



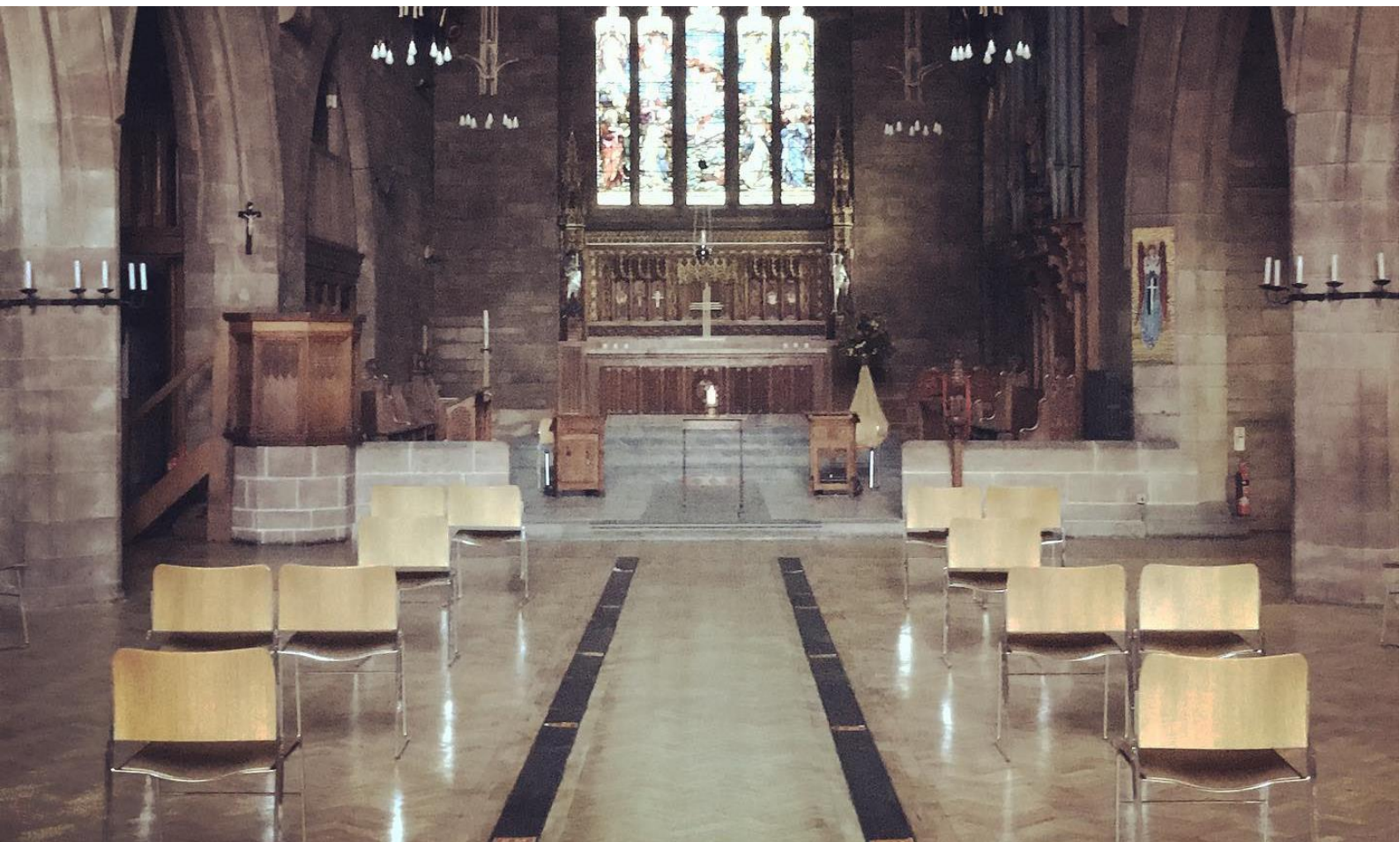
St Michael and All Angels Bramhall Parish Church

Annual Report from the PCC for 2020

Accounts for 2020

Prepared for approval at
The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Sunday 18th April 2021 at 2pm
in the Parish Church



2020



St Michael & All Angels Parish Church

COMMUNITY | INCLUSION | DISCIPLESHIP

St Michael and All Angels Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC also has responsibility for maintaining the site and buildings that comprise St Michael and All Angels Church and Parish Centre, together with the land and grounds of the church and all other properties owned by the PCC.

The Parochial Church Council of St Michael and All Angels Bramhall is registered with the Charity Commissioners (Registration No.) 1133883

Incumbent:

The Reverend Calum Piper

Parish Office:

St Michael's Parish Centre,
St Michael's Avenue,
Bramhall,
Stockport,
SK7 2PG

Bankers:

National Westminster Bank,
Bramhall;
HSBC, Bramhall

Independent Examiner:

Mr Stephen Burt,
3 Hobart Close,
Bramhall,
Stockport
SK7 1NW

Charity Number:

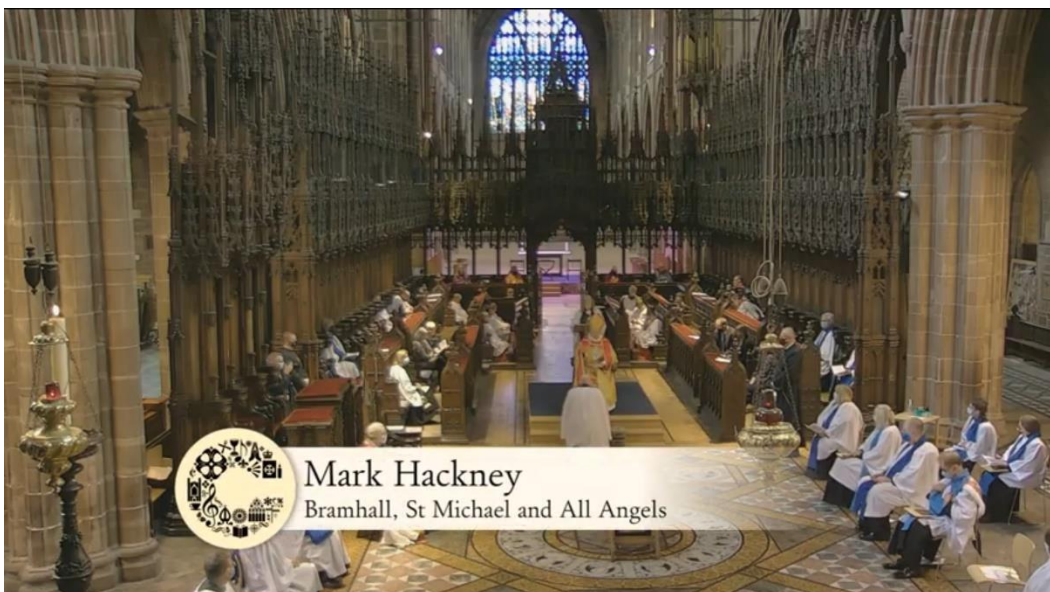
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Website

www.bramhall.church

Front Cover Image

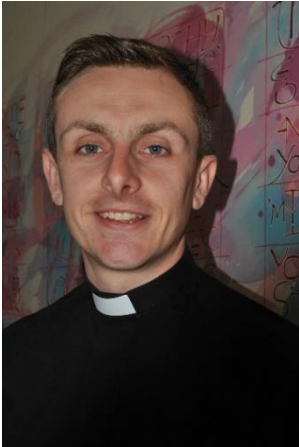
Seating rearranged in church to accommodate for socially distanced worship.



