyllis Wickenden and Francine Johnson

Social & Fundraising Report 2020

The year started well with a Beetle Drive in January raising £321. A good sum but the fun everyone had was more important.

We had Curry Night planned but with increasing news of the Covid pandemic we took the pragmatic decision to cancel. This was the first cancellation, as Ladies wot Lunch and our Community Coffee Morning followed.

At the end of 2020 we set up the 100 Club as a fundraising initiative – still some numbers available though.

Looking into 2021, we hope to restart our regular activities but also to get back on track with our social events albeit we may have to look at 'outside' activities.

Thanks to everyone for their support for the things we were able to do and we hope we can count on it going forward.

Phyllis Wickenden and Francine Johnson

Reports not forming part of the Annual Report

Deanery Synod Report 2020

2 meetings were held during the year which unfortunately I did not attend, missing the first one due to overseas commitments then having fallen off the circulation list in the general confusion of how to hold meetings at the start of the Coronavirus pandemic. I understand from the minutes that apart from the general business of the Deanery, such as Parish Share, vacancies, events, the special subjects covered at Deanery Synod in 2020 were:

February 2020 Presentation by Mark Tiddy Bradwell Area Youth Adviser.

His job is working with parishes with teenagers. SOLID festival activities and worship with young people. He stressed the importance of listening. Children can find church exciting.

Same issues that were coming up 20 years ago. We still have not got the message. We must be actively interested not just trying to look interested. 50% plus 10 year olds have smart phones. A huge way to engage with them. This technology has spread so fast, faster than any before. Challenges come from new technology.

December 2020 –Ministry and Stewardship

A more general meeting dealing with housekeeping, election of representatives and financial matters. Churches around the deanery have responded creatively to the restrictions of lockdown and post lockdown and lockdown again, and a remarkable number have been able to keep up their parish share contributions. The Rev'd Canon Mike Power, Area Ministry and Stewardship Advisor gave a presentation. Financial stewardship holds the dominant role as the decline in Parish Share continues. A year ago, there were great plans for stewardship and clergy well-being but in February this year the goalposts moved! The withdrawal of the Darlow scheme, the reducing of Parish Share and then Covid led to a financial crisis.

Churches are struggling to survive in the pandemic. Chelmsford had been a big beneficiary of the Darlow Scheme and dependent on it as, being a relatively new Diocese, there are few historical resources. This led to speedier plans to reduce clergy posts. The plan had been for 219 but current calculations would only support 166 which would seriously impact our ability to maintain churches. The central costs are 10% lower than other Dioceses. If we do not act the Diocese will be bankrupt in 5 years. Mike gave us a breakdown of the figures and said the problem is not the level of giving but the low number of regular givers. Some parishes have to support others. To maintain an acceptable level we have to boost 'Generous God, Generous Disciples' We should give at a level we notice but not more than we can afford. The Parish Share Scheme is being looked at. If parishes have the money and they could make extra contributions now is the time to do it. Revd Paul Mackay said there has been a loss of hall hire etc. Is it that the Parish system is not working? It is difficult to look beyond the parish but MMU's have worked in some way, to see ourselves as part of something bigger. We need to grow congregations then the problem will lessen. Revd Jonathan Collis pointed out we cannot have one set of criteria for East London and for the rural parishes.

Francine Johnson, Deanery Synod Representative

Churchwardens Report 2020

The calamitous event of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns have hampered and stifled the renaissance of growth in our church. Much of this will be documented elsewhere.

No services were held for Easter 2020 although we did open the church for private prayer. Again, restrictions and the need for social distancing restricted our celebrations in Advent.

These also inhibited holding the Coffee morning and the till then successful once per month "Churchyard Work Party" which had gained some support from the wider community. These will hopefully spring back to life as restrictions ease.

The most significant events regarding the Church and its fabric were:-

- 2020 was our Quinquennial year. Our long serving architect Margaret Davies resigned following the completion of our spire repair and was replaced by Peter Harman, BGA Architects, The Gallery, The Old Gasworks, 43 Progress Road, Leigh on Sea, SS9 5PR. The Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in December 2020 and the report identified no major risks but many urgent areas for monitoring and inspection. The full report is now in the dropbox shared area (please ask how to access)..
- The loss of our historic Terrier, which has now been reconstituted (although it might be said it is not yet fully comprehensive).

Minor emergency repairs to church guttering and the roof of the Church Hall were carried out during the year. The work of Tony Pond in raising the standard of maintenance of the churchyard requires special mention and due thanks.

Pat Fitch stepped down from the role of Churchwarden during the year and I would like to thank her not only for guiding me in this role but for her ongoing support and continuing work at St. Marys.

The Actions in the Quinquennial report have been sorted into 3 categories:- professional action, other and PCC.

