

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

What an unusual year! Looking back, it's hard to imagine where we were a year ago – so much water has gone under the bridge. We were just about settled into our temporary homes by the last Annual Church Meeting and we think it's fair to say that people not only managed the transition well but that they enjoyed it, even though we all missed our lovely church. Our hosts at Parkside, Sage Cross and St. Peter's made us welcome and many of us found the shared services at Easter at St. Peter's quite moving. We also had the privilege of Bishop Martyn joining us for our Palm Sunday procession to Parkside. We don't think we'll ever forget the image of our Revd Kevin emerging from clouds of incense at the lectern in St. Peter's!

Credit to everyone that we managed to keep our church life flourishing during the year. As you will see from other reports, Saturday Mornings carried on at the Council offices and Morning Prayer moved to Thorpe Arnold temporarily – thanks to them. Tiny Tots, the Men's Group, Parish Plod, Holiday club at St. Mary's School all continued. The choir managed their trip to Werkhoven and the Samworth Centre hosted many services, especially Litany and Holy Communion midweek. Thanks to Terry for supporting those services and for coping with equipment that seemed to go missing every week! Thanks also to Revd Kevin & Alison K. who majored on communication during the year: more posters to display than we've ever seen. Thanks also to Phil Balding, our great communicator, who seemed to have things on the website before they'd even happened.

So came the big day – November 24th – when we received the keys back from Midland Conservation Ltd. (MCL). Thanks to their great efforts, most of the work was done in time for a spectacular Christmas Tree Festival: although a well-oiled machine, it still takes tremendous effort to pull it off. Well done to all – without it, we would not be able to survive financially.

December was far busier than normal with about 40 people volunteering to clean church over two days in preparation for the Bishop's re-opening of church and the dedication of the new

window in memory of John Plumb. Thanks to everyone who helped in any way. The re-opening was followed the next day by the Mayor's Carol Service and, over the next week, by the nine school and Scouts services. Congratulations and thanks to the guinea pigs who successfully managed the new sound system during this time. All of this happening interspersed by Southeringtons bringing back our furniture and belongings. As usual, over 5000 people worshipped in church during December. We know that some people were frustrated at times that things took longer to get back to 'normal' but thanks for bearing with it. An interesting thought is whether everything should get back to 'normal', that is, the same: how far do we take this opportunity to change things and get out of that familiar groove?

As far as the fabric of the church goes, we're in a better position than we have been for years, although we have a Quinquennial inspection due this year and we know that the roof is likely to need some work. We must say a big thankyou to Mike McClure - again - who puts in an enormous amount of time on fabric matters (and to Maxie who rarely sees him). Mike reports elsewhere in this booklet on fabric, so we will only touch on a few items here. There will be snagging items to pick up with MCL and we're still waiting for the loop system to be installed. Ian Neale has continued in his role as link between the CIO and contractors and we'd also like to say a big thankyou to him. There is still work in the clergy vestry and the temporary area for the choir to be completed, and a lot of thought has gone into the children's area and, hopefully, new funds for it as well. We still await the outcome of the faculty application for some new furniture which will be influenced by recent discussions with the Victorian Society.

It can be invidious to single out individuals to thank but we feel it is entirely appropriate this year. So, a big thankyou to Gillian & Colin, who have recently stepped down from organising Care & Share for what seems like forever - you should be proud of what you've achieved, and to Marie who has given up managing church welcomers - a task that often needs daily attention. Thanks also to Harold, who at 99 is still washing our 14-foot long altar cloths! Otherwise, thanks to everyone who makes our

church life so vibrant, especially stewards and Assistant Churchwardens who provide so much support to us.

Last but not least, thanks to the clergy who continually strive to inspire us – not an easy task when they're confronted daily with fabric and administrative tasks. We said au revoir to Revd Catriona on her move to York Minster, and we said welcome to Revd Mary and Revd Debbie at their licensing in May and September respectively. Revd Kevin has been the lynchpin, supported by Alyson, during unusually demanding times, and he still tries to know everything that's going on. Thanks to the Pastoral Assistants and Healing Prayer team for their prayers and concern. And, thank God for our Readers and 'retired' clergy who offer so much support to Kevin and us all.

The big challenge facing us now is how we use our wonderful building in God's service. Watch this space!

John Spence & Roger Kirby

ST MARY'S DISTRICT CHURCH COUNCIL

This year there have been 31 people serving on the DCC, comprising clergy, churchwardens, readers, St Mary's Deanery Synod representatives, St Mary's pastoral assistants and of course the elected DCC representatives. There is the opportunity for a further 8 representatives to be elected at the AGM so if you are interested in joining the DCC, please ask someone to nominate you. It is a friendly group of people and the work is interesting, varied and rewarding. Becoming a committee member is a good way of finding out more about how St Mary's 'works' and of contributing to the life of our church community.

