



Community of
St Mary the Virgin

Annual News 2020-21
from Wantage and overseas

Community

Sisters at December 2020 in order of Profession -
the making of their life vows to God:

Jean Frances

Valeria

Phoebe Margaret

Christine Ann (Solitary)

Eileen

Lorna

Stella

Trudy

Elizabeth Jane

Novice Lizzie Ruth

The Sisters are pleased to have living with
them Manna our Postulant and Sarah Jane our
Alongsider who are exploring the religious life.



Dear Friends,

There's so much pain around.

Reactions to the pandemic can generate intense grief and sense of failure. Feelings of isolation, loneliness, lack of focus can predominate: through loss of work and anxiety about income, or the frustrated longing to hug one's grandchildren or to be able to study physically face-to-face with the creative minds of lecturers and academics rather than be stuck online in the hall of residence. Relationships can narrow down to angry resentments and jealousies with little capacity to expand one's horizons in fresh vision or quiet laughter and forgiveness. How can we link afresh with our Creator God and find stillness and hope and inner freedom?

Try holding in your mind's eye an image of something that delights you, that perhaps makes you smile or lifts your heart or reminds you of experiences of natural beauty. Maybe ponder on ways you might share these aspects of delight with another or offer images of beauty on behalf of those you can't be with or don't want to live so closely with. Maybe let your ponderings expand further afield with a lightness of touch towards political conflicts, homelessness, impoverishment, imprisonment, others' personal abuse, the lack of space and privacy in the refugee camp, human trafficking, despair. Try to hold something of others' pain to God to help the Spirit enter damaged hearts to bring comfort and healing.

And try not to forget to give thanks: perhaps for a memory that is a lasting gift to you. May you receive the spirit of courage as you struggle with bringing to birth new life.

May all of us, maybe in small ways, become peace-makers this Christmas.

Stella csmv

RIP Sr Honor Margaret CSMV



Sr Honor Margaret with Sarah Jane

Our Sister Honor Margaret, aged 96, in the 65th year of Life Profession, died on Sunday 13th September from a brain bleed in the JR Hospital, Oxford, after two and a half days of care. We were able to visit her in pairs freely at any time (with no masks needed by her bed) with experienced caring and sensitive staff close by. On the evening Sister Honor Margaret entered A&E she was entirely herself except for some difficulty in finishing sentences. The next day she had no speech but could communicate with nods and smiles. The two sisters visiting her sang the Vespers Respond for a Religious and she mouthed the words with them. The following day she was withdrawn with eyes closed, but we continued to give loving messages and played her a recording of a Bach performance. The next day, Sunday, we anointed her and prayed for her to be welcomed into heaven. Half an hour after we left, her free and independent soul departed to the life beyond.

Honor has been an increasingly wise, friendly and sometimes challenging presence for us since she's been on our Convent Infirmary Wing. She will be greatly missed by her Sisters, her family, close friends and by those who have cared for her on St Raphael's Wing. Many expressions of appreciation were sent to us valuing her strong capacity for friendship, her priestly dedication, her musical gifts, her integrity, her love of nature and bird watching.

May she rest in peace.



Novice Sister Lizzie Ruth, joined by Sisters Stella and Elizabeth Jane.

The Novitiate

At the end of July we had the joy of our Postulant Lizzie being clothed as Novice Sister Lizzie Ruth. As part of this service Lizzie was asked:

“Do you desire to discover, by living as a Novice Sister, whether you are called to give yourself entirely to the service of Christ in the Religious Life?”

To which Lizzie replied: *“I do.”*

The Novitiate, then, is a place of exploration, discernment and formation - the final outcome being unknown at the time of setting out. In our exploration we learn more about God and about ourselves. Through mutual discernment we seek to know whether or not we are called to the Religious Life and to this particular Community. In our formation we learn about the history, traditions and spirituality of the Religious Life - as the container and soil in which we will grow. Yet at its heart and most important, formation is about being formed and transformed into the likeness of Christ - each person becoming the unique Christ-like individual God has created us to be - and you only have to meet our SRW Sisters to see what individuals they are!

