



St. Mary the Virgin Annual Report 2017

LAY VICE CHAIR REPORT

It feels more than a little strange to be writing this as normally the Rector writes a report. The Rector is the Chair of the PCC but in our vacancy I have been Lay Vice Chair. Therefore it seemed a good opportunity to write a few words and share a few thoughts.

2017 has been an interesting and exciting year.

On the 9th July 2017 Richmond with Hudswell Parish along with our friends in our united benefice and as a community we bid farewell to Canon John and Liz at which point our vacancy began in earnest. Making an early start on the vacancy process allowed us to get ahead of the game and begin work on our benefice brochure (selling document) and profile (stats and details).

Much hard work was done in respect of our parish profile and brochure by everyone, producing documents, research, information gathering and sorting, photography, and then prioritising and setting of hopes, dreams, aspirations and prayers for our group of churches.

Huge thanks must go to John Dickinson for the gathering of all the information together, and the setting out of the brochure and to Purple Creative at Aske Estate who "finished" the document for us. And also to our generous donator for the cost of this work.

The end result has been that the document has been held up across the country as a "good example" and even more pleasing is that it attracted many to look at our website and consider applying for the position of Rector.

The interview day was both daunting and exciting - our community friends (schools, funeral directors, friends from local churches), civic links (our Mayor Stuart Parsons) and parishioners all pulled together to provide a notably warm welcome to our two candidates.

The most exciting news is that we have been able to make an appointment and very very much look forward to the collation and induction of the Revd Martin Fletcher currently vicar of St Peter's Hersham on Thursday 26th April 2018 at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church. We warmly welcome everyone to this.

At the start of our vacancy as a PCC we were very keen that we should be a parish with a vision for growth and moving forward rather than a parish of stasis and caution. We stated that we wished to be "brave and forward thinking" and it feels as if we are doing that. We have, and are seriously and positively looking at the way forward with regards our increase in parish share and all the implications which this has. We made decisions which we pray will assist us to be a relevant and loving body of people and building eager to welcome all to worship with us.

The key words during this vacancy have been "team work" "moving forward" and "welcome". Everyone has worked so hard both individually and collectively. We have been hugely blessed by the support of our retired clergy - they have so willingly covered every service which has been held across our group of churches. And our Church Wardens, Verger, Readers, choir, worship group, musicians, Musical Director, PA, flower arrangers, bellringers, welcoming team to mention just a few have all been amazing. Gifts and talents have been shared generously and people have often stepped beyond their comfort zone and ensured that the privilege of worshipping,

loving, living and learning has grown and developed. The parish has worked together as a team and it is wonderful to see that developing more and more. The time which has been given to support our parish over the past few months is huge and I know from the many comments which I hear that it is very very much appreciated.

We haven't however as a parish focussed all our attention inwardly - our community beyond our church doors has been very important to us and featured heavily in the time spent by many of our congregation. Members of our congregation work generously as volunteer drivers, visitors, people of prayer, teaching in our local schools, volunteering as governors and school class volunteers, as Happy Bodgers, listeners, talking newspapers, pastoral visiting, and generally being people who care. There is so much which is done that is unseen and goes unrecorded but which makes such a difference in the lives of people.

Of course we must not rest on our laurels - there is always room for more - there are always people to welcome, people to love, people to forgive, people to apologise to, and most of all people and situations to pray for.

And there is much to pray for and much to give thanks for. As we move forwards and look towards the collation and induction of Rev Martin we give thanks for all that has gone on in preparation for his appointment and arrival, we pray for his arrival and his settling in, and we pray for the parish of St Peters in Hersham as they begin the process of vacancy that we are nearing the end of.

As we near the end of the vacancy we pray for exciting times ahead - times of love, grace, enthusiasm and joy. As we said in our brochure - "may we together rejoice in what has been achieved and take up the challenges of those things that we know must be done... and, perhaps, some that we do not yet know?"

May we hold on to that which is good and, remember, the best is yet to come.