There are four main DCC meetings during the year and all have been well attended. In addition to the regular issues such as finance and fabric, unsurprisingly, the main emphasis this year has again been on the Re-ordering Project and towards the end of last year, the work needed to be done to get us back into the church building. We have also focussed on how to use our newly

refurbished church in a 'missional' way as mission was always at the heart of the Project. Following a talk by Gill Elliot from the Diocese, at our June meeting we looked at the idea of 'Pilgrimage Churches' and how we could make this idea work.

Three sub-committees, Finance, Pastoral and Fabric (and also the Fabric Express Group) have met regularly during the year, as has the Standing Committee which meets to set the agenda for the next meeting. All DCC members are asked to join at least one of the sub-committees. The sub-committees are generally where most of the work and discussion takes place, with items then being brought to the main DCC meeting, often for further discussion or to request approval of any action required. Given the changes to the church building, a working group has also been set up recently to compile a new set of regulations and terms and conditions for church bookings.

We said goodbye to Catriona in September and Marie Styles has also recently stood down from the committee. Our thanks go to both of them for their contribution during their time on the DCC.

Now that St Mary's has re-opened, draft minutes of all DCC meetings will be displayed in church and will also be put on the website. If you would like to know more about the work of the DCC, please do ask a committee member.

Rosemary Jinks – DCC Secretary

PASTORAL COMMITTEE

The Pastoral Committee continues to be an umbrella group for the various aspects of pastoral care within our church.

The Over 80s Group continues to offer friendship and social opportunities to the over 80s in our congregation.

New volunteers have come forward to ensure that the Care and Share Lunches continue now that Gillian & Colin Beavis have retired after 20 years of service to it. The lunches are well attended and include people from churches across the parish,

those from other churches in the town and also from the wider community.

Our team of Pastoral Visitors support the pastoral work of the church and visit the sick and housebound. Two new Pastoral Visitors have recently joined the team and a commissioning service is to be held in April.

The Congregational Contact Scheme generally works well and lists are regularly updated to include newcomers. We do, however, still rely on good communication networks and a pastorally aware congregation to ensure that everyone is included and warmly welcomed to our worshipping community, and also to prevent anyone from being overlooked at a time of need. An appeal for more list holders has recently been made as we look to continue to improve. Please consider joining us.

The Prayer Diary continues to be widely used, and the Prayer Chains are used regularly. It is hoped that the prayers in our prayer diary are used not only in our personal prayers but at times when church groups meet. The prayer area and the prayer board are back in the south transept. The prayers on the board are offered at Morning Prayer from Monday – Wednesday. The prayers are then placed in a box on the altar for the rest of the week. Whilst there is no altar in the south transept the box is placed on the high altar. The Healing Prayer Team continues to offer prayers for healing within the second Sunday 10am service. Baptism Visitors continue to visit baptism families on three occasions during the year after a child's baptism. Members of the Mothers' Union prepare Baptism Anniversary cards which are sent to each child until he/she is of school age. Baptism preparation sessions are now on Saturday mornings and new volunteers have joined the team to welcome baptism families. There is a new format for the baptism service and the application form for baptisms offers the opportunity for a thanksgiving service instead of a baptism where families feel that that would be more appropriate for them. Information is given so that families can make an informed choice.

The Storehouse project continues to be very well supported and the boxes fill up quickly. Thank you to everyone who contributes.

Your contributions help to meet a real and growing need in our community. There is a Storehouse box back in church. A box in the Samworth Centre worked so well during the reordering of the church, we have decided to continue to have a box in there as well as in church.

The Diocesan course 'Befriending the Bereaved' which ran in January/February was well attended with the majority of participants expressing a wish to be befrienders of the bereaved. The course enabled them to explore their own feelings on bereavement, to better understand the possible effects of it and to feel better equipped to be able to support with love, empathy and without judgement, those who suffer loss. Discussions on the subject are ongoing.

Jacqui Wilson

FABRIC COMMITTEE

Whilst St Mary's Church was handed over to the Project Contractors for the majority of 2017 nevertheless the Fabric Committee continued to meet to address non-project issues that needed to be handled. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Routine Maintenance - Lightning Conductors inspected; Lifting Equipment inspected; Boilers serviced; Fire Extinguishers inspected and updated as a result of the project alterations; Gullies & Gutters cleared; Church Clock serviced
2. Quinquennial Repairs – This ongoing work should have been concluded long ago but because of personnel problems with the firm the work stalled. This required the faculty to be extended before work could continue to have the roof walkway installed. Our Architect and the Contractor have now resolved the design for manufacture and we expect to see the Quinquennial works signed off in the near future. We will then commence planning for the 2018 QI inspection.