Mark Hackney
Bramhall, St Michael and All Angels

Mark Hackney licensed as Lay Reader at Chester Cathedral by the Bishop of Chester

Vicar's Introduction



Revd Calum Piper

"I wonder what would happen if the church building was closed for a period of time? What would happen to the people?"

This might seem like an odd question to start with, but it is a question that has been discussed by many church leaders over many years. It is a question that was up until 2020 one of those questions that has only ever been theoretically answered, as no church leader has ever wanted to stop their church community from gathering.

As I have read this report and looked back over 2020, a lot happened in the life of our church but most of that was dominated by the Coronavirus Pandemic that engulfed the entire world.

Our nation learnt new practices like being locked down, social distancing and even wearing masks. We were stopped from gathering together, singing and even meeting with family and friends. 2020 felt like a dark year and yet there was a lot of light.

From the phenomenal success in so many ways of The Wonderland Festival to having to learn new ways of worshipping, from caring for one another at a distance to getting to grips with social distanced worship wearing masks, we have experienced new things and been changed by them.

2020 was not a year where we pressed pause on life, but rather walked closer to the 'valley of the shadow of death' and needed to trust more than ever before in God comforting us and providing for us.

I am indebted to so many people for their support for me and my family. When our own families felt a long way away, St Michaels really was our family. Thank you to everyone that has engaged and encouraged with everything St Michaels has offered throughout lockdown.

I want to pay special thanks to the Churchwardens, Louise and David for their constant support and commitment to the church; Mark Hackney who hit the ground running as he was licensed and has been someone I would have been lost without in the worship life of our church; Andrea Millington and all those who stepped up to provide pastoral care throughout the lockdowns; Imogen Bird and Luke Sperry for their help with the church social media; the PCC for their wisdom as we navigated the ever changing national guidance and finally to those staff members who spent much of their year on furlough, but each time they returned shouldered many burdens – Karen Clapham, Janet Blackshaw and David Taylor.

2020 gave us answers to the theoretical question I started with. The church did not collapse as many might have expected, but it updated, overcame and grew stronger. Thanks be to God.

Revd Calum Piper

*"Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me."*

Psalm 23:4

Churchwardens' Message

To say this year has been full of trials and tribulations is a massive understatement. However, despite numerous setbacks we have experienced, we have striven to make life at St Michael's as bearable as possible under the many and various restrictions imposed on us all. Hopefully, the above will be our only reference to the pandemic, whilst we focus on the more positive aspects and achievements.

During January (Saturday 25th) we held our afternoon tea party to show our appreciation and say thank you to all our volunteers and salaried members for their commitment to maintaining the high standards which is St Michael's benchmark. And then came the pièce de résistance at the end of January: setting up for 'Alice'. The culmination of 18 months of planning and commitment. A massive well done to each and everyone involved. It was 'Our Community' event of the year! Witnessed by over 2,700 people. Little did we know what was to follow soon afterwards.

Although the Church has been closed for much of the time, the fabric of the Church, Parish Centre and grounds are always under scrutiny to ensure it is a warm, welcoming and safe place to visit. There have been numerous actions throughout the year to maintain and improve our buildings and grounds.

As a church we have also had to adapt further. During June, with the prospect of the Church being opened once more and the safety of all being paramount, socially-distanced seating was implemented. Sanitizers, track-and-trace QR codes and the requirement to reserve a seat at one of the three Sunday services and the one mid-week service was made available – all within government and canonical guidelines. And something new but proving absolutely vital, on-line services during full lockdown, and live streaming of services for those unable to attend when we were able to open.

We were sad to say goodbye to Jonnie Gait as our Director of Music. He is a real loss to the Parish but wish him well for the future. However, it was a real joy to welcome Mark Hackney as our Licensed Reader and a valuable member of the ministry team. Mark provided the mid-week service via Zoom during lockdown.

It would be remiss of us, as wardens, to not mention the enormous debt and gratitude owed to Calum for his unerring determination to maintain the Christian message whatever the circumstances. His technical abilities were more than impressive in achieving this. Well done, Calum.

Now, looking to the future with hope and faithfulness we wish God's blessing on everyone at St Michael and All Angels and the wider community. And a very special farewell to Churchwarden Louise from David.

Louise Richardson & David Walker

Postscript from Louise, Outgoing Churchwarden

This will be my last contribution to the Annual Report as Churchwarden as I look to hand over my very large bunch of keys to my successor and I want to put on record my thanks to everyone for the faith placed in me and support that I have received during the last six years in the role. I think it is fair to say that my time as Churchwarden has been like no other ranging from the first three years - first with Sue Taylor and then David Walker (thanks for their encouragement and support) - without a resident incumbent and relying on the dedicated service of Fr. David Stoter, Canon Bob Read and Fr. David Parker, then the arrival of Calum (and of course Jess) through his appointment and installation as Vicar to a pandemic no less. It has been an honour and a pleasure....as well as sometimes a real headache....but one which I have enjoyed enormously. We have much to be thankful for in this place and there are too many people to mention individually but I want to reserve my last thanks to Calum who arrived in July 2017 and threw himself headlong into his calling. I believe our Parish has been transformed by his vision, leadership and commitment and, along with Jess and Samuel, brings so much to our Parish life.

And finally, I want to wish Dave and the new Churchwarden well in the years to come.

Louise

P.S. And I didn't mention drains once!



Zoom became a new form of communication. Finance and Buildings Committee Meeting

Review of the Church's Year 2020

People

The year saw the sad loss of several members of the congregation, some to the Covid epidemic and some to other illnesses. Among those who died and will be sorely missed were former Vicar Rex Hack, former Churchwarden Dennis Massey, keystone of the Newala link Keith Fenwick, and former Planned Giving Coordinator Roy Phillips.

In order to spend more time with his family Jonnie Gait sadly took the decision in June to leave St. Michael's, where he had delighted everyone for some 15 years with his gifted and inspiring playing of the organ and the piano, along with leading the singing groups.

A very special event was celebrated on 9 May, when Dorothy Jopson reached her 100th birthday.

Frank Bennett stepped down as Senior Sidesman in September after many years of devoted service.

We were delighted in October to celebrate with Mark Hackney his licensing as a Reader (albeit via Zoom).

The paid staff of the church were all furloughed during the first lockdown, and returned to work when government regulations allowed.

Worship

Our worship life remained committed to ensuring that there was a range of worship styles making the worship of God as accessible as possible to all.

Because of the Coronavirus churches were advised to close on 17 March, and on 23 March the whole country went into lockdown, with all access to church buildings being banned. Worship went on-line, with members of the congregation being involved in providing readings and prayers. Easter was thus celebrated very differently. On 8 May our services marked VE Day. Despite lockdown it proved possible to open our outdoor Prayer Labyrinth on 11 May.

On 2 August the church was re-opened, with three Sunday services to allow for social distancing of chairs and a safe number of people inside the building. The services included a new informal evening service at 6.30 p.m. A Wednesday morning service also resumed. It was possible to celebrate Harvest on 18 October, with the addition of an on-line Harvest Quiz. Sadly lockdown had to resume on 5 November, until the church was able to re-open on 13 December.

