

REVIEW OF CHURCH ACTIVITIES IN 2019
(with updates to 13th March 2020)

OUTREACH, MISSION & EVANGELISM INITIATIVES:

CHURCH SCHOOLS:

Outreach in this direction continues to make progress at both of our Church of England Primary Schools of **Howick** and **Cop Lane**. As part of our on-going commitment to our Church Schools, we continue to purchase sufficient **bibles to enable each child in year three, at both Howick and Cop Lane Schools**, to have their own copy to use for the remaining four years at their primary school and then to take with them when they move onto secondary education. This continues to be very much appreciated by pupils, their parents and staff alike. **Cop Lane** school's presentation took place at their school with Church (Foundation) Governors and the Vicar attending along with family and friends of those children receiving a Bible. **Howick School** decided that the whole school would attend church on a Friday afternoon in December for their version of a "Festival of Nine Lessons with Carols" during which the bibles were presented. The church was packed with children, parents and other relatives plus churchwardens/ school Governors and some parishioners. The ability to be flexible in the layout of the church proved to be most successful with nothing but positive comments being expressed. The children were very happy to sit on the warm under-heated floor!! This is now an annual event at church.

Cop Lane school also attended church during advent for their celebration of Christmas and once again the church was packed. They thoroughly enjoyed the lay out and extra space to be able to perform.

As both schools are Church of England Primary Schools, each is also subject to a Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools (SIAMS) by the Diocese as well as the HMI Ofsted Inspection. **At Cop Lane** School the one-day SIAMS inspection took place in November 2017 and the school was again classed as "outstanding". The PCC congratulated the staff, governors and pupils on their achievement. **Howick** had had their one-day SIAMS inspection in February 2016 and had been assessed as "Outstanding" with no areas for improvement which is almost unheard of.

During 2019, neither school was subject to any inspection. However, neither school is standing on its' laurels, and it can't be ruled out that one or both schools could be subject of one or more inspections in 2020.

We reported last year that **Mr Ian Ashmore took over as Headteacher at Cop Lane** from Pam Carter in September 2018 and one of his first actions was to create a Christian Ethos Vision & Values Committee with membership consisting of our Vicar and all the Foundation Governors namely David Thornton, Jill Howe, Iain Jenkins and Greg Hodkinson. The inaugural meeting was held in November 2018 and there have been termly meetings ever since. The committee members undertook some Diocesan training in January 2019. Another of Mr Ashmore's innovations was for each class in the junior school ie years 3, 4, 5 & 6 to visit church during the academic year with year 6 visiting each term. The Vicar led a "*Service of the Word*" with the children being involved with Foundation Governors also in attendance. Appropriate explanations of the various artefacts in the church followed, before the class walked back to school. Feedback from staff and pupils has been very positive. Mr Ashmore was invited to our July PCC meeting in church and very kindly hosted our next PCC meeting in September at the school where members were shown round the school hall and each of the classrooms where the church distinctiveness was clearly visible.

The school received a letter signed by Nick Gibb, the Schools Minister congratulating the school for obtaining 100% result in the phonics national exam which made them in the top 2% in the Country!!

In September 2019, **the Headteacher of Howick School Miss Deb Bramley**, informed the Governors that she would be standing down as the Head from the end of the academic year ie 31st August, 2020, having been the Head at the school for over 12 years and the Deputy Head for the two years before that. The full process for a new Head subsequently took place and after final interviews in February, 2020, **Mrs Pamela Maloney was appointed and she takes up the Headship on 1st September ,2020.**

On a lighter note, **both schools** continue to use our redundant church hand-bells which have been enjoyed by children, parents, staff and governors!

PENWORTHAM LIVE:

In May 2019, the Parish took part in the annual Arts & Music Festival held in Penwortham. This being the eighth year was called "**Penwortham Live 19**" organized through South Ribble Borough Council. There were 20 venues throughout Penwortham with the Church hosting events both on the Friday and Saturday afternoons and evenings. There were positive comments received from both the performers and audience alike about the ambiance of the church, the flexibility of use (from regency style dancing - through a single performer playing a musical instrument - to a full band) and the superb acoustics for music and song. The whole Festival engendered a very positive Penwortham community spirit and for the Parish and it was the first time that some residents from Penwortham and surrounding areas had visited the church.

Such was the success of "*Penwortham Live 19*", that a similar Festival was planned to take place on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th May this year but COVID-19 put an end to that.

SHOE BOXES, KNITTED TEDDIES WITH CLOTH BAGS:

Since 2002, parishioners have been knitting teddies for distribution to less fortunate children both in this country and abroad. The 60 knitted teddies in 2019 were delivered to the Salvation Army in Preston so some children would have at least one Christmas present. Some 36 "shoeboxes" were delivered to "*The International Aid Trust*" in November who shipped them out for children in the Ukraine for Christmas.