3. Melton Borough Council – discussions continue to get MBC to complete works in churchyard
4. Organ - damaged blower repaired prior to organ rebuild commencing
5. Policy reviews:
 - a) Health & Safety policy reviewed
 - b) Fire Risk Assessment reviewed

Mike McClure - Fabric Committee Secretary

RE-ORDERING PROJECT

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS!!!

St Mary's Parish Church closed in January 2017 for the Project work to begin and re-opened late last November. Throughout the year we worshipped in a number of venues but mainly at the Council Offices at Parkside and St Peter's RC Church.

Our architects, Buttress have kept a close eye on the project as it proceeded. Our contractors, Midland Conservation were diligent and thoughtful. The workmen were so careful and caring about our building and often stopped to explain to passers-by what was happening. They were proud of their work which was emphasised when they came to support the Christmas Tree Festival and bring their families to show where they had been working. The subcontractors have skilfully fitted into the very tight schedules.

On November 19th Kevin made a presentation at the end of our morning service in Parkside outlining where we were up to with the Project and explaining what remained to be achieved. On Sunday 26th a shortened service was followed by an opportunity for the congregation to view the empty church. December 13th saw Bishop Martin perform the re-opening of St

Mary's alongside the dedication of John Plumb's Tree of Life window (Derek Hunt's stained glass window was featured in the local press and television). With Phil Balding constantly keeping us up to date via the parish website and Facebook, Project publicity throughout the closure was excellent. We have received lots of visitors to see the changes made and of course the new window.

Some visitors to St Mary's building may well think the work has been finished but completion is some way off. Fund raising is vital as we seek to raise the £130,000 remaining from our £1.9 million target.

At the time of the A.G.M the Malcolm Sargent Memorial Organ is gradually being re-assembled and will include many new pipes. The casework in the North Transept has been extended to allow this to happen. The new panelling blends in well with the existing woodwork. A temporary organ is proving a more than adequate substitute. The choir are temporarily homed in the South Transept where additional storage is being introduced for their music.

The organ console will soon return from Tiverton where it has renovated. The draught lobby in the west porch is functioning well and many people stop to look in as they pass the opened west doors.

The new flooring has been much admired. The ledger stones were returned as close as possible to their previous position. (NB: The ledger stones are of varying thickness and some are still drying out).

From the earliest discussions about key improvements to be included in the Project, toilets were at the head of the queue. The new facilities are discreet and accessible. Our servery is up and running. Training sessions have taken place to prepare volunteers and Church Welcomers. We have produced a series of supportive documents to inform the users of the servery.

As part of the Project the building was thoroughly cleaned from top to bottom. Cobwebs and dust were all swept away. This

preceded the installation of the pendant lights, chandeliers, up lights and spots. The new lighting system provides almost endless permutations and it will take some time before final settings are in place. As items have been brought back from storage they have been carefully cleaned and polished by groups of volunteers. This included a mammoth task with the chairs. Many thanks to all who helped in any way.

The new sound desk and speakers have made a significant improvement to our services. After many years of inconsistent quality and poor reliability we now have consistent sound. We anticipate the re-introduction of an induction loop for members of our congregation who have need of it. The rear projector and screen are a valuable asset to our building. WIFI is now available. A generous donation has met the installation costs. A separate donation covered the costs to renovate the Royal Coat of Arms. Fund raising will remain a key objective through 2018 as attention is given to the introduction of matching furniture. We are still awaiting a decision from the Chancellor about this furniture before we can proceed.

We are currently working with our architect Peter Rogan to plan a draft programme for a building on the old boiler house site. More information to follow.

I would like to place on record the contribution of members of committees who have worked over many years to bring the Project to this stage. A special committee meets monthly to spearhead the fund raising. Our CIO and FEG meetings continue on a fortnightly basis until the project is finally concluded. This has been a huge commitment from the people involved especially when there have been setbacks presented by the decisions made by the statutory bodies. All concerned recognise that St Mary's is a very special building and each change must be sympathetically planned.

John Craig

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

St. Mary's Church Melton Mowbray Development Charitable Incorporated Organisation

For obvious reasons, this organisation is commonly called 'The CIO', which was legally established in August 2016 but was only operational towards the end of that year. Just as a reminder, the PCC agreed that this type of body offered a more robust structure and offered better protection to its trustees who are Revd Kevin, Andrew Nutter, Mike McClure, Ian Neale, John Craig and Roger Kirby. Dina Neale is Secretary and Treasurer and John Spence, Liz Craig, and Gill Tate from the Diocese attend in an advisory capacity. The CIO's role, put simply, was to oversee the implementation of the plans to improve the church building. The PCC transferred money for the work and the PCC retained responsibility for fund-raising. The CIO works closely with the DCC through the Fabric Express Group, Fabric Committee and the Funding Group.