Gillian Lunn

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

- Canon Chambers gave notice that he would be retiring in the summer. He expressed his appreciation of the many different gifts of service brought to St Mary's by the congregation. This ensured an open door to all ages and a growing and exciting church. He then explained that greater energy was necessary to take this forward, which was why he had decided to retire at this juncture, to enable a new vigorous leadership of St Mary's.
- The purchase of seat cushions for the centre nave pews was approved, and the offer from Hudswell of seat runners for the north and south aisles was gratefully accepted.
- Permissions were sought from the diocese, and granted, for the following Communion Assistants: Gillian and Scott Lunn, David Frankton, Janet Morel, Claire Murray, Oliver Murray, Jennifer Patrick, Jonathan Roberts, Keith Robson, Dennis Stedman and Peter Trewby.
- The UK Government Food Standards Agency guidelines were adopted as one of the conditions of hire of the church building, and for provision of refreshments in church.
- Sharon MacCormack was asked to improve the shabby appearance of the notice boards, which then became colourful and attractive.
- Jonathan Roberts and David Frankton produced six large-print copies of the green service book, and are working on a large-print copy of the red service book.
- Work on removing the former bells and oak bell-frame, installing the new steel frame and

bells, and refurbishing the ringing-chamber, was begun in March, led by Peter Trewby, Andrew Slade, Chris Curry, Liz Foster, and Andrew Ogden of Taylor's Bell-hangers, with help from ringers and volunteers. This work began in March and the new bells were dedicated on 25th April at a ceremony led by Bishop James Bell, and were ready to ring in July. The ringers and volunteers were heartily thanked, and Roy and Janet Morel, and Leonard and Susan Scrafton, were thanked for their hard work in regularly clearing up the dust left by the work in the tower.

□ The PCC approved raising a donation from the community towards the transport costs of the tenor bell to a church at Chemmalamattam in the South Indian state of Kerala, which was in process of buying our former bell.

□ The numbers of Disclosure and Barring Service certificate holders currently stands at 28, covering church activities such as choir practice, pre-service rehearsal, bell ringing, the toddler group and hospital transport, plus the members of the gentlemen's group, calling themselves The Happy Bodgers.

□ Katrina Templeton, with a team of helpers, organized a very successful and much appreciated ten-day flower festival, focused on "Treasured Memories", which provided pleasure to exhibitors and visitors alike, and raised funds for St Mary's Church, as well as attracting people into the building.

□ Several meetings took place with the Archdeacon and the Area Dean to draw up a parish profile and a brochure for the advertisement in The Church Times of the post of rector. John Dickinson was praised for his hard work in producing the attractive text and illustrations for these. The brochure is still on-line on the parish website.

□ Gillian Lunn and Peter Trewby were nominated to represent the PCC in carrying out the selection of a new rector.

□ Repairs to the windows in Holy Trinity were completed to a high standard, an anonymous donation having been received for part of the cost.

□ The Church of England Primary School became part of the Dales Academies' Trust in September.

□ Chris Denton is introducing new music to the singing groups, and going into schools to commend and encourage children to sing together. The PCC hopes to offer more support to the music in church.

□ Work still awaiting completion:

□ a fire door to the choir vestry

□ pew cushions for the choir stalls

Jennifer Patrick, PCC Secretary

AFTER THE CARDS AND VISTORS

We met for coffee and a chat at Greyfriars on the 1st Tuesday of each month during 2017 until September, occasionally it was just Anne and myself.

After September I met members of the group by arrangement, as Anne was having hospital treatment on Tuesdays and I frequently went with Anne. Unfortunately Anne died in January and will be sadly missed.

I am continuing to meet recently bereaved people and hope to keep helping them to adjust to

their new way of life.

Carrie Stephenson

BELL TOWER REPORT

2017 was a very eventful year in the tower, with the climax of our appeal to replace the bells and frame. The old bells were removed in March, returning in April with their new friends to be dedicated by Bishop James Bell. The bells were finally hung and ready for ringing in July, when they were first heard pealing across town. Five of the old bells are hung for viewing in the tower and we have recently heard that the two trebles are going to Dorstone in Herefordshire. The old tenor bell is on its way to Chemmamalamatam in Kerala, India, thanks to generous donations from the congregation to help with transport.

While the bells were out, we took the opportunity to visit a range of neighbouring towers to keep our skills fresh. We ranged from Heighington in the north to Masham and Ripon in the south and Askrigg in the west and are very grateful to all the ringers who made us welcome as we joined their practices. In addition, we have strengthened our links with ringers at Grinton with a regular monthly practice and with Barnard Castle, who have hosted some of our ringers on most Mondays since the bells went out. With friends from Barnard Castle and Saltburn, we again won the 'fun' branch striking competition.

