

BathAbbey



2020 - 2021

# Annual Review

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# Welcome from the Rector

## *Dear Friends*

Welcome to our Annual Review, which this year looks back over just the last nine months at Bath Abbey - the pandemic having disturbed this reporting cycle, as so much else in all our lives.

As you will see from what follows, despite a range of extraordinary challenges, nevertheless in this period there has truly been an immense amount to give thanks for in our life together.

First and foremost, the prayers and warm encouragement of our Abbey congregation, though scattered and often only able to gather online, have been constantly sustaining.

I thank God also, most especially, for my simply marvellous colleagues. Our indefatigable churchwardens and PCC, and amazing team of clergy and staff members, have worked tirelessly to shape and enrich the ministry of the Abbey, in a constantly changing landscape.

We have orienteered through permissions and possibilities that have changed, repeatedly and unavoidably, for the safe conduct of almost everything we do at Bath Abbey: for our worship, singing, streaming online, visitor welcome, prayer, study, fellowship, volunteering and every aspect of working together (whether on-site, at home, or with varying degrees of furlough).

At the same time, excitement has steadily grown, as the Footprint Project moves steadfastly towards a glorious conclusion. In the last few months we have been delighted to receive back our beautifully restored and eco-heated Abbey floor; and at last (as I write) we are about to

move into some greatly improved offices and a magnificent Song School.

Finally, I must mention the Abbey financial team who have guided us through challenges which, deprived of all visitor income, have been most acute. We have had to make painful and unavoidable decisions to cut staffing costs, and we have survived only through essential extra support from individual donors, grant bodies and Diocese alike.

It has been a very tough nine months. But let us thank God for his faithfulness, and rejoice in signs that better times really do lie ahead. Writing this in Easter week, I gladly borrow the title of a Christian book, popular some years ago : "It's Friday, but Sunday's Coming!"

**Revd Canon Guy Bridgewater**  
*Rector of Bath Abbey*

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## THANKSGIVING - Worshipping and Praying

### Connecting with God in the Every Day

“Deepening Abbey Prayer Life” is the headline goal we set for 2020. To develop our primary purpose of worshipping and praying this year, we envisaged setting up prayer meetings, training courses, on-site resources and a prayer ministry team.

There is an old saying that the best way to make God smile, is to tell Him your plans! I believe that he has indeed been deepening prayer life at Bath Abbey – while also teaching us afresh that “his ways are not our ways” (as Scripture gently reminds us).

For an alternative and fundamental way to make prayer real is, of course, to need God more. I believe many of us will look back on these last nine months, and find we have indeed grown in our prayer life. We have just had to.

Others however will have struggled. Especially perhaps those shielding and forced to sacrifice any way of coming together, to encourage and be encouraged. On behalf of these especially, I pay tribute to our music department for providing a stream of online worship and inspiration; and also to my two senior clergy colleagues, without whom so much would have been impossible.

Our Abbey Missioner, Stephen Girling has brilliantly enabled online support during lockdown (worship, prayer, encouragement and teaching from our faithful team of ministers, both daily and weekly). Meanwhile Chantal Mason, who we have been so delighted to welcome as our new Abbey Pastor, has marvellously coordinated spiritual support for those at home, but not online. Thank you both, so much.

“Lord teach us to pray”, Jesus was asked by his first disciples. The Rector says “Amen” ... and waits with bated breath, for what might be the lessons of 2021!

**Revd Canon Guy Bridgewater**  
*Rector of Bath Abbey*





# THANKSGIVING - Worshipping and Praying

## Worship & Music

The highlight of these past few months was the arrival of our new Christmas recording 'Gaudete' which was played on local and national radio and received widespread critical acclaim.

There were three events where the Choir sang fully together in the autumn: The Remembrance Concert, the Advent Carol Service and the Festival of Nine Lessons just before Christmas.

All were recorded in advance and released online only, and we were really grateful to Ben Sandbrook for his outstanding contribution in

filming these.

We were also able to sing two Christmas concerts with small, but live audience. Our much-loved Melody Makers Choir, led by Sean Bowers, Assistant Director of Music, also put together a short online concert to help put smiles on faces at Christmas.