This formation is the journey of a lifetime. Indeed, St Benedict in his Rule, speaks of the monastery as “a school in the Lord’s service.” We learn and are formed through living the daily rhythm of prayer, worship, work, study and community life. There is an important process of osmosis in living side by side with Sisters who have faithfully lived the Religious Life for many



Manna creates striking flower arrangements in Chapel. Here she is reflecting on shape and colour as she picks flowers in our garden.

years - and who share their lived experience and faith simply by who they are and the way they live, as well as by their words. Living with others cheek by jowl brings great joy, laughter and companionship - but also tensions and difficulties. We can learn a lot about ourselves from those we find most difficult - as one ancient spiritual guide said, “the difficult sister is my physician.” So we grow in self-awareness and love, as we are honed by the plane of community life.

Each week the Novitiate meet together for Lectio Divina - reflecting on the Gospel for the coming Sunday. There are other regular study/sharing opportunities - learning about different types of prayer, the Office and the Psalms. Prior to lockdown, one of our clergy friends, Father Hugh Wybrew, gave a memorable class on the Eucharist which inspired our devotion. On another occasion, Sister Adrian SLG, who is living with us during the Fairacres building work, gave us a flavour of Carmelite spirituality. Shortly, we look forward to our Warden Caroline, who is a Franciscan Tertiary, coming to share with us on Franciscan spirituality. We are much enriched by these opportunities. There are also wider opportunities for engagement with the Novitiates of other Anglican Communities through a planned programme of study on monastic history, liturgy and worship, relationships/community life, social issues.

So we ask your prayers for our Novitiate and for those who are being drawn to join us.

Sister Elizabeth Jane

Novice Sister Lizzie Ruth

My work here primarily consists of cleaning and answering archive enquiries, and spending time each morning with the Sisters on the infirmary wing.

My time spent cleaning in silence is an extremely important part of my day. Rather than 'being on a mission' with the cleaning, I use it to practice going about things in a calm and recollected way. Brother Lawrence's 'Practice of the Presence of God' is a big influence on me. Since coming to CSMV I've also been growing in my discovery of Eastern Christian spirituality thanks to the library and to other Sisters. As a result, I've found the Jesus Prayer growing in me during my cleaning periods.

Answering archive enquiries is both fascinating and fun. It often feels like being a detective. Mostly the enquiries are about family members who were cared for at CSMV branch houses in decades past. It's a privilege being able to give someone a little more information about their parent or grandparent. I was also asked to look into the letters of theological friendship between C.S. Lewis and Sister Penelope CSMV. I'm finding I'm absorbing quite a lot about CSMV's history through answering archive enquiries.

In addition to having one-to-one conversations with the Sisters on St Raphael's Wing and helping them in practical ways, I've set up a weekly group Lectio Divina session in which we pray with the coming Sunday's Gospel reading then share anything we would like to about the passage. From time to time I also put on a fun group activity; things like watching a bit of the BBC Proms, or each sharing a poem we like. It's been a joy to share the riches of 'Christian YouTube' with the Sisters. At their request the next thing I'm planning to show is a documentary about the monks on Mount Athos. The Sisters say they've read about it many times in books, but with YouTube they've realised they can now see what they've read about all these years in a new way.

Novice Sister Lizzie Ruth

Living Alongside

There is a great degree of flexibility in the term 'Alongsider'. It can mean anything from having an extended retreat for a few weeks, to staying on long term and becoming fully involved. There is a real openness at CSMV to allowing each person to develop themselves spiritually and as a whole person in their own unique way, within the safe boundaries of community life. When I first arrived here, I intended to stay for two months and then move on, but it transpired that God had other plans! Now I've been here over a year and I feel like a member of the family.

