

St George's Tuffley with St Margaret's Whaddon
Worshipping, Caring, Pioneering
Growing God's Kingdom



April 2020

Dearly loved Parishioners

Annual Review for 2019

I'm delighted to introduce this booklet of reports on last year's activities.

Although we've had to defer our Annual Parish Church Meetings (APCM's), we want everyone to have access to reports on our past year without further delay. In these extraordinary days, it's good to reflect on our life as God's family together, both to celebrate all that's been good and to learn for the future.



Last year I spoke of us "building a runway" in Tuffley ready for God's great "aeroplane" of His Kingdom to land; and of the need first for us to clear away all debris that gets in God's way.

To help us all assess how well we've been doing, rather than give an overview of everything that's happened, I've selected a few of the year's features that stand out for me.

Worship – encountering our Lord together

- Sunday worship continues to be the foundation of our life together; supported by weekday communion and morning prayer. Our worship is enriched by the many people involved in preparing and pulling it all together.
- We've been delighted to support our music leader Paula in her 'Reader' training
- In Advent we focused more on prayer, and began to share the delightful series of 'Pocket Prayers' booklets; we've since held a Tuffley Prayer Day
- In our Lent sermons and home groups we explored the 'Pilgrim Way', some of the great foundations of our faith
- Worship among families was sustained well at Family Praise and Messy Church; and we continued to offer 'Jesus and Me' (JAM) sessions for children during Communion at St George's
- Special worship events included a 'Churchyard service' at St Margaret's shared by some 60 people whose loved ones are buried here; our annual 'Time to Remember' service; and our annual Remembrance Sunday service, where our local uniformed organisations were well represented.

- We began an exciting series of monthly café-style worship called ‘Soul Space’

Q: We’re being re-moulded during the lockdown; what shape shall our worship take afterwards?

Caring and Discipleship – growing in care for each other and love for God

- While support through informal networks is flourishing, we’ve also strengthened our co-ordination, aiming to respond to everyone we’re aware of at a time of particular need
- Mothers’ Union continue actively to support one another and reach out
- We’ve increased our ‘dementia awareness’, and we’re working to increase our understanding of ‘mental health’ issues
- ‘Ruthi’ arrived in Tuffley during the spring, and rapidly became a dear friend of us all. When she suddenly disappeared, we could find no trace of her, and were shocked to discover later she had died in a field on Crickley Hill. We held a special service celebrating her life and trusting her back to her Lord.
- To help deepen understanding and practice of our faith, Pete and Lorraine Best’s weekly Bible discussion group is ongoing, and we held seasonal groups in Lent, August, and Advent

Q: How can we further develop our discipleship, during and after lockdown?

Pioneering – sharing the love and life of Christ in our community

- Our well-established Coffee Pot and Day Centre have continued to thrive, and the Crossroad magazine continues to be much appreciated around the area
- Our Pioneer Helen moved to live in Tuffley. Pete and Lorraine Best are now ‘Associate Pioneers’ working alongside Helen.
- We’ve shared in weekly ‘prayer-walking’ the streets, meeting people, listening, and asking God’s blessing on all who live and work here.
- Schools liaison has flourished, with regular assemblies and special services; we prepared 40 Christmas Hampers for families nominated by four schools;
- We also arranged iSing Pop, a very special week-long music project where 700 pupils from two schools learnt songs with Christian themes, recording their very own album!
- We ran Exploring Christianity, and Alpha, courses on the Christian faith
- Our annual community event Tuffley Festival had record attendance, and included an iSingPop concert by 90 children



- Other social and entertainment events have continued, including a new ‘Hobbies Show’ in the spring
- We’ve been sharing in a new Diocesan-led ‘Asset-Based Community Development’ (ABCD) project
- We’re actively working with other organisations to support people in need

Q: How can we build our involvement in the community well, during and post-lockdown?

Church in Tuffley – four buildings, three denominations, one church



- The leaders of our three denominations continue to meet regularly share, pray and plan
- Our monthly ‘Refresh’ evenings continue to do what they say on the tin. We also celebrated a joint “Messy Easter” at Grange Baptist and “Messy Advent” at English Martyrs.
- We host ‘Music Makers’, a monthly gathering of musicians, to learn new hymns and songs for Sunday services, for Refresh and for other special occasions
- We delivered colourful Easter and Christmas fliers with ‘Hope’ magazines to many homes across the area. We sang Christmas carols at The Knoll, and at the Pike with a group from Holmleigh Park High School.
- We produced a desk-top ‘Tuffley Life’ calendar for 2020, selling some and delivering complimentary copies to schools, retailers and our many other local businesses in recognition of their contributions to the community.
- We share in monthly ‘Faith and Light’ meetings among people with learning disabilities: a real joy.
- We’ve been preparing an ‘information pack’ as part of our plan to welcome residents to the new ‘Yew Tree Gardens’ development on Grange Road

Q: What further opportunities do we have to grow together as the Church in Tuffley?

Infrastructure – keeping the show on the road

- Our two Standing Committees and Parish Church Councils (PCCs) continue to meet jointly; we considered carefully a proposal to create ‘One Parish’ but concluded we weren’t yet ready to proceed
- The Connections group has steered our developing website and social media
- The Church Centre has new double glazing, and will soon be painted outside; with new toilets planned for the summer

- We've renewed our commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in all we do; and all PCC members and other key volunteers have attended appropriate training
- Finances at St Margaret's are healthy, and a shortfall in St George's has been reduced, thanks to very generous people across the church family

Q: Should we be reviewing how much we 'give away' as a church? It may not be logical at this challenging time, but it may be a sign of our trust in God that we reflect on the Jewish model of the 'tithes', giving the 'first tenth', and looking to God to provide all their needs?

Adapting to the Pandemic

We've closed our buildings. We've cancelled public worship. We're holding meetings online. We're developing creative ways to enable us all to 'worship together at home' every week. We're trying to keep in regular contact with every church member, as well as with others we know across the community.

Q: While our activities have been curtailed, is something 'deeper' happening among us? If so, what do you sense this might be?

“Retirement”

Most of you know that in March I announced that I will be retiring at the end of July. The Diocese has promised to work closely with the church, to guide the preparation of a 'parish profile' and recruitment of a new vicar, and to support the ongoing leadership of the church meanwhile. Rosie and I really don't want to leave you; but we know we must.



Conclusion



Many people have given their times, skills, and money generously. I thank you all. There's been much activity, and much to celebrate. Yet we can do better in some areas.

As Jesus taught us, we pray: **“Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done”**. What do you think we should do to hasten God's coming? What 'debris' in our lives still needs to be cleared, individually and together, ready for the “plane of God's kingdom” to land?

“Behold I'm coming soon”, Jesus says in Revelation chapter 22. Are we ready to answer with the writer, **“Come, Lord Jesus!”**?

God bless you all

Bruce