

**THE CLAYDON BENEFICE
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH
MEETING 2021**



PRIEST'S REPORT FOR THE BENEFICE 2020

Well – how many ways can we say ‘what a year the last year has been?’ Or an adaption of the words of a programme rather more nationally known ... ‘that was the year that was ... ‘

In March 2020 many of us bade a sad farewell to Reverend Carl Melville. His ‘Farewell Service’ was held at Claydon High School, and there, amongst others, the Headteachers of all three local schools made it obvious that they were really disappointed at losing him ... but along with us all they wished him happiness and fulfilment in his new post.

A week after going into vacancy we went into lockdown! Once the shell shock began to wear off we had to decide what to do as a Benefice. Many churches were already live-streaming and/or recording, so were able to use that to their benefit. However, none of our three churches have internet connection, and equally, none of the PCC members or Ministry Team felt ably qualified enough to take on ‘virtual worship’. We kept in touch with our congregations where possible in a variety of ways, both individually and across the Benefice/ A weekly email went out, firstly to Henley and then to the Benefice. The Admin team kept the website, Facebook and In Touch pages updated. And as soon as churches were able to open, with the suggestion from Bishop Martin that it should be one church in a small benefice, Barham Church opened its doors for worship, and has maintained a regular and very loyal congregation ever since with many thanks to the dedication of Revs Jenny and Rev Bruce in enabling this to happen. But what about all those people who were shielding, or not yet ready to physically frequent a church building? It was a concern, and thus, from within the Ministry Team a Benefice Alternative Worship Team was borne. We held our first service outdoors in August at Home Farm, Henley at the invitation of Richard Self. The setting was perfect. The congregation sat in their garden chairs facing a vista of God’s glorious creation, field upon ploughed field crowned by blue sky and a shining sun. Our altar was made of pallets, our sunflowers stood in old glue buckets, and we believe that God smiled! (And I had to get up at an unearthly hour that I didn’t know existed in order to talk about the service on Radio Suffolk)!!

From there, the team were ready to take on the challenge of learning to ZOOM! With trepidation yet willingness – and a good deal of luck when receiving an offer of help from Ruth Dennigan, we have been able to put together a variety of regular services and have built up a loyal congregation. Without question we are now a four-church benefice! One of the joys of Zoom is that I have been able to invite many different preachers to join us – not something that would have been quite so easy had we not been in lockdown! Immeasurable thanks must go to Ruth because, whilst Zoom worship is not for everyone, thanks to her teaching, it must be said that it has certainly enabled our Benefice to worship together regularly.

We have conducted several weddings and, sadly, rather more funerals.

We have maintained the Ministry Team meetings, PCC meetings, Church Warden meetings – and ‘just catching up meetings’ all on Zoom.

So, without an Incumbent, facing a pandemic, and having to learn things we never thought we would have to learn, I reckon this Benefice has done alright. I hope you all think so too.

I have thanked people personally and in meetings, but now I must give my public thanks. I was a bit shell-shocked when asked to take responsibility for the Benefice. There have been mistakes on my part, some things I have forgotten, and sometimes I just ran out of time – I can honestly say that this has felt like one of the biggest learning curves of my life. But never at any point did I not have support. Our Benefice Ministry Team have encouraged, supported and helped whenever they could. Our Rural Dean, Rev Diane Williams, who attended all our Ministry Team meetings, has been such a support and listening ear whenever I have needed it. But to our Church Wardens, I do owe a huge debt of thanks . . . Wendy, Sarah, Richard, Jonathan and Robert – it has been my privilege and pleasure that it is with you that I have worked. And I thank you from my heart.

There are, though, two ‘members of the team’ missing . . . The shockingly early death of Caroline Seager, Great Blakenham Church Warden has left a huge hole in that small team, and in the wider Benefice. We also lost a good friend and a hugely dedicated and knowledgeable servant of Barham Church when Dorothy Lay died. I know this report is about the events of 2020, but by the end of that year Dorothy was gravely ill, so it seems fitting to mention her here. The loss of those two ladies was, and still is, keenly felt.

But we must finish on a brighter note – and so my final message is to you – the people of our Benefice and the worshippers in our churches. Most of you have been more than tolerant, you have been understanding of the difficulties we have faced, and you have stuck with us through thick and thin. Your personal messages of support, encouragement and kindness throughout these last fourteen months have often been, for me, light in the gloom.

