



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury  
and Ipswich**

Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva

Parochial Church Council

Annual General Report  
2021



**EARL STONHAM WITH STONHAM PARVA PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL  
ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

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**EARL STONHAM WITH STONHAM PARVA  
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL  
ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of the above presents the Annual Report for the year 2021. The report has been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act of 1993.

**LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

St Mary's Church, Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva.

**Correspondence address:** The Rectory, The Street, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket IP14 6AQ

**Telephone:** (01449) 711684

**email address:** revphilippayne@btinternet.com

The PCC is a charity exempt from registration with the Charity Commission.

The Sunday School Trust administers funds originating from the sale of the village school, which are used for the purposes of Christian Education within the parish of Earl Stonham. It is separate from the PCC with the Rector and the Churchwardens as trustees.

**Bank:** *Santander UK plc.*

**Independent Examiner:** *Mike Cherry*

**Address:** *Weylands Farmhouse, Forward Green, Stowmarket, IP14 5EW*

**PCC OFFICERS AND MEMBERS AS OF APRIL 2021**

Revd Philip Payne (Rector)\*

Mr Henry Stanford (Reader)\*

Mrs Jane Porph (Elder and Churchwarden)\*

Mr Mark Parry (Churchwarden)\*

Mrs Maggie Podd (Deanery Synod rep)\*

Mrs Frankie Wicks (Lay Minister)\*

Mr John Jones (Treasurer)

Mrs Caroline Shield (Secretary)

Mr Mike Dawe

*\*ex officio*

**COMMITTEES**

The PCC has the following sub-committees:

*Fabric Committee:* John Jones, Mike Dawe, Mark Parry

*Standing Committee:* Revd Philip Payne, Jane Porph, Mark Parry, John Jones, Caroline Shield

*Social Committee:* Frankie Wicks, Caroline Shield

## **THE PARISH TEAM**

Priest in Charge: Revd Philip Payne

(01449) 711684

Lay Minister: Mrs Frankie Wicks

(01449) 711222

Reader: Mr Henry Stanford

(01449) 711742

Churchwarden and Elder: Mrs Jane Porch

(01449) 710809

Churchwarden: Mr Mark Parry

(01449) 711816

Secretary: Mrs Caroline Shield

(01449) 711584

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

The PCC has 9 members (ex officio and elected) and the electoral roll had 41 names on it for 2021. The PCC held 5 meetings during the year, in addition to the Annual Vestry Meeting and the Annual Parochial Meeting, which was held on Tuesday 13th April 2021.

Discussions at PCC Meetings included: Covid, Growing in God, Little Stonham church, unification of Deaneries. *Caroline Shield*

## **RECTOR'S REPORT – NORTH BOSMERE BENEFICE**

Another year, another non-standard report. 2021 began with another period of enforced quarantine. The Covid situation has varied through the year. After a peak around Christmas/New year 2020/21 infections fell steadily until mid-summer, climbed into autumn and peaked again around the year-end. Across the country, vaccination programmes and improved medical care helped keep death and serious illness levels significantly lower than 2020. In November, the COP26 Climate Change Conference, hosted in Glasgow, brought a renewed public focus on climate change and other environmental issues.

In the report which follows I have sought to identify key features of church/parish life over the last year. There are just too many names deserving of thanks so I have refrained from naming anyone. My thanks to all who contribute so much to our community life.

## **Worship & Fellowship**

From early January, the decision was taken to stop public worship in our church buildings and focus once more on Zoom based remote services. The next time we assembled in person was in Earl Stonham at 6am on Easter morning. Since then, Sunday worship has been a mix of 'in-person' and on-line. Initially, one service per Sunday of Holy Communion, then a morning and/or evening prayer was added and, from September, an extended pattern of worship which sought to offer two services per month per parish (1 of Holy Communion and one other). Mid-week services continued on Zoom, with a mid-week Holy Communion service restarted in July. Initially twice monthly (Coddham and Earl Stonham), from October this settled on just one service per month, held in the Earl Stonham Parish Room. The Lent course 'Living Lent with Mark' also took place on zoom.

With flexibility and initiative, we managed to celebrate Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas in a variety of ways across the Benefice including churchyard services at Coddensham and Creting St Peter. Covid restrictions heavily reduced social interaction through after-service refreshments, coffee mornings et al. A Bible study course on Colossians was held in October and November.

### **Occasional Offices**

**Weddings** There were 3 weddings; one each in Gosbeck, Stonham Aspal and Earl Stonham.

**Funerals** A total of 39 funerals and/or interments were conducted across the 8 parishes (Includes Crematorium only for parishioners).