This allowed Christmas services to take place in church, with 123 people able to attend in person, though the Christingle service (with 580 views) and the Service of Lessons and Carols (with 912 views) with local choirs providing some of the carols, were recorded and shown online, in order to enable more people to be reached. A Christingle assembly was offered to schools, and a new very successful venture was the creation of an artwork outside the east wall of the church, which caught the attention of passers-by and attracted many positive reactions.

Christmas was also marked by a very successful Christmas Appeal, with over £3000 raised for the Children's Society (some via sponsorship for Calum's valiant 10k runs, some from the Christingle service, and some from an on-line Christmas Quiz), the continued supporting of the Chelwood food bank, particularly with Christmas items, and the supporting of Brinnington parish with the provision of 55 Christmas hampers.

A Day of Prayer for the community and nation took place on Saturday 28 November.

The Covid pandemic meant that average attendances at services greatly reduced: during October an average of 112 people were able to worship safely in person on Sundays when regulations allowed. Attendance at on-line services both during and outside times of lockdown was substantially higher than this. In the course of the year there was one baptism, one wedding, one service of prayer and thanksgiving after civil marriage, 15 funerals in church, 37 funeral services at the crematorium, and 12 burials of ashes.

The year seemed very lean for members of the Flower Club, who were able to provide arrangements only from August to October. They were however able to decorate the church for Christmas, with the hope this would give everyone a lift in extremely difficult times. Nina Hawkins and Betty Scott both laid down some of their responsibilities, having served the Flower Club faithfully for around 40 years, and others from the team have stepped up to take on these responsibilities. The Club looks forward to a time when they will be able to arrange flowers for weddings and all special days without interruption.

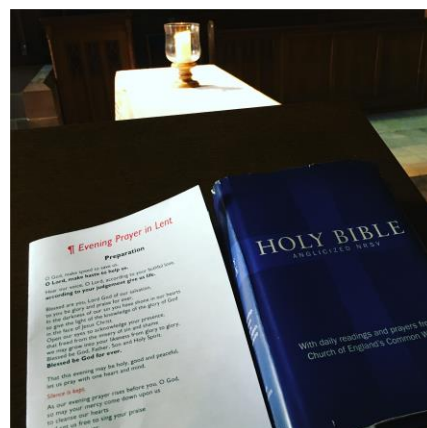
The Serving Team and those who look after the silver and altar linen continued to be fully active when possible.

The fortnightly "Mindful Space" meditation sessions were sadly suspended at the first lockdown.

A collection of food and toiletry items continued to be made during the various Covid restrictions, and was donated to Chelwood Food Bank in Stockport. The congregation continues to give generously.

Discipleship

In Lent the Vicar led three study groups, one on the Bible, one on the environment, and one on the disciples. The weekly Bible Study continued in Costa Coffee until March, when it was replaced by meetings on Zoom. A Quiet Day was held in the church in March, and the Library based in the Lounge continued to resource the congregation. The Doorway house group continued to meet fortnightly on Monday evenings, after March mostly via Zoom. The Thursday Fellowship which had successfully provided Bible study and fellowship reverted as it had the previous year to being a Lent Group in 2020 and this was curtailed due to Covid. Thursday Fellowship will be resuming when it is safe to do so.



During lockdown, a prayerfully-driven Zoom Alpha course was joyfully undertaken. Wednesday evenings saw nine participants join together to explore what it means to become a committed Christian. Videos were shared and lively discussion took place regarding the basics of the Christian faith. Alpha represents a real opportunity to explore the meaning of our lives, and the course ended with looking forward to the joy of a Christian life.

During the various lockdowns and other restrictions the Vicar has provided almost daily on-line Reflections which have been viewed by many, both within and outside the congregation. He and his wife, Rev. Jess Piper, assistant priest in Stockport and Brinnington, have also provided a regular series of recorded In Conversation pieces, which have encouraged and challenged all those who watch.

During Advent, the church community contributed daily to website reflections on a selection of Bible passages that involved the theme of 'Comfort and Joy'. It was both wonderful and very interesting, to witness so many different "voices" describing their viewpoints on the power of Scripture. Responses could be intriguingly autobiographical and imaginative, and were always helpfully insightful in their response to Biblical reflection. The call has gone out from our St. Michael's community: 'More of the same please, next year!'

Ministry to Younger Generations

During Covid restrictions the teenage members of the congregation were involved in contributing to on-line services, and the Youth Group continued to meet twice a month via Zoom, with around 4 young people attending each time.

The ecumenical youth space THE MILL had its challenges during 2020, like everyone everywhere. It began 2020 as usual, running after-school sessions five times a week and two each Saturday plus a weekly session in the High School and links with all the primary schools. They were all set to go into every school in May when the lockdown prevented that contact. So youth worker Ian got to work on a new website and social media links during that period. The trustees were also looking to replace Jake, the other youth leader, who had made the decision to become a full-time carpenter, and he was replaced by Rosie when the Mill reopened in September. The Mill was operational through the autumn term with ten young people maximum per session until the latest lock-down closed us again.

Running costs are about £48k per annum and funding has always relied on four main strands: local churches giving what they can, the Thrift Shop/Centrepoint Youth Fund, individual donations with associated Gift Aid, and funds received from outside grant-making bodies of all kinds. We were fortunate to receive funds given out by the government via SMBC to support businesses and small charities during the pandemic, as well as a grant for Covid-19 support from the Lotteries Commission. This money was used to pay salaries, utilities, rent and safeguarding checks, and it has enabled all our volunteers to have training in mental health issues that may affect young people during and after this pandemic.

Schools

The church continued to maintain good relationships with Moss Hey, Pownall Green, Valley and Ladybrook Primary Schools. Groups from the schools were among the first visitors to Wonderland. This year we had to restrict much of our normal interaction with schools, but a Harvest service and a Christingle service were recorded and shared with them.

Praise and Play

Praise and Play initially continued as previously but in the early part of 2020 numbers fell as we lost some older children to school or nursery. Despite the small numbers it was much appreciated, and the children enjoyed the time spent in church and craft activity each week. Thinking had begun about publicity and attracting more families after Easter but the onset of Covid and the need to make decisions made it seem a sensible time to close Praise and Play and rethink how to reform when we are able. As part of our pastoral care of this group, contact with families was maintained by email until the summer and all were doing well. Provision to meet the needs of this group will be provided again in due course.

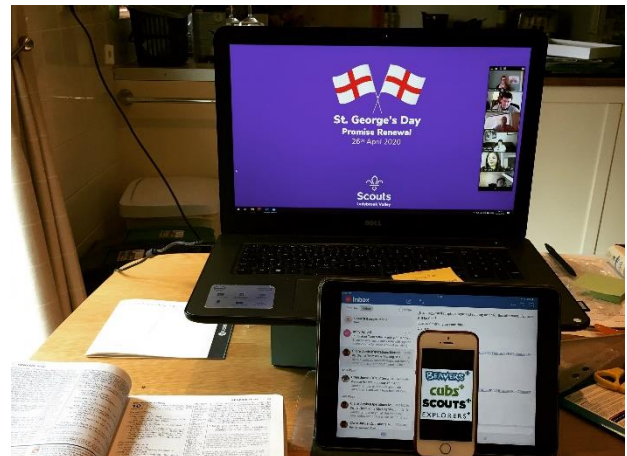
Brownies & Rainbows

Rainbows started 2020 with games in the Hall, doing badge work and some craft work. One excitement was a visit from a Guide dog who led the Young Leaders blindfolded around the Hall. Lockdown meant meetings were suspended until August. In September the terrace became the new meeting place. The programme included games, a Scavenger hunt and a walk through Carwood to see the Fairy Dell and climb on the fallen-down tree in Bramhall Park. Weather and darker evenings meant several meetings were cancelled before another lockdown.

