

PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL

Volunteers and Churchwarden Report for the APCM, Tuesday 25 May 2021

This year has been an exceptional and challenging one for our volunteers, with many groups not able to meet as usual. This year our Cathedral Annual Review provides a summary of the work of our volunteers, and a further overview is enclosed below.

The beginning of 2020 saw all our volunteers at their normal roles. On Sundays our Sidespersons and welcomers greeted all those coming to services and helped the vergers in tidying the Cathedral after services. Intercessors, readers, servers and volunteer musicians and members of Consort all played their part in our worship. Our Sunday School, Becket's Bunch, was led by a small but dedicated group of leaders and coffee and sherry were served after services. The Holy Dusters were in the Cathedral each Monday morning ensuring that the pews and memorials were dusted and the floors swept. The Memorial Gardeners, 'The Adams', arrived early on Tuesday mornings to keep the garden tidy through the winter months. Later on Tuesdays, the Lunch Club Volunteers prepared and served lunch for up to 50 people from across the city. On Wednesdays, the Toddler Group leaders and helpers led worship in the Cathedral and set out refreshments in Becket Hall for the group. On Thursdays, the ringers practised, and on Fridays, the Flower Guild could be found either arranging new displays or keeping flowers and foliage refreshed for the coming weekend. Throughout the week the Shop Volunteers and Guides could be found on duty helping with the Ministry of Welcome; Duty Chaplains provided pastoral support, volunteers helped in the Cathedral Offices and archives, and our Lay Pastoral Assistants visited those unable to come to the Cathedral. Education volunteers supported our regular programme of popular Schools Workshops.

Before lockdown our concert stewards and refreshment volunteers had welcomed audiences, and other volunteers had arranged a Fish and Chip Quiz Night in aid of the Society of St James, and a Skittles Evening was planned. In March everything changed: events were cancelled, then services, and finally the building was closed. Volunteer activity did not stop however. The Adams continued to tend the garden, socially distanced but still sociable, ensuring that this peaceful place was kept beautiful for all those who take time. Administrative volunteers worked from home and the Research Group, Head Guide and Archivist provided interesting information for our blogs. With the reopening of the building many existing volunteers offered to help the Cathedral to comply with new Covid-19 regulations and therefore remain open.

Although worship resumed in July it was not possible to use many of our volunteers who assist in services. A limited number of Sidespersons were on duty and our intercessors wrote prayers which were read by the ministry team. As the year progressed we welcomed back our shop volunteers and Holy Dusters and the ringers adapted to a very limited repertoire during the summer.

We were delighted to host an online Volunteers' Tea during National Volunteering Week in June, with a special guest speaker – The Very Revd Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark – who spoke movingly about the experience of lockdown and what positive things we might take from it. We were also pleased to offer a special Carol Service for our volunteers for the first time.

All our volunteers have been amazingly versatile and patient throughout the year. While we have enjoyed meeting them virtually, we look forward with great excitement to their full return as the current restrictions ease.

Our Churchwardens, Sue and Sheila have written a brief report on their experience through the year.

'It was a memorable day on 16th June, 2020 when we were able to open the doors of the Cathedral to welcome worshippers for private prayer and to light a candle, having been in lock down since 23rd March. Initially we were open from 11.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m. but in early July this was extended to 10.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m. at which time it was also possible to introduce a midday Eucharist every day. Also in July we were able to open on Sundays for worship, initially four services but as services were also streamed online this was later reduced to two, 8am and 11am. This would not have been possible without the help and support of a wonderful band of volunteers, some regular Sidespeople but also others including choristers home from University for the summer. Since then Sue has maintained the rota of Sidespeople for the Sunday services and Sheila has kept the rota for the weekday stewards. When the second lockdown arrived some felt vulnerable and could not continue but others came along and we were able to continue to provide a welcome.

Christmas brought its challenges with seven Carol Services instead of the usual three! There were two Crib Services, an eighth Evensong/Carol Service and Midnight Eucharist on Christmas Eve and three services on Christmas Day. Along with our regular Sidespeople we were indebted to the assistance offered by Choir parents.

More recently two major moving services were Choral Evensong in Commemoration and Thanksgiving for the life of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and Choral Evensong with Thanksgiving for the Ministry of and Farewell to Bishop Christopher Foster.

We also held a Commemoration of the first Anniversary of Lockdown when Jonathan Randall, one of our volunteers wrote, "Although I am sure it is important to keep the Cathedral open even for the usual small numbers, I found it particularly rewarding to see larger numbers yesterday morning. In particular three people said they had not expected the Cathedral to be open and were very pleased to be able to come in for a few minutes quiet reflection."

It has, as always, been a privilege and pleasure to serve as Churchwardens during this most unusual year. As she retires Sue would particularly like to thank Sheila, the vergers, the clergy and all the Sidespeople for their enormous support and love during all her time in this rewarding position. It has been a great joy and wonderful learning experience.'

May 2021.