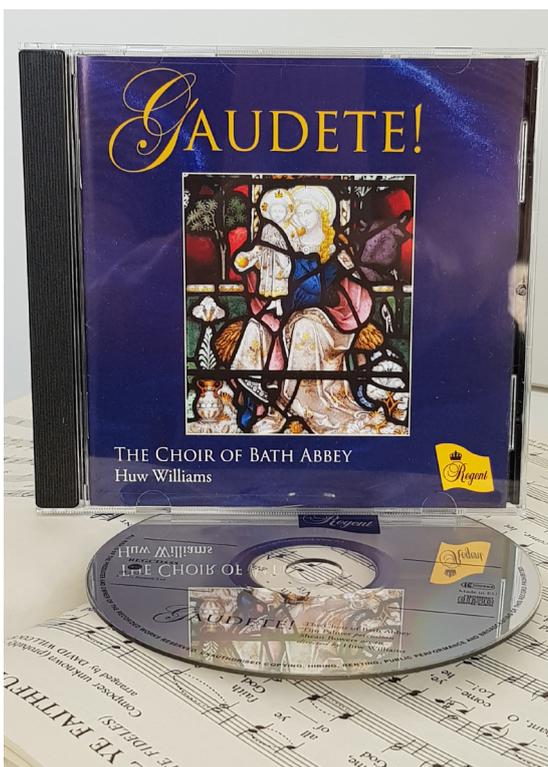
There was some return to normal between September and Christmas, with regular rehearsals and services in the Abbey, albeit with smaller numbers. The autumn also saw a few organ recitals by Sean and me.

During the November 2020 and 2021 lockdowns the Boys and Girls

had Zoom rehearsals and regular one-to-one sessions.

It was a delight to welcome the Girls and Boys back on 12 April and 13 April respectively and they visited the brand new Song School which is looking wonderful.

We have short UK tours to look forward to this summer: the Boys at Gloucester Cathedral and the Girls at St Paul's Cathedral. The Lay-clerks have sung more often these past months, proving how flexible they can be, with recording sessions early in 2021 and during Holy Week singing most days in very small numbers and adapting to brand new repertoire.





## THANKSGIVING - Worshipping and Praying

One of the highlights was the recording of *Lord you have been our dwelling place* which I wrote for the Remembrance Service on 24 March. I am grateful to everyone for their patience, flexibility and generosity of spirit as we have responded to the government guidelines these past months.

Whilst we haven't done as much as normal, I think the singers remain in great heart, and apart from some departures from voice change in the Boys and leaving for university in the Girls, we have only lost two singers since March 2020, though we have gained two as well!

**Huw Williams**  
*Director of Music*





## TELLING - Proclaiming the Gospel

The Abbey's vision is to be living and telling the good news of Jesus Christ. During the period covered by this report the 'telling' has largely moved onto digital platforms with the benefit of wider reach and the drawback of the loss of face to face learning.

During periods of Covid-19 lockdown the Abbey's weekly worship has been made available online as a curated blend of up-close and personal music, teaching, prayer and testimony. The online platform has given a high level of consistency and attracted over three hundred 'unique viewers' weekly.

Between lockdowns Abbey congregations were limited to a maximum of sixty however livestreaming has extended the reach of the service to an additional online congregation.

In March, on the first anniversary of the first lockdown, the Abbey partnered in curating and hosting an online Community Remembering Service led by the Chaplain of the RUH Bath spiritual care centre, a highly successful and hugely appreciated initiative. The Abbey's ministry team have continued to offer a daily Thought for The Day from Monday to Saturday, which is regularly watched by up to 120 viewers.

With many of the Abbey's caring





## TELLING - Proclaiming the Gospel

ministries shut down due to Covid-19 restrictions there has been a strong emphasis upon members of the Abbey congregation caring in their local neighbourhoods. In this respect 'the medium is the message', so the good news of Jesus Christ has continued to be told through a myriad of local and personal engagements rather than by

collective or organised effort.

The Abbey's ministry team have continued to work with the Footprint interpretation and education teams to help shape the curriculum for future formal and informal education around the good news of Jesus Christ.

**Revd Stephen Girling**  
*Abbey Missioner*

**" The Abbey's vision is to be living and telling the good news of Jesus Christ. "**





## TEACHING - Growing as followers of Jesus

### Learning Programme

The new Learning programme has continued to be developed despite the restrictions. I have been devising seven new workshops for schools which encompass the rich and impressive history of the Abbey. These will be on offer to primary and secondary schools from September 2021, using the new Learning room as a base for workshops.

Costumes, art and craft activities and high-quality digital resources will help students to learn about important subjects including the lives of Benedictine monks and how the Abbey is a Living Church today. The major events in the Abbey's history will be taught in a workshop called 'Bath Abbey through the Ages'.