In daily life, I attend all of the offices in Chapel, have an hour of quiet prayer alone and two work periods each morning – cleaning and working in the library. I also have various community-focused creative projects, which I enjoy during the afternoons, besides making time for relaxation and exercise. Life at CSMV is very different from my old life in the outside world where I lived in a shared house (not at all like a community!) and had three busy freelance jobs. The Life here has stimulated a very deep examination of my inner self as God has worked through the routine and time spent in prayer to bring things to my attention and work through them with me. It is amazing how much can be learnt about oneself and God from the relationships with other people in a community setting where you live, pray, work and sleep in such close companionship with one another.

I am still discovering what lies ahead for me in life, but I can say with certainty that I will retain a strong connection with CSMV regardless of where God may lead me on my next adventure.

Sarah Jane

Art restoration

We are fortunate to have a wonderful 14th century painting of the Virgin and Child. This year, art conservator Ruth Bubb has, over several months, worked on restoring it, and it now hangs in our new entrance building. Ruth writes here about the painstaking work, which has gone into transforming this beautiful piece of art.

“Conservation of the panel involved removing crude twentieth century and earlier restoration, original materials were stabilised and damaged paintwork retouched. The aim of retouching was not to make it look new, but to present a legible, coherent image.

The panel is a fragment of a larger object. It has lost most of the integral frame that would have surrounded the image with a gilded plinth and pinnacles, so part of the project was also to devise an appropriate way of displaying it.

The conservation treatment offered an opportunity to make a limited study of the materials and imagery of the painting. The surface of the painting was examined through the microscope and three tiny flakes of paint were studied in cross-section. The artist’s underdrawing was examined by infra-red reflectography. We hoped to see outlines that would help reconstruct the Virgin’s damaged features but unfortunately this was not the case, so the retouching was based on the faces of the Child and angels. The style of drawing suggests the artist was using a



familiar workshop pattern.

The materials and techniques used by the painter follow closely those described in Cennino Cennini's treatise on painting, written in fourteenth century Italy: the panel was prepared for painting with a layer of canvas underneath a white gesso. Incised lines were used to mark out the areas to be gilded. Gold leaf was applied over a red bole layer and decorated with punching and painted jewels. The flesh tones were underpainted in a green earth pigment, visible today because the upper paint layers are so worn. The painting of the Virgin's blue mantle makes most economical use of costly pigments. A greenish blue layer, probably azurite, was applied over a dark grey undercoat. The most precious blue pigment, natural ultramarine, was reserved for the uppermost paint layer. The paint medium was most likely egg tempera, but the robe was overpainted by a restorer using oil paint. Even after removal of the overpaint, the oil has irreversibly darkened the blue. Another type of gilding was used to decorate the figures' garments with fine gold borders, and to represent the stars on the Virgin's mantle. The Child's robe was originally glazed with red lake, also an expensive colour, but this has faded except where it was protected by gilded decoration.

This panel shows the influence of the Florentine Taddeo Gaddi but combines stylistic elements of both Florentine and Siense art of the fourteenth century. This may be because the whole region was devastated by the plague of 1348. Workshop organisation and the flow of commissions were disrupted, obliging surviving makers to make contacts and work further afield."

Ruth Bubb

New sculpture to greet visitors

Artist Nicholas Mynheer spent much of the first half of 2020 working on three large blocks of English limestone. Painstakingly, he has worked away to reveal a striking new larger-than-life-size sculpture of Mary and the Christ-child. The sculpture of a working mother holding up her infant son will welcome visitors as they approach the new reception area at the Convent.

“It’s very hard, very slow work,” says Nicholas. “Each block took a couple of months to shape and carve and even though it appears to be monotonous work, you can’t switch off at any point. That’s when you make mistakes.”

Among his tools, Nicholas used chisels given to him by Sister Bridget Mary from the Community at Wantage. “How perfect that I’m using her old tools to carve a piece that’s going to go outside the convent,” he says.