Along with the work on the bells, we have worked with practitioners to develop and deliver workshops in schools as part of our Heritage Lottery Fund grant. Children from a range of schools drew, rang, wrote and danced, engaging with bells in range of ways, and we hosted a day of bells as part of Georgefest in the summer. We look forward to the follow up exhibition later this year and will be holding taster and training days in the summer. If you know anyone who might be interested, please let me know!

Once settled back in with our new bells, we have focussed on developing our 8-bell ringing, completing the first quarter peal in Bob Major, with 8 changing bells. We aim to attempt ringing for each evensong and Fun-key service and a number of ringers have passed personal milestones, including a first quarter inside for Alastair, Jan and Yvonne. We continue to be lucky enough to have all the bells ringing on the majority of Sundays, thanks to the commitment of a varied band of ringers.

Susan Welch - Bell Tower Captain

CHARITABLE GIVING REPORT

The PCC made the decision to continue running the 'Charity of the month' voluntary retiring collection on the first Sunday of the month throughout 2017.

These collections have raised over £2000 PLUS Gift Aid during the course of the year, supporting six British and six international charities, who support others, either through their Christian work or in their care for the disadvantaged.

Charitable Giving Committee

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

Sunday 19th June 2017 saw St. Mary's packed with friends and family gathering to wish a fond farewell to John and Liz Chambers. Sad to see them go but we must be thankful for all their ministry during John's seven years as Rector. We wish them well for their retirement in Nottingham and hope they take with them fond memories of their time here in Richmond.

The process of appointing John's successor was to begin the following evening with the first of a series of meetings with the Archdeacon. The process of putting together the way in which we described our churches and our hopes and ambitions for the future at times seemed long and complicated. It did however allow everyone involved to focus on the reasons which make our churches so special to us all both collectively and individually.

I'm sure this process helped when interview day finally dawned and we were able to meet the two candidates who had been selected. It was a particular privilege to show them around the benefice introducing friends along the way. We received some wonderful comments about the warmth of the welcome, hospitality and fellowship that we were able to offer. Thank you to all who helped in so many ways to make this process so successful.

The vacancy period has allowed a whole year of special and regular services, ministry and activity without a permanent Rector. We have continued to grow and have fulfilled our commitment to the civic role of our parish. Thank you to all who have helped in so many ways to keep the parish working. Ordained clergy never fully retire as I'm sure John is finding out.

The bell tower project has continued following our visit to the bell foundry last year. The process of the removal of the existing bells fillings and frames has been an enormous task. Allowing volunteers to work alongside the experts from the bell foundry has been very successful. Sitting on the bell frame alongside the louvers in the tower and looking down to the floor of the church below is a never to be forgotten experience! All the hard work seemed worthwhile when we heard the bells ring out for the first time.

Removal of the bells unleashed hundreds of years worth of accumulated dust and debris. Thanks to all who worked so hard to keep the disruption and grime to a manageable level. It may at the time have seemed like an impossible and thankless task but it was much appreciated.

We've continued to host concerts and community events. Matching the expectations and demands of users and coping with the logistics of staging, seating and catering can be difficult. Thank you to all who have co-operated and helped to make this year's events so successful.

Juggling the demands of a full time job which continues to involve working shifts and weekends with wardens' duties can be a challenge. It is only made possible with the help and co-operation of my fellow warden and deputy Roy and Janet Morel. Often much responsibility falls on their shoulders. Thank you for your continued support.

And finally. Are you sitting comfortably? We very much hope so if you're sitting on one of our new pew cushions. Hopefully they'll serve as long as their predecessors.

David Frankton and Roy Morel, Church Wardens

ESTATES REPORT

Several of the windows in St. Mary's and the window in Holy Trinity have been repaired by Alan Davis – Creator of Ruth's window. The 'Mayor's window' in the Green Howards chapel has had a section of stained glass repaired and the windows in the choir vestry have been reinstalled

following removal and renovation. Both look wonderful and are a tribute to Alan's skill and craftsmanship.

A mysteriously broken section of the window in Holy Trinity, caused by movement of the glass has also received the Alan Davis treatment. The broken section has been repaired and the window refurbished to prevent the problem reoccurring. This project presented particular challenges as access to the outside of the window is very difficult. The resulting restoration looks splendid.

Our gas and electricity supplies have been dragged into the twenty first century with the installation of digital smart meters. This should result in accurate accounts without the difficulty assessing the meters which are situated in the choir vestry and cellar.