The CIO has met about 20 times during the year and the results are evident in church and on the extensive coverage on the parish website. Midland Conservation Ltd (MCL), the main contractor, was very professional, thorough and easy to work with. They gave us back our building on time – the week before the Christmas tree Festival. Inevitably, on such a large project, there were surprises along the way: additional asbestos that needed removing; problems with the thickness of some large stones that needed re-laying; part of the vestry floor was rotten; costs were higher for internal stonework, especially labour because so many slabs needed trimming; Historic England insisted on higher quality paving outside; the organ blower was damaged, needing an insurance claim....and so on. Nevertheless, we got there and we should feel proud about that.

There are still some outstanding issues – there will be the usual snagging matters that will be resolved with our architect and MCL but, more importantly, we still await a response from the Diocesan Chancellor on the furniture faculty application. Discussions recently with the Victorian Society will influence

that. Once resolved, we need to review plans for new furnishings.

As has been reported at church meetings, the additional costs for the floor and external paving have impacted the budget which, based on the latest figures, shows that we still need to raise just under £133,000 to meet the original budget set. At its meeting in November, the DCC agreed that the treasurer could borrow money received from the Blakeney Institute sale to ease cash flow problems. The DCC's Funding Group continues its efforts to bridge this funding gap.

If anyone is interested, we have an electronic copy of the archaeology report compiled by Leicester University based on its watching brief during the floor work.

Roger Kirby

THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

The Children's Society is a national charity that works with the country's most vulnerable children and young people. We listen, we support, we act. Because no child should feel alone.

For over 30 years St. Mary's has supported the work of this Society. A very small number of people make up the 'St. Mary's Parish Support Group' which basically raises money to enable St. Mary's to support the Society. The donations made for the refreshments served after the 10.00am service are given to the Children's Society as part of the Charitable giving of St Mary's. The proceeds this year enabled us to send £325.20 for the work of the Society.

Our most successful project is the sale of chocolate filled novelties at Christmas and Easter. We are very grateful to members of the congregation (and many others) who knit these novelties, to those who provide the chocolate fillings, to those who distribute and those who sell. The amount of money raised

is amazing. Many thanks to Mollie Goodrich, in particular, whose energy and constant encouragement keep this going.

House Boxes are available for anyone who likes to contribute by saving their small change over the year. Several of these boxes are held by our Church members and more by others in the community. These boxes are emptied yearly, the proceeds going directly to the Society.

The support group is also about raising awareness of the Society. This we do through the Christingle Services held throughout the Parish.

In the past we have held many and varied events to promote and raise funds for the Society such as dances, coffee mornings, afternoon teas, raffles, beetle drives, sale of second hand clothes, social events and talks by members of the Society. We are always looking for new supporters with fresh ideas and energy to help us to continue to support this worthy Society which believes in A BETTER CHILDHOOD FOR EVERY CHILD

Gillian Beavis

CARE AND SHARE LUNCHESES

In October 2017 we celebrated 20 years of Care & Share lunches. These were started to provide fellowship and food for those who would be going home from Church to an empty house. We progressed from that day with 18 guests to sometimes up to nearly 60. The lunches have taken place on the fourth Sunday of each month except December in the Samworth Centre at 12.15pm. Traditionally January has become a festive lunch.

The lunches are for anyone who wishes to join us either from our congregation, the Parish or the wider community. There is no charge for the meal but those who feel able make a donation which enables us to buy food for future meals.

Volunteers prepare and serve a simple three course meal and of course clear away! We aim to cater for all tastes. The Care &

Share ethic has continued as some guests kindly bring a pudding to share, something we do rely on. Thanks are due to all who help in anyway whether setting up the room, buying, preparing, serving, clearing away and washing up.

After much thought and prayer Colin and I have decided to 'retire' from our leadership of the Care and Share lunches. We have enjoyed the lunches and the fellowship with all those who have taken part and I am pleased that these will continue to take place with a new co-ordinator. Our best wishes for the future of Care and Share.

Gillian Beavis

HEALING PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

'Christian Healing is Jesus Christ meeting you at the point of your need'. Members of the Healing Fellowship pray and intercede for those known to us who are in need of healing prayer.

There is a Healing Theme during the 10am service on the second Sunday of the month. Requests for prayer are invited and offered up to the Lord. Members of the fellowship are always available to pray quietly with individuals with laying on of hands and anointing for those who wish for this. The confidentiality of those seeking prayer is always respected.

