

What Did We Do In The Pandemic?

AGM Report October 2020

Where were you back in March when the news suddenly broke that we were about to be hit by a pandemic, the like of which had never been known before?

I was in the church cafe at the time, talking with Nigel about the up and coming interregnum, which was just about to start.

The church and the cafe had to be locked down.

Only the Hub could remain open.

No-one knew how the virus was transmitted. There was no cure.

Everyone had to remain in their homes – only essential workers allowed out.

We didn't know how many of us would die. 50% ? 80%? Anyone's guess? We were terrified.

The 1st job was to establish some way of communicating with people around us.

We divided the parish up into zones in order not to lose contact with everybody. Each had a zone champion who would be able to make sure that everyone in their zone was ticking over.

We quickly worked out that 2/3rds of our congregation could be reached by email. But the other 1/3rd posed more of a challenge.

Telephone links were a starter. And later a newsletter from the church helped, once someone could get out to deliver, or post it!

A number of people kindly used their "exercise" walks to help with this.

The West Windsor Hub was immediately in full swing, doing food shopping for those who couldn't go out, and arranging food parcels and the collection of medicines for the vulnerable members of our community.

Our own Carolyn Carter, and David Flanagan along with Carole da Costa, were rushed off their feet keeping the Dedworth community afloat at this testing time, assisted by a veritable army of volunteers. Thanks to all of them for the work they did early on, and for

ALL the work they are still doing! From March up until today, we have scanned the Covid rules to see what we CAN do for our community and what it would NOT be safe to do!

We have delivered services by telecom, broadcast from a dial-in facility, encouraged each other by Zoom and dazzled our congregation on You Tube. In all of this we have relied heavily on our tech team. We are extremely grateful to John Sturgeon, Mike Smith, Paul Watkins, Lucie Lazell, Mike Brooks and many others who have recorded sermons, led Bible studies, prayer meetings and recorded family news items. You guys have immeasurably enriched our lives at this difficult time, for which we thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

Andrew Giles has done a splendid job in producing our newsletters, which has helped us to keep in contact with each other. He has worked hard as senior church warden and certainly deserves a brief rest now. (Don't get carried away, Andrew!). I am glad that he is continuing to do the job of secretary, and has promised to keep me up to speed by sending me even more emails than usual!

Before we were allowed back into church we realised that we could pray in the church garden. So we did ! God blessed us with some amazing answers to our prayers. Sometimes we think that God is not listening when we pray. Don't believe a word of it. It's simply not true. If you don't believe me, ask me one day to tell you about the entrepreneur who arrived in Dedworth in less than an hour after we prayed for one!

Once we were allowed back into church it seemed an easy thing to reinstate the 9.30am Sunday Service. Booking ahead is a good idea to save any difficulties in finding a chair. OK, you have to wear a mask, and sign in. You musn't sing, (or blow your trumpet!) but the congregation are just pleased to be together. They receive communion every other week, courtesy of our 2 visting clergymen Alan Dibden and Roy Burgess, and inbetween the services are taken by Jacki and Mike Thomas, and occasionally me. Thank you team for your excellent work.

It is much more difficult to work out the logistics required to get the 10.45am Sunday Service back into church, mainly because of the fact that so many children are involved. This is a work in progress and we are moving forward with this. However, we have our own team who make fun YouTube family friendly services which are stunningly good. And we have got as far as watching them from home/ watching them sitting in the church. So we are on the way.

We have recently started doing events for the young people in the church, all carefully organised in a covid safe environment, and also Sunday School is beginning to come back as well. We are blessed with wonderful and creative leaders both for the schools work and the children and young people's work. Which brings me to my last point...

All Saints Dedworth has risen to the challenge of both the pandemic AND the interregnum so far, and I'm very happy at the way we are all working together. Thank you everyone. Keep up the good work and all the creativity. The pandemic and the interregnum are not over yet!