In addition, thanks to a grant from

The National Archives, we are working with the Bath Preservation Trust and Bath Records Office on a six-month research project to explore Bath's links to the transatlantic slave trade and the history of a black presence in the city by studying digitised copies of the Bath Chronicle newspaper from the 18th century. Anna Riggs, Abbey Archivist, and her team of research volunteers are looking at the period 1760-80.

Since the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and the increasing awareness of colonialism's legacy today, the partner organisations feel there is an urgent need to share a more inclusive history of the Bath World Heritage Site.

We will work with consultants with inclusivity expertise to make the data available through a dedicated website. The project

will also create guidance on how to communicate information with honesty and sensitivity and the recommendations will then be shared with other archives nationally.

**Polly Andrews**  
*Learning Officer*





## TEACHING - Growing as followers of Jesus

### Youth and Families

I have kept in touch with families by email, phone and wherever possible in person.

We had great fun recording the (socially distanced) Nativity film and the families greatly appreciated the Family Nativity and Christmas Day Services.

It was a joy to hand-deliver the Easter Activity packs to our families and they all loved being back together for our Easter Family

Communion Service.

We also welcomed our newest member of the congregation, baby Penelope Fox born to Rob and Carly on 15 March 2021 – mother and baby both doing well!

I have also helped Huw Williams, our Director of Music, with the weekly Choir rehearsals via zoom and the boys in particular loved our fortnightly Quiz and Games nights.

**Tim Norton**  
Youth and Families Minister

**Our Abbey Family Nativity Service featuring 'Dermot the Donkey' was watched online by around 300 households.**





## TENDING - Caring as a church family

### Pastoral Care

Abbey Pastoral Care has been expressed in extraordinary and creative ways throughout the pandemic.

Our Pastoral Team, Chaplains and Contact Group Leaders, to name but a few, have diligently served the church family. The Pastoral Team has provided a valuable listening ear to many, in hidden acts of service, phone calls, and cards; and Contact Group Leaders a vital communication link in periods of lockdown.

Collaboration has been at the heart of Pastoral Care. The Pastoral Team, working with our excellent Contact Group Leaders, generously offered a 'Week of Blessing' across the church in January.

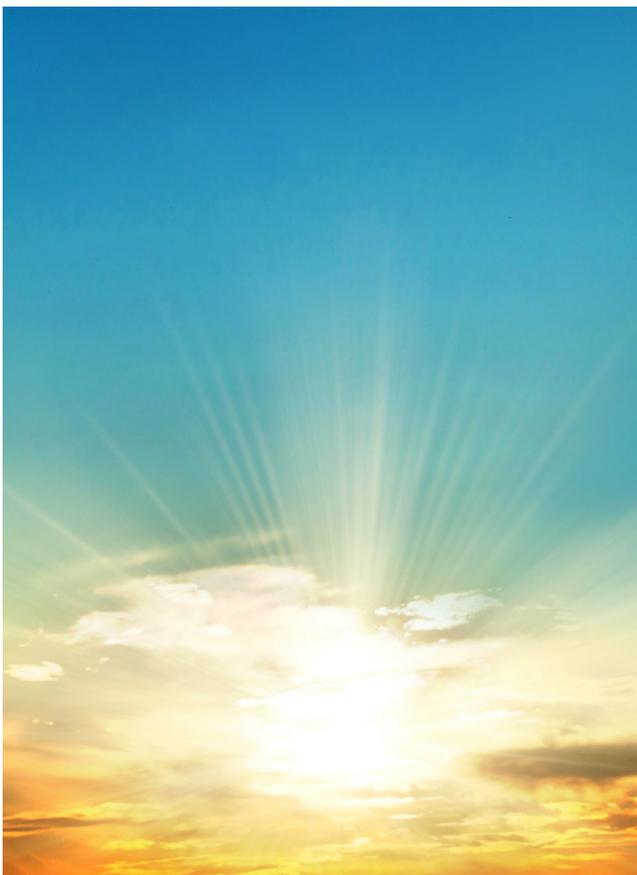
In addition, numerous doorstep visits have been made, with special visits offering Christmas Care and Easter gifts.

Recently a beautiful new Abbey prayer station for 'Peace of Mind and Heart' was designed by the Pastoral Team for visitors seeking solace.

And my thanks also go to our Chaplains for their faithful ministry in coming alongside our visitors.

