

**PARISH CHURCH OF
ST. MARY MAGDALENE BOLNEY**

**REPORTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 2020
TO BE GIVEN AT THE
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
ON SUNDAY 18th APRIL 2021
At 11.30am Via Zoom**

1. Churchwardens Report to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting for year end 31 December 2020

Church closure

Due to the pandemic which struck early in 2020, we were obliged to stop all worship, shut and lock the church to aid all attempts to slow down the spread of Covid19.

In June 2020 we were permitted to open the church for private prayer only. Visitors were requested to wear masks and use hand gel provided on entry and exit and respect social distancing. The front blocks of pews were permitted for use although every other one was blocked off.

A small team has diligently sanitised the pews each day to ensure no contamination.

We are very grateful to them particularly as no one knew how long this was going to last.

In July we were permitted to begin Sunday morning worship. We restricted numbers but still managed a good attendance.

Pastoral Scheme

Under a Pastoral Scheme dated 6 February 2020, a new benefice of Bolney and Cuckfield was created. By an Order dated 5 August 2020 the name was changed to the benefice of Cuckfield & Bolney.

Appointment and Licensing of Rev Michael Windridge

Michael was interviewed in February 2020 and offered the part time position of Associate Vicar to the benefice.

We were delighted to receive his acceptance but thus ensued a prolonged delay in enabling him to take up the appointment, partly due to the pandemic which held up remedial work to the vicarage following its vacation by the diocese's tenant.

Michael and Sabrina finally moved into The Vicarage in early October and we welcomed him (as best we could) with open arms.

Michael was duly licensed to the Benefice by Bishop Martin on Tuesday 13th October. He presided at his first Eucharist on Sunday 18th October. This marked the conclusion of the interregnum in Bolney , which started in January 2019.

Michael, being unable to physically visit his parishioners, has not wasted any time in contacting many of us either by telephone or email. He is working tirelessly to get to know us all but looks forward to the time when he is able to meet in person.

Sabrina is a great support and already a part of our Readers Rota and Flower Arranger.

Terrier and Inventory

The logbook, terrier and inventory are all up to date.

Projects

After an active programme in 2019, the one project of note in 2020 was making safe a large yew tree which had become dangerous in the southern part of the churchyard. Expert tree surgery work was duly carried out in the autumn.

The PCC intends to bring forward Tower Phase 2 in 2021, which involves erecting scaffolding and repointing stonework to the south and east elevations of the church tower.

100 Club

Continues as a valuable source of income: £2,530 in 2020. We always have numbers available and are grateful for any encouragement of new members.

Deanery Cluster meetings

Due to Covid19 these did not take place throughout 2020.

Fundraising

Fundraising to keep our Grade 1-listed church in good repair and support future projects is very hard work. It is a difficult task for the faithful few.

It has been very disappointing to discontinue our quarterly Bolney Markets and hope to reinstate them as soon as possible.

Churchyard maintenance

Our churchyard is kept very neat and tidy thanks to the efforts of Martin Burgess and Brian Barker.

Again due to Covid19, the Community Payback team has not attended to assist with keeping the churchyard tidy.

We continue to discourage the use of artificial flowers and ornaments sometimes with great difficulty. However visitors do comment on our well kept churchyard.

And finally...

We are extremely grateful to Fr Martin, Rev Ruth and Tony, for all their hard work and support throughout the interregnum. We continue to offer them all our unstinting support. Thank you all.

