

St Mary's Church Temple Guiting. Report for the Parish Council 2021/2

We are deeply thankful for the pastoral support offered by our clergy team during what has been a second difficult year for so many in our communities, as we continued to be affected by the covid pandemic.

We began 2021 in yet another lockdown, although, this time, church buildings were allowed to remain open for public prayer. A reduced service pattern operated across the benefice once churches were allowed to reopen for worship in-person. 'Zoom' worship has continued to offer that strong sense of being part of a benefice.

Last spring, as life began to open up, we were allowed to walk in groups of 6 and a small cross was carried across the benefice during Holy Week. The Easter Day service was held in St. Mary's churchyard on a beautiful day.

Our link with Temple Guiting School has continued throughout the year. In the spring St. Mary's hosted a wonderful exhibition of animal masks, which the children had created from unused plastic face masks! When the new term began in September the 'Open the Book' team, who lead Thursday assembly, were able to return in person and after-school 'Messy Club' restarted.

Special thanks must go to the creative thinkers of Temple Guiting who organised some online fundraising during lockdown; an Indoor Scavenger Hunt and Bingo which were great fun. As we emerged from restrictions, we were able to hold an outdoor Safari Supper on a balmy evening in August, which generated huge support. The Village Harvest Festival and Supper went ahead, though with reduced numbers being an indoor event. Special thanks are due to Kate Mather who co-ordinated these events, the teams of helpers and to everyone in the community who supported them.

'Tales with a Twist', a concert of folk songs and harp music was a very special occasion, being the first event we had been able to hold in St Mary's for 18 months. The church was beautifully illuminated with blue lighting, provided by harpist Mark Harmer. Rob Graves assisted with sound and light and Sheila Woods organised refreshments.

'Soup and a Story' evenings resumed in September with a hugely entertaining talk from Nick Scott on his experience as a publican in the Elephant and Castle! November's 'Soup and Story' was focused on the Climate Crisis. Duncan Andrews gave a fascinating talk on how the Farm Park is changing their practices to tackle this. His talk was followed by a Vigil to coincide with the last evening of COP26. The cellist Steffi Wagner accompanied our Vigil with solo cello pieces.

As Covid cases increased again in the run up to Christmas, we decided to hold the Village Carol Service in the churchyard. Around 90 people enjoyed the service, mulled wine and mince pies!

The PCC would like to thank the Parish Council for their financial contribution towards the maintenance of the churchyard. We continue to develop areas for wildlife in the churchyard with the assistance of Richard Scone.

We continue to be committed to being open in every respect to our village communities, to being an outward-looking church focused on current issues of equality, injustice, climate change and the environment and to making greater use of the churchyard for services/spiritual gatherings.

Ali Clifton Barnard
04/05/2022