

## **Hatley St George Church**

### **2020 / 2021 annual report**

This Covid-19 overshadowed year has been a particularly tough one for people in the Hatleys from the point of view of involvement with church. I am deeply grateful for the efforts and patience of those who have been keeping things going and doing without.

As a Chapel of Ease in the Parish of Gamlingay with Hatley St George and East Hatley the little church at Hatley St George (believed to be dedicated to St James the Great) was closed for worship and even entry for much of 2020 through government restrictions, as were all the others of the Benefice, and across the country.

When churches could be opened, Hatley St George church took lowest priority for Sunday services. Not being a parish church, and having limited facilities meant that even when we were allowed to open, regular services did not take place there.

Under Covid rules, the services in the parishes of the Benefice were, and still are, for the whole Benefice (which includes Everton) with Zoom broadcasting authorised. This was from church buildings as soon as that was allowed. Arranging for installation of a line into Gamlingay Church was a huge frustration during the time my sister was in her last illness, but is a great asset now. Special arrangements have been made for each church for the major festivals. Any service had to be 'safe' with separate risk assessments for each building.

The small size of Hatley church presents particular problems with distancing, however Christmas saw a nativity service and an 8 am communion, and some of the carol service was recorded from there.

Easter this year saw an 8 am Book of Common Prayer communion, the church wonderfully full of flowers and specially cleaned for the occasion thanks to a great effort by Penny Hewlett and helpers – so good to have support from beyond the usual tiny regular congregation.

During Holy Week, Hatley was included in the Zoom broadcast Taizé-style services, however the variable, sometimes poor phone signal meant there were problems that make this a less-than-ideal way to provide worship for those using the internet. The other services for the Benefice were all at Gamlingay for safety reasons.

Keeping people in touch with what is going on has proved even more challenging this year, which has provided a means to keep some connected; my thanks to the people who have helped me make that happen. A network of link people has distributed the weekly Newsletter physically and/or electronically, and kept as many people as possible in touch, by email where possible and by telephone where not. Apologies where that has not worked for some, but a great effort all the same.

The church APCM took place by Zoom this year. Chris Miller continues in Warden's role, with new Warden Nick Ingles joining him. Nick has supported the on-line music wonderfully, and we are hugely grateful he has been willing to take on lay leadership responsibility also.

St Denis' churchyard continues to be the responsibility of the PCC of Gamlingay and the Hatleys, with much gratitude to the local people who look after this redundant church and its environs. Special gratitude is due to Nicola Jenkins who keeps those willing and able to do things connected with those who have the formal responsibility. Some work has been done on the trees, and a comprehensive report and survey is under consideration.

The group which has taken on Hatley St George church has been somewhat in abeyance, with the retirement of the architect we were dealing with last year along with the limitations imposed by Covid-19. My time availability to meet with the group has been a factor, but there is expectation that we will get back into our stride with the need for work to improve drainage, heating system, incoming electricity supply and pruning of trees in the churchyard.

Although it is great to see St Denis church being cared for, and congratulations to those who have worked to put further work in hand to restore the building, I can't help being a bit wistful that the funding available to working churches and the person-power to apply for it means the church licensed for public worship is in a weaker position than the one that is not. Nevertheless, the worshipping presence continues in the parish, and we look with hope to the coming year.

During lockdown various initiatives have helped people in the villages locally, including increased support for food banks. In our parish, the C-of-E and Baptist churches have come together to provide a focal point in Gamlingay to enable more local provision, in partnership with others.

This has taken a little longer to get up and running than had been hoped, due to the time it takes to get paperwork and legalities in place. In the next few weeks we hope to have the Alms house Chapel as a place for Community Fridge food sharing as well as distribution for food bank food parcels through the Need project. Hatley folk have contributed already, and will be doing so again. Many thanks for that!

With prayers for continued blessings for these communities.

Hilary Young  
Priest in Charge  
May 2021