It is planned to install a fire door at the bottom of the stairs leading to the choir vestry. This is awaiting the necessary faculty.

Ongoing work with the lighting continues. Our continued campaign is to replace traditional fillings with led units where possible. The extended life of these replacements certainly saves climbing thirty feet into the air to replace a bulb.

New led strip light fittings have been replaced by several down lighters in the choir stalls. Esthetically less pleasing perhaps but it does enable choir members to read their music.

Our heating system continues to serve us well. Our four boilers kept in good order by our maintenance contractor KH Heating. Always good to know that help from local specialists who know the system is at hand.

Regular maintenance of the guttering and roof inspections continue to keep the building more or less watertight.

Repair and maintenance of the Rectory is the responsibility of the dioceses. Following John's departure we have been co-operating with the appointed contractors who are working on the heating system, kitchen and the garage roof. Hopefully this with some decorating carpet fitting and cleaning will have the house ready for Martin's arrival after Easter.

Richmond Town Council in the person of Andy Macey continue to keep our churchyard in good order. Thank you for keeping this large area so well maintained.

The next twelve months will, I'm sure, bring it's share and challenges in keeping our much loved building in good order to serve the needs of all those who use it. This is only possible with the help and co-operation of those who give their time and talents so freely. Thank you for all your hard work and efforts – it's very much appreciated.

David Frankton, Roy Morel and Len Scrafton.

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Richmond Deanery Synod is a synod convened by the Area Dean and/or the Joint Lay Chair of the Deanery Synod, who is elected by the elected lay members. It consists of all clergy licensed to a benefice within the deanery, plus elected lay members. Meeting three times a year usually in February, June and October the synod members play a key part in the governance of the Church of England and it is they who elect the lay members of the diocesan synod who formulate diocesan policy. Lay members are elected at the APCC, serving for three years. Currently Susan Welsh, Claire Murray and Jonathan Roberts are your representatives for St. Mary's Church.

It is an opportunity for all parishes within the deanery to share their good news how their parish is developing and progressing and for the Area Dean to keep us updated with Diocesan news and developments.

The year commenced with our own Rev Canon John Chambers retiring as Area Dean and welcoming Rev Yvonne Callaghan (Easby w Skeeby and Brompton on Swale and Bolton on Swale) as Richmond Area Dean.

The main topic for discussion in 2017 has been Vision 2030 where the C of E is looking outward into the future with an anticipated 40% less theological clergy due to retirement and lack of entrants-what shape do we need to be in by 2030?

Creating much debate within the deanery at workshops, deanery and PCC meetings and amongst our clergy, this has led to further presentations and discussions around the role of lay worship leaders. Members of our congregation who feel they have a vocation are encouraged to discuss their calling with a member of Clergy or Lay Reader and participate in a training course provided by the Diocese, part of a national campaign 'Growing Vocations'.

In 2017 Rev Yvonne supported by others undertook a walk of the deanery 'Thy Kingdom Come' where over the course of a week she walked through and visited all parishes within the deanery. Wishing to repeat this experience she has thrown it open to the deanery in 2018 and looks to repeat the 2017 brilliant experience requesting a small group of individuals to form a team and organise the event for 2018. If you would like to be involved or participate in the walk further information can be obtained from your deanery synod representative or Rev Yvonne.

Other topics discussed were the Parish contributions towards the Parish Share, a hot topic of debate, appointment of the Bishop of Ripon, ongoing training for incumbents, how to create a more effective PCC, Safeguarding, Lent Courses, and of course the sharing of local parish news, good practice and ideas for future development.

Katrina Templeton, Secretary to Deanery Synod.

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S REPORT

The Friends have continued meeting at various times throughout the year, to help with the extra needs of St. Mary's, such as making a large donation for the pew cushions, a trolley which can transport the Crib etc. and a leg holder which connects to the trolley, moving the banner etc. easily. We have also provided refreshments for several concerts.

A big thank you to Margaret Emmerson, who has tirelessly continued to organise Saturday trips to various venues, not only raising money for the Friends but also providing a very popular social event.

We would welcome any members of St. Mary's who would like to join The Friends, a very friendly group.

Carrie Stephenson, Chairperson

KNIT2GETHER REPORT

Since The Knit2gether started meeting at the Restaurant at Greyfriars in June 2014 we have become a happy, supportive, welcoming group.