CHRISTIAN AID:

In May, a number of parishioners again acted as collectors in Penwortham. Even with five fewer collectors being available this year, the sum of £1600 was collected and banked (£1632 in 2018: £1636 in 2017: £1648 in 2016!). House to house collections for **Christian Aid** is another way of supporting those in the Third World. A further £100 was raised at a concert performed by Leyland Band in church at the beginning of April (see below). Regrettably the House to House collections were cancelled due to COVID-19.

DONATIONS TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONS & CHARITIES:

The Parish Policy has been, for a number of years, to donate **10% of our collections to Christian Charities and Missions**. This is based on the previous year's giving. Having paid for Bibles for Year 3 pupils at both of our Church Primary Schools in the Parish as mentioned above, the remaining money for the two previous years was available for distribution and the PCC agreed that £2500 should be sent to each of the following charities namely the Foxton Centre, the Salvation Army Citadel both in Preston and Sports Chaplaincy UK. Minor donations to the local British Legion in respect of poppies, and to Churches Together in Penwortham, the Lancashire Association of Bell Ringers and to the Friends of Blackburn Cathedral were also made.

In addition, the Bishops Harvest Appeal for third world Christian charities raised some £610 making our parish again one of the largest donors to the appeal in the Diocese.

CHURCH USE BY OTHER OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS:

The parish hires the Nave and/or large room in the 1956 extension known as the Choir Vestry. The following are a summary of the significant bookings.

- The **NHS Blood Donor Service** run a monthly session lasting 8 hours between Easter and Harvest during when members of the public visit the church to donate blood.
- We also have a weekly Monday evening booking from the end of September through to the end of March by the **Preston Society (Birds & Natural History)** who invite speakers to give an illustrated talk with some 80 to 120 in attendance each week.
- **Leyland Brass Band** gave a concert in Church on 4th April having booked it after last year's performance because the acoustics were so good.
- For the last five years, the **Preston Young Actors**, also known as '*The Troublehouse Theatre Group*', have put on an annual production in early Autumn. This year it was '*McBeth*' aka '*The Scottish Play*' was performed over five consecutive evenings in August to audiences of between 60 and 100 each evening under the direction of Rick Bithell. It was an abridged modern telling of Shakespeare's tragedy (with live music thrown in). They gave marvellous performances and their use of the space was very imaginative and creative. They put a lot of enthusiasm and energy into each performance with the end result being a play well worth seeing and they didn't need one prompt!

In recognition of how the church had supported these young actors, they were anxious to do something in return for Penwortham in general and St Mary's church in particular. Under the direction again of Rick Bithell, they produced three short personal video tributes enhanced by some singing. Each was downloaded, not only onto our church website, but also onto local social media groups as well as onto 'You Tube'. To cap it all, Rick's fiancée Lorna Kellett, an actress from Penwortham, got married to Rick at our church in November which for us was the icing on the cake.

VOLUNTEERS:

The Church Regulations require that any "***substantial voluntary help***" must be recorded in their Annual Report. There is a small group of active parishioners who give of their services in financial management, general maintenance and administration. The Parish is very fortunate to have such people who are prepared to continue to give so much of their time and talents for the benefit of the Parish. Our Vicar continues to say this publicly on all occasions. We are required by the Regulations to state if any member of the PCC has received any payment for their services during the course of the year. We report that David and Rachel Tuke are members of the bell-ringing team and their fees are in accordance with those approved by the PCC. Our organist Rhoda Martin is also paid in accordance with the approved rates.

We do not have an appointed vergers but when a wedding or funeral takes place, the Vicar asks if someone could act as a vergers. David Thornton and Jill Howe (Churchwardens) perform these duties but only infrequently and are paid the statutory fee in each case. This is not really defined as "***substantial voluntary help***" because only a small fee is paid but with the other substantial voluntary work each undertakes, it was felt this should be recorded in this report to demonstrate transparency.

ECUMENICAL MATTERS:

All eight churches in Penwortham form the Ecumenical Group – two are Church of England (St. Leonard's and ourselves), two are Methodist, two are Roman Catholic, one is the United Reform Church and the eighth is a free church which meets in Whitefield Road Primary School. Each church sends to South Ribble Borough Council's (SRBC's) Community Liaison Officer, the various events and services which happen during Advent and over Christmas who then produce and distribute a leaflet highlighting all these events in Penwortham.

The procession of witness on Good Friday in 2019 took place as usual but due to COVID-19, the 2020 walk was cancelled.

All the churches were involved in **Penwortham Gala** in June 2019. A Churches Together in Penwortham (CTiP) marquee was erected again where information about each church was available with light refreshments being served on the Saturday afternoon which was staffed on a rota basis with each of the churches involved. A joint ecumenical service held on the Sunday on Hurst Grange Park and this replaced our 10.15am Communion Service at church on that day. Similar plans for 2020 were made but scuppered due to COVID-19.

