

## **Parochial Church Council**

I guess this takes us back to the y/c 1 January 2020, a couple of months before the first lockdown. At the time, we were holding Sunday church services once a month, either a Communion service led by an ordained minister or a Parish Worship service led by a lay person. Attendance had declined to congregations of about 4 people. Since March 2020, there have been no church services in either All Saints or Saint Cuthbert's.

With recent deaths of elderly parishioners and attendees, membership of the Parochial Church Council had reduced to 1 member (the church warden) and a couple of ex officio members including the treasurer. The treasurer's role is still carried out by Richard Virden. Representation on the PCC is now down to one person. As a result, Corsenside is now working closely with and supported by Bellingham with a view to forming a joint PCC.

Last September 2020, Revd Dr Susan Ramsaran retired as rector of the North Tyne and Redesdale deanery. At present, that role is fulfilled by the Revd Sarah Lunn, whose responsibilities include the southern parishes of Chollerton, Humshaugh, Wark, Wall, Birtley, Thockrington and Simonburn as well; so she is very hard pressed.

Financially, we are still supported by a hard core of parishioners and others with regular donations which keep us going. We are solvent, but have no reserves to speak of. Although both church buildings are in reasonable order, they are expensive buildings to maintain; the latest 5-yearly report on the condition of St Cuthbert's is in preparation, and will indicate that there is a lot of work to do to reduce penetrating damp.

The 2 main questions we are faced with are :-

1. What ordained minister will we be provided with? The Church of England are planning to continue with more input from parishioners and more collaboration between parishes, so we will have less of a Susan or Sarah going forward, when we really need more. It is hard to see their role being substituted by parishioners, although we can try.
2. What buildings are we going to continue with? Corsenside has 2 churches to maintain, which we can ill-afford. This has to be rationalised, probably by retaining one church building and adapting it for use by both church and community. Adaptation will be essential if we are to access grant-funding for repairs and improvements.

These questions have been suppressed by lockdown, but I expect that answers will need to be found before long.

As always, we are grateful for the support provided by the Parish Council and many others. A party of volunteers led by Paul Sinclair came to St Cuthbert's in April, and did a major tidy-up of the churchyard and surrounds. It was a great example of volunteering at its best, and how the community continues to value its churches.