

St George's Church Report for 2020 for the Parish Council

The arrangements for church services have changed several times during the year as a result of Government and Church of England Covid guidelines. At the start of the first lockdown in March, our Rector Revd Angela Melaniphy led a weekly Livestreamed service from the Rectory. This was followed by socially distanced church services with limited numbers from July, alternating between the four churches in the benefice. The one wedding planned for the parish has had to be cancelled but funerals went ahead and one graveside funeral was held. All the services carried out have involved considerable planning around the use of different technology, and also careful planning to ensure social distancing and hygiene requirements are met – non-more so than for the Remembrance services held at the War memorial. The plan to celebrate Christmas with an outdoor Carol service on the cricket field had to be cancelled due to concerns about the emerging new strain of virus but we did have a live service of Holy Communion on Christmas day with a congregation of 30 people.

Other activities have continued using Zoom – a weekly service of Morning Prayer; the Energise youth group; Church council meetings and the Rector's weekly 'visit' to the school.

One positive aspect of the use of streamed services is that we have served a wider congregation including parishioners who would not normally attend church. Another positive item we are pleased to report is that our curate David Lee joined the staff and started work in the Benefice in July. The ordination service for David was delayed until September and our Annual meeting was also delayed until October .

One obvious concern for us during the year, has been the need to maintain our pastoral care to those parishioners who have been shielding or self- isolating. Revd Angela wrote to all parishioners at the beginning of the first lockdown to explain the church's arrangements, including a letter in the village magazine, and has continued to maintain contact with parishioners. Home study resources have been sent to those people who were self-isolating and a book of prayers for use during the pandemic was distributed.

Following the initial closure, the church has been kept open during daylight hours since June, to ensure that parishioners have a quiet place to sit and reflect or to offer their prayers. Our message to all parishioners has been that we are here to help in whatever way we can, despite our normal services and activities being interrupted.