

St Sampson's Church:

APCM May 2022

During the last year, services have gradually been returning to normal, although Communion has remained as distribution of the bread only, the wine being taken only by the presiding priest. For all of 2021 we also had socially distanced seating, which inevitably reduced the capacity of the Church quite drastically.

We were able to hold the Remembrance Sunday service inside the church in 2021 – we only had the wreath laying the previous year – and once again the Last Post and The Rouse were played most effectively on the handbells.

We have been very fortunate that our congregation numbers have remained remarkably stable, and this is despite losing some regular worshippers to illness. The major services, such as Remembrance, Advent, and Christmas Carol Services have been strongly supported. The combined Mothering Sunday and Service for Ukraine, with the lighting of candles for loved ones, received much favourable comment. This Easter, when even the wine was offered to the congregation, the atmosphere was positive and uplifting, and normality finally seems to be within reach.

We have continued to be magnificently served by our visiting retired priests; there are six whom we use regularly, and they seem very much in tune with our style of worship, and keen to ensure that we offer a service every Sunday.

We continue to look after this lovely Grade I listed building, although inevitably it is like painting the Forth Bridge. We have not yet heard the results of the Quinquennial Survey, but we need to repair the cable for the outside lighting, and also replace the inverter for the photo-voltaic panels. We are also still awaiting repairs to the vestry window. Nevertheless, the Church is probably in as good shape as it has ever been, and we are grateful for the support we receive from the Parish Council and from the village.

It has been a very difficult year for Sheila and the choir. Singing was singled out as a dangerously effective way of passing on Covid, and thus rehearsals in person were impossible for the first part of last year, although we have a Zoom practice each week – a strange experience! We began to have socially distanced choir practice in the autumn, but, in view of understandable caution, we celebrated Christmas with a service of 6 lessons, as opposed to the usual nine lessons, and the choir and handbell ringers combined for the carols. Nevertheless, the two identical carol services were sold out.

One innovation, which was warmly welcomed, was that, in the run-up to Christmas, Sheila arranged for the choir to Carol Sing at the houses of those in the village who were ill or self-isolating.

Now the restrictions have been relaxed, choir members are eager to see their families again, so attendance at choir practices has been more patchy than usual, and also we have, very sadly, lost one or two key members. New recruits are always most welcome.

It has been easier for the handbell ringers, as they could play and wear masks, and they played Christmas Carols outside the pub to a large gathering, and the recent Hymns on the Handbells evening proved to be a great success.

Last year we squeezed in three weddings when lockdown allowed. Sheila continues to be our regular weekly organist, with help from James Funnell on the second Sunday of each month, and the occasional other Sundays when he isn't taking services elsewhere.

We are still 'in Transition' – that is, without a priest. The diocesan plan, called 'On the Way', hopes to appoint a priest to serve Fowey, Tywardreath and Golant. There are complications, however, as Tywardreath and ourselves are open to the idea of a woman priest, and Fowey is not. I suspect we will still be 'On the Way' when I make next year's report.