Prayer chains have been established. Individuals can make a request for prayer for themselves, another person or a particular situation. Once the request has been made it is passed along a chain so that a number of people will make that prayer. All prayer requests remain absolutely confidential.

A monthly Prayer Diary is now available. It can be found after services, in the Churches of the Parish and in the Samworth Centre. We are invited to use this daily in our private prayer times and in the various church meetings and groups we attend.

The team responsible for compiling the Diary are always open to suggestions for items to be included.

Gillian Beavis

ST. MARY'S MOTHERS' UNION

The year started as usual with the Annual Meeting held in the Samworth Centre. The short meeting was followed by an account of the Rotary Project - 'Purple 4 Polio' given by one of our members. During the year we welcomed a variety of speakers all of whom held our interest with their chosen topics.

The MU theme for the year was 'Faith in Action' and we followed this through with our ongoing activities. Many Teddies were produced all of which were gratefully received and suitably distributed by the Diocesan Action and Outreach unit. Small baby clothes, shawls, cot blankets and children's cardigans were also in good supply. A few Twiddle Quilts were also produced. It was also suggested by the A&O unit that we made up toilet bags for patients staying unexpectedly and unprepared in hospital. We were responsible for delivering a supply of these to St. Mary's Hospital in Melton.

Some of our members are responsible for the sending of Baptism Anniversary Cards.

Prayer is an important part of 'Faith in Action' and a few members took part in the 'Wave of Prayer' in June. We held our own service during the Archbishop of Canterbury's call to prayer in the 10 days between Ascension Day and Pentecost -praying around the world for families, friends and neighbours to come to know Jesus Christ.

In November gifts for young carers were taken to the Pre-Advent Service held in Thorpe Arnold Church and led by the Revd Debbie Starling.

We also used Faith in Action as the theme for our tree entered in the Church Christmas Tree Festival.

The Deanery Festival (Lady Day Service) was held in All Saints Church, Asfordby. Sadly, this and the Pre-Advent service were the last of the Deanery Services as such as with the closing of 2 other branches we remain the only branch in the Deanery. However, we will continue to hold these services within our annual programme.

After the Summer break, Rev'd Mary presided over our annual Holy Communion Service and it was good to welcome our Diocesan President Margaret Rouse on this occasion.

An important part of our monthly meetings is the fellowship we share during social time. This is made possible by our hostesses who supply us with tea biscuits and cake. Thanks to all who take on this task. The annual coffee morning is another time of fellowship and is always enjoyed by those who participate. For those who have not experienced one of these coffee mornings I thoroughly recommend you try the next one.

And, of course, there is much fellowship on the annual outing in August, an event to be recommended, last year to York.

The vision of the MU is of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships. We meet on the third Friday of the month at 2pm usually in the Samworth Centre and there is a warm welcome for visitors and friends at any or all meetings.

Gillian Beavis

LUNCHTIME ORGAN RECITALS

With the Church Building closed for reordering during 2017 and the Organ dismantled for refurbishment we have had a temporary lull in our Lunchtime Organ Recitals. We look forward to the final installation of the newly refurbished organ and will hope to resume this very popular outreach.

Colin Beavis

XPRESS



We meet for Xpress, on the 1st Sunday of the month after Ten O'clock Praise, in the Samworth Centre for about 40 minutes, and on the 2nd and 3rd Sundays we leave from church and return for the communion. It is a group for children of primary school age (KS1 & KS2). We praise God together with fun songs, drama, playing games, studying God's word and making great things that remind of Him.



We try to tie our themes in with bible readings used in church so if the children's craft creations are shown they should fit in with what people have been hearing about in St. Mary's. This year, for example, we have made tinsel star advent calendars to countdown to the birth of Jesus and hand spinners to celebrate the baptism of Christ.

As you would expect this is rewarding group to be part of especially when you see young children enjoying thinking about God – it is amazing how insightful they are and how much they challenge your own faith. **At the moment we are desperately short of helpers. The more helpers we have the less often our volunteers need to miss the Sunday service.** So please pray and if you like to play games, make art and/or talk meaningfully with children and willing to help once a month, please let Alison or myself know. Thank you.

Dave Kitching

TINY TOTS

Catriona finished last year's report with 'there is much to build on in the year ahead' and that has certainly happened.