Susan Ayres and Tim Hutchings APCM 03/21

2. PCC Secretary - 2020 Report

During the year the following served as members of the Parochial Church Council

Vicar	The Revd Michael Windridge (From October 2020)
Chairman/Reader	Dr Anthony Bond
Incumbent	The Revd Michael Maine
Curate	The Revd Martin Mills
Churchwardens	Mrs Susan Ayres, Mr Tim Hutchings
Treasurer	Mr Tim Hutchings
Deanery Synod Representatives	Mrs Peta Pratt, Mr Rodney Pratt
Secretary	Mrs Claire George
Safeguarding Officer	Mrs Linda Barker PCC (co opted Jan 2020)
Member.	Mr Martin Burgess
Member.	Mr Ron Leggett
Member.	Mrs Janice Warren

Standing Committee (formed April 2020 as a consequence of the pandemic)

The following served as members during the period April - September 2020

Chairman/Reader	Dr Anthony Bond
Incumbent	The Revd Michael Maine
Curate	The Revd Martin Mills
Churchwardens	Mrs Susan Ayres, Mr Tim Hutchings
Treasurer	Mr Tim Hutchings
Secretary	Mrs Claire George

The Council met in person on three occasions; January 2020, March 2020. The Council met via Zoom; November 2020. There was an average of 11 members being present at each meeting.

The Standing Committee members met between April and September 2020 via Zoom on 5 occasions with an average of 6 members being present at each meeting

Meetings discussed a wide range of items concerning spiritual, pastoral and mission needs of the parish as well as care of church building, social activities, fundraising and financial matters. Matters concerning Health & Safety, Safeguarding, are standing items on the PCC agenda; the Interregnum was a standing item until July 2020. From April onwards; the pandemic and its consequences were discussed at every meeting. Details covered in other reports.

Policies are updated the second PCC meeting after each APCM most recently in January 2021 as our APCM was held in October 2020 due to the pandemic.

Charity Commission. We are now registered with the Charity Commission and are required at the end of each year (annually) to produce and file a report. The PCC have a legal responsibility. All members (as trustees) can look at the Charity Commission website to acquaint themselves with their obligations.

Church Website. We are grateful to Martyn Belsey whose help as usual has been invaluable in helping keep the church website up to date with all information about church; the services, our diary and calendar, PCC information, magazine rack including latest editions of pew and parish news, photos, hymns to learn. links to relevant websites and the church **Facebook** page. Particularly so during the pandemic when in addition to Sermons, he has also kept pre recorded Services on our website Audio Files which are ready to listen to by 9am each Sunday morning.

Claire George (PCC Secretary) April 2021

3. PCC Treasurer's Report- APCM year ended 31 December 2020

1.The accounts show a modest surplus of £1,692: Income £50,940 (2019 £74,924); Expenditure £49,248 (2019 £78,856).

2.Regular giving has held up well through lockdown. Donors not yet committed are encouraged to sign up to direct debit via the Parish Giving Scheme or make contactless payments via the card-reader which is available for use at any time just inside the south door of the church.

3.The PCC's net assets are £24,544, comprising cash at bank (current and deposit accounts) £31,349, less creditors (balance of loan and fees owing to the diocese) £6,805.

4.The highest outgoing for the PCC is "Parish Share", the parish's contribution to the diocese, which for 2021 is £28,187 (2020 £28,650), payable monthly.

5.In July 2020 the PCC was registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. This requires members as trustees to submit an annual report and financial statements in the prescribed format.

6.It should be noted that a seemingly healthy cash position currently enjoyed could change dramatically if the PCC was to lose some of its generous donors.

7.Following a successful project in 2019, the PCC is planning to undertake Tower Phase 2 in 2021, being the repointing of stonework to the south and east elevations of the church tower. This is budgeted to cost around £18,000. Grants are being applied for. Depending on what grants if any are offered, members may have to decide to draw down on reserves to meet the cost of the work.

Tim Hutchings - Hon Treasurer 28.03.2021

4. Electoral Roll

Our current total on roll is 61. The roll has duly been updated in line with Church Representation Rules.

Susan Ayres (Electoral Roll Officer)

5. Cuckfield Deanery Synod 2020 Report

St MM PCC could now have up to 3 Deanery Synod reps, however Peta and Rodney as our Diocesan reps can also attend Deanery meetings.