**Baptisms** 5 Services of Holy Baptism were conducted.

### **Social Welfare**

In all 10 villages, church members continue to play an active part in village social life. The weekly email-shot and hard-copy mailing reported in the 2020 report continued.

**Soup & Service (Haysel House).** Due to social distancing requirements Haysel House has not been able to resume hosting the Service & Soup community. However, this community recommenced meetings (with Soup) in May using both Gosbeck Village Hall and, when the weather was suitable, a private garden. The inevitable RAs were prepared and adjusted as required.

**Coffee Morning/Fellowship.** An important aspect of wellbeing, one which has been severely tested of late, is fellowship. By September, regular, informal coffee and fellowship gatherings had recommenced, in a number of parishes.

**Coddensham Baby and Toddler Group.** Under the auspices of St Mary Coddensham, the Coddensham Centre based, Baby & Toddler Group recommenced in June.

**Flower Festival** – Coddensham, Crowfield and Hemingstone were able, once again, to hold their flower festivals. Hard work by talented teams saw displays to the now expected high standard.

**Schools** - The big school news for 2021 was that, after just over 6 years in post, Mrs Waldron left Stonham Aspal School at the end of the year, to take up a new role with Her Majesty's Inspectors (OFSTED). As Rector (and hence also a Governor) I was involved in the selection process which has appointed Mr Ben Hemmings, (then head of Chilton Primary School, Stowmarket), who will take up post after Easter 2022.

Again, access to both schools was prevented due to Pandemic restrictions. However, Creting St Mary School attended the church for end of term Easter and Summer Term services, while Stonham Aspal Church hosted a Year 6, School Leavers Service. I was able to conduct the Creting St Mary School Act of Remembrance on the School field, together with a few video/cameo pieces.

## Summary

When Sunday church services are canceled, it is tempting to think that the church is closed. I hope the above tells a different story. Above all, church means people of faith and I trust that this report gives a flavour, at least, of that faith being worked out in the practicalities of another challenging year.

***Rev'd Philip Payne - Rector***

## SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding continues to be on the PCC Agenda for every meeting with prominent notices with contact details displayed in the Church and the Parish Room. The organisers at Diocesan Office have changed and their names changed on notices and websites. During the year all the members of the PCC have updated their training and been given reminders by the Safeguarding Officer, Frankie Wicks. She has continued as Safeguarding Officer and keeps a record of training done.

The diocese changed its system of Safeguarding Training in October 2019. There are now 3 levels

Basic Awareness

Foundation Course

Leadership Course

Both the Basic Awareness and the Foundation Course are easily available online at the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich website. The recent editions of these courses online are easier to use and more informative than the previous version.

PCC members are expected to do both the Basic and the Foundation Courses. The Leadership Course is for clergy, ministry team members.

*Safeguarding in your parish – who's who?*

*The Incumbent/priest in charge Rev Philip Payne 01449 711684*

*The churchwardens Mark Parry 01449 711816 Jane Porch 01449 710809*

*The Parish Safeguarding Officers Mrs Frankie Wicks 01449 711222*

*The team of licensed/accredited ministers Mr Henry Stanford 01449 711742 Mrs Frankie Wicks 01449 711222 Mrs Jane Porch 01449 710809 Mr Mark Parry 01449 711816*

*Hall managers and bookers Mrs Frankie Wicks 01449 711222*

*Who will you talk to if you observe or are told about Safeguarding concerns?*

*Any of the above*

*In case of emergency where harm may come 999*

*Concerns of harm*

*Suffolk County Council Customer First 0808 8004005*

*Suffolk Police 101/ 01473 613500*

*If against a member of the clergy, to the Diocesan Bishop Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor 01638 718939*

*NSPCC 0808 800 5000*

*Childline 0800 1111*

*Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre 0808 1000 900 <http://ceop.police.uk/>*

*Women's Aid and Refuge Crisis National Helpline 0808 2000 247*

***Frankie Wicks***

***Safeguarding officer***

## **FABRIC REPORT**

2021 was another challenging year for the community and St. Mary's stood (often illuminated) as a beacon for all the community.

As we all learned, sadly, to live with Covid we were able, as restrictions eased and with analysis of regulations and guidance, and careful planning and implementation, to open the church for more services and on more occasions, albeit still more constrained than before the pandemic. Restrictions and guidance did vary over the year and we ensured our risk assessments and policies reflected those changes. To a large part our visitors and worshippers were positive and helpful in following the measures put in place purely for their safety and that of the wider community of which we are a part.

It is hoped that as we move into 2022 things will normalise further but we stand ready to respond as necessary, and will continue to work within whatever constraints we face to ensure as safe an environment as practicable for our worshippers, visitors and our wider community.