**Revd Chantal Mason**  
*Abbey Pastor*

**" The Pastoral Team has provided a valuable listening ear to many, in hidden acts of service, phone calls and cards..."**



### A Prayer for Peace of Mind and Heart

*"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit". Psalm 34:18*

Lord, I come to you,  
feeling confused and bewildered.  
My world has been shaken,  
my hope has been dimmed.  
Fragments of grief lie all around me,  
waves of fear break over my life.  
Help me know your presence of calm,  
bring light to my darkness,  
and peace to my heart.

Heal my heart and my mind,  
from crushing thoughts, fear and anxiety.  
Give me hope for my future,  
restore my troubled soul.  
Loneliness and grief can threaten to overwhelm me.  
Protect me Lord,  
give me comfort and relief.

Hold me close and lead me to security,  
where your love breaks in and guides me to peace.  
Order my steps, bring courage and stillness.  
Help me to trust.  
Help me dare to believe,  
that in the pain and in all of the heartache,  
You are still God  
and You will bring peace.  
Amen.

*Written by the Abbey Pastoral Care Team, February 2021*





## TENDING - Caring as a church family

### Safeguarding

Notwithstanding the pandemic closure, the work of Safeguarding goes on. It continues to be an integral part of Bath Abbey's Safer Recruitment procedures, including Disclosure and Barring System (DBS) clearance where the role so requires.

Appropriate Safeguarding training is completed although in view of best practice we encourage/recommend all staff and volunteers to undertake basic awareness Safeguarding training regardless of

their role.

During this reporting period, 24 DBS clearances or re-clearances were obtained, and 90 hours of Safeguarding training were completed online.

**Natalie Cox-Mullings**  
Human Resources Officer

**"[Safeguarding] continues to be an integral part of Bath Abbey's Safer Recruitment procedures, including Disclosure and Barring System (DBS) clearance where the role so requires."**





## TREASURING - Sustaining and renewing creation

### Footprint Project

Those of you who have been to the Abbey over the past couple of months will have noticed the huge transformation that has happened through the past year. Not only do we now have a completed Abbey floor, but we also have heating – now being provided by energy extracted from Bath’s natural spring water which runs through the Roman Drain. This a very welcome milestone as we push on towards the completion of the Footprint Project.

Work has progressed well throughout the past year, despite the challenges and complications brought by the pandemic, thanks are owed to our dedicated consultants and contractors

who have worked hard to keep the project on track. Inevitably we have seen delays, and there is still some work to do within the Abbey, including the installation of the new AV systems, cleaning and restoration of monuments, and the re-installation of the Corporation Stalls, all of which will be completed over the summer months.

The new Song School has been taking shape and we are now into the final stages of fit-out. This is an exceptional new space which will support the Abbey’s reputation and development of musical excellence. We are looking forward to opening the practice rooms to the choirs.

The new vaults and museum spaces will provide the Abbey with unique

facilities for interpretation and learning, a valuable resource for the church, as well as local schools. The team have been working over the past seven months to develop an exciting education programme, which we aim to launch in the Autumn.

**Nathan Ward**  
Footprint Project Director

**"...thanks are owed to our dedicated consultants and contractors who have worked hard to keep the project on track."**





## THANK YOU - For the support of the Footprint Project

We are extremely grateful for the generous financial support Footprint has received from benefactors across the community, including the Abbey's congregation, local philanthropists, regional and national Trusts and Foundations, and The National Lottery Heritage Fund. We are thankful to all those who support this visionary project, this year especially.

### Footprint's Supporting Trusts & Foundations



The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and the DCMS's Culture Recovery Fund

- 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- Allchurches Trust
- Annett Trust
- Bath Abbey Music Society
- Bath Boules Charitable Trust
- Brownsword Charitable Foundation
- Coles-Medlock Foundation
- Fairfield Charitable Trust
- Friends of Bath Abbey
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Gatliff Trust
- Grace Dieu Charitable Trust
- Hobson Charity
- J & P Benson Trust
- Kirby Laing Foundation
- Layton Trust
- Linbury Trust
- Lord Barnby's Foundation
- Peter Stormonth Darling Charitable Trust
- Ray Harris Charitable Trust
- Restore Our Planet
- Roper Family Charitable Trust
- Sandra Le Marchant Trust
- Stephen Clark 1957 Charitable Trust
- Swire Charitable Trust
- Trevor Osborne Charitable Trust
- Wolfson Foundation
- World Heritage Site Enhancement Fund





## TRANSFORMING - Pursuing justice & peace in society

### Mission Support

Keeping in contact!