March - Family Support Work talk by Martin Auton-Lloyd.

FSW has been going 130 years starting as a refuge for unmarried mothers. It has changed over the years as it adapted to society's different needs. FSW uses resources in supplying statutory services which local services can no longer afford. Poverty is a big problem; a case worker for FSW in Haywards Heath and surrounding villages currently supports 30 families. Many parents have mental health issues, some families have to cope with autism; many are heavily in debt. FSW can help with paperwork for claiming benefit, for taking people to hospital appointments etc. All possible because FSW is not time limited. The food collected in our churches is a very important part of the work of FSW feeding the hungry. Gifts and books are also always welcome.

November - "County Lines"

County Lines is a form of organised crime where criminals based in urban areas pressurise vulnerable people and children to transport, store and sell drugs in smaller county towns, taking its name from the phone lines used by organised crime gangs to communicate between towns. Criminal exploitation of children as young as six are forced to carry and sell drugs far away from their homes, skip school, sleep in drug dens and are treated as criminals - when they often feel trapped in a hopeless situation. The most common drugs involved are heroin and cocaine but also MDMA, cannabis, amphetamines and spice. 90% of English police forces have seen county lines activity in their area and the violence is getting worse.

Rodney and Peta Pratt

6. Bolney CEP School.

This year has been dominated for the school and all of us, by a pesky virus. The school staff, pupils and parents have been amazing. Stepping up and embracing the huge challenges presented, whilst continuing to provide a first rate education and care to the pupils.

Providing in school education for children of key workers as well as on-line for all the others has been no mean feat, but has been executed to a very high standard. Add to this risk assessments, extensive cleaning regimes, and class bubbles; everyone deserves the highest admiration and praise.

We can only look forward in hope for the next year, that our children's education will not be interrupted.

The on going pre-pandemic challenges of limited finance of course hasn't gone away and will remain a challenge for many years to come.

We are indeed blessed to have such a wonderful school and staff.

Tony Bond (Bolney School Foundation Governor)

7. Safeguarding report

I am very pleased to report that all members of the PCC have a current DBS.

All members of the PCC also have completed the relevant Safeguarding training as required by the Church of England. This will need to be updated every three years.

All PCC committee meetings have been on Zoom and it is much appreciated that there is a good protocol for its use and all members have embraced this.

Our church services have been on Skype for much of the year. Also we have been holding virtual coffee mornings on a Thursday. All these events are also subject to safeguarding policy, not just on face to face meetings.

It has been a very quiet year for the church and I can report a quiet year regarding safeguarding for St Mary Magdalene, Bolney.

Linda Barker (Safeguarding Officer)

8. The Bolney Guild of Ringers' Report for PCC

The bells were in good condition when they were checked in 2020 and since they haven't been rung for several months we are assuming they will be fine. Martin Burgess can check for us before we ring for the Easter Sunday service.

We have a band of eleven ringers and used to practice on a Friday evening from 7.45 pm- 9 pm. Occasionally, we have had Advanced Practises with the Northern Division on a Monday evening about 2 or 3 times a year and we also have a few visiting bands who ask to come and ring the oldest peal of 8 bells in Sussex but none of this happened in 2020 and the first part of this year because of the restrictions imposed by the Government to try to stop the spread of the Covid 19 pandemic.

We started to ring again on Sundays when the Tier system was in place before the second lockdown but that only involved 4 of us ringing: Heather Jordan, Susanna Bowen, Martin Burgess and Penuel Ellis-Brown. We rang at 1 metre distancing, wearing masks and with the main outer church doors open for about 15 minutes. We will resume Sunday ringing from Easter Sunday onwards when we can, and hope it won't be too long before we can ring on practise nights and for weddings etc.

Our ringers are:

Penuel Ellis-Brown, Heather Jordan , Martin Burgess,
Brian Cook, (Tower Captain) John Williams, John Jordan, Lawrence Littleton Evans,
Susannah Bowen, Debbie Malins, Jeannette Sutton and Pam Pattenden.