"Despite the moving 'homes' Tiny Tots has continued through the year. We have been very grateful to The Samworth Centre for accommodating us, whenever possible. Whenever there was no place in the Samworth centre we had an outing, usually to Jumping Jelly Beans. In January we returned to church, as many activities have, and we are enjoying the space especially during the marching songs. Many a visitor has enjoyed the stream of Tinies and not so Tinies marching around with musical instruments singing enthusiastically. Attendance has been maintained over the time with a returning Mum with her second child. It has been lovely to see the Tinies grow from babes in arms to active participants joining in with all the actions. Some of the mothers have become involved in other areas of church which keeps our links with them as their children go onto school. At the last meeting of the summer we held a Sports Day in the park with a picnic. The weather held off and there was a lot of fun

Developed out of the mother's enquiring has been a group nominally called TTMEG (Tiny Tots Mums Enquirer Group). So far they have studied 'Turning to Christ' from the Pilgrim course. The group was led by Catriona and facilitated by some of the helpers from Tiny Tots. When Catriona left a desire to continue with learning was asked for so the group now meets fortnightly, recently working through the second book in the Pilgrim course 'The Lord's Prayer'. These evenings are intense, exciting, challenging for the leaders and have led to two members of the group becoming confirmed.

Due to the age of the Tinies, there is a continuous change of new members. We welcome the changes and hope that the firm foundations established will continue to flourish."

Trisha Nutter

ST MARY'S TOWER BELLS

This year was a complete change as St Mary's was out of action and the band of ringers became nomadic ringers. We carried on with our Tuesday nights practices at Wymondham, where the bells were a lot lighter than Melton. We had a few new ringers join us at Wymondham. Also had a few practice nights at Saltby, then started to join the High Framland ringers once a month.

It was a relief when we finally got back to St Mary's in December and it was a pleasant surprise to walk into a warm St Mary's and to find extra heaters in the ringing room! There really was a sense of coming home. We ended the year ringing the old year out and the new year in. Nice to be back home.

On a sad note we lost John Sutton who was a long-standing ringer at St Mary's and a tireless and energetic Tower Captain and Vice-Captain. John was very supportive and offered advice and help with the jobs around the tower. He will be greatly missed.

After 15-years Malcolm Ball stood down as Treasurer. He was presented with a bottle of wine and an orchid for his wife, Celia.

Helen Peacock - St Mary's Tower Bells Secretary

ST. MARY'S HANDBELLS

There isn't very much to report this year due to us not being able to have regular practices as the Church has been closed for almost a year.

However, Wendy has kept us together as a team by allowing us to practise at her home once a month.

We haven't performed at many venues but did do a concert in the Market Tavern for the Stroke Club for their Christmas Meeting. We also played at the Christingle Service in the newly refurbished St Mary's which was truly enjoyable and the young people showed great interest and enthusiasm. Let's hope we have some future Members!

If anyone is interested to see how we perform we meet every Tuesday evening in the Tower at 6 30pm.

You can get more details from Wendy Saywell Tel 01664 480209 or Marian Sutton Tel 01664 561020

Marian Sutton

SERVERS

Well another year has passed and the team of servers at St Mary's has provided a sterling service throughout, even though it has been stretched at times, leaving some services with only one server. This is also an SOS for new members, we are in need of more servers, if you are interested please come and speak to me, Kevin or any of the servers. We look forward to serving you throughout the next year, with a larger team helping take the strain.

Training is available for new members, it will also include a refresher for all of us and we'll be working on redefining what our tasks will be throughout the services.

What does being a server mean, and who can do it? Being a server involves things like leading the choir and clergy into or out of the service, assisting the clergy in preparing and clearing the communion table and lighting candles and it's open to everyone.

So, if you think you would like to be a part of this team, please get in touch, we don't bite. If we can increase the team to 12 or

13 it would mean only one duty each per month with holidays or special services easily covered.

The Lord works in mysterious ways..... Is he calling you?

Finally, my thanks go to every member of the team for getting us through the year and I am sure we are all looking forward to working with our new members in the months to come.

Sigrid (Siggy) Atherton

SATURDAY MORNING @ ST MARY'S

Saturday Morning at St Mary's meets on the second Saturday of each month except for August (to allow for the popular Holiday Club), and December (due to the number of trees in the Church!). The team involved in Saturday Morning at St Mary's were surprised by the success of the transfer to Parkside. Certainly a more intimate surrounding which helped everyone feel more 'together'. Numbers stayed high, and the themes ranging from 'May the Force be with you', 'Summer Knights', 'Pirate Adventure' and 'Christmas is 'A' Comin' still brought people over to Parkside. We appreciated being able to continue with this valuable regular presence in the town which draws many people in who wouldn't normally come to church. Our last session at Parkside highlighted the local charity 'Toys on the Table', encouraging families to bring presents for children who would have very little at Christmas. Having logged the presents, the children took part in wrapping them up. The churches link with this worthwhile cause could be developed during 2018. Each session of Saturday Morning @ St Mary's ends with a short service that reflects the theme. Children (of any age) are encouraged to come to the front and join in the actions. From this small seed, questions of faith have developed.