There have been some minor repairs, including to the heating and plumbing, in the church and Parish Room. Thanks in particular to Tony Turner and Barbara and Brian Heard for their contributions. There have been no major structural issues. The plaster of Damocles remains outstanding despite contacting the architects again. A new contractor needs to be found for guttering maintenance. Prior to the pandemic we had conducted a walk round of the church to identify items from the Quinquennial for further action but this was subsequently put on hold. None of those items were immediate but can now, in due course, be reassessed.

We have been able to restart regular church cleaning, flower arranging, sidesman duty and readers and intercession takers – our thanks to all those who both do and arrange these activities, which are a much appreciated part of church life.

The annual inventory check will be carried out and the inventory updated, having not been completed for a while due to distancing and other constraints.

The churchyard has once more been kept tidy particularly by John Bull, ably assisted by John Jones and others, all of whom have given kindly of their time for which we are in turn grateful.

I have continued to update and expand the content of our A Church Near You page, and that of the Benefice. Despite limitations it contains details of all Benefice services, Philip's weekly reflection and Liz Ince's pew sheet, a reminder of physical and Zoom services and other, seasonal pages. We have a link for general donations to the church and we now have a page for our monthly chosen charity. The latest stats suggest continued growth to over 10,000 views this year.

At long last Stonham Parva is under repair, thanks to a significant Heritage Recovery Fund grant. I had a number of interesting site meetings in the run up to works starting, with the architect, structural engineer, quantity surveyor, roof contractors and bat advisor, including a nocturnal bat survey with the latter and his team. Given the scope of the works it will be some time before we are able to once more hold services in the church, but is heartening to see matters moving forward. Thanks once more to Mary Hamilton for liaising so effectively with the Churches Conservation Trust field officer – to this end I did propose her formally as the CCT Volunteer of The Year, but sadly without success.

It remains an enormous privilege to serve as Churchwarden and fabric person and I would like to thank everyone in the Parish, Benefice and beyond who continue to be such a great support.

**Mark Parry**  
**Churchwarden**

## **THE CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY**

The year started with the pandemic still rolling on and restricting our lives but hope coming in the form of vaccinations. These were organised efficiently in various locations and helped by many volunteers such as Caroline Shield.

Church services were on Zoom, a short Morning Prayer on Wednesday mornings and a 9.30am Sunday service each week shared across all our parishes. The advantages of these were that some people joined us regularly who did not often come to cold church buildings. At the same time we got to know more people across the benefice. Even World Day of Prayer was on Zoom.

Funerals were still restricted in numbers and no singing permitted but as Spring approached services started carefully again. Easter Sunday was even more special than usual with a service at Stonham Aspal involving a one-way system via the churchyard for those receiving Communion (bread only).

So we progressed to one Zoom service and one other service somewhere in the benefice each Sunday. We relied heavily on Liz Ince's notice sheet each week to keep us up to speed.

Thy Kingdom Come was celebrated across the parishes and on Zoom. Singing was allowed outside only with some memorable moments. Singing outside Gosbeck church among the bluebells will always be special for me.

In July we had the first Coffee and Cake in the Village Hall with lots of open windows and people glad to see each other. The following week was Tony Porch's funeral with an enormous congregation. Despite our best efforts to have 'social distancing' people crammed together inside. There were chairs out in the churchyard for those who felt safer out there. The WI got back to producing wonderful funeral teas for that day and for Brian Sayer's a few days later. They were meeting with picnics outside on nice afternoons. By September the PCC was meeting in the Parish Room rather than remotely; Courtney Porch's wedding went ahead as planned and we had a proper Harvest Festival in church. This was followed by the Over-60s one in the Village Hall a few days later.

The parishes joined together for a talk on environmental issues in October to coincide with the international conference in Glasgow. Gradually restrictions were lifted and by the time of Derek Stiff's funeral in November we were allowed to sing.

Christmas was almost back to normal with Christingle, the village Panto, various dinners (held in the Village Hall where people felt more secure than in a restaurant). Carols on the Green was very well attended being outside and gradually the numbers of people coming to church increased. Each of the 8 parishes had 2 services/month, one with Eucharist and one without and this seemed to work well despite a new variant of the Covid virus being a threat. We look forward with hope

***Frankie Wicks***



## **ST MARY'S BELLS REPORT**

After a long period of not being able to ring the bells at Earl Stonham, I tolled the 5th bell 99 times prior to the funeral of Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh On April 17th 2021 along with towers all over the country.

On July 31st 2021 we were able to fulfill the request from Brian Sayers family to ring for Brian's Memorial Service. Brian and Bridget, members of the Earl Stonham band of ringers for many years and sadly missed.