An outside Christmas party was planned, but again the weather thwarted the first attempt. Luckily the Saturday of a second try was a beautiful day. The Rainbows arrived, warmly dressed, wearing Santa hats, reindeer antlers and glittery tiaras. There were two visitors – the GirlGuiding Stockport President and one of Santa's Elves, who got the party going with music, dancing and games, followed by lots of food, a candy cane hunt and more food. There was a letter from Santa apologising for not coming (he was shielding to be safe for Christmas Eve!), but he made sure there was a sack of presents for everyone. A lovely time was had by all.



Rainbows Christmas Party



Ladybrook District St George's Day Parade moved online

St Michael's Guides

St Michael's Brownies were online from April. They found a new way of delivering over Zoom a fun and interactive programme that engages the girls during these times, including games, challenges, scavenger hunts and quizzes, and the girls have been working towards their Skills for the Future badge. Some of the highlights of 2020 were a careers night with a forensic scientist, engineer, interior designer and university manager, a film night at Christmas, Brownie promises made over Zoom and of course lots of fun.

Owing to COVID the Guide unit was suspended from March to May while they looked at how to carry on during the pandemic, and then started Zoom meetings. In one of these meetings they welcomed an animal specialist to talk about care and preservation of different species, and they have also taken part in online games with Our Chalet in Switzerland. Even with all the changes Guides were able to meet around five times outdoors in September in a socially distanced way, including a campfire at church. Guides also went to Treetops outdoor adventure and enjoyed an evening doing the high wire.

4th Bramhall (St Michael's) Scouts

All sections of 4th Bramhall Scouts had to adapt their programmes to be in line with pandemic restrictions. All camping had to be cancelled, but Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers all managed on-line Zoom sessions and badge work. The Cubs met under the parachute canopy erected at the far end of the church grounds for a socially-distanced meeting to make Remembrance poppies, and the Scouts managed several outdoor meetings there.

Pastoral Care

In addition to careful preparation and care given to those involved in baptisms, weddings and funerals St Michael's aims to care pastorally for all its members in many ways. The Mother's Union visits and supports its members who are ill, and a strong network of friends at St Michael's covers most temporary needs due to sickness etc. Members of the Pastoral Team visit local care homes and those isolated in their own homes, and Home Communion is taken if requested. Our members on the Chaplaincy team at Stepping Hill visit those in hospital. Support following a bereavement and response to more acute issues, or simply a need to talk something through in confidence, is offered by the Pastoral Workers.

During the pandemic much of this activity had to cease and be replaced by more creative ways of offering care. For once, St Michael's building not being in the centre of the village has brought benefits, as mourners have been able to line the pavements around the church at funerals, showing our respects to those who have died.

Early in the first lockdown the congregation was divided into pastoral groupings, with one person volunteering to stay in contact with others by telephone, and this has been much valued by many.

Some of the people that I have phoned have been in very strict isolation, others only slightly less so. There were times when I felt they were feeling quite depressed and thankful to speak to someone. On other occasions I have felt cheered and uplifted by our conversations. Calum is to be thanked for setting up these links between members of the congregation, one of whom I did not previously know, but whom I am looking forward to meeting when things are back to normal.

Pauline D'Souza



Field of Light

Other new initiatives included the Christmas 'Field of Light' event, remembering those we have lost, and the deeply moving service for the dedication of the Baby Memorial commemorating those babies lost by miscarriage and stillbirth. Members of the gardening team, who have made such progress with the grounds, enjoyed the growth of fellowship that this task brought.

Fellowship

Despite the lockdown and general restrictions 2020 saw continued fellowship within church activities and organisations.

During the pandemic the Mothers' Union continued as a Christian mission working through grassroots membership to support families and communities in Britain and round the world. This was partly possible through a nationwide appeal to members to which our branch sent £500 as well as our branch members' individual donations. This appeal was because very few fundraising events were possible. At St. Michael's three new members were enrolled in January bringing the membership to 51, but towards the end of the year three members moved away from Bramhall and one precious member died on New Year's Eve 2020. There were three branch meetings and a pub lunch before the temporary closure in March, but the long-established group system kept all members in touch.

ACE (Arts and Crafts Experience) sessions prior to Wonderland in February were devoted to helping with backdrop, caterpillar, toadstool and other Wonderland related activities. Prior to the March lockdown they only managed one more session, creating woven crosses. ACE members have kept in touch via email and some have been encouraged to create 5 x 7 in. panels in the colours of the rainbow, the idea being linked to God's promise of hope and the rainbow symbol linked to the NHS during the Covid crisis.

A Thank You tea party on 18 January was hosted by Revd Calum and the Wardens for the many members of the congregation who serve the church in some way, and was once again appreciated by everyone present.

In the early months of the year TGiM on a Monday and the monthly soup lunches on a Wednesday following the morning Eucharist service continued to be valued, as did the monthly breakfasts held after the Sunday 8.00 am Eucharist.

The Micah Project

During the year the Parish Development (Finance) Committee began to explore the challenging questions from the book of Micah:

What does the Lord require of you? What does it mean for us to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with the Lord our God?

Out of this they developed the Micah Project, in the belief that through this project we will see God continue the task of building his church through us. By sharing in acts of justice, mercy and humility, we will offer the love, peace and grace of God to our friends, neighbours and wider community. As a result:

Our community will be changed

We will be changed

God will be glorified

The project has a number of strands, wanting to:

- reach out to the marginalised in our community, who have no voice and are forgotten about, and to offer hope, protection, and a voice for them
- support young people's development, particular with self-esteem, leadership and community involvement
- support young families with building sustainable and healthy routines and relationships
- work with other leaders of our community to address areas of concern
- support the isolated, by establishing community amongst the forgotten
- find new ways to bring people from all ages together to share in life together

To begin to equip the parish in following God's call to answer this challenge, the Committee proposed establishing 3 part-time posts for an initial period of 3 years:

A Children & Families Worker, to deepen and develop our relationships with the three primary schools in our parish, but not excluding other schools who serve the people of Bramhall, to resource the church in connecting with our established play groups with new talent, resources, and energy, and to establish a children's' ministry alongside our weekly worship, which will be a place where particularly young children feel safe, included and passionate about the love God has for them.

A Youth Worker to build on the youth work already started and connect with the next generation of young people, to deepen the relationship with our local High School as well as Grammar schools in the area, to support the work of Churches Together in the Youth Bar Millennium Project, and to work along with the vicar to establish a young leaders' academy that will equip young people with community and leadership skills so that they are better engaged to be the next leaders of our community

A Community Worker to seek out areas of isolation and look to build bridges between them, to share in the ministry of supporting those who struggle with mental health, and to promote inclusiveness in our community between all people.

A generous donation had initially been given of £24,000 towards this project, and a further £1500 had been received from the All Churches Trust. In October 2020 the PCC agreed unanimously to support the Micah Project to a maximum of £70,000 over the next 3 years, which would open the doors to applications to trusts and foundations for further funding. The Group then began work on preparing job descriptions for the new posts. It is hoped that people could be in post by summer 2021.