We desperately need more young people to learn to ring otherwise the art of bell ringing will die out. Perhaps some of the older primary school children could be encouraged to learn and maybe the younger members of the parish between 20 and 50 years of age? Unfortunately, articles put in the Parish Magazine don't seem to produce anyone coming forward to enquire about learning nor do Open Tower Days.

Mrs. Penuel Ellis-Brown (Secretary of the Guild)

9. The Parish Magazine Report for the PCC

The magazine is being produced monthly except for December/January and July/August when it is a joint one. It varies in size from 28 to 36 pages maximum and 250 copies are printed each month and cost 60p each to purchase.

Contributions of articles for the magazine are excellent and usually arrive in time to go to be printed. Thanks to everyone who helps make the magazine of interest to the Parish.

During 2020 and 2021 when there were restrictions due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the magazine could not go to Church House to be printed. Instead it was uploaded to the Bolney website to be read online and for those subscribers who didn't have internet access some copies were printed on a home printer.

The May edition of the magazine should be printed once again and this and future copies will be in colour.

Mrs. Penuel Ellis-Brown (Editor) April 2021

Clergy Report for St. Mary Magdalene APCM 2021

This report deals with the calendar year 2020. It is a committee effort, with the period upto Reverend Michael Windridge's arrival in October being covered by Father Martin, then subsequently by Reverend Michael.

January - October 2020 - Father Martin Mills

In addition to the shortcomings of things designed by committee, there is also the fact that the author of the first part of the report has struggled to remember every turn and twist of the developments that have afflicted us all over the last year or so. He has therefore relied quite heavily on a rather smudgy diary and the minutes of PCC meetings. If, as a result, anything or anyone has been overlooked or misreported, he begs your indulgence.

The overarching story of 2020 has been the Covid-19 pandemic, as we observed, and perhaps experienced, its effects on society at large, and on the activities of the church. The year began normally enough, with our now standard interregnum worship pattern continuing into the new year. Although we were now entering the second year without a priest-in-charge, we were greatly heartened to know that the search for Fr. Keith's replacement was now underway in earnest. 15th February saw us at the Rawson Hall for Bolney Market, one of our

most successful endeavours in reaching out to the wider community. As it turned out, this was to be the last such event to date, but we are very grateful to Claire and all who have helped with these sales. The minutes of the 10th March PCC meeting noted that, very sadly, Archdeacon Fiona had been obliged to retire on health grounds. We are very grateful to her for her assistance with various issues. Fiona's role was to be shared by Rev'd. Julia Peatty and Rev'd. Derek Welsman. We also agreed that the main Sunday service would always be at 9:30am in future. It is good to record that our links with Cuckfield were strengthening, the pastoral scheme being implemented on 1st March. The men of the parish were invited to attend meetings of the Cuckfield Men's Group and Ron sought to encourage our involvement. Rev'd. Michael Maine, our Benefice Incumbent has attended some of our PCC meetings. On 15th March, he employed his considerable skills as an organist by treating us to a delightful concert at St. Mary Magdalene, and it was pleasing to see a number of Cuckfield folk present. By this time, the Covid- 19 outbreak was already making itself felt, and we were distancing at this concert.

By 27th March, The Church of England nationally had ordered the closure of all church buildings, with not even clergy allowed to enter for prayer. At this point, as I recall, only funerals in the churchyard or at crematoria, were permitted, and those with only a very small number allowed to attend. It is sobering to think that, as late as 26th Feb., the church had been packed for Robin Symes' funeral. We were only a week or two into Lent when the closure order arrived, and it was, I am sure, a very strange Holy Week and Easter for us all.

