

APCM Report, for the period May 2021-22

Like many of us, I expect, this year has felt like a very long overdue opportunity to get out and about and see actual people. It's been a pleasure to meet many of you in real life after a year mostly spent in a little black box on Zoom.

I was ordained Priest shortly after the last APCM and you've been amazingly supportive and tolerant of the higgledy-piggledy process of getting to grips with presiding at the Eucharist in all its variations.

Services

Highlights for me were my first Mass, outside in the churchyard, with folks from St Mary's, St B's and St George's, my sending parish, all gathered on camping chairs, umbrellas at the ready, in what turned out to be, last minute sunshine. And Easter Eve and Easter Sunday this year will stick in my memory for a long time. Hats off to the merry band of gardeners who helped decorate the Lady Chapel for the Triduum — they did a great job of bringing the outdoors indoors at such a special time of year.

It's been a real pleasure and delight to begin to take more occasional offices, there were several weddings last year as couples were finally able to go ahead with all the weddings that were delayed during lockdown, and four more in the diary for this summer.

Baby Cafe

When I last reported to APCM, Baby Cafe was an embryo of an idea. Nicola and I were working away behind the scenes, looking at venues, applying for grants and buying equipment. We opened for a trial in June last year, for 4 weeks at the end of term and were overwhelmed by the response of some of the mums who came along. It was one of only a very few baby groups open at the time, and some of the babies had never seen another baby — one mum said it was a bit of normality in a crazy world, just that her baby could lie on a mat next to another baby and they could look at each other made a difference to her experience of being a mum.

Baby Cafe has gone really well, we run every Tuesday in term time at the Bluecoat School. We've baptised a few baby cafe patrons in the last year too :O) We couldn't run without volunteers — paid in baby smiles and cake! Pauline, Lourdes, Nicola and I are the regulars with help from Sarah on occasion. We also have a work experience student with us this year from Kennet School, Keeley was referred to us by Kath Forbes as she wants to be a midwife — she has been a brilliant addition to the team.

This term Baby Cafe is branching out in a collaboration with a local personal trainer. Mel from the appropriately named 'Mission Exercise' is running a post natal exercise sessions over four weeks on Friday mornings. I met Mel when she was bridesmaid at one of the weddings I did over the summer — she is very keen on encouraging mums back to fitness after having a baby. We have a regular group of seven on Friday mornings, which again is at Bluecoat School.

We had a grant to run Baby Cafe from Oxford diocese, for June 21-22. A local charity has agreed to provide funding for us for a further year, so Baby Cafe is solvent until July 2023.

The Nest

Cake seems to be the golden thread which runs through my curacy, I'm currently working with David McLeod (Vicar of Greenham) and Sue Edwards (who goes to St Nics) to start up a new baby and toddler group for families with adopted or foster children. We will facilitate the provision of toys and activities for toddlers and coffee and cake for parents. There is nothing like this locally, the nearest is Reading (and who wants to go to Reading with a toddler???) We have been in touch

with the Home For Good charity, and PACT (Parents and Children Together) regarding setting up and funding, and I'll be putting a request for funding through the Good Exchange for our running costs and hall hire. That group will be based at St Mary's Greenham and will serve Newbury, Thatcham and the surrounding villages/areas. Please keep The Nest in your prayers.

Pipe Dreams

2022 also saw the revival of the organ project, which had been on ice since before lockdown. Our organ is quite a special one, it turns out. It's a fine and rare example of the work of a firm call Grey and Davison, and it's the kind of instrument that seems to make organ enthusiasts hop up and down. A third of it is currently unplayable, although we don't usually notice as Tim is so adept at compensating for its flaws, so we are intending to try to restore and repair it to its former glory. There is a team of us, including Richard Foster, Chris Watts and Christine Rice, currently looking down the barrel of specifications, tenders, funding applications and faculties for this. A proposal will shortly be landing with PCC.

Thanks as ever to you all, I give thanks daily to have landed a curacy in such an interesting place, with such lovely people and such understanding and creative colleagues.

:O)



Rev Angela Brennan
May 2022