Wonderland Festival 2020

A personal view by organiser Sue Taylor

On 30th January 2020, the moment that would determine whether 18 months of planning would come to fruition arrived. On that Thursday evening the church was stripped of all its furniture, chairs stacked and stored (who knew the vestry could hold so much!) and children's space dismantled. All of this captured on a time lapse camera, eventually to feature in our very own film of Wonderland. Several of us stopped to take stock, take a deep breath and with faith began to transform St Michael's into Wonderland!

So how, why and when did we find ourselves in this situation? In 2018 St Michael's had hosted a magical 'Narnia' experience. Over 2000 people attended and one of the overriding comments as people left was 'What are you going to do next?' For those of us involved the answer was brief: "nothing for some time!" We agreed to have a few months off to reflect, to mull over the week, to accept the plaudits and to breathe!

In August a group of people met to make a decision. 'Could we? Should we undertake another festival for 2020? The answer was an overriding 'Yes' and so it began. Which book? What theme? We identified possibilities, read and re-read books and eventually a consensus was reached: we should recreate Wonderland! In dark, cold February we would transform St Michael's Parish Church into our very own Wonderland. We would bring about some post-Christmas cheer! Little did we know what lay ahead!

Our remit was clear. This was outreach, it was for the community of Bramhall, it would be a free event and it would put St Michaels at the heart of the community. Calum set the bar high! We should aim for 2500 visitors and we should involve as many church members as possible.

On that Thursday evening, all the hard work over the previous 18 months began to take shape. Sets began to appear, the Riverbank, the library, the magical hookah smoking caterpillar in the forest, the kitchen, the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, the Queen's garden. Yards of fabric had been transformed into backdrops painted week after week by willing volunteers. Members of ACE put aside their plans to help. Gardens appeared, hundreds of flowers planted months before flowered as if to order. The Flower club made dozens of red roses for the Queen's croquet lawn, waterfalls of playing cards were hung. The vision was becoming a reality!

Thanks to members of the congregation we had more props than we could ever have imagined! Pots, pans, plants, statues and teacups! So many teacups! We had wonderful creations, a huge tea pot, a pig/baby, flamingo croquet sticks, so many offers of help. Countless helpers worked tirelessly. By the Monday we were set to go, the costumes were picked up, there was time for a quick dress rehearsal in between the health and safety inspection! At 6 pm on the Monday evening we opened the doors to 'Wonderland' And it never stopped from there on in.

The first 3 days were allocated to school visits and uniformed organisations. On Friday the public were invited in; it was a long day culminating in fizz and nibbles. What a success! And so it continued. Saturday and Sunday were incredibly busy, word was out. People queuing down the church drive, in the pouring rain, sustained by cups of tea and good-natured banter.

It was an incredible team effort. The folk who fed us throughout the festival, the characters, relentlessly performing their parts with good humour! The maintenance crew mopping floors

(the bubble machine was a great success!), sweeping up, hoovering, the washers-up, the bakers, the biscuit makers, the welcomers, the guides (who I fully admit to taking advantage of!) So, so many people contributed, too many to name.

As the festival drew to a close on the Sunday, we'd had almost 3000 people through the doors of St Michaels. The service that took place was joyous, a celebration of community. As we cleared away after the service, the organising group sat together, to reflect on our experiences and to read some of the comments in the visitors' book.

'Brilliant, a fantastic way of bringing the book to life'

'What a lovely event, so much hard work'

'Absolutely Inspirational'

'An incredible event'

It would be true to say that we were a very happy somewhat exhausted group, thrilled with our success. There was however one comment that had recurred time and time again....' What are you going to do next?

There are too many people to thank, so many gave of themselves, their lives dominated by 'Alice' for some considerable time. I must however make an exception. Calum's willingness to take risks, his desire to reach out into the community and his support for all those involved made such a difference. The community of St Michaels should be rightly proud of what it achieved!



The Wonderland Cast

Lynn Smith – Duchess

It was a real pleasure to play the Duchess, meeting so many lovely people of all ages from our community, but the true magic of Wonderland for me was the excitement on the children's faces when they spotted the Cheshire Cat and their loud laughter when the baby turned into a pig. That was something to cherish, absolutely priceless.



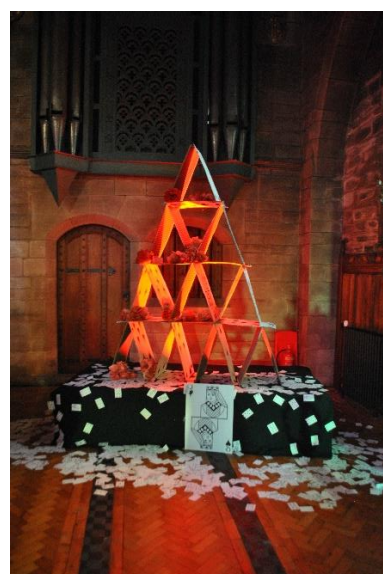
Pauline D'Souza – Duchess

I thoroughly enjoyed the part I played and even when different individuals shared a role their different approaches were equally appreciated, as was commented to me by individuals who came more than once. When pressure of numbers was great cast members skilfully adjusted their scripts to help the flow of visitors without diminishing their enjoyment. Congratulations to everybody involved!



Tilda Chadwick – Dormouse

I really enjoyed being part of Wonderland, it was a different way to learn about religion and I liked being with people who were fun. I also liked seeing the church full of lots of different people (even my teacher) and seeing how much they all enjoyed being in our church. It made me really proud to be part of it.



Chris Ainscough - Dormouse

Wonderland! Oh, what an experience through the eyes of a mere dormouse who certainly had no time to sleep! From early beginnings, through months and months of preparation, tremendous effort and hard work by everyone, under the instruction and guidance of Sue Taylor and Sheila Newbon – who both must have had endless sleepless nights but whose dedication and commitment played a huge part in making Wonderland such a great success.

4 February 2020, the big day finally arrived! The hustle and bustle, the laughter and, may I say, a great deal of marching for a dormouse who just wanted to sleep but who experienced an overwhelming feeling of friendship being part of St. Michael's Church family and the bringing together of a much wider community. Those days spent in 'Wonderland', a time I will never forget. The transformation of our Church into a magical 'Wonderland' in which, and I quote, "Human imagination is not simply our means of reaching out to God but of God's means of manifesting himself to us." (Christian Wiman)



Sally Harwood – Queen of Hearts

'Off with your head!' – a classic line shrieked many times but I have to admit, it did take some time to drop 'from one's' vocabulary!!

What a privilege it was to be nominated for the part of The Queen of Hearts, a role that is completely opposite to my nature yet was such a joy to play.

Although hard work, our prep sessions together reaffirmed the friendship within our St Michael's community. Little Samuel being present, although oblivious to exactly what was going on, wore a beaming smile across his face and brought happiness into my heart as I worked on cutting, painting, stamping bricks and all the other hundreds of craft ideas that our Sheila came up with.

There are many highlights and numerous things that are imprinted on my mind. Our first costume fitting and seeing Phil W in his 'bunny legs'; seeing my mum (The Dormouse) in a onesie; Phil K's jokes and his caring way of ensuring that during the production, you were kept hydrated; the banter that went on in-between scenes, including flying hedgehogs (David T!!!). I could go on and on!