Meetings have a regular attendance of approximately 13 – 15 ladies, of all ages, plus many

occasional visitors. Each bringing their own creative projects, sharing knowledge and skills whilst having fun and fellowship.

16 people attended our Christmas party. New member always welcome.

Claire Murray Convenor

MONDAY MORNING TODDLER GROUP REPORT

Gathering about 10am in the Methodist Church Halls we enjoy a time of fun and friendship for children aged between 0 and 5 years old and their adult carers (mum, dad, grandparents, friends etc.) Tea, coffee, juice, fruit and healthy snacks are available throughout, and even more important a warm welcome is guaranteed. This is manned by an enthusiastic, loving and committed team made up of ladies from both Richmond Methodist Church and St Mary's Church. If you would like to come along and help we would love to see you, as more helpers make it easier when there is the inevitable outside commitments or illness. You don't need to help all session or even every session.

We celebrate Christmas, Easter and birthdays. Families are kept up to date with activities and services at both St Mary's and the Methodist Church and we are delighted to see them come to services including Christingle, Easter and the Crib service.

The time spent with each other is invaluable. We play, we chat, we sing, we say a prayer, we share. We know the children gain lots, but we suspect the adults gain even more as they find people with similar concerns, joys and thoughts as each other.

Gillian Lunn

MOTHERS UNION REPORT

What a privilege to be a part of a worldwide organisation of four million members. We, the members of St Mary's branch, are very proud of the part we play in the life of our parish.

We help with baptism services, all the children receive a book of bible stories or prayers. At Fun-key Church M U members provide the refreshments and help with activities on a regular basis

It was very flattering to become "The Belles of St Mary's" when we played our part in the exhibition for the bell appeal and welcoming the cyclists home from the Richmond to Richmond ride. We liked that title so much that you may find it used in events we are involved in when the Tower cafe is open.

The Mothers Union was responsible for providing every lady in church on Mothering Sunday with a cheerful primula plant and also sending a contribution to "Make a Mother's Day" an international Mothers Union Appeal .

In our diocese we support the Away From It All (AFIA) appeal which provides holidays for families who otherwise would not be able to take a break at Primrose Valley near Filey, very much appreciated and local families have benefited in the past.

In our own area we have supported the Women's Refuge with funding, toys for the children at Christmas and cleaning materials for those able to set up a new home.

We do have some social events too, we said farewell to Liz and John (both members of our branch) at a tea party and presented them with a rose bush with the name "Warm Wishes" which was how John usually ended his e-mail messages. In honour of their membership we shared a

cake with the congregation after Johns last service at St Mary's.

Membership is now open to everybody who follows M U principles (i.e.family life) and at our Christmas party there were both men and women as well as several children, a good time was had by all, entertained by the Dales Folk. (Freda and Tony who incorporated some attendees) and followed by a lovely afternoon tea.

Our afternoon tea is a feature of the now annual fund raising event, a concert given by the wonderful Reeth band. We try to keep the ticket price low to enable more people to attend and we look forward to another full house this year.

The size of the new diocese does cause problems for us, Halifax, Hellifield and Huddersfield are not easily accessible. We do have shared meetings and services with Leyburn, Catterick and the Cowtons branches. It is always a privilege to travel to Ripon to say the midday prayers which we take a turn three or four times a year. It was an honour that it was our day on the rota to do the prayers in the Cathedral on the day our World Wide President Lynne Tenby was visiting. On the Thursday nearest to Mary Sumner day (August 9th) we usually celebrate with a picnic for the Ripon episcopal area branches in the Precenter's garden after the Midday prayers. Sadly this will change and we may have longer journeys to share that occasion. We joined in the Ripon area Advent service at Starbeck which was taken by the diocesan chaplain, Rev'd Andrew Cromarty from Colburn. The branch always begin our meetings with prayer and we have a service in church for Lady Day, Advent and Christmas. In fact prayer is at the centre of all we do.

Our branch, though small, is well respected in the diocese for all we do and our prayerfulness. It would be wonderful if members of the congregation felt able to join us and help with our commitment to Gods work in Richmond, Ripon diocese, York province and the world. Anyone would be welcome at any of our meetings which are monthly in each other's homes. Look out in the magazine or on the pew sheet, please come along and join in.

Margaret Clayson. President

ST MARY'S MUSIC REPORT

2017 was a busy and interesting year for music at St Mary's.