So I bid farewell to my Benefice responsibilities as we welcome Reverend Mark into our midst. I hand over the reins with confidence in his leadership, with enthusiasm and with a ready willingness to be part of the team that takes our Benefice into the future.

May God bless you all.

Cathy

ST PETER'S CHURCH - HENLEY CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT FOR 2020

ORGANISATION & GOVERNANCE

The Priest in Charge and PCC are legally responsible for over-sight of the Church and this report is their account of the activities for the period from January to December 2020.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Parochial Church Council has the responsibility of co-operating with the Priest in Charge in promoting ecumenical needs of the parish. (The Parish Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956, Section 2). The PCC is a charity, which is currently exempted from registration with the Charity Commissioners.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

As with most other organisations the work and activity of the Church has been severely affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic throughout most of 2020.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Our usual priorities centre around Pastoral care, children's work, social events and fellowship. This year we started well but in March we were effectively closed through the restrictions imposed on all people to attempt to contain the Covid -19 outbreak.

Usually our pattern of services would be:

First Sunday	- Holy Communion 10.00am
Second Sunday	- Family @ Henley 10.00am
Third Sunday	- Family Communion 10.00am
Fourth Sunday	- Café Church 10.00am
	- Evensong 4:00 or 6.30pm
Fifth Sunday	- Individually arranged

MEMBERSHIP

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in March/April, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

During 2020 the following served as members of the PCC:

Priest in Charge: Rev. Carl Melville - resigned March 2020 - Chairman
Parish Priest Rev. Cathy Austin - SSM
Church Warden: Mr Richard Self

Elected Members:

Mr Chris Dawkins - Secretary
Mrs Sarah Hazlewood - Assistant to Churchwarden, Vice Chair

Mrs Mandy Walczak
Mrs. Maureen Hall
Mrs. Anji Dawkins
Mrs. Susan Reeve
Mrs. Clare Thomas

Ex officio member: Mr Grahame Hughes - Treasurer

Honorary Independent Examiner: Mr Keith Lawrance.

Early in the year the Claydon Group of Parishes was officially made a legal benefice. This means that we no longer have a Priest in Charge, but a Rector.

During March 2020 our Rector Rev. Carl Melville decided to move on and left us. We have missed him greatly and thanked him and wished him well in his new benefice. Rev. Cathy Austin has carried the benefice through the ensuing vacancy. This has added much to her usual workload and we thank her for her very hard work during this difficult time.

BUILDING & FINANCE

This year we have done nothing in the way of Church building.

The PCC now have architect's plans for the intended work to improve the back of the church. With a view to showing them to the congregation shortly, and hopefully applying for a faculty and grants.

Throughout the year churchyard maintenance has become more difficult. It was decided that we would look for a commercial organisation to keep the grass cut and the grounds tidy. In September a local firm "Shades" was employed to do this, so far it is working well, and the churchyard is tidy again. We thank everyone that has helped for their work keeping the churchyard in a reasonable condition, over the years, it has been greatly appreciated.

We have had very little income during the year as we have had very few services and no fundraising events,

CHURCH ATTENDANCES

There were no regular church services held after the national Covid lockdown in March. Benefice services have been held throughout the rest of the year via Zoom.

PARISH MAGAZINE

The parish of Henley continues to be served by a commercially produced newsletter, which now seems to work quite well.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Again, a very unusual year with most events cancelled.

During the year we had 1 funeral and 4 weddings. These seemed very strange with severely limited numbers attending, but in some ways appeared to be much more intimate.

In September we held an outdoor service which was well attended. In December we filled the Community Centre car park with a Drive in Carol Service. As we couldn't decorate the church for Christmas, we thought that we would have our Christmas tree outside. We held a public light switch on with many of the villagers attending in carefully marked family groups, this was an excellent evening and should be repeated in better times.

We managed to hold our usual Christmas Children's workshop, but this year over Zoom.

We have not been able to hold fundraising events and must resume them vigorously once we are able to do so.