Transferring back into the church with the theme 'We're back!! Come in and Celebrate' was a lively affair with dancing from the New St George Morris dancers and the Want2Dance group plus many regular activities and a slice of celebration cake. The cake

had been 'stirred up' at the November event, then baked and decorated by Marie in time for January. 'Friendly February' encouraged people to think of others and the Memory Quilt was seen in full and became renamed as the Parish Patchwork with Kevin sewing a square. We look forward to seeing this complete soon.

Remembering the intimacy offered at Parkside we have repositioned the activities so we are more together - the layout is still ongoing but has proved popular so far. It is reliant on a band of people to move furniture before AND after to help with the success.

We are pleased to see regulars coming back each month and are inspired by how people hear about the event. Visitors are often taken aback when they come across us and pleased to see the church being used in many ways. It is evident that the numbers are up when there is a popular theme - especially if it is linked to a recent film, but also when related to anniversaries and remembering the war.

Many thanks must go to the team who come enthusiastically each month, to the army of cake bakers providing the refreshments, to Melton Lace Ladies who regularly turn up to demonstrate their skill, to Shaun who comes prepared to challenge all in Chess, and to those who come for certain events/activities - each month the children leave with the excitement of the session. It is also lovely to see others who come for a cuppa, a chat, a read of the papers and to enjoy watching the children's excitement.

Trisha Nutter

CHURCH WELCOMERS

This is the final report I will be putting forward. It will also be short as the church was closed for the refurbishment for the best part of 2017. Church Welcoming started up again on December 14th. With a limited number of volunteers to work the rota with, it was decided to just have the two sessions in place. This was

the case until the end of February 2018. Up until the end of February we have opened our doors from 11am till 3pm. I was keen to get it open earlier but without the vast amount of volunteers now needed this proved difficult.

A big recruitment was put in place and adverts etc in Parish Views, weekly news and even the local newspaper were placed. This resulted in a number of new volunteers but it was clear to me more were needed as it had been decided quite rightly that two people should now be on duty. For several years we relied on many doing the sessions singularly.

It was with great sadness that on 22nd February I decided to step down from organising the Welcoming rota. My position was made untenable in several ways but I want it known it was nothing to do with my health. Mike Brown has taken over and I am sure he will do a great job. I wish him all the best. With all the lovely volunteers I have had the pleasure to work with I'm sure it will be made all the easier for him. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped in the past. Special thanks to Keith Wilson, always at the end of the phone to give me good advice, Marian and John Sutton who gave me the courage to take it on and were always on hand for friendly advice. Mostly a huge thank you to my son Tom, without him many a time St Mary's would have closed.

God Bless

Marie Styles

80'y PLUS FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE

The group will have met twice when this report is read.

In November at "Looking ahead for Christmas" we gathered together to finalise our Christmas tree entry, and decided on the theme, "From The Old to the New". With the return to our lovely WARM church it seemed an apt title. Those that attended

seemed to be in agreement with the theme and some of the prepared work was on show for the members to see. A dozen of us enjoyed the time together, but it would be even more enjoyable had there been more to join us. Perhaps we should call ourselves 70 to 90 Fellowship Circle?

The next event will be on Monday March 19th (YES MONDAY). We shall all meet again to learn about the Parish Patchwork that Marie Styles and Rosemary Hennig started, and even add our own patches towards it. This will be followed by a cup of tea and cakes.

There will be a warm welcome to anyone wishing to join our group, please contact Jill Milner/Rosemary Hennig/Rinah Walls for any further information. Contact details can be found in 'The Weekly News.'

There are plans for a summer event this year. Again, that will be "A Picnic in the Park," with the Sunday Band to entertain us for the afternoon. Dates are due out in March from the Town Estate. 80s Plus Fellowship Circle events to be arranged. Please check in 'The Weekly News.' Bring a friend.

Jill Milner

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

What an amazing weekend with a record number of visitors and the huge variety of trees from the tiniest ones to the huge main tree at the screen transforming St. Mary's once again. The contractors had handed back the building on Friday 24th and there was much to be done if we were to be ready to open as planned. From Monday 27th November until the clearing up on Wednesday 6th December the committee were to be seen in church for 12 hours each day preparing, organising, welcoming, serving refreshments and doing the dozens of other jobs needed to make the Festival flow smoothly. We were also grateful to many others who came in help clean and prepare.

During Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday the church was transformed, as the many trees were brought in and decorated. This year we had 45 new organisations and businesses doing trees which brought many fresh ideas and themes. Thursday night saw our Wine and Buffet Evening and this year Terry Waite switched on the lights. Terry gave an amazing talk about the Emmaus Charity and we had a record attendance to hear him. The excellent buffet was much appreciated and we would like to thank all those who gave food and helped in making the evening a success. Friday saw the opening to the public with many school children being our first visitors.

