Another year of COVID and lockdown sadly meant reduced numbers at Holy Communion but there were lots of signs of hope throughout the year .

On a very wet 20th May we were visited by no less than 4 bishops who were walking the Way of Light from Heavenfield to Durham. The schoolchildren joined us for a blessing of our new gates by Bishop Christine. The gates had been lovingly crafted by Will Chalmers of the Shire.

Despite the wet weather, they all enjoyed the hospitality of the community and the schoolchildren contributed much with their lovely singing.

There were 4 weddings at St Helens this year, notably David and Claire Patterson who were married by David’s father Andrew.

On the 4th of September we held a very successful Open Day which raised welcome funds for the church and which was enjoyed by all who came.

This year Songs of Praise took the place of our usual Harvest service on November 21st. Then in December our Carol service was followed by the Nativity play despite last minute hiccups. However it was a ticketed event to comply with COVID.

In February the BBC came to record the ancient ceremony of Clipping the Church on Mothering Sunday. It was good to see the whole community young and old come to take part. The weather was fortunately reasonable between storms Eunice and Franklin and the day went well. A great thank you to Claire Nixon who not only prepared a wonderful Simnel cake but also allowed cameras into her kitchen to film how it was made.

Funerals although not now limited in attendance are generally smaller than pre-pandemic with resultant lower collections.

The fabric of the church is generally in reasonable repair. The bell tower has not yet been attended to and some repainting of the interior of the church may be needed. Following clearance of the vestry some damage to the plaster was discovered which needs repair.

This last paragraph is from Barbara Parker.

And now with some sadness I must ask the PCC to accept my resignation as Churchwarden and PCC member. It has been a privilege and a great honour to serve St Helens and Andrew for all these years and I am sure I will miss it.