



St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury

Annual Parochial Church Report

Presented at a meeting held on 23 April 2017

This combined report is presented in accordance with the Charity Commissioner's Statement of Recommended Practice commonly known as SORP 2005.

CONTENTS

Section 1

Annual Report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council.

Section 2

Accounts of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31 December 2016 incorporating:

- Summarised statement of financial activities for the year;
- Balance sheet as at the year end;
- Detailed notes to the accounts;
- Independent Examiner's Report.

St Mary the Virgin, Church Road, Almondsbury, BS32 4DT

**Annual Report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council
and the activities of the parish generally for the year to 31 December 2016.**

Correspondence address: The Vicarage, 3 Sundays Hill, Almondsbury, BS32 4DS

PCC Members:

Rev Philip Rowe	Rev Paul van Rossum (Curate & Chair)	
Liz Tierney (churchwarden)	Margaret Roberts (Lay Minister)	
Mike Jenkinson (Lay Minister)	Astrid Domingo-Molyneux (Lay Minister)	
Alison Rowe (Deanery Synod)	Bob Sharp (Deanery Synod)	
Clare Jefferis (Deanery Synod)	Sue Hewson	
Celia Jenkinson	Sandy Thompson	
Pam van Rossum	Rosemary Griffiths	
Jackie Barnett (Minute Secretary)	Mo Pearson	
Corne Human	Dick Avery	
June Curry	Judi Thomson	David Thomon

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The Parish of St Mary's, Almondsbury, is part of the Benefice of Almondsbury and Olveston with Aust, of which the Reverend Philip W Rowe is Incumbent.

The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure. The appointment of PCC members is governed by and set out in the Church Representation Rules and is from those on the Electoral Roll of the Parish. The PCC is registered with the Charity Commission (registration number 1131407).

Vicar's Introduction and Mission and Worship Report

It is my pleasure to introduce the Annual Report and Accounts of Almondsbury PCC.

The primary objective of all PCCs is the promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have defined this in our Vision Statement of 'Creating a community of wholeness, with Christ at the centre'.

Last autumn we have decided to implement this vision by adopting the Diocesan Mission Statement of 'Connecting with God, Connecting with each other and Connecting with our community'. From this statement we are seeking to implement the three priorities of making disciples, growing leaders and engaging the younger generation.

Over the past year we have been encouraging and overseeing our ongoing public worship and regular activities. These are the backbone and core of our ministry and I am encouraged by all they are doing and achieving. Each one of them are important and make a vital contribution to God's work of changing lives through St Mary's. In mentioning just a few aspects of this work I by no means negate the value I place on all this dedicated work.

It has been good to welcome Matthew Thomas and Joseph Nicholls. Matthew has made a good start as our organist and choirmaster and we look forward to him continuing the development we have seen with his predecessors. Joseph has developed our youth work, particularly on Sunday evenings and our links with schools. It has been encouraging to see our small groups grow and develop and we are facing the pleasant challenge of adapting to this. Our new prayer meeting (monthly Tea, toast and prayer) is the largest regular prayer meeting we have had for many

years. The Pastoral Care Team is working well and we are considering how our pastoral care can be developed. We will be running another Growing Leaders course from the autumn.

I am very encouraged by the vitality and outward looking vision of St Marys and thank everyone who contributes so generously in time, talents and money to enable this. In particular I am grateful for all those who responded so generously to our Giving in Grace Appeal increasing our planned giving, with the tax uplift by over £10,000. Financial generosity is invisible but is a prerequisite for a sustainable work of God. Also I would particularly acknowledge my gratitude to Liz Tierney for serving as the only Churchwarden over this year.

With my gratitude and prayers,

Philip Rowe

Churchwarden Report

This past year, we have had only one churchwarden. I wish to thank all those who have supported me over the past year. It is particularly appreciated that Graham Jeffery continues to be Chairman of the Finance and Building committee, which has reduced my workload. The Church's Terrier and Inventory Log was updated kindly by Tim Jefferis over the past year. In the coming year, I hope to be working with another churchwarden.

Dick Avery has completed his first year as Verger, and he has done a sterling job in carrying out his duties especially opening and closing the church on a daily basis, and attending weddings and funerals. Trevor Llewellyn assists in opening the church a couple of mornings a week. We are fortunate that Dick and Trevor are willing to do this, especially as many churches are often closed during the week.

A major spring clean was carried out in June 2016 with a good team of willing helpers and the serving of bacon rolls by Rosemary Griffiths. It is hoped to make this a yearly event, but no date has been arranged for 2017.

I would like to thank those who help out with the cleaning and maintenance of the church and church rooms. Also we have a good team of flower arrangers and banner makers.

Liz Tierney

Buildings Report

The Church and Churchyard, the Church Rooms and 14 Church Road

Introduction.

This report highlights the main activities covered by the Finance and Buildings Team. A more detailed report can be found in Appendix A.

Quinquennial Report.

Work has been carried out during the year with reference to the Quinquennial Report of 2014.

Tower and Bells.

In September, the clappers of bells six, seven and the tenor clappers were refurbished.

It has been identified that the bells need turning. A recommendation for the granting of a Faculty was made, subject to there being no objections lodged by the public. The public notices were displayed in January and February 2017, and no objections were received. A Faculty has

been granted and the aim is for the bells to be removed in 2018 costing £80,000 for which the bell ringers are pursuing grants from relevant organisations.

Electrical Installations and Lighting.

There have been repeated requests for exterior lighting above the outer door to the church porch. It was intended for this to be included in the Faculty for the Church re-ordering. However, this may be reconsidered.

Boiler.