Like every church up and down the land, we were obliged to adapt to the new circumstances in accordance with our resources. Most of us now know far more (perhaps more than we wished to) about how our computers work. The frontiers of technology are not a natural habitat for your assistant curate, and I regret that it was not possible for me to make alternative worship provision earlier than it actually occurred. However, I am surrounded by people of competence, to whom we can be very grateful for steering us through this transitional phase. Tim very kindly made it possible for the PCC to meet by Zoom, and Dr Tony Bond as chair with Claire George as secretary, adapted effortlessly to the virtual sphere.

Concerning worship, we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Martyn Belsey. In addition to adapting and regularly updating the website, he has co-ordinated the production of the Sunday recorded audio service, including the selection of recorded psalms and hymns. He has also given me much personal technical assistance. The support of Ruth and Tony in this endeavour has been greatly appreciated, and the continuing involvement of the intercession-writing (and latterly lesson-reading) team has also added much to this worship. Thank you all. With all this teamwork it became possible to establish a new worship pattern of Compline by Skype on Tuesday evenings, the recorded Sunday service, plus the Thursday eucharist. Depending on current restrictions, this has been either solo priest broadcasting by Skype, or a mixture of in person / broadcast worship. Chapter and deanery meetings have also continued by moving online. It is worth noting that the Thursday eucharist, restored to weekly frequency, began enjoying attendance figures in excess of the pre-Covid era. Hopefully, these services have been able to provide spiritual sustenance to church members (and even wider afield, judging by Sunday ' hits ' on the website.)

However, the fact that people have been denied access to the sacrament for periods, and only able to receive in one kind at other times (up to the present) will have been keenly felt. We can but pray that communion in both kinds will be possible soon. It has been a great sadness also that we have not been able to deploy our server/ minister of communion team for some time now. I know how much their duties mean to the team, and hope that a resumption will be possible soon. It has been good to enjoy the skills of our flower arrangers, when allowed, and we have also missed hearing the bells very much.

By July, we were discussing resumption of in person worship and were able to proceed with this, subject to masks, distancing etc., a joy to be back in church. Because of cleaning requirements and time constraints, it has not yet been possible to resume the Sunday 8am service.

On 2nd August, it was a real pleasure to be able to announce the appointment of Rev'd. Michael Windridge as our Associate Vicar, and we were able to commence plans for welcoming him and Sabrina to the parish. The vicarage, it was noted in PCC minutes, was to be made ready....

We welcomed Bishops Ruth and Will to the diocese by means of a virtual installation service, broadcast from Chichester, on 13th September. Harvest was celebrated on 27th September, reminding us of God's steady provision for our needs, whatever else is going on in our world.

If church is a body of people joined to each other in Christ, then it follows that we should be close to one another in spirit, looking out for each other's needs. The effects of the pandemic have been very unevenly spread, but I hope we have managed to maintain the unity of the body through these odd times, giving and receiving support when needed. The weekly Skype coffee morning has been an important part of this, backed up by phone calls, emails, and physical meetings as and when allowed. I hope and believe the church is of good spirit. The parish church is, of course, there for everyone, not just regular church members, and we have tried to keep this wider pastoral ministry active during the pandemic. We have faced various restrictions: pastoral visiting has been difficult, and it has not always been possible to keep the church open for private prayer. However, we have tried to let people know that we are there for them, and have offered our services to the wider community as best we can, including via the parish council. Even when the church building was shut over the Easter period, we have been able to display notices of encouragement, including details of the national prayer line number. The parish magazine continued online, with a small number of hard copies being kindly produced for us by Margaret and Martin Burgess. The posters with Bible verses, placed above the church door by Marigold, were especially appreciated.

Traditionally, one of the ways in which the church provides pastoral care to the wider community, is through the occasional offices : baptisms, weddings and funerals. I am pleased to say that, despite all the restrictions, examples of each of these services took place at Bolney in the period under review.