Sunday Service Ringing commenced again on August 1st after relaxing of Covid restrictions and we continue to ring once a month for the Sunday Service. We rang for Harvest Festival in October, in November for the Remembrance Service on 14th and the Christingle Service on 28th . The Annual Carol Service on December 24th.

The ART Course is taking place at Earl Stonham on March 19th, a course for people wanting to learn how to teach bell handling and ringing to new ringers. Hopefully this will lead to us having the opportunity to organise more "taster sessions" for interested future ringers.

***Margaret Cherry***

## **DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

We continued to be represented by Maggie Podd and Rev Philip Payne. John Jones was serving as Deanery Organiser for the northern (Bosmere) part of the Deanery.

The Deanery Synod met three times during 2021. The meetings in February and May were held via Zoom, the October meeting in St Peter's Church Hall, Stowmarket.

At the February meeting Matt Levett, Diocese Youth and Young Adults Officer, spoke about things we can do to help young people be part of our churches. He advised that we look at everything we do from an outsider's (unchurched) view, including our language, use of jargon, etc. Matt is available to offer help and advice to churches.

Bishop Martin's Document Discerning our Future was also discussed. The report focuses on 6 questions which were discussed at the meeting:

1. How do we identify local/focal ministers and what would you expect them to do?
2. What's the future role of church buildings in mission?
3. How do we strengthen congregations and deepen faith?
4. How do we strengthen our response to our environmental crisis?
5. What creative ideas do we have for developing new sources of income?
6. How do we extend our community engagement and partnerships for the benefit of the people of Suffolk.

The main topic for discussion at the May meeting was the Deanery Plan.

The Plan has been developed from what parishes said they wanted to do in previous questionnaires. It will be reviewed and updated at least annually by Deanery Synod.

In order to implement the Plan:

- Working groups will be formed to take forward at least one action initially from each section;
- volunteers to take forward items in the plan and develop proposals to bring to Synod;
- make use of all skills and expertise available in the deanery including those who are not Synod members;
- publish a list of opportunities with working groups to sign up to.

Adoption of the Deanery Plan was approved at the meeting.

Diocesan Synod Elections were held in July.

A Deanery Day of Prayer was held on Saturday 20 November, St Edmund's Day. Our Benefice hosted a service on Zoom to close the day.

At the October meeting the key speaker was Diane Grano of the Lightwave Project. There is a growing network of small groups all over Suffolk called Lightwave, dedicated to shining the light of Jesus in Suffolk through acts of kindness and practical service as well as worship and witness. Meeting in small groups in homes, pubs, offices, schools and other places these are new worshipping communities that work alongside more traditional ways of doing church. Each group receives support and training in their outreach. The project runs from 2019 to 2024. Diane Grano is happy to speak with and help parishes in the Deanery.

As Deanery Organiser (north) for Bosmere, John Jones continued to report on financial shortfalls for the Deanery and Diocese. The roles of Deanery Organiser (south) and Secretary remain vacant.

There were updates from the Diocesan and General Synods.

***Maggie Podd***

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Another strange year! The Covid restrictions of 2020 continued for most of last year, with a similar impact on collections at services, charity collections and parish room lettings.

Fortunately, the bulk of our income comes in regularly every month through donations via standing orders and the Parish Giving Scheme, together with the associated Gift Aid tax recoveries. The resumption of church services and Coffee & Cake at the end of the year produced a small, but welcome, income.

Expenses in total came to £27,700, in line with our budget. The lack of services led to savings in Church Running Expenses, but at the end of the year we had to buy heating oil at a price we had never seen before.

One exceptional item in the year was a legacy of £2,000 received from the late Lady Hawkins, who had lived in London. We don't know what connection she had with this parish but nevertheless we are

very grateful for this legacy. As a result, we achieved a surplus for the year of £2,045 on our Unrestricted Funds.

Unrestricted reserves at the year end amounted to £20,300. This is more than we need to hold, but the Fabric Fund balance is quite low at £9,000 and if significant repairs are needed we may have to fund them partly from Unrestricted Funds.

The Designated Fund, of £2,300 from the Atherton Bequest, was created to be used for enhancements to the church fabric or furnishings. So far none of this has been spent.

Collections for charities were affected by the suspension of services, but thanks to the use of Give a Little and donations direct to our bank, a total of £3,325 was raised. This is a very creditable achievement and we are grateful to everyone who supported these collections so generously.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has again been so generous, supporting both our charity collections and the church's running costs, thus making the Treasurer's job easy and free from anxiety.

***John Jones***  
***Treasurer***