

Report of St Sampson's PCC for the Parish Council AGM

The church, like every other organisation, has endured a strange year. For the first time, the building has remained locked except when services were permitted, and many activities that helped to bind our community together have had to be cancelled. So let's deal with the negatives first.

Handbells have been gathering dust, and only saw the light of day on Remembrance Sunday, when three of us played *The Last Post*, followed at the end of the two minutes' silence by *The Rouse*. The big bells have also largely been silent, although we did ring the muffled bells for Remembrance Sunday, and we also rang for Easter Day to celebrate the resumption of services. Greg also chimed and then tolled the bell 100 times when the Duke of Edinburgh died, and repeated this act of remembrance on the day of his funeral.

In between the various lockdowns we have always held a Sunday service, and local retired vicars have been most supportive in coming to take our services while we are in transition – that is, without our own priest. We are now holding a Communion Service every Sunday at 9.30am, except for the third Sunday of each month, when we have Evening Prayer at 6.00pm, taken by one of our two churchwardens – who are now Greg and myself. It is heartening to report that despite the mandatory face mask and social distancing, our numbers have held up remarkably. At Christmas, the Cornish Christmas and Christmas Day services were both full, and since restarting services this Easter we have enjoyed great support.

One real highlight has been choir. Sheila has held Zoom choir practices every Monday, and although it is not the same as singing together, it is a great deal better than not singing at all. The choir have stuck with it, and enjoyed a weekly sing as well as the reinforcement of that sense of belonging which is so important to human life. Sheila has chosen music ranging from *Captain Noah* to sea-shanties, folk songs and hymns – a rich and varied diet for music-starved times.

Last year the church bought sound equipment which has been invaluable. At a time when congregational singing is not allowed, Sheila has enhanced the spoken liturgy with appropriate organ music, and also played CDs of choral and orchestral music. Thus music has continued to play an important role in life at St Sampson's.

All organisations have found fund-raising impossible, so the grant of £1,000 from the Parish Council towards the cost of a new church shed was immensely appreciated: many thanks. This donation has enabled us, with John Varco's help, to demolish the old shed – which took frighteningly little persuasion to fall down – and to erect, with Andrew van den Broek's famed expertise, a new, positively cathedral-like structure to house all the church's paraphernalia.

I must end this report on a sad note, though. Carol White has for many, many years been a Churchwarden, and has overseen the refurbishment of the church

so that today it is probably in the best condition it has ever been since its transformation from a 13th century chapel to the Tywardreath Priory to a 15th century Parish Church. Carol suffered a very severe stroke nearly three months ago, and is at present in Newquay Nursing Home. She is severely disabled, and our thoughts are with her and her family.

After I wrote those very encouraging words on the condition of the church, this weekend a pane of glass in the Vestry blew out, and the wooden frame is clearly rotten and will need replacing. But these are the delights and challenges of looking after Golant's historic and beautiful Grade I building. Simon Jenkins, in his book of Britain's 1,000 best churches, described St Sampson's as 'warm and welcoming', and we hope the Parish Council will agree with his judgement.