Professional action required

Priority-Professional Input

PHOTO 50

Hairline fracture on western wall at the rear of the church

Structural Engineer

PHOTO 56

Crack at the head of the window in the vestry

Structural Engineer

PHOTO 65

Close up photo showing one of the cracks to the head of the window Lance the windows

Structural Engineer

PHOTO 68

Photo showing the evidence of the fracture on the opposite side of the arch

Structural Engineer

PHOTO 83

Fracture in south wall of bell tower, consider monitoring this whilst at the same time as monitoring the movement within the main section of the church.

Structural Engineer

Roof & Guttering

PHOTO 7

East side of porch roof with moss.

Roofer

This should be carefully removed and any loose tiles secured in place.

PHOTO 8

West elevation of south porch, similar scenario as the east elevation but a number of tiles are damaged or have come away.

Roofer

PHOTO 13

Support bracket for the gutter has slipped and should be refixed be the gutter properly seated.

Roofer

PHOTO 17

Timber fascia requires attention

Roofer

PHOTO 20

The buttress wall to the north elevation is saturated, suggesting the gutter above has failed. This should be addressed and any moss or vegetation growing out of the wall removed.

Guttering

PHOTO 22

A gully appears to have been installed one assumes to collect the rain water and drain it away from the building.

Drainage

It is not clear where this discharges the water and the down pipe is not physically connected to the outlet.

PHOTO 26

The land drain installed at the north side of the church is exposed and has been damaged.

Drainage

PHOTO 51

There are several locations within the church which appear to have been painted with emulsion paint. This should be removed and suitably treated prior to applying a lime wash

PHOTO 59

External door leading to the north graveyard.

In this photo the white emulsion paint is clearly visible

There is a small fracture at the head of the door, where this to has been painted with emulsion paint

PHOTO 60

Photo showing the emulsion paint stopping before the font and localised areas beyond which have now begun to spall

PHOTO 62

Further evidence of emulsion paint around the alter

Refurbish Main Entrance door

PHOTO 46

Entrance door to church needs repair and treating. The door is worn and the external face of the door is pitted with pin holes as a result of the door being used as a notice board.

This door should be adjusted and treated as necessary to ensure hood working order.

PHOTO 77

The centre aisle of the nave is carpeted which covers the stone floor behind. The carpet is in good condition.

The wood block flooring is in a fair condition, and whilst the floor has been repaired in the past there are signs of wear and tear.

The edge border to has sunk and parts of the flooring in areas appear to be damaged and have become detached from its base

PHOTO 78

The area other localised areas of damage to the wood block flooring. These should be repaired or replaced as required.

Other

PHOTO 88

Electrical cabling should be properly sealed in a suitable junction box and or buried below ground if required.

Electrician

PHOTO 38

Section of boundary wall not yet rebuilt some of which is in poor

Groundwork/mason

PHOTO 39

Photo showing loose stone of boundary wall.

Groundwork/mason

Action required by PCC (may be completed by volunteers)

A longer list of miscellaneous items which will be formulated as a job list and may be built into the efforts of volunteers to the Churchyard Work Party.

A number of new initiatives bore fruit. The Church Rational Lottery/100 Club was re-established and launched in January 2021 after support from the congregation and friends with 65 of 100 annual numbers sold and prepaid.

Our new sound system proved essential for recording and transmitting via Zoom, Facebook and YouTube media which may well bring many rewards as we reached out to a wider audience.

Craig Hunter, Churchwarden

Incumbent's Report 2020

I am writing this in April 2021, but the report concerns the calendar year 2020.

Introduction

The report concerns my second year as Lead Minister at St. Mary's Church North Shoebury. I need to begin by offering thanks to you all for the support I have received from you in this very difficult year.

The year started full of optimism. St. Mary's was a growing church. We held mid-week services, and a regular Community Coffee Morning. We had established a Sunday routine which now included two morning services. The Church Hall was becoming more extensively used by community groups.

As I recall, the theme for the year concerned loving God and loving neighbour. Last year in my report, I wrote, "You will have heard me say that purpose of a community of Christians is to meet to worship God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to support each other on our Christian and life journeys".

Early in the year we began to hear of Coronavirus, and there had been some infections. There were two tourists in York, and then some people were taken to an isolation hospital while they were tested. No-one knew what was about to happen. We were "chugging" on, and were nearly through Lent, there had been a Lent Group, although this was really struggling to keep going. I suppose everyone had more important things to worry about.

Then there was an explosion in the number of people who became infected, including me. I was taken into hospital on the 5th April, and almost immediately into intensive care and put on a ventilator. Sadly I was not alone. Because of distance, and the fact that an effective communication system was not in place, I simply "disappeared". Quickly though, news spread.

A year later, although I may seem fully recovered, I am actually still recovering. So, another thank you to all those who have supported me during this time. Your support is important and will need to continue.

As with last year, I will break this report into sections.

Worship

The time when we are able to gather this year to worship as a community has been seriously disrupted, several times. I am pleased that in the times lockdown was eased, numbers were maintained. Many are still very cautious, and rightly so, but we have been able to share services using the internet, and this has helped. It has also brought us new members.

