

## 2020 Annual report to the Benefice churches, April 2021

Revd Adrian Morton



### Introduction

Everything was proceeding as normal until March 2020 when the pandemic hit the UK and life as we knew it, including church life, became very different.

Sunday morning worship stopped following the government's lockdown announcement on 16th March 2020. All church activities and events stopped as unnecessary social contact ceased.

This report details the church's response throughout the remainder of 2020. Whilst trying to capture the flavour of all that has gone on, it won't be able to cover everything that has happened, and I'm aware there has been much 'behind the scenes' ministry that has happened across all the churches.

### Ministry continues

#### *Pastoral support*

With many people having to self-isolate, offers were made to collect shopping, prescriptions as well as other practical support. The church community was kept in touch with largely by phone calls, emails, and a WhatsApp group. Since the summer of 2020, the benefice has run a hardship fund available to both those in the congregations and those who are known to the congregations.

#### *Online Worship*

Early on in the lockdown, services went online, which meant the clergy learning new skills! A Youtube channel was created, weekly 'mid-week musings' started and daily prayers were offered via the Youtube channel, our Facebook pages and the Websites. I am grateful to all those who have contributed and still do to these online services. In particular, it has been great to have our own worship groups from both Bozeat & Wollaston recording worship hymns and songs. Over Christmas, the churches delivered (all online) an Advent Calendar, and both a Christingle and a Carol service.

#### *Children's work*

Children & families have been supported in a number of ways. In the summer of 2020, a team produced an online Holiday club called 'Brave Dave'. This gave rise to a new weekly 'Way Makers' children's club which involved activity bags being delivered initially to around 50 families across Bozeat & Wollaston, with an accompanying weekly online video. Weekly online assemblies are delivered to both Bozeat & Wollaston primary schools. A huge thanks to Louise Morton, Jo Icke (children's & families worker at Bozeat) and the many helpers for keeping the children's work running.

#### *Youth work*

This has continued with a mix of discipleship and outreach groups meeting via WhatsApp and Zoom both during the week and also on Sunday's. Sarah Howes, our youth worker, started her college course in the Autumn and is now also working with Gleneagles church in Wellingborough to provide an online youth group. When able to, a team has run a lunchtime club at the Top School in Wollaston. In addition, when restrictions have allowed, a team has provided outdoor youth work

in both Bozeat & Wollaston. A huge thanks to Sarah, Chris & Shelia Dommett and all those who help run these youth groups.

#### *Prophecy group*

Under the leadership of Barbara Macmillan, those who have an interest in the prophetic have continued to learn and develop via monthly exercises and activities. Words have been given occasionally during the online services.

#### *'Onsite' worship*

When restrictions have allowed all the Benefice churches have opened for onsite worship, following the rules required to do this, i.e. social distancing, the wearing of face masks. All church buildings, apart from Strixton, have opened for private prayer at some point during the year.

#### *The Aireys*

Dawn completed her curacy time with us at the Christmas Day services of 2020. It has been great to have Dawn, Chris and Ezra with us over these past 3 and a half years, and we sent them off with our blessing (and some presents!) as Dawn took up her new post as vicar of Gleneagles in Wellingborough.

### **What does the future hold?**

The full extent of how the pandemic has affected people in general and the church community in particular is still yet to be clearly seen. I'm sure loneliness has been exacerbated and mental health issues for all ages are frequently talked about in our media. Many expect some restrictions to be in place for the rest of 2021 and maybe even beyond.

There are many, including our own Bishop, who are suggesting we can't just return to what was 'normal' pre-pandemic.

It seems clear that we will need to embrace the 'digital space' in some capacity, and to continue to offer something online together with our onsite worship. Many are talking about how we use the digital space to not only offer worship for those unable/not wanting to be in a building on a Sunday morning, but also what opportunities there are for discipleship and outreach.

Chris & Linda Brett have recently run a successful online Alpha course with a second starting on the 20th April 2021.

These are questions to be wrestled with by new PCC's over the next weeks/months as we slowly return to being able to meet together.

I realise this report is somewhat shorter than previous years and I apologise if there are items missing that you consider very important! Details of how each of the church's finances have fared over this past year will be given at the church's annual meeting.

With grateful thanks to all those who continue to be part of the church community, who have played their part in loving their neighbour, serving their Christian brother and sister, and in any way being an agent of hope, peace and comfort over this past year.

To God be the glory,  
Adrian