

St Marylebone *Changing Lives*: The Parish Church that's raised £1-million during lockdown.

Sitting on Marylebone Road, St Marylebone has always been much more than just a parish church; the team and congregation at this iconic Grade1-listed building has been working hard throughout lockdown to make sure that it stays at the heart of its community.

When lockdown became a reality in March, the parish church's *Changing Lives* fund-raising campaign had just been launched. The project seeks to give people access to heavily subsidised mental health support from the St Marylebone HCC's 25 analytical psychotherapists and psychiatrists, access to better primary care through the NHS Health Centre in our Crypt, build a core group of 240 volunteers and apprentices who will enhance their employment prospect and learn new skills, extend the parish church's work with school and university students, tell the fascinating story of the history of St Marylebone through the ages and carry out urgent fabric repairs including the replacement of the failed Regency roof which has put the building on the Historic England *Buildings at Risk Register*.

A grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2019 had provided a strong start to fund-raising. The parish church still needed to raise a further £4 million by April 2023.

Throughout lockdown, the parish church continued to go above and beyond to support its local community and many of its activities, including worship, Young Church, and key psychotherapy and counselling work, moved online.

Working alongside local councillors, members of the congregation and wider community in need were matched with volunteer helpers; the parish church's two schools (including the Church of England's only Special School) were supported, along with local hospitals through long-established chaplaincy provision. Zoom chats and online afternoon teas and chat sessions became something of a new normal.

With the forced cancellation of the week-long annual St Marylebone Festival in July, music-making too moved online. John Rutter, CBE, born in St Marylebone and baptized at the parish church, joined musicians and singers in presenting an online festival concert and the St Marylebone *Changing Lives* team continued not only to raise funds, but to deliver an ambitious activity and heritage outreach programme, including an innovative aural and visual history programme in association with a local Youth and Community Centre, the British Film Institute and Chocolate Films.

Our hard work was recognized by our supporters, and we believe it certainly instilled a further sense of trust in our donors who have so generously contributed at this difficult time, with generous grants and gifts totaling £1 million received between March and July.

The Rector of St Marylebone, The Revd Canon Dr Stephen Evans says, "*Thank you to all who have shown just how much you value what the Church can do, not only in more usual times, but throughout lockdown. Thank you, for your generous support in helping us to continue building, shaping and sustaining community life and in assisting us in playing a crucial part in our community's recovery; ensuring we remain here for at least another 900 years.*"