##### Churchwardens’ Report

2021 was dominated by the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which saw continued restrictions on all types of social activities including public worship. Our 2020 Annual Report documents the history of the pandemic from 23rd March 2020, and its effect on St James’ Church. We take up the story from **6th December 2020**, when the 8.00am and 10.00am Sunday services resumed once again following the re-closure of church buildings on 2nd November 2020. A booking system for the 10.00am services then replaced the 3-weekly rota, and this continued until **25th July, St James’ Day**. For us St James’ Day was a milestone, with the congregation singing the mass setting and a hymn for the first time in 16 months, “To God be the Glory” (albeit wearing facemasks!). Also, an icon of St James was presented to us by our Orthodox church friends. The booking system was no longer required, hymnbooks and kneelers were put back, and a more normal seating arrangement was put in place with one metre distancing between rows. In addition, coffee was served after the service in the hall, and there was a cake! As from **2nd August**, we were no longer required to record the names of those attending the services for Track and Trace purposes, but it was not until 26th September that the chairs were finally returned to their usual position.

Our flagship Sunday 10.00am Parish Eucharist has not yet returned to pre-pandemic numbers, and the 8.00am Communion Service is small. As from **19th September**, we have had Sunday evening services held on 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month. During Holy Week 2021, on **Wednesday 31st March**, we introduced our midday (midweek) Mass, which continues to attract a faithful following including several church members who do not feel able to join in the larger Sunday event. Morning prayer is also said at 8.30am on each weekday (on-line on Monday and Wednesday and in church on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday).

Music has always played a major part in our services, and the restriction on singing was keenly felt; it is a joy that we are able to sing again in church. We have been delighted that St James’ is bucking the trend by having started up a choir during this last year. This developed out of the weekly individual recordings by singers which Jim Weeks encouraged and put together during 2020, and from **22nd April**, some members of the fifteen regular singers have been singing each week in a choir which Tim Bayton now directs and rehearses. Several of the choir members are also accomplished instrumentalists and so from **1st August** different musicians and singers have been providing various musical contributions during communion. Our 2021 Carol Service was a highlight, with our own choir and instrumentalists, together with visiting singers and musicians joining us.

Since 29th March 2020 St James’ services have been broadcast online providing a lifeline every week for many and holding us as a family together, and the PCC have decided to continue to stream every Sunday Parish Eucharist service. After consulting with the Archdeacon, the funds were raised for suitable audio-visual equipment. With its usual generosity, the church family raised the required funds with ease. We have been deeply indebted to the small but highly skilled team responsible, masterminded by Jim Weeks.

Away from our regular services, the pandemic has inevitably meant that some of our usual activities have not taken place during the year. Having successfully operated for over 30 years in September, our Luncheon Club and Outreach have had to cease but we are in discussions with another lunch provider nearby, who is backed by Exeter City Council.

Messy Church did not meet in 2021, although the team of volunteer’s plan to re-start its monthly meetings in May with the onset of lighter evenings and milder weather.

From March 2020, our children (JAM) and young people (11-ups) were only able to meet up online with occasional outdoor events such as a Christmas treasure hunt, but they did enjoy a Zoom pancake party, pizza party, Christingle event etc. They have now resumed meeting on Sunday mornings (JAM from September, and 11-Ups from November).

Our parish administrator, Sue Pinn, has unfortunately had to work a reduced number of hours each week, for health reasons, but we remain grateful to her for her continued faithful service to the church.

As Wardens we as always very thankful to everyone who has helped during the last year you have again shown a true St James spirit.

Rachel Martindill

Andrew Mimmack

Church Wardens