Henley Mothers' Union

Our year started much as usual, with our AGM, then a bible study with Revd Carl just before he left our benefice, and a wonderful talk from Richard Stainer about his visit to Ethiopia with Christian Aid. Then lockdown came! We quickly started a WhatsApp group which most of our members have been able to join, sharing prayers, happy things and sad thoughts too. Then Zoom enabled us to see one another again, and how wonderful it was to see each other again! We re-established our monthly meetings over Zoom, initially just for a chat, but then with a little more purpose – several bible studies, discussions and reflections and Anji shared news from Kagera. When regulations allowed we also met up in gardens – the grand tour of Alex's garden was a highlight of the summer. Our Christmas party went ahead over Zoom – it was a fun evening with a quiz and games, and some festive headwear!

We enrolled one new member, but sadly lost two – Liz moved to North Yorkshire and Mary passed away.

We were only able to hold one fundraising cake sale, but members gave very generously with their subs renewals and we were able to donate £700 to MU funds at the end of the year. Members also knitted, sewed and helped out with various projects for MU and the local community. We sent baptism anniversary cards to the children baptised at St Peter's during the last five years.

Pastoral Group

Like everything else, the challenge of the Pandemic hit our opportunity to make pastoral visits around the village and beyond.

However, the Pastoral Team mastered the art of meeting on Zoom, and managed to keep in touch with our folk by telephone, email or by popping a card through the letterbox.

In Henley we are fortunate to be able to enjoy lovely local walks, and so have been able to catch up (on the other side of the road to one another!) with a chat and a wave.

Surprise doorstep visits were made with little 'you haven't been forgotten, and you are prayed for' treats, such as strawberries and cream, or flowers.

We are looking forward, very much, to being able to have face-to-face contact with our folk in the not too distant future!

St Peter's Ecumenical Prayer Group

Meet: on first Monday of each month 9.15am

This is a very small group of people from different church backgrounds who like to start the month in prayerful togetherness for just 20 minutes. The year started normally enough with us meeting in church but post lockdown we went on zoom. This means that some people are unable to join in so they receive a printed copy of the thoughts for the day. Others however have been able to join in who hadn't previously. Someone leads with a reflection, specific prayers are shared and there's silence for everyone to relax into God's presence with their own thoughts.

Do think about joining us!

Gt Blakenham Churchwardens' report

Most of the activities at Great Blakenham are covered in other reports, but it should be mentioned that although our small church has not been able to open for regular services due to its size, we have maintained regular contact with our congregation members and made new friends in the new housing in the village.

We have seen happy and sad times in the last year, with the wedding of our late Churchwarden, Caroline Seager, followed so closely by her sad death in December, but still a Churchwarden to the end.

Being involved in many people's lives during the last year, and seeing them in totally different circumstances, is a privilege. Our friends at The Old Rectory are a joy and regular contact has been maintained, albeit socially distanced!

Thanks to our team of volunteers at Great Blakenham for their continued support during the past year. We look forward to growing our church and welcoming all who come in or meet us on their journey, wherever that may be.

Wendy Hooper, Churchwarden

The late Caroline Seager, Churchwarden

Great Blakenham Electoral Roll

GB's Electoral Roll currently stands at 17

Great Blakenham 200 Club

REPORT OF GROUP ACTIVITIES AND HIGHLIGHTS:

The 200 Club was set up to fund repairs to the fabric of St Mary's Church, covering all permanent structures within the Church boundary. There were seven collectors for 2020 and thanks is given to them for their continued work and support. Thanks to Marion Little for administering the 200 Club in recent years: this has now been passed on to John Hooper.

Tickets cost £12 per year, the monies are collected during January and early February. The draw was made electronically for 2020 with six prizes per month of between £5 and £25.

John Hooper

Gt Blakenham Church Fabric

St Mary's church was not open for Services for the majority of 2020 due to Covid, and size restrictions. With the exception of Private Prayer on Saturday mornings when permitted, we were fortunate to witness two weddings, including that of our late Churchwarden, Caroline Seager.

We were fortunate to be able to hold an outdoor Churchyard prayer walk which also celebrated our Patronal Festival in August; commemorated Remembrance Day with the laying of wreaths in November, and offered a quiet time for individual Private Prayer. Thanks is given to those who have assisted with welcoming people on these occasions.

The churchyard upkeep is the responsibility of Great Blakenham Parish Council as the churchyard is closed. We are grateful for the good work by the contractor in maintaining the churchyard over the past year. This work has been supplemented by the efforts of volunteer parishioners on an ad hoc basis when possible.