Nicholas doesn’t think of his work as being specifically evangelistic. “I really like the idea that people can see elements of their own life in the work. When I carve a mother and child, it is in a sense any mother and child. I’d like to think that any young woman looking at this sculpture will identify herself with Mary. This is a living, working mother. There’s a real a sense of rolled-up sleeves, which I actually rather like.”



Looking forward to offering a warm welcome

The Sisters greatly value opportunities to welcome visitors to the Convent in Wantage. The guest wing has been somewhere that groups and individuals can step back from the ‘busyness’ of life. The refurbishment of this part of the Convent has been going on throughout 2020. Whilst work was delayed by Covid-19 it is expected to be finished by the end of the year. When the situation improves, we very much look forward to once again



offering a warm welcome.

Many of the 21 bedrooms on the upper floors have en-suite shower or bathrooms for the first time. The Quiet Room on the second floor has been transformed by the removal of the low ceiling so that the room is now open to the pitched roof. A new stair and lift tower provides much improved access for those with disabilities and there are two fully-accessible bedrooms.

The greatest transformation has taken place on the ground floor, with the creation of the Maribel Centre. The name recalls Mother Maribel, artist, sculptor and Mother General of our Community from 1940 to 1953. Here we have created a place of encounter, with a range of meeting and conference rooms.

The work on the guest wing is the culmination of a wide-ranging programme of refurbishment to different parts of the Convent site in Wantage. St Mary's Lodge has been converted into six affordable flats for teachers starting out on their careers; the Studio now houses the central team of the Vale Academy Trust which runs eight church and community schools in the area; and the upper floors of the North Wing have been refurbished to provide a base for the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, with its growing family of more than 35 schools across Oxfordshire and Berkshire. The Sisters are delighted to have been able to extend a welcome to these organisations and individuals who play such a vital role in the education of thousands of children.

The striking new entrance building and reception area, opened in autumn 2019, ties together the different areas of the refurbished Convent building. By the time this Annual News reaches you, we hope that the new sculpture of Mary and the

Christ-child commissioned from renowned artist Nicholas Mynheer will be in place outside the entrance. As Nicholas has said of his sculpture, it reflects a sense of welcome and outreach: “The young Mary joyously holds her son aloft. With rolled up sleeves she looks directly at us, smiling, engaging us.”

We look forward to being able to welcome back our many friends as well as opening our doors to new visitors.

OVERSEAS PROJECTS

CSMV continues to support a number of charities and institutions in India and Southern Africa with which it has historical links. Covid-19 has raised many challenges for our friends overseas.

Indian projects face major challenges

For a century, Sisters from CSMV served the local community in the city of Pune, about 100 miles south-west of Mumbai in India. They set up schools, health centres, and lived, prayed and worshiped amongst the local people.

Today, this work is carried on by Indian Christians through the Society of St Mary the Virgin in India (SSMVI). There are three schools educating more than 1,400 children, a hostel for orphaned and vulnerable girls, and a home for elderly women.

The Panch Howd part of Pune, where most of SSMVI's activities are located, has been within a “containment area”, with very tight restrictions because of high rates of Covid-19. The SSMVI schools and St Michael's Hostel for girls have been closed since March and may not be able to re-open until 2021. This is a huge setback which, in all sorts of ways, will affect the future of the children who are normally cared for and educated. The teachers are making every effort to keep in touch with their



*Sister Stella meets science students
at St Hilda's School, Panch Howd*

students, and to offer some online learning. This is, however, a real challenge. Not all of the teachers and very few of the families have computers or electronic tablets. At best, most families have just a single mobile phone.

The schools rely heavily on contributions by parents to meet running costs, including many of the teachers' salaries. With children not able to attend the schools and many parents having lost work as a result of the pandemic, few families are able to make a contribution at the moment. This has left SSMVI struggling to pay its staff and there is no government support for this in India. Earlier in 2020, CSMV provided some emergency funding so that teachers could receive at least part of their salaries over the summer.