Our Church hosted the Churches Together in Penwortham **World Day of Prayer** in March, 2020 just before the COVID-19 lockdown and we took part in Lancashire Sings Christmas at Penwortham Golf Club run and organized by BBC Radio Lancashire who sent a reporter who did a live interview during the broadcast.

PARISH FINANCES:

The Statement of Financial Practice (SOFP) 2015 and the subsequent changes to the Church Accounting Practices dictate how our accounts have to be prepared.

David Tuke is our treasurer, who has financial skills and he has prepared the accounts using specifically designed computer software for church accounting procedures and we have been able to show a true comparison with activity in 2018 alongside 2019.

The accounts, balance sheet and notes to the accounts forming part of the annual report are shown on pages 1 -10 including the Independent Examiners certificate giving us a clear bill of health (see page 11). These would have been explained by our treasurer at our Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) scheduled to have taken place held on Sunday 26th April 2020 commencing around 11.30am after the 10.15am service in Church. But as we all now know, the COVID-19 pandemic put an end to this.

The Church regulations state that both the Annual report and Accounts have to be approved by the PCC as they are the Trustees and are later presented at the APCM for those present to receive and note. This will still be done when we get to know when we will be allowed to hold our APCM. As has been mentioned on the introductory first page of this report under 'Explanation', the accounts were accepted by the PCC and the details forwarded to both the Church of England Statistics Branch and the Diocese before the deadline date. This updated version of the Annual report was approved by the PCC at their meeting on Monday 14th September. Therefore, everything is now ready for the APCM in due course.

CHILD / VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION & SAFE FROM HARM POLICY:

Clair Bernstein was our Parish Safeguarding Officer until the 31st December 2019 and an updated version of the Policies and Appendices were signed off by the Vicar and Churchwarden David Thornton, after it had been re-affirmed by the PCC in June 2019. These documents continue to be displayed in Church and on our Church website. The forms in the appendices continue to be valid and there was also no change needed to the Vulnerable Adult Policy.

The Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) has become much more rigorous as the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS), now called "Thirtyoneeight", have had to comply with the latest changes to the Data Protection Policy. This is now giving greater security to our applicants moving forward as the information provided is highly sensitive.

Towards the end of 2018, the Church of England put out a document outlining what training was required to be undertaken by Clergy, PCC members and others who work with children and young people as well as vulnerable adults. The two basic courses (C0 & C1) were undertaken on line by everybody, but for PCC's, Clergy and other key post holders who work more closely with youngsters and the vulnerable, had to undertake more intensive training run by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team either at the Diocesan offices or locally. 28 people from the Parish were subject to this enhanced training at our church on 27th November so the Parish is now totally compliant. Another requirement was to complete our Parish Safeguarding Audit and submit it to the Diocese which we did together with our policy on how we would deal with a serious "non safeguarding incident".

The Church of England issued new instructions on what information about safeguarding had to be prominently displayed in church as well as on our church website. We can report that we are totally compliant.

Clair Bernstein has been our Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) as well as our Vulnerable Adult Co-ordinator for some six years whilst being a PCC member. She stated that when she stood down at the 2019 APCM in April, she would only continue to the end of 2019, as she wished to see the completion of all the necessary training. Clair has been thanked but we now place on written record our appreciation.

We are very pleased to announce that Gareth Allen, who is a PCC member, kindly agreed to take on this responsible roll which he did on 1st January, 2020. Gareth is a senior teacher at a Preston church primary school and is their safeguarding lead at the school.

We continue to be committed to providing a safe environment for all children and vulnerable adults.

THE CHURCH BUILDING:

QUINQUENNIAL (every 5 years) INSPECTION:

Every five years a full report (quinquennial report) on the condition and fabric of our Grade II* listed church has to be carried out by a diocesan approved qualified architect who for us is Stephen Fish. The latest Inspection took place in September 2017 and the report was sent to the PCC in January 2018. There were two urgent items requiring attention.

One was to address issues with the parapets which had resulted in some dampness coming through onto the walls in the Nave and the second was to address crumbling masonry around the West window. Specialists have now been to church and given quotes for both jobs and a faculty will now be applied for and the work will hopefully be undertaken later this year. The Chancellor of the Diocese (the planning authority) directed that the observations of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) had to be sought before anything further could be progressed and as at today's date (24th August) we are still awaiting a decision.

The other work identified to be completed within the next three years will be carried out with total costings for all the work identified estimated at £76,000. Most of this work will have to be done by professionals. Two important pieces of work which has been addressed by one such professional, was the replacement of tiles on the nave roof which now makes us watertight again and the removal of the flag pole as its' wooden housing in the roof of the tower was found to be totally rotten. Many of the other minor tasks have now been done and the remainder will be completed by parishioners.