My efforts at chorister recruitment continued, with visits to (in no particular order) Richmond CofE school, Richmond Methodist school, St Mary's Roman Catholic school and Bolton-on-Swale CofE school. I'm glad to report that we did indeed gain some new trebles (now numbering 10) with more interested in joining. Visits to schools continue in 2018 as a gentle reminder that we exist and that joining either group of singers/musicians at St Mary's might be quite possibly one of the better choices they make in life!

One of my own better decisions involved a move to the area in September 2017 and this has made it much easier to do my job at St Mary's. No longer does a school visit mean losing half a day or evening organ practice involve a 60-mile round trip and taking a midnight feast!

The trebles enjoyed a visit to the Ice Cream Parlour at the Station in the autumn and in December sang Christmas Carols live on the British Forces Radio station on the Garrison (a programme that has been repeated several times since). This was great experience for them, good fun and involved a (very) early morning feast including chocolate and snacks!

Our monthly Choral Evensongs continue and I'm very grateful for the help we receive from Anacrusis members, ex-choristers from St Mary's as well as many others from the congregation who strengthen our singing on these occasions (and for Christmas carol services), as well as

Andrew Christer for his superb organ playing and accompaniments.

Thanks also to Fionagh Bennett for her work with the music at St Mary's and for graciously swapping services to allow me to indulge myself by taking over the musical reigns of the All Age Worship services. She now plays the organ on the first Sunday of the month. Meanwhile my learning curve continues steeply on the third Sundays where we're adding to our repertoire each month with a splendid group of musicians.

We have bought music for the choirs' music library including a beautiful Christmas carol 'Lully lullay' (used at 9 Lessons and Carols) and other works.

The organ continues to be magnificent, colourful of sound and (most importantly) to work. It continues to do its job just as well as when it was first installed in 1912 - tribute indeed to the quality of the craftsmanship of Harrison and Harrison of Durham who built it. This was no 'budget' instrument when bought but in the long term we can now see that it was a very wise investment. Materials will gradually deteriorate over time and the many moving parts will wear out but as long as it is correctly maintained there is no reason that it should not continue to serve for many decades to come.

As mentioned above, Fionagh plays for one service a month and Andrew Christer accompanies our monthly Choral Evensong services. A new name has now been added to our list of organists as Alastair Lunn has started to learn this amazing musical instrument. Our new Organ Scholar often accompanies hymns on the piano at school and before long we'll be hearing him play occasional organ voluntaries and hymns in church too. It's great to feel that a young person is so keen to learn the 'king of instruments'. Maybe one day he'll enjoy practising in cold dark churches as much as I do.

My thanks must go to all who sing in the choir and to all chorister parents for their continued support of the music at St Mary's. Much appreciated. Plans for the future include a Choral Evensong service at Ripon Cathedral and the trebles' possible involvement in a performance of 'Captain Noah and his floating zoo'. Unsurprisingly, these events are unlikely to be combined.

Chris Denton, Director of Music

The Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team is a group of men and women who help with the pastoral care of our parishioners. They do this in a variety of ways from visiting care homes and taking Home Communion, visiting sick in hospital, visiting those who would appreciate a visit and a chat, and being a listening ear.

They are also members of the Prayer Circle which prays for those who request such support. It is wonderful to think that the prayer circle has really taken off and become an established part of our church, and wonderful that we can support each other in prayer.

The team meets quarterly in order to share with and support each other.

As part of the Pastoral Team, the Happy Bodgers is a small group of men (so far) who are willing to do minor DIY jobs to help disabled or older people in their homes. Though these services are absolutely free, several people have made donations to the church as a result.

It is worth noting that a huge amount of pastoral care and support and love takes place outwith that carried out by the Pastoral Team. We can all help support each other.

Gillian Lunn

ST MARY'S WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP REPORT

We have enjoyed another very happy and successful year.

The past year has been interesting and varied which followed the usual pattern of short time of prayer, a guest speaker followed by refreshments. Our meetings last about an hour and a half. We meet in the Town Hall on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 2pm (excluding July and August.)

In keeping with our affiliation to St Mary's we held our Annual Easter Service and the traditional Carol Service. In addition, we held our Annual Summer afternoon tea and Christmas parties.

We continue to be a happy, relaxed and caring group who enjoy good fellowship together.

