

Churchwardens' Report for APCM 2019

This last year has seen momentous changes to St Thomas's.

In January 2020 the Church was closed for a major re-furbishment, the first since the installation of the Victorian pews and Font. The floor was cleaned, so successfully that at least one parishioner complained about the "un-necessary expense of replacing the floor"!

The Victorian pews were removed and replaced with pews seating three or five people, which has given us great flexibility for future events in the Church. The Doom Painting has been cleaned and re-fixed to the wall, as part of the plaster was separating from its base. At the same time the opportunity was taken to clean some of the mediaeval woodwork in the roof, revealing some stunning colour and detail. The Nave Altar, designed by Matthew Burt, was installed and this has now become the central point of our worship.

The whole effect has been to lighten the internal environment and to provide more flexibility for music, theatre, and other events. There are continuing works envisaged for the years to come, but progress made in the last twelve months has been pivotal. This could not have been done without much hard work, and particular thanks has to go to the Re-ordering Team and the Fabric Committee.

The Church reopened on 09 February 2020, and at the end of the month a charity concert was held for "The Orchestra for All".

Throughout the year work has continued on the Organ, and while not yet complete, we have begun to see the light at the end of this particular tunnel. Hopefully our next report will note its conclusion and the restoration of a pipe organ to St Thomas's.

Other events, such as our traditional Mayor Making and Christmas Services, continued in their usual way but mention must be made of the Charity Cycle ride organised by Netia Coupe which raised many thousands for the Quest 2020 Appeal. This was a major undertaking which, thanks to Netia's attention to detail, ran like clockwork. In October the Guildhall hosted an Auction of Promises which also raised several thousand pounds for the Appeal. Within these few sentences are hidden hours of planning by many people who have freely given of their time, and to whom the Church is truly grateful.

In July 2019 we sadly "lost" Jonathan Plows, following his appointment to the Wylie Valley Benefice. Jonathan has made a huge contribution to St Thomas's, even returning in February 2020 to organise the International Pancake Race! Many of St Thomas's congregation migrated to Wylie for his induction.

The end of the year has been overshadowed by the Coronavirus pandemic which closed the Church in March 2020, thereby postponing our APCM. On line services have kept us together and we look forward to the time when we can fully participate in our worship and service to the community.

Fi Green & Michael Humphreys