It has also been good to see a relationship developing between the church and the young family at the Eight Bells. We are very grateful to them for hosting the FSW donations basket. This, plus our formalising a charitable giving plan, is a healthy sign of the church looking out

beyond the immediate community, despite our current woes that might have inclined us to become inward looking.

In all aspects of the church's life, we have been wisely and generously led by Sue and Tim, our wardens. Their skills and dedication to their duties are known and gratefully received by all of us. During an interregnum, the weight of responsibility on wardens' shoulders increases considerably. To then have the multiple confusions and challenges of the pandemic thrown into the mix, has put a huge load upon them. We are so grateful to you both.

Thanks to Tony's role as a governor, which has itself been very demanding, we were able to maintain contact with our church school, and the PCC received regular updates concerning the school. Although the school has largely been unable to hold services in church, they have made visits in smaller groups, encouraged and assisted in no small way by Sarah Harvey. We are full of admiration for the way in which Lorraine Kenny and her staff have maintained school life as best as they have been able, in the face of many challenges and changes. I have been aware for some while that I have not devoted the time to the school that the school/church relationship really needs. It has therefore been a source of much personal relief and delight to see how Michael has devoted himself to strengthening links with the school since his arrival.

It is so good to finally have Michael and Sabrina with us, and it was a happy last-minute alteration that saw the venue for his licensing service change from Chichester to St. Mary Magdalene, albeit with only a small number allowed to be present. His 'real' first service was, of course, the Sunday eucharist on 18th October, when our church members, together with Michael's and Sabrina's son Harry and other special guests, were able to welcome him into his new ministry. Michael's generous, collegiate approach to his priesthood was evident in this service, and it has been a pleasure to work with him ever since. Michael, though, may have wondered about the nature of the Bolney welcome when he found himself being led into an APCM immediately after the eucharist.....

October - December 2020 - Reverend Michael Windridge

It is with a sense of deep gratitude that I am able to submit this report as your Associate Vicar of Bolney (House for Duty) licensed to this task by the Bishop of Chichester in the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Bolney on October 12th 2020. The parish had been in interregnum since January 2019 following the departure of the Reverend Fr Keith Littlejohn who had served with dedication and whose ministry was greatly appreciated.

I would like to place on record my heartfelt thanks to former Archdeacon Fiona Windsor without whose encouragement I would not have applied for the post, given that three other Dioceses had ruled me illegible to apply for any parish ministerial positions on grounds of age.

Bishop's Appointment

Although I received my letter of appointment from Bishop Martin on 4th March 2020, as a result of Covid-19 it was only on Friday 2nd October 2020 that my wife Sabrina and I were able to move from our home in South Norfolk to the Bolney Vicarage.

Bolney Vicarage

When we first visited the Vicarage following my interview on 3rd March 2020 the house and garden looked in a sorry state of repair and neglect. My wife had the imagination to realise its potential as a family home whilst I viewed the prospects of living there a lot less enthusiastically!

My concerns were entirely misplaced. When we arrived in October we found a wonderful transformation had taken place. The house was spotlessly clean, freshly painted throughout, and newly carpeted in both the living room and vicar's study. There had been significant clearance of the overgrowth in the garden and both the central heating and hot water system in the house were operating (and continue to do so) quite brilliantly. A cleaning party drawn from members of the congregation had most generously volunteered their services before we opened the front door. Given that the rain was slashing down during the entire drive from Norfolk that day their kind gesture proved an enormous morale boost!

I would like to pay a special tribute to the tenacity of the churchwardens, backed fully by the PCC, in ensuring that the Diocese fulfilled its long overdue stewardship responsibilities for this property which had last been occupied by clergy in 2014 and tenanted ever since.

The Shadow of Covid

Shortly before I arrived in the Parish I asked if a message could be displayed in St Mary Magdalene including these words: *“However excited we are at coming to St Mary Magdalene, Sabrina and I are acutely conscious of the terrible impact the Coronavirus is having on both our national and local parish life. People will be asking where on earth is God in such a destructive pandemic. May this holy place and this prayerful congregation continue to witness to the Light and Love that the world's darkness will never extinguish.”* None of us could have been aware then of the many months that would follow when all our lives would continue to be so affected (and still are) by the prolonged ‘lock down’ as a consequence of this cruel pandemic.

