

Children and Young People

We are very pleased to have another new member. Chloe Benson has joined Pippa Mitchell, Ginnie Gregory, Corinne Jones, Ann Pierce, Helen Lee, Tom Pote and Phil Hancock.

At the time of writing last year (January 2020 for 2019) there was no hint of what was to come for this year. For the first couple of months everything was what we would later call 'normal'. In Junior Church and Trinity Breakfast Club numbers were small amongst the little ones with the two groups brought together to have critical mass, but there was good use of the Children's corner for those under three years old. Café Club, reaching its first birthday in February and a major success, had been strong all through, meeting weekly during term time in Caffè Nero, with thoughts about establishing a 15+ group, and there being a young people's trip to Kwasa in preparation. Alexandra Stevenson and Catherine Antcliff had retired from the Girls' Choir and Nick Graham had taken over. Both Girls and Boys choirs were strong. Sandfield Days and Holy Trinity Pewley Down (HTPD) Days were running. Things were going well in Brownies and Guides. And other activities such as Family Bingo were again very well received. But then came March 2020, and everything started to change, dramatically; the Covid-19 pandemic was with us, lockdown was on its way.

Pippa has worked very hard and effectively in keeping in touch with both children and their families. This has partly been through short, well-received and acclaimed YouTube videos, some by Tom, though largely through one-to-one contacts. Church via Zoom was now in place. During the full lockdown in the latter part of the (2019-20) school year – schools included – there was a Children's Chat Room that ran alongside the "Coffee Rooms" chat rooms. With the movement to online communication special attention was paid to the safeguarding requirements, and appropriate risk assessments drawn up and provision made, such as how chaperoning should work, for use by all the children's online activities. Café Club similarly went online – deliberately maintaining its Thursday 5.00-6.15pm slot – its appreciation being marked by running beyond the end of term, and a welcome antidote to the difficulties posed by online learning. Some children have found online learning quite difficult and, for some, hard. The Café Club group of a dozen youngsters from seven different schools have stayed constant all through the year, very supportively of each other. Normally, events such as the annual scratch nativity would have happened too. With constraints at the time allowing in-church services for limited numbers, there was a crib service, to which seventeen families attended.

With the changes in worship that came with the various levels of restriction and lockdown, more young people have been involved, particularly through readings - Old or New Testament, and Gospel - either in church or from home. Fourteen young people have read the Gospel over the summer. The Girls and Boys choirs have made tremendous contributions, both 'real' and 'virtual'. Nick Graham's, and similarly Martin Holford's, creations of choral pieces from individually sung contributions were early stunning successes that were very joyfully received, and copied. Some rehearsals were in church or the trinity centre, all socially distanced, following required practice. Another highlight pinnacle was that of the Girl Choristers' composed and performed Christmas Carol. Keeping choirs together, especially those of young people, takes a great deal of extra work and dedication in these circumstances, for which our church community is very grateful: thank you Martin and Nick, and all those who assist, including the parents.

Brownies and Guides have similarly operated via online means through much of the year, the better weather of the summer also allowing socially-distanced, covid-secure outdoor activities, in groups up to 15 girls. Even so, because of key-worker roles and the risk of cross infection, some meetings reverted to being online. There are separate more detailed reports for both Brownies and Guides.

It is anticipated that Sandfield and HTPD activity days may start again towards the end of the current school year. The relationship with Sandfield continues to be strong, re-endorsed by the new head, Kate Collins, and by the parish's commitment through outward giving.

Despite all the difficulties and sometimes tragic events that are part of a pandemic, the year has been marked, too, by tremendous successes and commitment to each other and to the community more widely.

Philip Hancock (Chair)
January 2021

Choirs

2020 got off to a very good start as Nick Graham, a former boy chorister in the choir, was recruited to direct the girls' choir.

Once COVID-19 restrictions came into force and with the wonders of technology, the choir adapted quickly to using 'Zoom' for rehearsals so that the choristers in particular maintained the weekly discipline of practice. A number of events were cancelled due to COVID, including the girls' summer tour, joint evensong with the cathedral choir and the annual new chorister open evening. This last event was a particular blow to lose as it has been a fertile event for attracting new boy choristers, and recruitment is needed as soon as possible once conditions allow if the boys choir is to survive long term.

There were, however, some unexpected blessings in lockdown. Of particular note were 'virtual' choir performances masterfully assembled by Nick Graham of hymns and anthems sung by the boys, girls, adults and, indeed the whole parish. For many, the recording using this method of the hymn 'Jesus Christ is risen today' for Easter Day was particularly poignant, and even reached Channel 4 news, attracting comments from afar.

The boys' choir was able to meet for a socially distanced tea party in July to mark the end of term and singing recommenced in September, with the boys showing little signs of the extended separation although further restrictions made this short lived. In November, the decision was taken to cancel the tour to Ripon Cathedral, scheduled for August 2021 in the light of concerns about how COVID would impact upon it. It would have been the choir's 13th tour.

A new CCTV system was installed at the organ console at the end of 2020. This greatly improves communication between visiting organists, and conductors, orchestras and choirs in the nave, thus raising the quality of the facilities available to hire to outside groups.

At the start of 2020 the girls' choir said goodbye to Alexandra Stevenson (Director) and Catherine Antcliff (accompanist), who had both led the choir excellently for several years and Nick Graham was appointed as Director. The choir have been primarily rehearsing on Zoom, and achieving great things; the first virtual choir video reached almost 10,000 people and was featured on the Classic FM website. Like the boys, the girls returned to in-person singing with aplomb in September, although this had to be curtailed once further lockdown restrictions came into force.

The commitment of choristers, adults, and parents, as well as members of the congregation joining in virtual performances, has reinforced the music tradition of the Parish and bodes well for when worship in church returns.

Martin Holford, Director of Music

Brownies and Guides

3rd Guildford (Holy Trinity) Brownies has, like many other organisations, had an unusual year. Girlguiding instructed us to stop face to face meetings a week or so before the national lock-down in March. After a couple of weeks of planning, we resumed our weekly meetings on Zoom & have carried on virtual meetings for the rest of the year except for a month off in August and three face to face meetings in the Trinity churchyard in September. We have adapted many of the programme activities for a virtual environment & done other activities such as a virtual sleepover to mark the end of summer term. Most of the brownies have remained engaged & have continued earning badges; two have made their promises online. Two of our young leader team went off to university in September.

Helen Lee

Over the past year guiding in the parish had to take a different format. Since April 2020 guide meetings at 3rd Guildford (Holy Trinity) Guides has taken place virtually via Zoom.

We have continued with the guiding programme finding ways as leaders to adapt the resources available to deliver the programme over the internet. Sometimes giving the girls tasks to do off air to do and then come back together as a unit.

Over the course of the year, we have made pitta pizzas, which looked amazing; arm pit fudge; made dens, which were very elaborate and decorated with fairy lights. Our powers of observation were tested with mapping with a modern twist. Dashcam footage was compared to a traditional Ordnance Survey map. The girls had to discover where they were from a virtual 'drive' using satellite view in Google maps.

We have lost a few girls since lockdown, but we do have a number of regular attenders.

Ann Pierce