To quote Sue, 'In a moment of madness', it was decided to do it all again and I was excited to be a part and involved in more ways than one. Despite all the highs and lows, it was an adventure from start to finish. It demonstrated how a community can come together from very young to more mature. It very evidently demonstrated our values as a church – Community, Inclusion and Discipleship and us all playing our part in the ongoing story of God.

Would I do it again... yes, in a flash!

Buildings

(incorporating fabric and ornaments report)

Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic work has continued as usual to ensure that the church buildings and site are kept in good condition and suitable for all our activities. There have been numerous actions throughout the year; in particular the central heating and sound systems have been serviced, the hall and church floors refurbished, the Parish Centre re-painted, and we have welcomed steeplejacks who climbed up and treated the bell tower in poor weather conditions. In the grounds, trees were lopped, superb improvements were made to the flower beds in and around the memorial garden, and the memorial garden masonry was re-constructed. We also had the dedication of the Baby Memorial plaque - a very welcome addition. At present we are working hard to resolve the worsening problem of rainwater overflowing from the gutters on the South porch and reducing the trip hazard by having the step at the South porch levelled. We owe a debt of gratitude to all who give so generously of their time to keep everything in such good order.

Gardening

In the spring of 2020 work was started to clear the south border which had become overgrown with rhododendrons, ivy and weeds. This clearance, with the encouragement of passers-by, took many weeks to achieve, but by the end of May plants had been requested from parishioners and friends that were subsequently added to the cleared beds. The south border was shortened in width to make it more manageable and grass seed sown to extend the lawn border.

After the planting of the south border, volunteers continued to maintain the beds and borders around the Church. They have also created decorative stepping stones to aid future weeding and provide some colour and interest during the winter months. The help given has enabled new projects to be put in the pipeline for 2021. There is now a regular gardening session once a week, weather permitting.

It was decided to buy plants from a flower auction to re-sell to the public, in order to raise funds for the continuing work required. So far a couple of sales have taken place in the large St. Michaels car park and one in the car park in the village, next to the Victorian. These were a great success and the monies raised are being used to buy the gardening extras that are needed, especially for new projects being undertaken. The aim is to continue with the auction plant sales in 2021.



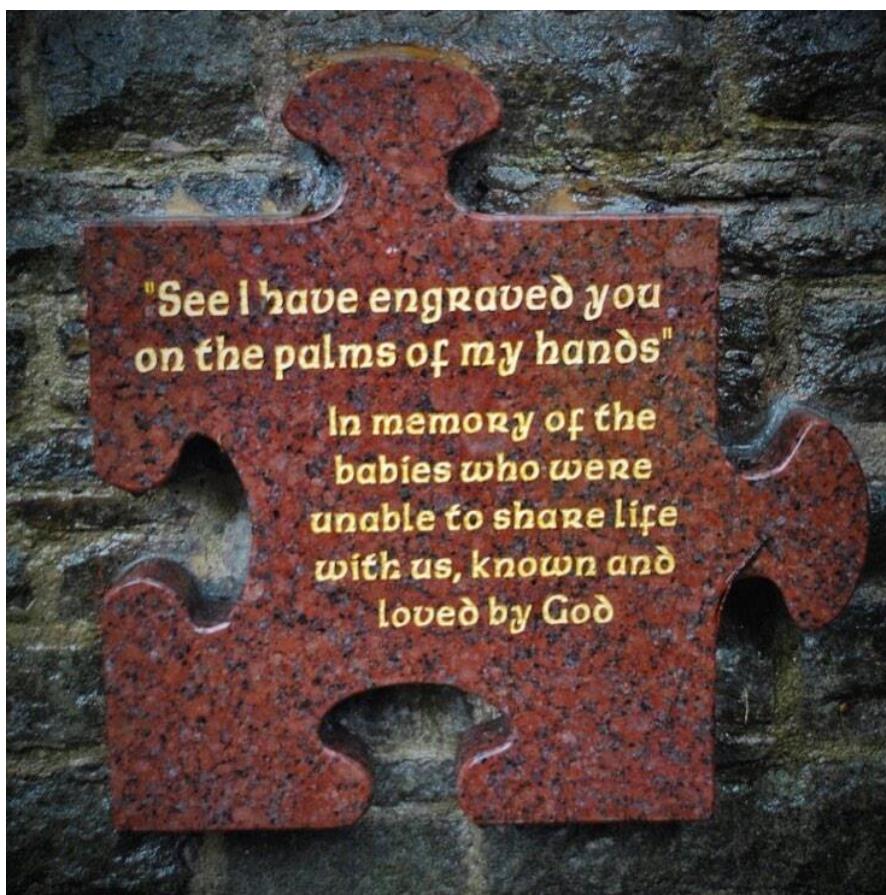
South Side Flowerbed Renovations

Health and Safety

As PCC Health and Safety Officer, Hedley Smith reports that the normal monthly HSE inspections were suspended during the months of March to June inclusive due to Covid-19 lockdown, but on 20 July an inspection of the buildings was carried out to check they were in a sufficiently safe state to welcome back parishioners. Covid-related signage was clearly visible; hand sanitising stations were in place and chairs were sensibly spaced to minimise any risk of airborne transmission. It was therefore deemed safe, social distancing accepted, to open the doors again in August. Monthly inspections were carried out between August and November, the Hall emergency lighting was tested each month, and the Hall fire alarm system was checked zone by zone each week. A new fence was erected between the hall lawn and the outdoor education area which will help to ensure children playing outside are contained within the lawn area. A revised access step layout to the south porch is in hand.

Safeguarding

The PCC Safeguarding Officers, Cathy Hedley and Susan Joyce, continued to implement the PCC's safeguarding policy (revised annually), including DBS (formerly CRB) checks and maintenance of suitable records. Susan Joyce also serves as Children's Advocate. Parish policies and procedures for Safeguarding Children and Young Adults and for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults were implemented. Members of the Pastoral Care team and those with an active role with young people had the necessary safeguarding checks. The Annual Safeguarding Audit was completed, and seven points were noted for action.



During National Baby Loss Awareness Week a new memorial stone was dedicated in The Memorial Garden. The stone is to remember babies who are born asleep or don't make it to full term.

The PCC

Membership

Members of the PCC either hold office ex officio or are elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. A small number of members may be co-opted. Elections to the PCC confer membership for one year, with a maximum service of six consecutive years, after which members must stand down for at least one year. During the year the following served as members of the PCC

Ex-officio Members

Clergy	The Reverend Calum Piper	Vicar & Chairman
Churchwardens	Louise Richardson	
	David Walker	
Reader	Mark Hackney	from October 2020
Pastoral Workers	John Baker	
	Andrea Millington	to September 2020
Deanery Synod Representatives	David Beveridge	Deanery Synod Lay Chairman
	Bryan Goodwin	Deanery Synod Treasurer
	Tricia Munn	to October 2020
	Jo Oughton	from October 2020
	Phil Wadsworth	
Diocesan Synod	Bob Munn	PCC Vice-Chairman