Pastoral consequences of the Coronavirus

Having spent the previous ten years working full time in a busy Member of Parliament's office in the House of Commons, I was fully prepared for what I knew would be a pretty sizeable culture shock taking on such new parish responsibilities.

I have to acknowledge that these past six months have proved even more challenging and frustrating in not being allowed to exercise a full pastoral ministry. Nevertheless, in spite of these/obvious difficulties and disappointments, I thank God for being able to record my sense of fulfilment, enjoyment and satisfaction in my new calling.

As a consequence of Covid I have been tightly constrained from getting ‘out and about’ in the Parish to meet a cross section of villagers, most of whom are not involved with St Mary Magdalene as well as visiting members of the church congregation in their own homes. Pope Francis has said that the shepherds of the church “should have the smell of the sheep about them”. He calls on his bishops and clergy to immerse themselves in the lives of the people they serve. I long to be able to do just that once these lockdown restrictions have been lifted in their entirety. To date, Sabrina and I have fully supported the marvellous ‘take away service’ of the Eight Bells pub and we are now proud Vice-President members of Bolney Cricket Club. I look forward to engaging with all the other organisations and societies in the village, including Bolney Parish Council.

Ministry Team

I wish to pay my respects and sincere thanks for the exemplary way in which Fr Martin Mills, Reverend Ruth Bond and Dr Tony Bond (together with the PCC) so successfully managed the interregnum which lasted from Fr Keith's departure in January 2019 until my licensing in October 2020. I felt quite apprehensive involving myself in such a smooth running machine! Fr Martin and Dr Tony Bond's generous offer to maintain leading Sunday services on appointed Sundays continue to make an invaluable contribution to the worshipping life of St Mary Magdalene. I have also been privileged to have taken a very small part in the funeral services of Veronica Burgess and Joy Fatcher conducted with such spirituality by Fr Martin.

2020 Christmas Introductory Letter to Parishioners

In view of visiting constraints arising from Covid I decided to write an introductory letter to each of the c.550 households in the parish of Bolney. This exercise was only made possible by the extremely generous offer of our local postman Mark (together with help from his two colleagues) who hand delivered the letter during the course of his normal delivery round. It has been extremely gratifying that, even to this day, villagers I meet along the pathway to church still refer to this introductory letter during casual conversations.

2020 Christmas card and Advent Calendar to Bolney Church of England Primary School

Given that – even to this day – I have been prevented by Covid from visiting the school, and regarding forging relationships with children and staff as a pastoral priority, I delivered to the school Advent Calendars and Christmas cards last Christmas for all the children. I was touched to receive many individual thank you cards and notes. I was delighted that the children, under the encouragement of Sarah Harvey, in particular, paid classroom visits to the Church in the run up to the Christmas holidays.

2021 Easter Card and Palm Cross to Bolney School

In similar vein I have just delivered signed Easter cards to each of the one hundred and one children at the school. They were also given a Palm Cross to take away.

Lorraine recently invited me to join her for a mid-day walk to discuss how best I might be introduced to the school once the Summer term has begun and assuming lockdown regulations allow.

Together with Sue Ayres and others, Sarah has created a beautiful Easter Garden and I am equally delighted that she is bringing all classes down to visit the Church during Holy Week.

St Mary Magdalene Organist

The congregation is already aware of the particular importance I attach to the musical and choral components of church services and the liturgy. Happily for me, I have inherited a superb organist who carries out his role with great skill and spiritual knowledge and sensitivity.

Martyn Belsey also selects the recordings of hymns, psalm chants and other musical components appropriate for the liturgical requirements of the individual Sunday.