Over these last few months, Mission Support has been faced with a different sort of challenge in order to keep in touch with our partners, both locally and abroad. It may have been by Zoom, but we have had reviews with all the Bath-based charities that the Abbey supports and have learnt of their plans for the future and of new initiatives made necessary by the

periods of lockdown.

Meanwhile we also continue to be in regular contact with our partners in India (Reaching the Unreached) and Africa (Wycliffe) who send us informative and colourful updates, describing how they also have had to adapt to provide for their communities in the most vital ways during the pandemic.

All this simply illustrates the importance of staying in touch and maintaining our links. It is through

them that we know of the acute and pressing needs of so many people, both near and far. There are signs of a brighter future, of new ideas and opportunities to share more of our resources – and people, time and talents – once again.

Starting, right now, with the Pentecost Appeal! Please think to support us in that.

**James Playfair**  
*Chair, Mission Support Group*





## FINANCIAL REVIEW

Looking back, the last 12 months, have been an incredibly challenging period of change and upheaval, probably the most that the Abbey has experienced in a generation, caused by the Footprint Project works and then overlaid with the pandemic, its lockdowns, our inability to gather, sing or worship together and finishing the period with staff redundancies and the very sad passing away of HRH Prince Philip.

When the pandemic gripped the UK back in March 2020, the Abbey was immediately impacted in the following ways, all adverse:

- We closed to visitors just at the point when our peak season was about to commence;
- When we were permitted to open, our visitor and shop capacity levels reduced significantly;
- We were unable to run Tower Tours due to being unable to comply with COVID-19 social distancing and hygiene guidelines;
- Our ability to fundraise was hampered and de-prioritised and competition for donations increased;
- The Footprint Project suffered delays mainly due to supply chain issues and social distancing;
- Disruption costs increased due to Footprint delays and our daily operating costs increased due to COVID-19;
- Overseas visitors to the

Abbey are not expected to return until 2022

In March 2020 we estimated that our visitor numbers and our key income stream “visitor donations” would drastically fall as would our Tower Tour, Shop and Concert income streams. We estimated that in 2020 and 2021 the pandemic would lead to a reduction in our commercial income of around £1m. We quickly formulated and implemented a survival plan and approached key stakeholders for assistance to help us get through 2020 to 2022.

Our visitor numbers fell by around 75%; our shop remained closed for 8 months; we were unable to deliver Tower Tours for 9 months due to our inability to comply with COVID-19 social distancing and hygiene guidelines and no concerts or graduations took place.

Fortunately, after months of completing applications and delivering presentations to stakeholders, we received significant financial support from the following organisations:

- The Diocese of Bath & Wells
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
- The Church of England
- The UK Government Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

We are eternally grateful to these organisations for providing the

Abbey with around £2m, mainly in the form of grants, to support both the Footprint Project and our Bath Abbey operations. These funds have enabled us survive 2020 and into 2021 we believe that we have enough cash to get us through to 2022, which is when we hope that near-normal will return.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our team of wonderful volunteers; our PCC; our Churchwardens; staff and team of clergy and chaplains; as well as our team of professional advisers and Emerys our contractors for helping the Abbey get through these difficult times. Its been a great team effort. Thank you.

We are not “out of the woods” yet, however we are nearly there. The success of the vaccination roll-out, we are in the final phase of the Footprint Project, we re-open our doors to visitors on 17 May and a new spring/summer season is ahead of us fills us with hope, positivity and excitement.

**Frank Mowat**  
*Executive Director*



## TREASURING - Volunteering

Through every stage of the pandemic our volunteers were instrumental in opening the Abbey with a warm welcome, and those who could come in adapted to changed roles and responsibilities with an enthusiasm that does them credit.

Volunteers supported our work behind-the-scenes too, assisting

with our exploration of online services, sewing sashes, and researching our links with historic slavery.

We cannot wait to welcome you all back as the Abbey reopens, especially those of you who have been shielding for some time. We will have the roles you love as well as some exciting new opportunities

as Footprint completes.

With thanks and in anticipation,

**Mary Wickenden**  
*Volunteers Officer*

## TREASURING - Remembering

### Remembering with love members of the Abbey family who have died during the pandemic

The impact of Covid-19 on our Abbey community has been profound. We have grieved with members of our Abbey church family who have experienced the death of loved ones this past year. All those who have died will of course be remembered at our APCM, and also later in the year at our 'All Souls' service.

