

St Mary's Church Bentley
PCC Report to the Annual Parish Meeting
Thursday 6th May 2021

The pandemic seriously impacted the Church during 2020. On Sunday 15th March we held a service as usual. The following Sunday, which was Mothering Sunday we were only allowed to open for private prayer and by the next Sunday all our churches had to be closed. So services had to go on line, which is not our normal worship experience.

By the time that churches were allowed to open again Bentley Church was in the middle of a refurbishment project so the church remained closed for worship. Although some other churches in our group did open it was a very different experience with having to book a place, social distancing and wearing face masks. But the greatest difference was that we could not sing, which was an incredibly hard loss for everyone. The refurbishment of Bentley is now complete and we have an inside toilet and lovely kitchen/hospitality area. We are looking forward to being able to serve our usual refreshments. But at least we are now open for worship even if the same social distancing regulations are still in place. We are really looking forward to a time when things are more normal.

We are grateful for the work, carried out on behalf of the Parish Council, by Peter Baldwin, in the closed churchyard. We have a team of hard-working, keen and very capable volunteers keeping the churchyard extensions neat and welcoming. The carpark is a valuable asset. We continue to have strong links with the Primary School and Church members take an active part in school life and the school uses the church for special services. During most of 2020 we were unable to continue the Open the Book, an initiative that enables the children to take an active part in watching and hearing stories from the Bible. We have managed to record video stories but miss the interaction with the children.

We continue to support West Villa Homeless Families Unit especially at, Christmas, Harvest and Easter. They are always very appreciative and we are grateful for the support we receive from our wonderful village community. Bedding and towels are still very much needed and many thanks to the many, often anonymous, donations.

We have not been able to have any of our social or fund raising events during the last year but hope to start again later in 2021. We did manage our Annual Quiz and many thanks to all those who supported our 'do it at home' version. This time we had joint winners, congratulations to them and everyone who took part.

Many thanks for all the local support and we look forward to better times ahead.