**The Yare Valley Churches Annual Report to the Parish Council [2021]**

As with most organisations, the Yare Valley Churches has not been immune from the impact of the global pandemic and it has been the feature of our year. Despite the buildings being closed for large proportions of the year, the local church has not stopped serving the local community. Despite our services, cafes, toddler groups and youth groups needing to stop meeting in person, we quickly moved our provision on-line.

One real positive was the way in which organisations across the community joined to create capacity to support our local area with shopping, dog walking and prescriptions. The Community Response Team was able to rapidly support large numbers of the community who would otherwise have struggled. A huge number of volunteers offered help in many different ways and many went above and beyond what was required. It was a real light of hope for people who felt anxious and uncertain and a credit to this community who rallied round those in need.

As has been the case with many organisations, we have used lockdown to review what we do and how we operate. As we emerge from lockdown, our cafes have opened once more, offering support to the whole community – particularly those who can feel isolated. Our Youth Café has reopened and our services have started once more within the buildings. Our Toddler Café is due to reopen after half term and other groups will begin once again in September. Work is being undertaken to recommission the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle as soon as possible so that once again people can have lifts – ensuring that we are able to connect the community.

We were delighted to be able to sign the Accord between the Parish Council, Brundall Memorial Hall and the Yare Valley Churches. It signals a new chapter in the relationship between the three organisations which we hope will lead to greater communication, deeper understanding and further corporation between them.

Young people are now facing a lack of employment possibilities and also mental health issues. We will be providing mental health support as well as launching a new mentoring/placement programme. We will be inviting young people to spend time volunteering with us in the café, with the sports team, doing admin or as part of the communications team where they will be able to gain experience and some qualifications to help them fill in their CV – hopefully enabling them to become more employable. We will be doing this in partnership with Momentum.

COVID has brought delays to the building project, but this is now progressing once more.

Our central staff team has increased:

Tom has joined us as Community Sports Worker

Matt is our curate

Lisa is our Resource Manager

We will be having Ben join us as our intern for the year from September.

But that only provides part of the picture as all the work of the church is carried out by a fantastic team of volunteers who work to serve the community.