As we marked the anniversary of the first lockdown on 24

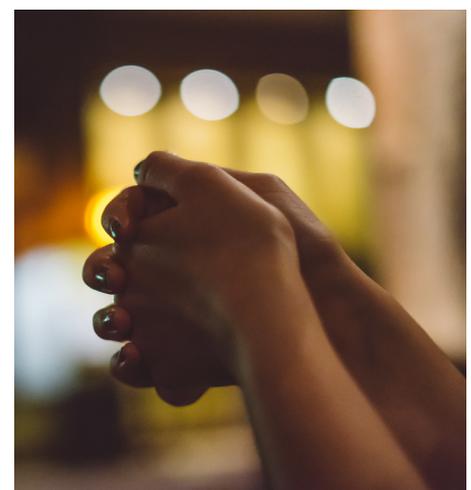
March, it was very moving to be part of the Bath and North East Somerset online 'Community Remembering Service' partnering with the Royal United Hospital, Dorothy House, SWALLOW, Care Homes, and BANES Council in expressing our solidarity.

We recognised our shared grief and loss as a wider community. During this service we acknowledged the heartache of being unable to meet together at funerals and the pain of being isolated in bereavement.

It was so fitting that Huw Williams, our Director of Music, composed an anthem for this service based on Psalm 90,

that gave voice to our song of lament.

**Revd Chantal Mason and Revd Canon Guy Bridgewater**  
*Abbey Pastor and Rector of Bath Abbey*





## TREASURING - Message from the Churchwardens

### Keeping it going!

It is only a modest achievement but the Abbey has opened for private prayer almost every day over recent months when for much of that time, due to the restrictions, services have been cancelled. There was no congregation in the Abbey at all again in November and Remembrance Day services were online. We were back for Christmas, with live-streaming and limited numbers, but after the New Year, there were no services in church until Palm Sunday. It is marvellous now to be back in more space and in time for Easter.

We are very grateful to our staff, the Operations Team especially, the chaplains, Stephen and his IT skills, and the small, merry band of volunteers, deputy wardens and worship support who have helped us through this confusing and uncertain time. Thank you for your support, willingness and ability to adapt, in several variations of the limited space.

It has been very good to share the churchwarden responsibilities with Rose Amphlett. Elected at the last APCM, Rose has already had a very busy time of it, not just in the Abbey itself, but in getting to know more about the many facets of our community life, from finance to fire extinguishers!

There is always going to be a prophet of doom, an inflexible Jeremiah, who it seems is there only to say that you

cannot do something when you are desperate to do just that. This has been the role of the (this!) churchwarden. Keeping to the rules. In the olden days when they had real power it would have been different.

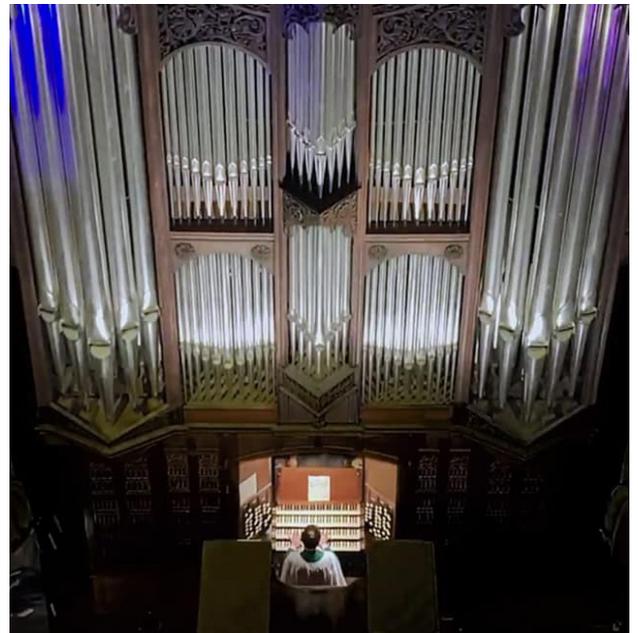
Like everyone else, the churchwardens, both of them, are genuinely looking forward to when the restrictions are lifted and the response to your requests will no

longer have to be 'let us see' or just . . . 'possibly'. Two not entirely helpful answers.

It is all going to be coming back soon and life one hopes will be a lot simpler. Alleluia!

**James Playfair**  
*Churchwarden*







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