The door stewards did a fantastic job and we really appreciated their contribution over the days of the festival. The clergy did a sterling job all weekend welcoming the thousands of visitors from far and wide. We were amazed to find the distance people had travelled to visit our now famous festival which attracts coaches from all over the country. Refreshments were served all weekend and our thanks go to all those who served, those who made all our delicious cakes and to those who donated the tea, coffee, biscuits and all the paper plates, cups etc.

We stayed open late on Friday evening and attracted many visitors who had watched the lights switch on and the fireworks in town. On Saturday with extra stalls in town we attracted more visitors than usual and had a very busy day. Carols Amongst The Trees was well attended and it was great to see so many families. Sunday was another busy day culminating in the Songs of Praise. The collection of £652 was given to the Emmaus Charity which does such excellent work.

Christmas Cards sold well over the weekend and thanks go to Brian Wray for organising the cards which sold out during the festival.

Monday was another late night and we were rushed off our feet serving mulled wine and mince pies to the adults and welcoming Rainbows and Brownies who spent part of their meeting with us. Tuesday saw a large number of visitors coming for a final look at the trees.

Financially the festival brought us a profit of over £25,000 but more importantly we are able to report that over 10,000 adults came into our church and many, many children. This gives us a tremendous opportunity for outreach and we are able to spell out the Christmas message to all those who come through our doors. So, thank you to everyone who was involved in any way, however small, it could not happen without you, our church family, and the many organisations in the town. Special thanks go to the tremendous amount of hard work done by our committee Trisha and Andrew Nutter, Brian and Marilyn Wray, Martin and Margaret Copson, Phil and Karen Balding and Alyson Ashby.

It was an amazing event and a superb start to our Christmas celebrations in our newly refurbished building.

Dina & Ian Neale

CHOIR

Since last year's APCM, the choir numbers have remained fairly constant at fourteen singers. This situation can be challenging at times, especially if some members are unable to attend on a Sunday. But we continue to meet these challenges and remain optimistic. Sadly, commitment to the full schedule of services is no longer possible for all choir members. We have to try to maintain our standards, even when we're not a full team.

We currently don't have a junior section of the choir. Whilst the church building was closed and we were meeting at many different locations, recruitment was too difficult and so was put

on hold. I'm happy to say that I've been in touch with the Head teacher at St Mary's School and hope to go and recruit some new youngsters very soon. We want the choir stalls (when they arrive!) full again, with boys and girls and adults of all ages - a real church family choir.

During the year the choir has sung in various locations, whilst St Mary's Church was closed for re-ordering. It took us some time to get used to singing in the council chambers. This was one of the most difficult spaces to sing in. It is acoustically dead, due to the curtains, carpets and soft furnishings. However, we were able to use St Peter's RC Church for our Choral Evensong services. This really was a joy. St Peter's has a lovely acoustic for choir music and a nice pipe organ.

In August, some of the choir made a return journey to our friends in Holland. We hired a minibus and went up to catch the overnight crossing from Hull to Rotterdam. Upon arrival, we rehearsed with the Dutch choir, and then had lunch together. After lunch, there was more rehearsing, and then we checked into our hotel. In the evening, we all went for a meal at a very popular 'pancake' restaurant. What an interesting place! The following day, we met in the church early to warm up, and then we performed Haydn's 'Little Organ Mass' liturgically. This was very beautiful. After lunch, we presented a concert of English music and the Dutch presented theirs. This was very well received. After this, we decided we wanted to sight see before our journey home. This was really good... and I even managed some very difficult parking! We hope to invite our Dutch friends to come to Melton and do a similar thing here.

In December, we returned to church. Hallelujah! We were augmented by our regular 'extras' to sing at the Candlelit service of Nine Lessons and Carols. This is always a very rewarding event, as the church is always full. We are really grateful to those who come and sing with us at these special occasions.

This has been quite a difficult year, due to the church being closed. We had to store all the music in the archive room, which has proved a pain. We've had to carry the robes and heavy music

around with us. We've not had a base. This was made a little worse when we found out that we weren't having the choir vestry back. HOWEVER, I am most grateful and thankful for the newly constructed temporary vestry in the south transept which will be an excellent teaching space for the choir, until funds are raised to build us a purpose-built Choir Room.

Choir singing is very enjoyable, especially when there are plenty of singers. We would certainly welcome anyone who would like to join us. The ability to read music would be an advantage but is by no means essential.

James Gutteridge – Organist & Director of Music