Thanks is given to the team of volunteers who have carried out manning and cleaning the church during a difficult year.

Wendy Hooper, Churchwarden

The late Caroline Seager, Churchwarden

St Mary and St Peters Barham – Church Wardens Report

It has become very difficult to find new ways to describe this current time, so I will just say that it provided us with sadness, joy, hope and some mixed emotions.

The sadness derived especially from losing not just our Church Warden Dorothy Lay but also our friend and colleague from Great Blakenham, Caroline Seager. Both gave us hard work, dedication friendship and support. They are, and will continue to be, greatly missed.

The Bells project has been completed successfully. We extend a massive vote of thanks to Paul Corbett for the immense effort and time he put into his task. It literally would not have happened without him. It is a shame that all the restrictions that last year brought meant that the various stages passed without much attention from the wider community. However Bishop Mike visited us on April 25th to bless the bells and we hope to have many occasions to celebrate with them in the future.

Despite reduced services and events church life still requires much work. Reverend Cathy was thrown into not just one but two unexpected roles, and has provided inspirational leadership and Rev's Jenny and Bruce have kept physical worship continuing

In Barham Church. My fellow Warden Robert has helped prepare for worship twice a week and navigated our way through Church of England rules and regulations. Roger has kept his usual careful and efficient watch on our finances. Whilst they have diminished, it would have been much worse without him.

Zoom meetings are not always easy to conduct. Ours have never been anywhere close to some that have gone viral, but we are a lively bunch with plenty of ideas and opinions and Beverley has battled distractions to take notes and provide minutes.

In fact all members of the PCC have played their part in maintaining the Church and deserve the gratitude of the congregation.

The joy is derived from the massive response we had to our Christmas experience and the two outdoor services we held in the week leading up to Christmas. This is also a source of hope that we have a solid base of love and support for us that will be invaluable as we rebuild our worship and faith life whenever we are able .

Families @ 4.30

Sadly, our programme of Sunday sessions for families came to an abrupt end after our March 2020 session when the pandemic struck. By the time we had organised Zoom Worship online for our morning congregations, we felt that parents were under enough pressure with home schooling etc that we shouldn't be adding to that. What was particularly disappointing is that the number of families attending had been growing to the point where we had 26 children and 20 parents at that final session in March and there was a real buzz in the hall. For the remainder of the year, we have kept in touch with the 29 families on our register through weekly emails with the Young Church Magazine for the week attached. This consists of four pages of colouring pictures, puzzles, quizzes, word searches etc based on the theme for that week.

We did make face to face contact with many of the families in December when they attended the socially distanced Christmas Experience at Barham to visit Father Christmas and view the numerous nativities we had on display in the Church. We had lots of great feed back from that event with many also looking forward to the day when we could return to our Sunday sessions.

We hope that the Barbecue planned for 18th July 2021 can be the catalyst for getting back to meeting on the 1st Sunday of each month again for crafts etc, worship and a sit-down communal meal.

Claydon and Barham MU

The first 3 months of 2020 our meetings were face to face and included the AGM a musical afternoon of Hymns and Songs accompanied by Len Ward on his Melodeon. March the Ladies from Bramford Road Methodists joined up for a Quiz identifying flowers.

April and May the letters from our president were printed and posted by hand and contact made by phone.

June saw some of our members on Zoom hosted by Margaret Fosker.
July Cream Tea on the grass at St Peter's Court.

August we had a Walking in the Footsteps of Mary Sumner Service St Mary's Church Yard. The weather continued to be good and afternoon tea was enjoyed at St Peter's Court.

October was subscription time and most renewed which we were very thankful for as we are able to support M U projects.

November Zoom and December a Secret Santa roamed the village.

Thanks to all for support and acts of kindness.

Jane Whight.

Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team have met face to face on a few occasions (when allowed) and maintained close contact by phone.

Sunshine Service

There were three Sunshine Services held in Claydon village hall in the first three months of the year.

Young Families

Young Families met on six occasions during the year the highlight being the birthday party in January.

Open The Book

The Open the Book team were privileged to take bible stories into Claydon Primary School during January and February.