It is worth mentioning that the Women's Fellowship was formed from the then Young Wives Club who wished to open membership to a broader cross section of women. This was achieved and continues to be the case as our membership is a broadly-based elderly group of ladies both secular and interdenominational.

Eileen Simms, Convenor

STUDY GROUPS REPORTS

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The Wednesday Study Group has continued to meet on most Wednesdays during the year. Much of the year was spent reading through and discussing the New Testament book of Hebrews. This has some challenging sections but very rewarding. The author aims to persuade and illustrate what was once the relatively new idea that the man Jesus was indeed the Christ. Two thousand years later we are challenged, through Hebrews, to think through why we claim Jesus as Lord.

The Lent course was a welcome interruption as we once again used the York Course set for the year. These established courses reach a wide audience both in this country and beyond. We are already excited by the 2018 course as it has been written by Bishop John Pritchard who will launch it at St Marys at 19:00 on Thursday 8th February - a date for the diaries! It would be good if we were to spread the word far and wide - all are welcome to this launch event.

In recent weeks the Wednesday group has begun its study of Mark's Gospel. It's good to revisit, periodically, one of the four gospels to re-learn and develop our understanding of the Jesus story. The Gospel of Mark is also the main gospel used in Year B which started at the beginning of Advent 2017.

An open invite remains, as always, to 2 Hurgill Road on Wednesday evenings at 19:30. Cake and biscuits on offer! (Please check with Scott or Gillian on 826895 to ensure that it is not a week off).

Scott Lunn

THURSDAY BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The Thursday Bible Study Group meets at 1 Roper Court, Richmond, DL10 4DF, at 7.30 pm on Thursday evenings. Everyone is welcome to join us.

We have finally completed studying The Acts of the Apostles, with help from Bishop Tom Wright's commentary, which was an exciting story with interesting characters and much deeper theology than we had anticipated, which was why we took so long to finish it. We are now

embarking on the book, "Ten", by Bishop John Pritchard, which looks to stimulate discussion, and intrigue us and entertain as well.

We usually read to ourselves the text selected for each week, we discuss our understanding of the text, and contribute our individual insights and experiences, with the help of the book. There is no compulsion to speak – just listening to others is a way taking part.

We finish the evening with tea or coffee and biscuits, and enjoy each other's company.

Jennifer Patrick. Convener

TREASURERS REPORT

Background - This year has seen follow on work on the Gift Aid aspects of the stewardship scheme and further attention to reducing costs. Following Independent Examination, the accounts will be presented to the PCC at their meeting on 12 March 2018, and the Annual Church Meeting on 25th March 2018.

Summary as at 31 December 2017

We have managed to limit ourselves to a small deficit of £1,012, on a similar turnover to 2016.

We have seen the financial impact of falling congregation numbers, a reduction in general giving from Donations, and the effect of a number of regular donors coming out of paying tax, which impacts the Gift Aid we can claim. We have also seen a fall in income from Wedding and Funeral fees.

On the expenditure side we have had to find an additional £10,700 for the Parish Share – the main element of which is pays for our Rector. We have benefitted from a full year of our new reduced Gas and Electricity, and insurance contracts.

We have been asked to pay an additional £7,800 for our Parish Share in 2018, which will be a challenge and the PCC is preparing to increase fund raising in the short term and look at reversing the trend of falling congregations in the longer term.

The PCC has sufficient long term investments and bank deposits to cover both the 'Restricted Funds' below, and reserves. Our investments have again performed well.

I would like to thank those of you who accurately count the collections each Sunday. Also thanks go to the Church Wardens who look after all the banking. Claire Murray as assistant treasurer processes all billing and supplier invoice payments efficiently and thoroughly, as well as being a mine of information on Parish matters. Special thanks go to Alastair McLean who has carried out an independent examination of the accounts.

Restricted Funds (Money set aside for special projects)

The Bell Fund has sufficient residual money to cover the small amount of remaining work.

From the Fabric Fund we have completed 'good as new' repairs to the damaged windows in Holy Trinity, St Mary's choir vestry and the Green Howards. We completed follow on work on the Disabled Toilet and handrail. With the financial support of The Friends we have invested in new pew cushions. Work has been completed to install replacement LED lighting and on improving the light in the Choir Stalls.

Other 'Restricted Funds' are in reserve to cover future work to the fabric of the church, the anticipated closure of St Michael's Hudswell, the anticipated replacement of the main blower on the organ and for the development of Fun-key church.

William Gedye, Treasurer