On a happier note, students in their final year at Epiphany School achieved very good results in their public exams in 2020. These exams took place just before the coronavirus lockdown and all the students passed, with 90% placed in the top two grades (out of four). This reflects the remarkable work undertaken by SSMVI in very disadvantaged communities. We hope and pray that 2021 will bring renewal and new opportunities for the future flourishing of this work.

Irene Homes, South Africa

Like many other organisations Irene Homes started 2020 with its own dreams and plans, but was brought to a standstill as we faced up to the reality of a worldwide pandemic.

We had to work with the minimum staff and had to regulate shifts in such a way that all our residents were cared for, while other necessary functions continued. Residents had to deal with not having physical contact with their parents/ family, their routines were interrupted because they could not attend workshops every day, they could not visit with each other outside resident houses, they did not have the normal interaction with all the staff and we could not continue with Chapel assemblies.

At Irene Homes we share the smallest of small moments of happiness with each other and we had to learn to embrace being able to care for each other within the residential setting.



When four residents and eight staff members tested positive for the Covid-19 virus, residents took the realisation of the impact of the virus as a motivation to adhere to all measures meticulously and have made it their business to guide and assist each other. The health of two of the four infected residents was compromised and they died of natural causes during the lockdown period. Sadly it was not possible to honour their lives in a memorial service in the Chapel. Clinical staff had to deal with both residents' and staff members' feelings and anxiety due to the loss of the residents. Residents were guided by workshop staff to express their feelings of loss and grief through the making of collages and other therapeutic sessions.

We have missed tangible support through which we normally receive financial support and physical evidence of belonging. We had to close our Charity Shop for more than two months during the lockdown and could not have our Annual Garden Fete on 1st May. With companies and individuals facing an economic struggle too, Irene Homes realised just how much we depend on tangible support to take care of our residents. Our fundraising strategy could be best described as adaption and innovation depending greatly on social media.

At Irene Homes we are still on strict lockdown measures, especially for visitors. We have encouraged parents/families to visit residents under controlled conditions in order for residents to have that connection with their people. But as an organisation we will crowd together and keep living the Word of God.

Estelle van Schoor, CEO

Botswana

Longstanding Associate and supporter Margaret Taylor writes from another Southern African country struggling to find a new normal in Covid times.

“The work of the Holy Cross Hospice in Gaborone and the Gabane Community home-based care centre continues. Both have lost clients and support and have had to put staff on to part time work. Your money meant that staff could still be paid at least a half salary.

There has been loss of work here, though not on a large scale in the Gaborone district, partly because a large sector of the workforce is government. However, I have passed on money to two people who were finding things very difficult. Bushy, whose new job lasted one month, before he was retrenched again. I also gave a donation to Mma go Portia, who was reticent to ask but it was clear she needed help with only one of her five adult children in part-time work and five grandchildren in the house. A young man called Kitso asked for the very modest sum of P100 to buy school books for his daughter.

What worries me is that, although I have put out the word to three friends in remote areas, where there must be need, two of them have not replied. The third has responded and is asking people in her area and network, where she works with women small scale farmers, so I may get a positive reply.”

Margaret Taylor

Postscript: Margaret was widowed early this year and is looking forward to a visit from two of her sons this month who are each bringing a grandchild to visit. We pray for them all.

All of our overseas friends are struggling in this pandemic. If you would like to make a contribution to their work, please contact the CSMV Bursar Keith Glenny at keith.glenny@csmv.co.uk

OBLATES AND ASSOCIATES

Oblates

No-one needs reminding of the impact of Covid-19 throughout 2020 and its probable effects well into 2021, yet the Oblate fellowship together with its council members, continues to operate. Much of the communication has gone online, and regular council meetings are held via Zoom. In October the members of the Oblate councils for UK and South Africa held their inaugural 'get-together' meeting which proved highly successful. It is hoped that the joys, needs and concerns of fellowship will be shared on a regular basis going forwards.