The Community Activities Group

The groups are:

Meet'n'Eat: this is an important group for like minded folk who enjoy a lunch with friendly company. We have welcomed many new people to this group; they, and all our regulars are always most welcome. We managed three sessions in 2020, but have not met since March 2020.

Thanks to all involved in this Group and all they do.

The Knitting Group has not met in recent times, but is a friendly group and gets involved in Great Blakenham's Christmas Festival when possible.

The Art Group has a steady membership, having as many members as can be accommodated. Members enjoy putting on displays and going on visits in normal times. The group was only able to meet for the first three months of the year.

The Book Club had several new members but was not able to meet in 2020.

The Walk & Talk group was not active in 2020 but hopefully can restart when restrictions allow.

Safeguarding: all three Parishes

Overview: everyone who participates in the life of the church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all. Safeguarding is an integral part of the mission and ministry of the church in this diocese and is in line with the Growing in God strategy. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

In October 2019, the Diocesan Synod agreed that all PCC members must complete Basic and Foundation modules. However, there are certain roles within the church community which require a higher level of safeguarding training than others, such as clergy, licensed lay ministers, lay elders etc.

There are four levels of generic safeguarding training: Basic, Foundation, C2 Leadership and C4. The modules should be completed in sequence. Further information is available at <https://www.cofesuffolk.org/safeguarding-training>.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team held a series of Safeguarding Officer Forums which were very informative. The sessions provided an opportunity to meet with other Safeguarding Officers and members of the Safeguarding Team to discuss and share any queries, fears and ideas about Safeguarding.

A very recent addition is the online Dashboard, a tool for Parish Safeguarding Officers to input and update details on Safeguarding in parishes.

Claydon and Barham: PSO Ann Colthorpe

2020 as we all know was controlled by the Covid Pandemic. With very few events and a limited number of Services, Safeguarding was not a major issue other than making sure peoples' training was up to date.

We had two people on the PCC who could not complete the basic training online, but I was told not to worry until we could do face to face training once again.

In the last three months a new Leadership training has been introduced. This training is more intense, and the Certificate has to be worked for. Jonathan Dedman and myself have completed it. Robert Clarke and Paul Corbett are in the process of completing the training.

We also have a "Dashboard" to help us review and check our Safeguarding procedures within the Parish.

With a report on Racism in the Church and the Church of England being accused in an earlier report in 2019 of abusers being able to hide within the Church of England. We are all encouraged to keep Safeguarding on our PCC Agenda.

Henley: PSO Clare Thomas

I took on the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer at the start of the year. Everyone identified to require/update safeguarding training or DBS checks completed their training and DBS checks were done. I attended the Diocesan Safeguarding Forum and started to use the Safeguarding Dashboard.

Great Blakenham: PSO Wendy Hooper

All those who require training has been identified and any updating has been undertaken. I have also undertaken the Leadership level of training which does require input before and after the online training days. The training is intensive, but necessary. The Safeguarding Dashboard is also being used. I also attended a Safeguarding Forum held by the Diocese.

I am an authorised DBS checker for our Parish and for the Diocese.

Safeguarding is on our PCC Agenda and members are kept up to date of any changes in training or news from the Diocese.

DEANERY SYNOD

During the year when not much of normal life happened an important event concerning the deanery took place on the 1st Oct 2020. When the Bosmere and Stowmarket Deaneries ceased and merged to become Gipping Valley Deanery.

The inaugural meeting was on Zoom with about 50 people, all worked well when Dean Joe Hawes spoke about the cathedral and the way in which it was there to serve as place of refuge and comfort for parishes and Clergy alike.

The general discussion that followed was a bit chaotic and struggled for a focus, indicating that there may be problems with numbers in the future, sadly the wider smaller parish involvement gained from holding local meetings will no longer be possible due to venue size.

An interesting point was the deanery organiser reports which revealed a large difference in what had been paid by Bosmere 43% and Stowmarket 75% and someone aggressively questioned why?

Merging the deaneries also merged the finances, cash in bank was Bosmere £3600 and Stowmarket £760. It was suggested that £3000 of the Bosmere account should be put towards the Bosmere share shortfall. This was passed to the mission and pastoral committee for further discussion and the finally agreed division was £2500 towards the share shortfall and £500 toward initiatives identified in the Bosmere deanery plan and the remaining balance transferred to the new Gipping account.