

St Mary and All Saints' Church, Droxford – Annual Report for 2021

The North Chapel having been re-opened as Wilfrid's café, has been used with care during the period of Covid regulations but has become an increasingly popular attraction for villagers and visitors alike. Church life is recovering slowly post-COVID restrictions; the virus has not gone away. The community support for this community venture, supported by the church and PCC, but operated by the Droxford Community Interest Company, is virtually universally supported. It is a matter of great sadness that vandalism has taken place on occasions affecting both church and CIC property, and this has been reported to the police.

FODC in 2021 continued its invaluable work in support of the church and community, which has meant that in 2022 work to engage the wider community could get underway as soon as Covid permitted.

A full programme of public and collective worship replaced limited opening and use for private prayer on limited days of the week, as soon as this was permissible. Hygiene and safety precautions are still in place, especially when Communion is being distributed. Hand sanitiser to protect the public is still being provided. Face-to-face collective worship, led by the Rector, resumed in both Meonstoke and Droxford Schools on a weekly basis. For much of 2021, this was only by 'Zoom' to school and for home-learning, when governors and volunteers were not allowed to enter the school buildings for most purposes.

A popular and successful Harvest Lunch followed an informal Harvest Festival in September.

The Churchwardens – Bonnie Hamilton and Clive Bryant, resigned May 2021 and our thanks for their energy and dedication is repeated here. In July 2021, when the APM and APCMs were held under modified post-Covid regulations: Jill Edmunds continued in the post of secretary until the end of the year; the vital role of treasurer remains filled by Richard Baxter, and his excellent services are very much appreciated and the PCC expresses its collective thanks for his continuing in the post, despite all the other pressures on his time; the key link on the FODC committee is Jeff Hooper; the parish Deanery Mission & Pastoral Committee representation fell vacant; Sheila Matthissen and Ann Symes continued to make invaluable contributions to work of the PCC and the life of the Church; and, Catherine Fabian continued to bring a youthful perspective until April 2021, when she stepped down to complete her PhD and to attend to her other commitments.

The benefice was ably the Revd Canon Antony Hulbert and Cathy Matthews. The wide-ranging duties of James Matthissen, who was also elected to the PCC in 2021, include his role as Verger, but all his other help is also acknowledged with thanks.

The PCC's work continues to be supported ably and efficiently by our Electoral Roll Officer – Rachael Dean, the Benefice Safeguarding Officer – Ali Pepper, and the Benefice Weddings Co-Ordinator – Sue Wells. Many others in the community help with the running of the church and keep it looking so attractive especially Audrey Dryden- Brownlee and the flower arrangers, Laura Jerosch, Sacristan, the cleaners and Stuart Attrill and those keeping the churchyard mown and tidy. Our formal thanks to them all are recorded here.

In February 2021 lead was again stolen from the Chancel roof – this was noted in the 2020 report given in July 2021:

“Members of the DAC came to Droxford and insisted that the lead should be replaced. After the resignation of the churchwardens on account of this decision, the remaining PCC members decided to use lead again to get the work done as quickly as possible, but also have an alarm fitted.”

This decision was taken reluctantly and only after long and detailed discussions with our insurers. Jeff Hooper reported in July 2021 that first roofer was sacked and a new one was employed (Cost £3,700). This work is complete and the roof alarm is in place. The PCC is very grateful to John Dryden-Brownlee for dealing with potential repairers etc and overseeing the work. Much other planning for works has continued by John and Tony Hoile; the PCC is blest to have the help and skills of two such skilled and able professionals to steer the plans for further improvements (e.g. the fence on the eastern boundary, repairs and improvements to the Bell Tower, other repairs in the church included the ceiling panel in North Chapel, gratings in church floor. ‘Dogs on Leads’ signs for Churchyard were provided but these fell victim to vandalism – see above. Repairs to the Churchyard flint were undertaken

The three-section notice board has been purchased (central panel contains church information, and the enclosed side panels are for church/ PCC and Café notices.

A wooden chair that is on the CBC approved list has been identified, money has been made available, these will be purchased in due course for occasional use in the church at large services and baptisms..