I think it is important that we continue to stream services, even though not everyone is able to gain access. But if St. Mary's is going to support this method of communicating the Gospel, we need to find a small team of technically competent people, or people who are prepared to be trained, to share in this activity. It is not possible to preside at a service and be the technical team at the same time. We worship whenever two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, even if this is on YouTube, Facebook or Zoom.

I would like to thank all those who took part in the “on-line” Christmas Carol Service. It was excellent, even though support was thin. It would have been more impressive had more been able to take part. We may well revisit this next Christmas.

Services stopped being held in church after Christmas. We look forward to the restoration of services in 2021. I would welcome any thoughts or comments that you might have about patterns of service, and contents of service as we make a new beginning. If we look back to 1254, when St. Mary’s started, there have been many significant changes in services, and indeed, the wider worship life in North Shoebury. If this is to continue and develop, it requires our contributions.

Spirituality and Nurture

Part of the role of any church is to encourage its members to grow in faith. It is also reasonable to expect members of any church to wish to grow in faith. At St. Mary’s there are several ways in which this can be achieved. Although I think there is a place in public worship for sermons, they are not the best way to develop “spirituality”. We are nurtured when we gather to learn.

Morning Prayer

We do this when we meet for Morning Prayer. We share in the Daily Office, and talk freely and openly about the readings for each day. We have learned that there is no such thing as a stupid question, and often the group is able to find a way towards an answer. Often there is no answer.

Thursday Thinkers

This is not an original title; it is the name of a group who meet at the church of a friend of mine in Birmingham. Here, we meet as part of the nurture ministry of St. Mary’s of which we are all a part. If we are not learning, we are going backwards. We need to be stimulated or after time, if we are not careful, our faith becomes less and less relevant in our lives.

Thursday Thinkers is one hour on a Thursday evening. It ran for a short while in 2020, but I hope that it will increase in importance in the life of St. Mary’s in 2021 and I commend it to you. If you would like to be part of a group, but Thursday Evening is not suitable, please let me know when might be better.

Evangelism

At some time in our life, someone shared their faith with us, and we responded. This is evangelism. This may have happened in many different ways. It is not necessary to know the Bible inside out, it is not necessary to know every word that Jesus ever spoke, and when. It matters that we live our lives in a way that reflects the life and example set by Jesus. Evangelism happens when someone asks us why we do what we do. But we need to have a simple answer. When someone asked Stephen Cottrell why he was a Christian, his simple answer was, “Because I believe in God”. In this way the conversation begins. We can evangelise as a church as well as individuals. Again, this happens in a great many ways. Here are two ways in which we have been successful this year.

Churchyard maintenance

A great success this year has been the churchyard working parties. Many non-church members have come to help. They have discovered that we are “normal”. This activity also shows that we are here, and that we are active in the area. I hope they are able to continue into the new year, and of course I thank all those who have organised these afternoons, and those who have taken part.

Coffee mornings

While we were able to hold the coffee mornings, the numbers were increasing. Indeed, many regular members, who came for coffee in the first instance, became helpers. As we grow out of the lockdown, these will be continued on Thursday at 10:45. Please try and make a special effort to engage with them.

Vocation

As I said last year, “We are all called to serve God.” Please find time to read 1 Corinthians 12. Some are called to be members of the PCC, some to simply worship. Taking part is vocational. A great many people took part in the life of St. Mary’s during 2020. The Family Service was led by members of the congregation. Certainly, during my illness this was important. As we find time to pray maybe we could listen and think about what God might be asking of us. As our priorities come under review following the coronavirus pandemic, simply asking the question, “How can I help?” may be the response to a call.

Service and Hospitality

This does not mean what we do on Sunday, “Service” is about how we practice our faith. We continue to support HARP, and Southend Foodbank. The pandemic has disrupted the lives of so many and these two charities have made such a great difference to those in serious need. As was the case before the “Welfare State” was established, it falls to faith groups to support those who fall between the cracks in the social fabric of the nation. As Christians we are called upon as those who “love God and love our neighbour”. As the Welfare State is being rolled back, will we be able to continue to fill the cracks? Are we hospitable? Are we able to make a difference?

I thank everyone who during this year has put themselves out to help those in need. This might include shopping for shielding or house bound neighbours. It includes simply keeping in touch, and letting people know that they are not forgotten. I think we now recognise some of the dangers of feeling isolated.

Last year I talked about St. Mary’s being a village church in an urban world. Maybe in the new year, we might think about what sort of things a village church might have done and see if that fits into our role in North Shoebury.

Generosity

Finally, I need to thank everyone for their generosity this year. Support for “Easyfundraising” has been great. According to account details that I can see, as I write this report, nearly £700.00 was raised for St. Mary’s by members of the congregation. There is a large list of on-line shopping companies who support charities through Easy Fundraising. For everyone who shops on-line, please take time to look at: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk> It is at no cost to you.

We also need people who are generous with their time. It might be gardening, helping at coffee morning, cleaning the church, or even taking part in groups. By looking at all the elements that I have included in the report, what we are building is a caring community that values each other, values the church, and values our neighbours.

God bless

David