



## HOLY CROSS ANNUAL MEETING 2020

### RECTOR'S REPORT

It was not the start to a new ministry at Holy Cross that I had envisaged, with a broken church boiler, a pandemic and a lockdown after my third Sunday in post, but it has been good and God has been with us all. The achievements of this time are listed in the Annual Report so I will not repeat them here, but I will say that Izzy, Bess and I have experienced the generosity of the Holy Cross community and the warmth of your support as we all tried to get to know each other and keep our life of prayer going in a very difficult time. Thank you all.

The Vestry and others have worked very hard to sort out the boiler problem, just after running a successful campaign to raise money to restore the stonework of the church. I would thus also like to say a special thanks to them, especially the fundraising team, and to all of you who contributed so that we can now have a fully paid for and excellent heating system. The Church can't fulfil its mission if its building is freezing! I would also like to thank all those who worked so hard during the transition period from one Rector to another – you deserved a break but got a lockdown.

The stones of our Church are a symbol of God's presence and faithfulness. They are also a symbol of the Body of Christ in this place – our Church community. This year we updated our congregational roll which at present stands at 115 including 91 communicants (these two figures have to be sent to the Scottish Episcopal Church each year and represent those associated with the church and those who receive Holy Communion at the church during the year). During the year we sadly lost a much-loved member of the congregation, Helen Allan, and another who had moved away, Chantal Tuke, as well as a number of us losing members of our families to Covid. They all remain in our prayers.

Public worship was suspended during the lockdown in March. Since it resumed in July attendance at Holy Cross has remained at what it has been for the last few years, about 32 each Sunday. Looking at who was there each Sunday, however, has revealed that we have a regular worshipping community of about 60 people with, during the two months since we reopened, about 15 first-time visitors to Holy Cross. Church attendance and membership has declined across Britain in recent decades, the number of communicants at Holy Cross was 120 in 2011, 328 in 1975, and 481 in 1966, but the picture is not all gloom - in the past year we have also seen growth. We rejoiced in the baptism of Emilia and Bess, who regularly worship with us, and also welcomed nine new people to our roll of whom seven are communicants.

We have a great treasure in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whom we celebrate in the Liturgy, experience in prayer and meet in Scripture and serving our neighbour. It is good news to share with all around us and, rather than just looking back over the past year, I would like to share with you five areas of our life as a congregation which are prominent in all growing Churches and which we could look at developing in the future – how they develop is up to us!

1. Worship
2. Prayer and Healing
3. Children and Families Ministry
4. Christian Formation
5. Serving the Community

Now is not the time to say more about them, you may have questions about what they mean and I hope we can discuss them in future.

Looking back again, it has been an unusual and challenging year, a time of transition, and as we hope for a return to some state of normality next year we might ask ourselves:

1. What have you missed at Church during the pandemic?
2. What have you not missed at Church during the pandemic?
3. What has been helpful during the time we could not meet?
3. What have you gained in your Christian life during this period?
4. What new things might we keep when we return to normal?

Thank you all for your support, love and prayers. It is an honour to succeed Bob and Douglas as Rector of Holy Cross and, for all the challenges ahead, I can see many signs of hope and green shoots of growth. I end with the 'Welcome Statement' for Holy Cross adopted this year by our vestry, which I trust says something of who we are:

"All are welcome here!

Holy Cross is a Christian church. Everyone is welcome here, whether you are a person of faith or not. We hope that any contact you have with us will be a positive experience.

All are invited to become a member of the Church, the Body of Christ, through Baptism. All the baptised are welcome to receive Holy Communion, the pledge of God's love and sign of our union in the Body of Christ.

Holy Cross is an inclusive church: there is no discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, race, age, sexual orientation or social class.

'You are all one in Christ' (Galatians 3:28)

God bless,

Stephen