Elected Members

Hamida Adkins		Jill Illingworth	from APCM 2020
Chris Ainscough	to APCM 2020	Janet Ketteringham	
Frank Bennett	to APCM 2020	Phil Ketteringham	to APCM 2020
Marina Bennett	to APCM 2020	Graham Knight	PCC Treasurer
Frances Beards		Andrea Millington	from October 2020
Imogen Bird	from APCM 2020	Andrew Moore	to APCM 2020
Glynis Brown		Tricia Munn	from APCM 2020
Robert Cryer			PCC Secretary
Pauline D'Souza	from APCM 2020		
Doreen Donnan	from APCM 2020	Sheila Newbon	from APCM 2020
Fred Donnan	from APCM 2020	Louise Sell	from APCM 2020
Georgina Foot		David Taylor	to APCM 2020
Shelagh Gall		Susan Taylor	
Sally Harwood		Stuart Villard	from APCM 2020
Michael Holmes	from APCM 2020	Georgia Watson	from APCM 2020
Sue Howgego	from APCM 2020	Rob Watson	



Report

The full PCC met five times during the year, the last three via Zoom. The average level of attendance at PCC meetings was 87%, an increase of 4% on the previous year. Committees and working groups met between meetings, via Zoom in much of the year, and reports of their deliberations and activities were received by the full PCC and discussed as necessary. During the year the PCC received reports and discussed, among other things, the formation of an Eco-Action Group, the disability awareness and safeguarding audits which had been carried out, arrangements for the opening of the church for private prayer and later for services of worship, the establishment of the Micah Project, and the updating of the annual budget to take account of the repercussions from Covid. Because of Covid restrictions the Annual Meeting was delayed until 20 September, and took place in a socially-distanced church.

Committees

The PCC operates with two permanent committees, and with working groups set up to tackle any special projects or tasks. These committees and working groups meet and report as necessary to the PCC.

Standing Committee

Membership: Vicar, Churchwardens, PCC Vice-Chairman, PCC Secretary, PCC Treasurer

This Committee is required by church law. It has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. It met six times during 2020, primarily to set agendas for PCC meetings.

Finance and Buildings Committee

Membership: Bob Munn (Chairman), Janet Ketteringham (Secretary), Vicar, Churchwardens, Graham Knight (PCC Treasurer), George Foot, Mike Holmes (from APCM 2020), Sue Howgego (co-opted, then from APCM 2020), Phil Ketteringham (to APCM 2020), Peter Pugh (co-opted), Hedley Smith (PCC Health & Safety Officer), David Taylor (to APCM 2020),

The overall aim of this committee is to provide and maintain the material resources needed by St. Michael's to carry out God's work. It is responsible for finance, care of buildings and grounds, health, safety and environmental issues, and personnel matters. It has powers delegated from the PCC to deal with smaller and more detailed matters while providing advice, and it makes recommendations to the PCC on more substantial ones, including the annual budget. It met four times during 2020. As the coronavirus pandemic struck, it prepared a revised budget for the year based on the estimated loss of income; planned giving has held up very well, but the budget recommended to the PCC for 2021 provides for continuing reductions in other income. During lockdown, a dedicated team spent time significantly enhancing the church grounds by clearing and planting, which continues. With our buildings not in use, it was also convenient to have the floors in the Hall and Church treated. Later in the year the committee updated our reserves policy, which was duly approved by the PCC. We are grateful for the service of Phil Ketteringham and David Taylor over the last six years, and are pleased to welcome Mike Holmes and Sue Howgego as members.

Young Generations Action Group

Membership: Jo Oughton (Chair), Revd Calum Piper, Churchwardens, other church members with a passion for children, family and youth ministry

This group aims to:

- Implement the strategic plan for children and young people previously agreed by the PCC
- Encourage St Michael's in the stimulation of faith among the young people of Bramhall
- Set goals for the church each academic year for engaging with families and children
- Listen to the needs of families and young people in our church and community

The group developed plans for 2021 to look at provision for children and families in Sunday worship, possibilities for reaching out to schools, and developing the Zoom youth group, along with continuing to sustain and nurture relationships with the uniformed organisations and the Mill.

The Micah Project approved by the PCC in October 2020 will see work with young people very much strengthened in 2021.

Newala – Bramhall Link Group

The first meeting in January 2020 was an optimistic one, planning several fundraising events for our projects in Newala and to help some of our young people visit there in 2021. Some £7,500 was in the bank ready to be allocated to the projects. £1500 was allocated to the long-established schools' porridge project and £2500 to build a water tank in a village. The remaining £3k would go towards a possible two-year project which our young people could help with on their visit, and Bishop Oscar was to be consulted about this.

Then tragedy struck the world and, close to our hearts, the pandemic took from us our brother and friend Keith Fenwick; he is greatly mourned and missed. Over £1200 was given in memory of Keith for the Newala Link and, after consulting the bishop and Jean Fenwick, it was sent to build toilets for a primary school.

As the true scale of the pandemic unfolded plans had to be laid aside for most fundraising events, though a quiz night organised by Nina Hedley was run before lockdown, as was a Lent Soup Sunday. Robert Cryer's vegetables continued to grow despite the virus, thus there was a produce table in the foyer once again. Courgettes, apples, onions, flowers, marmalade, all sorts, appeared and gave joy to people carefully coming to church to worship and pray. An International Recipe book was compiled by Verity Beards-Jones.

Meetings later in the year concentrated on sorting out communication with Newala, looking at using new tech if possible, as well as responding to two requests from the diocese. The first was to furnish the new paediatric 15 bed ward in Lulindi health centre with mattresses, pillows, mosquito nets and 30 bedsheets at a total cost of some £2040, which we sent them. The second was to use the water tank money to rebuild a small decrepit health centre situated in Luatala, an area lacking any other health facility. This serious alteration of where the money is allocated was permitted by the Standing Committee, as we could all empathise with people needing a safe place to go when ill or giving birth. The water tank project will be resumed as soon as possible. Thanks go to Graham Knight and Ann Walker for handling all the accounting and banking since March, and to Terrie Hunter who relinquished the post of bookkeeper.

So, 2020 finished with knowing that our support is needed in Newala and is used wisely. The Link Group is in the process of determining who will replace George Mbesigwe, Elizabeth Milanzi and Dr Lawi Issa as signatories on our Tanzanian bank account. Thanks go to them for helping us and we know their friendship and prayers will always be with us.

Links have been forged with Rev Jackan Waweru, and we now have links to other Tanzanian societies and people with connections in Newala in particular. We know we cannot visit in 2021, but we can continue to support the link and remember the people of Newala in our prayers.

Eco Action Group

Membership: *Hamida Adkins, Frances Beards, Glynis Brown, Robert Cryer, Doreen Donnan, Keith Fenwick, George Foot, Shelagh Gall, Sue Howgego, Janet Ketteringham, Andrew Moore, Sheila Newbon, Calum Piper, Louise Richardson, Helen Russ, Phil Wadsworth (Chairperson), Georgia Watson.*

Formed in September 2019, the Eco-Action Group continued to map out its remit and agenda as we moved into 2020, but putting many of its intentions into action had to be postponed because of Covid. The Group did, however, manage to fulfil the three specific targets it had set itself:

- Achieve a substantial further reduction in amount of paper used. This was realised because of the use of the digital screens in church, and because of St Michael's Today being e-mailed – both as a result of Covid, but which will continue in the post-Covid 'new normal'.
- Stop the use of disposable tableware, cutlery, etc at St Michael's and its organisations' events. A PCC motion made this St Michael's policy.
- Achieve the 'Eco Parish' Bronze Award.

A set of targets was drawn up for 2021 and agreed by the PCC, so that the whole church 'owns' them. They include making a wild-life friendly pond in the church grounds, and installing 15 bird boxes.