It is comforting to know that members of the Oblate community continue to pray for one another, especially on the anniversary of Oblation, and keep in contact by phone. The long awaited Oblates address book will be published very shortly and plans are under way for the annual Oblates' Day in 2021. Closer links are also being made with the Associates' Steering Group to help facilitate sharing retreats.

As regards our 'work' and 'rule of life' as CSMV Oblates, can we be encouraged by the following words by Lord Williams (2020) commenting on the rule of St Benedict:

"What are the particular habits of mind and heart that this rule is meant to inculcate; and where do we lack them, and what can we do about it?"

Can we reflect upon our CSMV rule in this light?

Steve Delaforce

South African Oblates

Like every other Soul worldwide, life is rather different, but we are managing to get things together. Between us, we keep our SA Oblates in the loop, contacting as well as we can. Priscilla, our oldest Oblate, amazes us with her wonderful letters. Then there is Marge Fossie keeping us entertained with her beautiful videos, which come through every couple of days.

If any of us are down or unwell we try to keep in touch.

We still managed to renew our Oblation. Our Oblate Register looks rather different, with things like renewed in garden or renewed over Zoom cups of tea. So overall I feel this lockdown has brought us more together, never thought we could be closer. But here we are, trusting our Lord will continue to guide us on to a most blessed Christmas, with no chaos at the shops. How wonderful is this.

Stevie Ancient

Associates

The Pandemic has had a considerable effect on all of us, not least the isolation and fear of the disease.

For some time we have been talking about improving outreach to our Associates, especially for those who are no longer able to travel to the Convent. The Pandemic has forced us to consider alternative ways of reaching out by using technology, resulting in the production of our first Quiet Day online – a beautiful Celtic Style Day led by our Associate, Revd Angela Butler. This was followed by an online Retreat ‘Seven Sonnets and the Lord’s Prayer’ by poet and priest Malcolm Guite. For our Associates’ Day with Father Phillip Wells, Vicar of Wantage, a Service Sheet (including access to a live broadcast of Father Phillip’s sermon) was sent to Associates, enabling us to join the Sisters from our own homes in celebrating Associates’ Day and this has opened up lots of possibilities for the future.

We are also very mindful of the large group of people sadly unable to use technology and reassure them that they are in our prayers and that we can always be contacted by phone or post.

Sue Thwaite



The Associates' Quiet Day page on the CSMV website

LOCAL PROJECTS

CSMV assists three charities based in Oxfordshire with prayer and financial support. They too have adapted very creatively to a difficult year.

Community of St Frideswide

These past few months have been challenging for all of us. As a community we have had to change the ways we help enquirers discern whether they are called to join us, and some of our members are finding it very difficult to not be able to take part in some of the mission activities which they were giving substantial time and energy to. At the same time, we are trusting that the Lord will lead us through this season in his own way as we look to him to guide us.

Like everything else, the Community of St Frideswide has largely moved to online gatherings since the beginning of the March lockdown. This did mean that we had to change our programme quite substantially, but fortunately also offered us an opportunity to involve former members who now live far from the Oxford area. We led the opening section of the National Online Easter Vigil put together by a number of cathedrals and other communities around the country, and it was a special delight to be able to include segments which had been recorded and sent by two of our former members who now live in the USA.

We also moved our retreats online. As I write this, we have just finished our latest 24-hour online retreat. We punctuate the day with times of prayer over Zoom with a member of the community taking turns to lead us all in a reflection on a scripture passage or prayer. Although this has worked so much better than we had anticipated, we are very much looking forward to the day that we will be able to hold our retreat at Wantage.

www.stfrideswidecommunity.org

Kate Seagrave: Mission Priest

Discovering Prayer

Helping people find peace and strength through prayer in a time of turmoil

Discovering Prayer creates high quality guided prayer times that encourage people to pray. We also design courses that educate people about different forms of Christian prayer, enabling them to experience the ancient paths of Christian monasticism.

