**Vicar’s Report APCM 2021**

As it has only been 6 months since our last APCM in October there are few reports to bring to this meeting.

The impact of COVID on our society and therefore how we express our life together as a worshipping community has continued to present a challenge to us this year. The duration of this pandemic, I suspect, has been greater than any of us expected. When we were able to open the doors of our church it was to a very limited expression of worship and fellowship. This context continues as we look forward to a time of freedom and restoration. However, whilst we may have largely left our buildings, God has not left the church and has continued to work in and through us by His Holy Spirit.

For some of our church family there has been the ultimate loss of loved ones. We continue to mourn the loss of Helen to Michael Porter, Jenny to Ian Harmer and most recently Peter to Jane Williams. Our hearts go out to all who daily carry the heavy burden of grief. Whilst we have lost them from our fellowship, theirs is the far richer experience of presence in the ‘house of the Lord’.

Loss has been a feature of this past year for us all to a greater or lesser extent. It is a reality that we continue to live with alongside uncertainty as to how and when we can resume being the Body of Christ in communion and fellowship with one another.

And yet as a people of Hope, we are called to continue to worship, pray and witness to our faith in the risen Lord Jesus whatever the circumstances of our lives.

I would like to thank you all for your faithfulness to Christ as the mission and ministry of the church has continued through these times. As the body of Christ, we all have a part to play in service and mission.

‘Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it’ (1 Corinthians 12:27)

If I were to thank you individually this would be a very long report as there would be so many people to thank but you know who you are and you serve for an audience of One, to please and bring glory to Jesus who gave himself so fully for each one of us.

So many of you serve in teams, giving of your time, energy and finance to see the Kingdom of God advance. Thank you for your continuing ministry and service.

Here are just some of the ministry activities we have been able to continue, using the technology available to us to adapt to new ways of working:

* Sunday YouTube services and additional ones at Christmas and Easter
* Zoom Coffee and chat each Sunday for fellowship
* Zoom monthly prayer gatherings
* Alpha Course online
* The Prayer Course online
* Weeks of Prayer (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity/ Holy Week)
* Smarties online
* Ministry to the residential homes particularly to celebrate the festivals of Christmas and Easter
* Pastoral care for those in our community through Tewkesbury Community Response
* Feeding the 5000 pre-cooked meals project
* Easter Blessings
* Transform
* Life Groups
* Youth Ministry
* TJC online
* Schools ministry (Experience Christmas online/Experience Easter online)
* Resourcing C of E school with Isingpop School assembly packages
* Funerals
* Maintenance of our buildings and churchyard throughout this season

Thank you to you all who have contributed to make the ministry and mission of our Church possible in these challenging and extraordinary times.

Whilst I cannot thank everyone the role of Church Warden carries a legal responsibility and therefore I would like to give special mention to Roger who is stepping back as CW after 3 years in post. We have hugely appreciated all the support you have given over these years Roger, fulfilling a position in which both your Father and daughter have served with such distinction and concluding a generational dynasty of service. Thank you.

I would also like to give special mention to Sue Perks who has stepped down as leader of our worship group. Sue has served in this capacity for many years. We are grateful for her range of musical gifts, not simply in leading sung worship on Sundays but in coordinating the special events choir and the very high standard of music that has so enhanced our Taize services. Whilst Sue is stepping back from leadership of this group our hope is that she will continue to support the worship ministry of our church on an occasional basis.

As we look ahead to the future still not fully knowing how things may yet look, may we look with confidence, keep our eyes on Jesus and trusting ourselves and the life of our church to him.

Jesus said; ‘I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it’ (Matthew 16:18). He is still building His Church. We all still have a part to play.

As the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth;

‘Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain’ (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Prayer points:

* Please pray that there will be a restoration to the full expression of our life together which we so miss.
* Pray that we will be able to welcome lots of new people to our fellowship who have joined us over the last year through our online services.
* Pray that we will all recognise that Jesus calls us to full mobilisation. That we all have a part to play in serving the church and building God’s Kingdom and therefore resourcing the ministries that God has entrusted to us.

**Stephen Walker**

**Vicar**

**APCM 2021**