Parish Development Group (Finance)

Membership: *Louise Richardson (chair), Sue Taylor, Ann Walker, Rob Watson and Stuart Villard.*

- This new group is intended to support the Parish's mission and future strategies through:
- Identifying, bidding for and securing external sources of funding to support the Parish's strategies for future development
- Producing, organising and evaluating an annual programme of events and activities with the dual aim of generating income and importantly enhancing community outreach and social engagement with the Church and the wider parish
- Working with existing and potentially new church groups to co-ordinate all fund-raising activities across the church organisation, in order to reduce the possibility of event fatigue and duplication

During 2020 the Committee completed work on developing an approach to legacy giving, and devoted the bulk of its time to develop detailed plans for the Micah Project. In 2021 they plan to look at the potential for re-furbishing parts of the Parish Centre, in particular the kitchen.

Electoral Roll Report

The new Electoral Roll membership authorized at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) on 20 September 2020 was 260 (195 resident and 65 non-resident). Since the publication of the new Roll, two amendments have been agreed by the PCC such that at the end of 2020 the membership stood at 256 (189 resident and 67 non-resident). Phil Ketteringham has continued to act as Electoral Roll Officer.

Deanery Synod

Cheadle Deanery Synod met twice in 2020. At the March meeting the Synod considered outreach to schools, and raised the question of possible changes to parish boundaries. The October meeting (held via Zoom) took considerable time looking at how to undertake mission during the Covid pandemic, sharing experience of what each church in the deanery was doing. The Synod now has a new 3-year elected membership, and Jo Oughton replaced Tricia Munn on the Synod. David Beveridge retired from the role of Lay Chair after several years' service, but remains an elected member, as do Bryan Goodwin and Phil Wadsworth.

Churches Together in Bramhall and Woodford

2020 has been a year of considerable change for the churches in Bramhall, with a new Methodist minister replacing Philip Berry, the retirement from the Baptist church of Phil Dixon, and the absence on sabbatical leave of Jonathan Dawson from Ford's Lane Evangelical Church. These changes, along with the Covid restrictions, have limited the possibilities for mutual activity.

Giving to Missions and Charities

The accounts for 2019 showed a surplus of £6261, to be allocated by the PCC at its first meeting after the 2020 APCM. The APCM was of course delayed, but eventually the money was distributed, with £2000 for the Mill, £2000 for the Barnabas Fund, £2000 for Christians Against Poverty, and £261 for the Christian Aid Harvest Appeal. During 2020, other giving and fundraising was inevitably curtailed, but a total of £7450 was raised and sent to Newala. Additionally £4831 was given by direct collections and sent to various charities, while £1745 was sent direct to the Children's Society via the donation button on the church web site. In addition, space was provided to charitable organizations free of charge on 29 occasions, worth £1539 if charged at normal hire rates.

Public Benefit

The Charity Commission requires charities to report on how their activities carried out their aims for the public benefit. In reporting, the PCC has had regard to the Commission's guidance on public benefit. During 2020 many church activities have been suspended due to the Covid pandemic.

Worship

Services are open to all, and in normal times the church is open for private prayer and meditation on weekdays, though during the periods of lockdown and other restrictions this was restricted to specific weekdays or stopped entirely. Services are also normally provided in local care homes and at Christmas in Bramall Hall Chapel.

Occasional offices

The church is normally used for baptisms, weddings and funerals. During 2020 there has been one baptism, one wedding, one service of prayer and thanksgiving after civil marriage, 15 funerals in church, 37 funeral services at the crematorium, and 12 burials of ashes.

Education

Contacts have been made with some local schools, and links are maintained with uniformed organisations. Learning about the Christian faith is fostered by sermons, by monthly all-age services, by short study programmes, and by a variety of house groups, now meeting digitally. In normal years parties of local school children visit the church as part of their curriculum and are introduced to the building and the activities that go on in it. A local school sometimes borrows equipment. This work takes place in the context of our Strategy for Children and Young People.

Concerts

The church building is available for booking by organizations that present concerts and book readings. Because of the pandemic there were only 2 concerts held in church during 2020.

Pastoral Care

A team of volunteers visit people in the parish who are ill or have been bereaved. Occasional lunches and short services are also provided for those who are visited and for care home residents. The clergy visit and minister to those in hospital or hospice. Much of this activity has been suspended during 2020, but a network of pastoral care has kept parishioners in touch with one another by telephone.





Scouts and Guides

St Michael's sponsors the 4th Bramhall Scout Group and 4th Bramhall Guides and Brownies, each of which has a policy of open recruitment. The Scouts have their own premises, but the Guides meet in the Church Hall. Both organizations use the church grounds for outdoor activities such as games and cooking.



Active Angels and Michael's Munchkins

When restrictions allowed, these playgroups met to provide activities for pre-school children with their mothers or other carers.



Praise and Play

This term-time group provided a small, safe and welcoming place for pre-school children and carers to enjoy refreshments and a lively praise session while building relationships and community. Its activities were suspended in March because of the Covid lockdown.



Parish Centre

The Parish Centre is available for hiring when not required for church use. In the early part of the year it is often the venue for meetings of several charities and other bodies, and various special events and parties. The Covid pandemic severely restricted such events in 2020.

Missions and charities

The PCC gives to missions and charities from any surplus voluntary income. Missions and charities also benefit from funds raised by special collections and fund-raising activities.



Chelwood Food Bank

A collection of food and toiletry items is made every week, normally at both morning services, and donated to this Food Bank in Stockport the following day. This collection continued during all Covid restrictions.

Financial Review

We must be thankful to God for all the blessings received during a most difficult year because of COVID 19 and the changes due to restrictions on Church attendance.

During the year, PCC Funds increased by £19,464 to £640,290 [2019: £620,826], which includes increases in value of the investment funds held with CCLA of £8,576 and donations to the new Micah Project of £25,500. Although PCC day-to-day activities were in deficit by £12,290, [Income £168,706, Expenditure £180,996], and the activities of the Newala group resulted in a deficit of £2,403 [Income £5,118, Expenditure £7,521], there were increases in restricted funds of £78 and in the Micah Project of £25,501.

The PCC day-to-day income reduced by £6,984 when compared to 2019. The major increases were £7,495 from the Government Job Retention Scheme and £17,479 from Sundry Donations, which includes donations to the Micah Project, Special Collections £3,280 and Gardening £1,180. The major reductions from 2019 were Planned Giving, Collections and Gift Aid £9,145, Hall and Church Hire income £22,221, Parish Events £2,115, Flower Club £1,869 and PCC Fees £994.

The PCC day-to-day expenditure reduced by £11,935 when compared with 2019. The major additional expenditures were Parish Share £2,278, Missionary Giving £3,280, Building Maintenance – Painting Tower £1,536, Gardening Club £1,180, and Hall Maintenance and Floor Polishing £1,312. The major reductions in expenditure were Buildings £8,862, Parish Events £3,972, Hall Cleaning £3,015, and Flower Club £1,858

During the year, no Capital Expenditure was undertaken by the PCC. Bramhall Parish Hall Trust paid for the Church Floor to be maintained and polished with no charge to the PCC. The PCC also received a grant from Chester Diocese which was used for TV screens in the church, to remove the need for paper service sheets, and for upgrading the Wi-Fi in church to stream services for Church at Home.

Part of