Responding swiftly to the challenges of the coronavirus crisis, we created our new, free Discovering Prayer Community. Members receive practical prayer tips and a free guided prayer time every month. It is designed to give people the spiritual scaffolding of a rule of life in days that have lost so much structure. More and more people are now saying a daily office as they pray through the morning, midday and evening prayers we've made available. The response has been overwhelming. Here's what one participant said,

'During this extended time of isolation I have found Discovering Prayer to be a tremendous source of encouragement and support. It has been like an oasis in the desert providing refreshment and a real blessing spiritually.'

Discovering Prayer has recently become a registered charity and it links people to the Sisters at CSMV in prayer.

<https://discoveringprayer.com/>

Michelle Eyre

BeSpace

Working with and in schools has been a real challenge for BeSpace in 2020. The charity, supported by CSMV, creates prayer spaces in schools. But for six months of the year, most were shut.

The solution was BeSpace classroom kits as well as resources to help teachers support themed activities around Remembrance and Thanksgiving and Advent.

"It is more important than ever before that children and students have the opportunity to pray and reflect on all that is

going on in the world and all that has changed in their lives,” says Kirsty Morgan, BeSpace’s Acting CEO.

BeSpace also said farewell to one of its biggest supporters, Bishop Colin Fletcher, on his retirement in November. Standing down as a Patron of the Charity, Bishop Colin wrote, “The growth and development of BeSpace has been one of the things I have most enjoyed being involved with in my time as Bishop of Dorchester. Managing that balance of being clearly Christian in its foundations and workforce, coupled with opening children’s and young people’s eyes and ears to spiritual experiences, whilst at the same time not proselytising, is a very remarkable achievement.”

<https://bespace.be>

OTHER NEWS



The New Year started without one of our longest serving members of staff. After 11 years of faithful service Jane Marett retired from our Bursary at the end of 2019. She had been a thread of continuity through much change in the Bursary and the administration of the Convent generally.

As we approached Lent, pupils from Year 5 of Wantage Church of England Primary School visited the Convent as they prepared to write a Passion play. They came to see Mother Maribel’s beautifully carved Stations of the Cross in the St Mary Magdalen Chapel and Sister Elizabeth Jane and Manna showed them round and answered their questions.

Looking at the exquisitely carved art, one pupil said, “This reminds me of when my gran died.” Sadly, lockdown meant that this year’s play was not performed.

