**The Friends of All Saints Gresham**

**Annual Report for Gresham Parish Meeting, 5th May 2021**

The focus of our efforts this year has been to progress the Heritage Lottery Funded Project for church repair. This was due to begin in June 2020, but all fundraising ended in March with the onset of the Pandemic Lockdown and the building work did not commence until August. In the meantime, we were able to secure both the necessary Mitigation Licence from Natural England to ensure any bats in residence were protected while the builders occupied the site, and the Diocesan Faculty, (Planning Permission), for the proposed schedule of work.

To date, a complete new rainwater disposal system has been established with new soakaways, and new rainwater goods throughout. The East window has undergone specialist renovation, the external walls and buttresses have been repaired as necessary and currently the nave is fully scaffolded, has had all crumbling plaster sites renewed and five coats of specialist paint has been applied. The work on the tower has yet to begin.

The builders have faced problems: an underground vault was discovered on the route of proposed drainage channel to the SW of the church. The vault was reburied and the channel route adjusted. Bones were found at one point in the excavation; these have now been reburied at a short service led by the new incumbent, Revd. Jeremy Sykes. More recently rotten floor joists have been exposed. Currently we are looking at ways of dealing with this problem and will make a decision at a PCC meeting scheduled next week. The pandemic has also taken its toll : a late start in August, the need to have very few workers on site ( social distancing), and during the winter, some necessary self-isolation, has all meant that we are well behind schedule. We do not expect to get the church back until mid Summer at the earliest.

Regular administration is required to release funding as the builder and others invoice us. Helen Hunter, our Friends Treasurer, and I meet regularly to undertake this. We have a separate Bank Account for all monies associated with the bid.

The Committee and I are able to undertake some preparatory work for the planned Celebratory Reopening and the other outcomes we put in the bid… a Lecture Series, Concerts, Art Exhibitions, and a series of leaflets encouraging people to visit the church. However, without definite dates, plans cannot be confirmed. We have been trying to bring our website further up to date and recently have managed to get a link from the website to a full digitised copy of “Voices and Faces”, the late Keith Entwistle’s book on Gresham history. This was one of our Project objectives and thanks go to Michael Caldwell and Chris Hunter for dealing with the IT associated with this.

Our only fundraising this past year is our 100club which has now been running for six months and has proved popular and successful. We intend to resume fundraising as soon as we can.

Julia Drury, Chair, The friends of All Saints Gresham