

Friends of Sutton Veny Church - Annual Report – March 2021

Background

With the approval of the Parochial Church Council (PCC), given at their meeting in October 2018, The Friends of Sutton Veny Church group (FSVC aka The Friends) was formally established on 2nd April 2019. The purposes of FSVC are:

To help conserve, maintain, and improve the fabric, furnishings and fittings of St John the Evangelist's Church and to:

- 1) support the upkeep of the building and its grounds;
- 2) foster public interest in the building and its grounds.

The current trustees are:

Christopher Elliott – Chairman
Alick Moore – Treasurer
Patrick Clarkson – Governance
Richard Jackman – Secretary/PCC link/Membership
George Brooks
Victoria Mossop
Hermione Trypanis

Membership

The Friends group was established as a charity separate from the PCC because it was felt that there were many within the village and beyond who, though not overtly religious, were supportive of initiatives to keep the church building at the centre of village life. The membership list would appear to vindicate this view, although several members of the worshipping community have also chosen to be FSVC members.

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent absence of opportunities to promote membership has resulted in growth being modest. There are approximately 55 names currently on the membership list. Most live in the village, but a few live elsewhere.

In the coming year efforts by both trustees, and hopefully members too, will endeavour to promote both a higher level of take-up locally and also to encourage increased membership from those living further afield (potentially as far away as Australia, bearing in mind our strong ANZAC connections), who might want to maintain a linkage with our church. The parallels between the current pandemic and the tragically high proportion of the ANZAC war graves that reflect deaths attributable to the 1918 Spanish Flu outbreak is poignant and one that the trustees hope to publicise.

Governance and Charitable Status

A constitution document was signed by the trustees on 2 April 2019 and the Friends group has been run in accordance with the constitution with the exception of the 2020 Annual General Meeting, which had to be cancelled due to the Coronavirus restrictions imposed by the government.

The Friends of Sutton Veny Church was entered on the Charity Commission Register of Charities on 31 Mar 2020 with a registered charity number of 1188816.

The standing agendas of both the PCC and the FSVC trustees' meetings now include items to generate requests for support and to respond to them respectively.

Main Activities & Achievements

The Covid- 19 pandemic has blighted the programme of fundraising and awareness events that trustees had hoped to organise. However, some have still been held; albeit constrained by the restrictions imposed to limit the spread of the virus.

The need to wait for the end of the first lockdown and residual social distancing rules dictated a delay to the repeat of the previously successful Summer Party until the August Bank Holiday weekend. Organised in conjunction with the normal Saturday Produce Stall, which raises funds for church projects under the auspices of the PCC, the event was well attended with visitors being briefed on the benefits of the Friends group and their activities. Some very welcome donations were also received.

The autumn concert by Michael Lunts had to be cancelled, but the easing of restrictions over the Christmas period enabled carol singing to go ahead on 19th December and, due to the generosity of both the singers and the audience, £220 was raised.

A walking quiz was developed with clue sheets sold for £5 each to amuse people on their village walks during lockdown. Take up was modest. However, it was enthusiastically received by those who tackled it and approximately £80 was raised.

Activities - Planned

Looking forward, the events diary reflects a repeat of the Summer Party on Saturday 28th August and the hope that Michael Lunts' light musical concert, 'Tickling the Ivories', will be reinserted in early autumn. A list of possible events and fundraising activities continues to be maintained but most are currently ruled out due to Covid-19 restrictions.

With the major project to improve the church's facilities still in its definition phase, practical support to the PCC has remained limited to the organisation of the maintenance of the churchyard. Preparation for the task of seeking grant funding for the church project has so far been limited to the preliminary identification of some of the grant-giving bodies that will be approached once the detail of the project and, importantly, its likely cost, has been established.

There is no doubt that a healthy membership list will be a strong piece of evidence to be put to potential donors that the community is supportive of the project, which seeks to enhance the ability of the church to be a building used by the whole village.

Notwithstanding the understandable focus on the project that will improve the church's facilities, the trustees remain mindful of the Friends' stated aim to support the upkeep of the church as it currently is. With a quinquennial inspection due in mid 2021 we must all hope that it raises no issues requiring remedial action that might assume a higher priority.

Finances

Membership involves a commitment to a regular donation of just £10 per year. However, some generous one-off donations have also been received, and two in particular, both of £20,000, have been made in the past year. These donations have had the very positive effect of boosting funds available to a level that has the potential to enable really significant benefits to be achieved. The charity's holdings now exceed a threshold which dictates that our finances need to be scrutinised by an independent examiner and filed to the Charity Commission.

The separate income and expenditure documents set out in greater detail the financial status of FSVC as at the end of the 2020 calendar year. In summary, they show a total funds figure approaching £52,000 and this will be boosted further with the reclamation of Gift Aid, for which the charity is now eligible. Both the financial health of FSVC and the size of the membership base will form vital evidence in demonstrating community support and attracting matched funding when applications for grants are made.

The total continues to reflect very limited outgoings to date (none in 2020). With the main focus of expenditure likely to be in support of the enhancement project at the rear of the church. Potential reimbursements in support of events have not materialised in the accounts as a result of the personal generosity of trustees.

Conclusion

Despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, The Friends of Sutton Veny Church have continued to achieve their objectives. Now a registered charity and eligible for Gift Aid, it is operating correctly within its established governance regime. Due to steady growth in membership, as well as several very generous donations, it has finances that have the potential to contribute very significantly towards the realisation of the church improvement project and thereby to achieve a primary aim of putting the church at the centre of village life.

March 2021

Friends of Sutton Veny Church

Financial Statement for Year Ending December 2020

The income from Regular donors for the full year 2020 was £4,171, an increase from £1,687 in the year April - December 2019. Thus indicating a solid foundation of income, based on membership, committed for the years ahead.

In the year 2020, the income from legacies and single donors was £41,936, boosting the total funds to £51,867. Thus the strength of regular subscriptions from the community and the windfall of big, single donations puts the Trust in a strong position to provide significant financial as well as practical support to the PCC in their planned project to enhance the Church's facilities.

The Trust has been recognised by HMRC as a charity for tax purposes, register No. ZD08295, and will claim Gift Aid from donations given from taxed income, which is expected to raise an additional £1,880.

Outgoings. No money was paid this year to the PCC for Church enhancement. Due to Covid restrictions on "crowd" activities there were no payments made to support fund raising activities. Expenditure for the summer party and carol singing being covered by the Trustees.

The Year End Account and the Bank statements have been presented for independent scrutiny. The expenditure and income of the Trust funds will be sent to the Charity Commission, after acceptance at the AGM.

Alick Moore
Treasurer

Income and Expenditure Statement - 31 December 2020

Income

Regular Donors	4,171
One off donors	41,936
General donations	0
Event income	35

Total Income 46,142

Expenditure

Event costs	0
Purchases for Church	0
Administration	0

Total Expenditure 0

Surplus/(Deficit) 46,142

Reserves brough Forward 5,725

Surplus/(Deficit) – Current Year 46,142

Current Reserves 51,867

Represented by

Bank 51,867

Total Funds 51,867