The joy of Easter came as the





Photo Wantage Herald

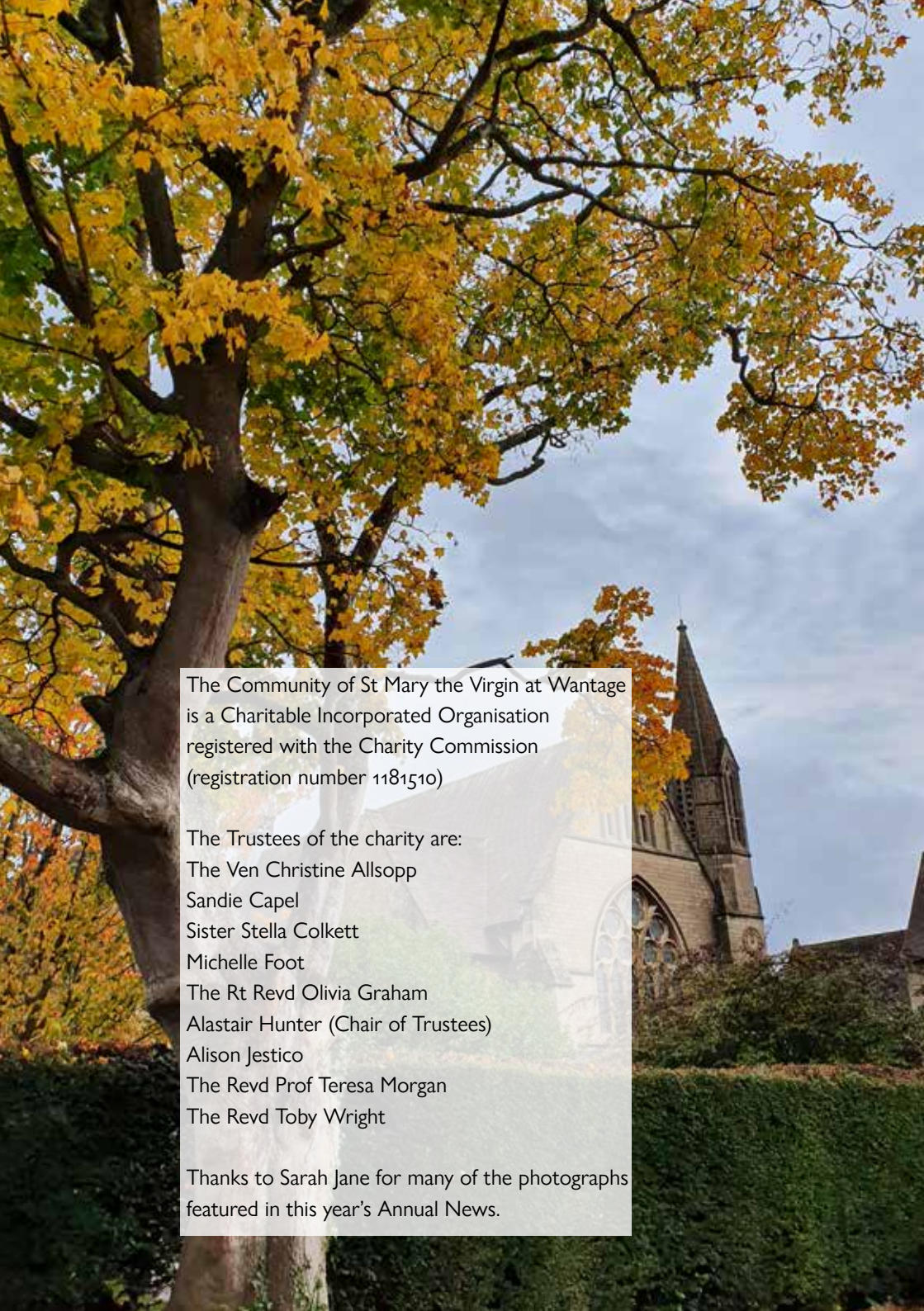


pandemic's first wave reached its peak. And material bought for the Sisters' habits at CSMV was put to a new use, Medical Scrub sets.

Anna Bradford has been working with the Community for over 15 years, sewing bespoke habits for the Sisters. She turned a roll of polycotton, a lightweight material that is usually used for the Sister's hot weather habits into three full sets of medical scrubs and ten pairs of scrub trousers, which were donated to the GP surgery in nearby Lambourn. She went on to produce more scrubs for a 'Scrub Hub' serving the NHS frontline workers in Swindon. This was one of Anna's last involvements with the Community as she has moved away from the area. We all wish her well in the new life she is building.

High summer saw the 100th anniversary of Wantage Recreation Ground and the story of the important part played by CSMV in the creation of this important public space in the town came to light. Research by local historian Trevor Hancock shows that in 1917 the town's Urban District Council received a letter from Sister Kathleen with a petition from 868 people, mainly boys and girls, asking for somewhere to play as an alternative to the streets.

The project was chosen as a town memorial to those killed in the First World War, and on 13 May 1920 the new Recreation Ground was officially opened. Over the century since then generations have enjoyed the Rec, and all because of that petition presented by Sister Kathleen.



The Community of St Mary the Virgin at Wantage
is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation
registered with the Charity Commission
(registration number 1181510)

The Trustees of the charity are:

The Ven Christine Allsopp

Sandie Capel

Sister Stella Colkett

Michelle Foot

The Rt Revd Olivia Graham

Alastair Hunter (Chair of Trustees)

Alison Jestico

The Revd Prof Teresa Morgan

The Revd Toby Wright

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featured in this year's Annual News.

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