Sadly, Covid has denied us the more regular playing by Martyn but we are very much looking forward to his return to church for our service on Easter Sunday.

Bell Ringers

I was so pleased that St Mary Magdalene's Bell ringers were present when the Bishop of Chichester came to conduct the licensing service on 12th October 2020. Again, I attach great

importance to this aspect of the Church's witness and aim to do all in my power to support members of the present 'Tower' and to encourage others to take up the skill.

Recording of Sunday Services

Staring into a blank i-Pad screen to record the Sunday Services is not my idea of worshipping fun! Nevertheless, we have to be so grateful to Martyn Belsey for managing the whole IT effort required to collect the home recordings from the multitude of readers, preachers and intercessors who have enabled us to broadcast these Sunday services over the past few months.

Daily Office

On days other than Thursdays and Sundays, I aim to be in church between 9.30am and 10am for the Daily Office as conducted by the daily audio for Common Worship Prayer (Church House publishing).

Thursday Eucharist

Fr Mills and I celebrate the Eucharist on alternative Thursday mornings at 9.30am. As a newcomer to the technical demands of Skype and Zoom I have maintained slow but I, I dare suggest, steady progress in coming to terms with this new technology. The learning curve has been punctuated with a few embarrassing mistakes but I readily concede the virtues of meeting virtually when we can't assemble bodily!

It is a humbling and richly rewarding experience to be able to offer this Eucharist service to such a loyal and dedicated group of virtual communicants.

Chapter meetings

I have taken part in several Deanery Chapter meetings since last October and have been most impressed with the humour and resourcefulness of my fellow clergy of the Cuckfield Deanery.

The Benefice of Cuckfield and Bolney

Covid is entirely responsible for the lack of any progress in bringing to life the potential benefits of the new Benefice of Cuckfield and Bolney.

I have held one meeting only at his home with Fr Michael Maine, the Benefice incumbent and Rural Dean. We have met on Zoom a number of times. Michael is a wonderful pastoral priest and I am most fortunate to be serving under him. I look forward to reinforcing our friendship and cooperation once Covid restrictions have been lifted. I attend a monthly Evening Prayer with him and several others from Holy Trinity, Cuckfield on the first Wednesday of the month.

Lent Course

We were delighted to join forces with Bolney Village Chapel to conduct a five week Lent course studying the 2021 Lent book 'Thy Will be Done' by the Dean of King's College, Cambridge, Dr Stephen Cherry. I am most grateful to both Dr Tony Bond our Lay Reader and also Simon Allaby, Pastor of Bolney Chapel, for leading four of the sessions and bringing their own valuable insights into our discussions. Most helpfully, Simon was able to take control of the Zoom meetings and steered us into 'break out' rooms with key questions prepared to guide and stimulate our thinking.

Churchwardens of St Mary Magdalene

It has been my greatest ministerial fortune to have inherited two quite exceptional Churchwardens. Sue Ayres and Tim Hutchings have given me all the support,

encouragement and friendship a newly appointed parish priest could possibly have wished for.

Assuming for the very first time the role of a 'Priest in Charge' of a Parish their knowledge and expertise has been even more appreciated. Their wisdom and guidance has given me much needed self- confidence in helping to carry out such a Covid restricted pastoral role.

Easter Sunday and beyond

This report is being written on Monday of Holy Week as we look forward to coming together as a church family for the first time after many testing weeks to celebrate live Good Friday and Easter Day services.

Today sees the first lifting of lockdown restrictions. As today's Times has reported "*It may be far short of a full return to normal life, but for those who have been isolated in their homes, kept apart from family and friends for many months, it is a liberation.*"

As we give thanks for the gift of liberating vaccinations, let us this Easter Sunday rejoice in Christ's defeat of the world's darkness and look forward with Resurrection hope towards new life and worship in St Mary Magdalene.

Bolney Vicarage - Monday, March 29th 2021