THE CHURCH LAND SURROUNDING THE CHURCH

(covering the church yard and Castle Hill – [the site of an ancient Monument].)

The maintenance of the churchyard is the responsibility of the South Ribble Borough Council (SRBC) as we are a 'Closed churchyard' and subject of 'an order of the Privy Council' back in the year 2000 which has been documented in many of the previous annual reports over the last 19 years. Therefore, only what has happened in 2019 and 2020 will now be shown.

THE DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE OFFICIAL PARISH VISITATION/INSPECTION

The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) is in effect the planning advisory committee for the Diocese through whom any changes / repairs must have their agreement and the formal approval by the Chancellor of the Diocese before work can be undertaken. Apart from their advisory role, the DAC ensures that all diocesan policies and regulations are being complied with together with the Archdeacon.

To this end, every year the DAC visit, over a few days, selected parishes in one Deanery. We had been informed that our Parish would be visited on 7th June, 2019. We had been asked to consider three issues in advance of their attendance. One was "***What issues would you like advice on to help you in your plans for the future?***". The whole of the DAC together with the Chancellor of the Diocese, the Diocesan Registrar and his deputy together with the Archdeacon totalling 24 people, arrived at the appointed time with only 40 minutes allocated to be with us. In that time the Vicar and churchwardens escorted the whole of the contingent around the churchyard consisting of three separate graveyards to the south, north and west of the church. Many grave headstones in the northern and western graveyards had been laid flat and the grass was at least two feet tall, hedges had not been cut and recognised footpaths significantly overgrown. (The south graveyard from the lychgate to the west and south entrances of church have been maintained by church volunteers so first impressions to visitors was positive BUT this was work should have done by SRBC).

Despite repeated requests in writing to SRBC to fulfil their legal obligations over the years, very little in the way of maintenance has been done. All members were horrified with the conditions they experienced. A further written file in a large A4 ring binder was handed to the Secretary of the DAC with a plea that the Diocese put pressure on SRBC to fulfil their legal obligations which included applying for a faculty (authority) to the Diocese to undertake the work. A strongly worded letter from the Diocesan Registrar (a barrister) was subsequently sent to SRBC which initially they did not even acknowledge.

In the interim, the adviser to the Diocese on monuments attended the church at our request and he produced a damning written report stating that it was the worst graveyard condition he had ever seen in his 30 years of operation. He detailed how many headstones were dangerous in each graveyard stating that if an unsafe headstone in the northern graveyard fell on anyone, it could prove fatal and those in the western graveyard could cause serious injury. The report also provided an estimate on how much it would cost to make all the headstones safe.

Some three months later two representatives from SRBC visited church by arrangement with the Vicar and he was joined by all three churchwardens. SRBC were given a written copy of the Diocesan monuments adviser's report stating that they would report back. After visiting the whole churchyard, they stated they would report back to their director but verbally accepted that it was the Council's responsibility to make good. SRBC commissioned an independent firm of monumental masons to visit our churchyard and their report confirmed the findings of the Diocesan adviser. Shortly after this, metal fencing, called Harris fencing, was installed by SRBC to prevent any access to the northern graveyard. Since then some cutting of grass in the churchyard has taken place by SRBC and there is now an ongoing dialogue with the Vicar and senior SRBC Council Officers so the future now looks more promising.

THE FUTURE:

The 2020 APCM covering all activity in 2019 was due to have been held at the end of April, 2020 but because of COVID 19 we still do not yet know when we will be allowed to have our APCM. Therefore, any significant updates up to 24th August have been documented.

Mention was made last year of enhancing our facilities up at church using the monies we received from the surrendering of the lease on the former church hall land. The PCC have had considerable discussions during 2018 and 2019 on how best we could achieve this. We drew up a list of requirements we would wish to incorporate and professional advice was sought through our architect. The PCC agreed with the professionals that the most cost-effective solution would be to demolish the whole of the 1956 extension and to build a state of the art two storey annex which would be larger than the footprint of the existing building. The shape, however, was defined by the location of graves which we would not disturb. Our Architect Stephen Fish, who is also on the Diocesan Advisory Committee, drew up plans which after a number of alterations, were put to the PCC for consideration on 11th March, 2019. An artist view was shown as well as the plans and were very warmly received. The plans are now on display in church for everybody in the Parish to view. We are in the early stages of consultation, including pressure groups, and both the Local authority and the Diocese will have to approve any new build but progress has been almost halted by COVID-19.

This report was approved by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) at their meeting on Monday 14th September and will be presented to the APCM at Church when the Church of England and the Diocese allow, due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. This updated Annual report together with the audited accounts and balance sheet having now been approved by the Charity Trustees (ie the PCC), have now been submitted electronically to the Charity Commissioners.



The Revd Chris Nelson – Vicar & PCC Chair



David Thornton - PCC Secretary