

## **West Littleton APCM 2021**

### **Reports for the Benefice for 2020-21**

#### **REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING April 2021**

The Children's and Youth Work of our four parishes is aimed at developing the spiritual and social life of young people in a secure environment. Accordingly, the PCCs take the safety of everyone within the church very seriously and expect that everyone will work within the *Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults: Policy and Procedure*. In particular, the PCCs expect anyone who becomes aware of a safeguarding risk or of actual abuse, to immediately raise this with the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

The PCC is responsible for Safeguarding in the parish and so Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at every PCC meeting. The PSO (Parish Safeguarding Officer) gives regular reports to the PCC.

As your Parish Safeguarding Officer I have continued to make sure that all workers with children and vulnerable adults are up-to-date with their DBS clearance and training. All PCC members should do the Basic Awareness online course which can be accessed on the Diocesan website:

<https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>.

The past year has been a very different year as we have been unable to gather children for church activities. However Bunch (for 8-11 yr olds) has been meeting online and there has been a Youth Alpha course, also online. A Risk Assessment for online work was prepared.

The team of Kids Club helpers have continued to meet regularly, and children's activities have been provided in all churches for collection to use at home.

The Policies and Procedures for the Benefice are posted on the Marshfield Church website ([marshfieldchurch.org](http://marshfieldchurch.org)) and all policies have been reviewed annually by the Benefice PCCs.

We are now able to report on Safeguarding to the National Church via parish dashboards instead of completing an annual audit. This highlights issues which each parish needs to address. Currently all four parishes have completed most procedures though we need to make sure that training is completed by all those in positions of trust.

*Aurea Hart* Safeguarding Officer for Marshfield Benefice

#### **Report on the Benefice Youth and Children's Work**

Kids Club for primary school ages on Sunday mornings has not met since February of last year due to the pandemic but we have offered family friendly services regularly online and school assemblies have continued using Zoom or Microsoft Teams

Due to lockdown Thrive only met three times in 2020 – once online, once outdoors and once in the church (socially distanced!) We currently have 7 in this 12-15 age group who attend. Once lockdown 3 was in place we gave up meeting until we could meet again face to face as school work was also online and sitting in front of screens was not really wanted on Sundays as well as weekdays! The group have missed being with each other and we look forward to restarting once lockdown restrictions or weather allow. Bunch has continued to meet online most months during 2020 for school years 4, 5, and 6 led by Rev. Lynne Godfrey and Julia Collis.

The most positive development for our Youth work was the start of an online Youth Alpha which saw five 15/16 year olds meet weekly for 10 weeks to explore the Christian faith.

#### **Deanery and Diocesan Report for 2020**

Chippenham Deanery met in February 2020 at St Peter's Chippenham before the Pandemic restrictions were brought in. Two Churches shared their Eco journeys – one of which was St Mary's Marshfield. The keynote subject was 'Faith in later life' and was led by Ruth Ranger helping churches to reflect on how we can support those who are in the later stages of life remain resourced in their faith.

In June, due to lockdown, we met online to pray together with church representatives across the Deanery and to find out how churches and congregation members were coping with the shutdown of churches and the use of online platforms to enable worship to continue.

In October, the Synod was focussed on the Diocesan vision for the next five years through seeking the opinions of as many church members and non-members as possible as to how we should shape the church to meet the needs of those we serve. This was under the heading of 'Transforming Church. Together'. The meeting took the form of a facilitated workshop responding to questions posed across the Diocese about the nature and focus of church. This will now be evaluated to shape Diocesan Vision and Values and form a strategy for shared ministry over the next five years. This sits alongside the ongoing Church of England initiative to reform church structures and the statement of the new Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell that the church needs to be 'Simpler, Humbler and Bolder 'in all it does.

Other initiatives our Diocese is asking us to engage with are 'Living in Love and Faith' – looking at issues in human sexuality, and the important commitment by the Diocesan Synod to achieve Net Carbon Zero by 2030 across the Diocese.

*Rev. Sally Wheeler*

### **Incumbent's Message looking back on 2020**

As a Benefice we have found ways to continue to worship throughout the long-protracted year of Covid restrictions. The use of Zoom has been unifying and comforting for many – being able to 'meet' virtually when church buildings had to be closed and services were not permitted gave reassurance and encouragement. Church porches remained open with notices, resources and information clearly available to help people stay connected to the church, offering spiritual support and details of online services.

We have all grown in our use of technology and Zoom services enabled wider connections across the Benefice with a new mix of worship, videos and visiting speakers able to join in the ministry offered by the Benefice team, including the Archdeacon of Malmesbury. We also had participants from our different churches leading prayers and reading Bible passages uniting the Benefice churches and the Chapel. An added joy of the online services has been far-flung family members and wedding couples joining us when geographically distant, and unable to travel. We regularly enjoy fellowship with one member's sister who lives in the Shetlands!

Following thorough risk assessments, we opened all four churches in early June 2020 for prayer and have remained opened since. Once services were permitted in July 2020, we initially offered one service a month in each church alongside a weekly 10.30am zoom service, giving those who could not cope with the technology the chance to worship in the buildings.

Connections through Facebook, WhatsApp and a Benefice emailing list, have helped to maintain the communications and profile of church in our communities. Home groups, and a youth Alpha have also benefited from using zoom, while two online family friendly services have been offered each month: Breakfast church and Church@4pm. In addition, the Rev. Lynne and I have continued to run assemblies online for the Church School.

In our villages, opportunities to safely share outside in have been embraced, for example: VE day, Remembrance, Christmas Village Trails, Eco Churchyard trails and outside Christmas Carols, plus a mobile Nativity scene! The villages have also marked any funerals with people lining village streets as a mark of respect given that they cannot attend a service. 2020 saw a remarkably high number of funerals across the Benefice, only four of which could be attributed to covid. We continued to find ways to work within the regulations to enable families and friends to pay their respects and be supported - many services taking place in the churchyards or cemetery until churches were again permitted to hold services.

The loss of congregational singing has been keenly felt, and creative ways have been found to include live music with organ, soloists or small choirs when permitted; elsewhere the use of recorded music has enabled sung worship to be heard and followed as part of a service.

Generosity has remained a mark of people's faith with good responses to appeals for specific charities and towards our CMS Link partners, the Rocks family in Brazil. There has been ongoing support and use of the church mini-larder in Marshfield, and Benefice-wide a collection of Christmas gifts and Easter eggs for distribution by the Sisters of the Church. Most importantly giving to the churches for mission and

maintenance has continued faithfully, but inevitably levels have dropped without regular collections in services, except where the Parish Giving Scheme has been adopted.

Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, in 2020 the church has continued its ministry in all four Benefice Churches and communities, and we have seen God's faithfulness in what has been achieved. In this Easter and Pentecost season as we hold our annual Church meetings, we are reminded that we are called to serve in Christ Name with the power of His Spirit in us, and that as such, we are the 'Hope Holders' and 'Bringers of Good News' to our communities. We do it in His strength, thanks be to God.

*Rev. Sally Wheeler April 19<sup>th</sup> 2021*