There have been occasional but recurring reliability issues with the boiler. Replacement and/or upgrading may be required in the medium term.

Vestry Wall Safe.

In late 2015, the key broke in the lock of the vestry wall safe and the lock had to be drilled into in order to obtain access. This destroyed the lock, which could not be repaired.

A new free-standing safe was installed in the Vestry in November 2016.

Re-Ordering of the Church Interior. See separate report from Paul van Rossum Churchyard.

Discussions and decisions are still ongoing with regards to the safety features for the trench on the south sound of the nave.

During the summer of 2016, Dr Jonathan Berry, an Inspector of Ancient Monuments with Cadw, carried out a detailed survey of the chest tombs in the churchyard. We are still waiting for his report which will include recommendations for conservation. However he is off work for several months.

It is hoped to encourage the wider community to become involved in the upkeep of the churchyard. Alison Rowe is hoping that the village will 'adopt' one or more graves and undertake simple maintenance of the surroundings.

Church Rooms.

The boiler continues to give cause for concern due to its reliability and longevity. Servicing companies are not interested in working on LPG boilers.

Redecoration of the exterior is likely to be carried out in Spring 2017, costing about £2,000.

No.14 Church Road.

Planning permission for the installation of replacement uPVC windows was refused. Repair work and painting to the existing windows was carried out at a cost around £4,000.

ACSA still wish to continue their discussion with the possible purchase of 14 Church Road. The PCC are continuing with exploratory discussions. Clarification is required that there are no restrictive covenants on a possible sale and the subsequent use of the proceeds.

Church Finances.

The PCC decided that the Parish Share for 2017 should be increased to £45,000, with a proviso that, in view of the deficit financial situation, that the sum might need to be reduced during the year.

Footnote.

The members of the F&B Team would wish to thank Mr Barry Coltham for his services as Treasurer and to welcome Ms June Curry to the role.

Graham Jeffery

Financial Review

Continuing on from Barry's report for 2015, 2016 is a similar picture with some significant financial outlays relating to the architect fees for the church modifications. Income has continued its downward trend, also the grants available for a new Youth worker were reduced, leading the PCC to consider a reduction in the level of giving to the Diocese for Parish Share. After a meeting with the Diocese Finance team, a decision was taken to maintain the level of Parish Share but with a strategy to tackle the growing deficit. The PCC instigated a planned giving campaign led by Philip and Paul informing the congregation of the financial difficulties which has resulted in a very generous response which bodes well for the 2017 financial position.

We cannot rest on our laurels though, as there are a number of maintenance issues relating to the church infrastructure such as boiler and system and damp which may need addressing in the near to medium term.

There have been some really successful fundraising events this year both by groups and individuals to support nominated outward giving charities. There were some minor outstanding amounts that have not yet been distributed which will be quantified and donated in the next few weeks.

Thanks should go to all those in the church who help out by cashiering after the services, paying money into the accounts and managing the gift aid and planned giving, personal thanks go to Paul for his help with the bigger picture advice which he has provided to support the planned giving campaign and the budget for 2017.

There are still some improvements required in respect of the financial record keeping relating to day to day income and expenses to ensure it meets acceptable standards for audit purposes. One of the main issues is the control around designated funds - a system for ensuring that funds are separated from the day to day finances would make it easier to keep track of these.

There are some significant decisions currently under consideration by the PCC as a result of approaches by Almondsbury Village Shop and Surgery; these include the potential sale of the shop (14 Church Road) and more recently the potential sale of the Church rooms to the Surgery. Whilst the PCC has indicated that it is open to considering such proposals it has made no commitment to a decision one way or another as both proposals are at very early stages with the benefits and financial and practical implications yet to be fully explored.

June Curry

Treasurer

Church Re-ordering

This report summarises the current position of the proposed church building developments.

In my report for last year's AGM I listed the developments to the church that the PCC had proposed to the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (the DAC). For ease of reference I repeat these here:

1. To add two high quality matching wooden units ('pods') at the South-West and North-West corners of the church. The one in the South-West corner would house a Disability Discrimination Act compliant toilet facility that can be used by everyone and include nappy changing facilities. The other pod would be a small kitchen and servery.

To provide social/circulation space in front of the kitchen/servery pod along the North aisle. It is felt that the North aisle is better than across the back of the church as it means that pews do not need to be removed from between the main pillars.

To move the font to the South-East corner of the nave. Drawing on Olveston's experience this would be a better location for baptism services. It will also increase the space available for the social/circulation space in the North aisle.

2. To improve access into the building:

a. To make it easier to open and close the West door and to use it as the entrance for wheelchairs.

b. To modify the steps into the church from the North Porch and add handrails.

To improve access into the Chancel:

c. To improve and make permanent the current temporary deep shallow steps between the choir stalls and the chancel to enable wheelchair access.

3. To add glass doors to both the entrance from the North Porch and at the West Door.

4. To remove existing kitchen units and install new storage cupboards.

5. To refurbish the existing WCs.

6. To remove the existing carpet floor coverings in the Nave and either replace them with new carpet or renovate the underlying stone flooring.

7. To carry out a full survey of damp in the church and then to redecorate the walls and ceiling of the Church on a like for like basis.

8. To install a retractable projection screen above the archway between the nave and the choir stalls and to install a projector either in the choir stalls or above the portico at the West Door.

Several informal discussions have been held involving members of the DAC, the church's architect and ourselves. In addition, some limited written feedback has been received. However, progress has been slow and the discussions have not yet reached a conclusion. Hopefully, they will do so by September 2017. At this point a formal application will be made for permission to carry out the works. This application process includes formal consultation with interested parties, including parishioners and statutory bodies such as Historic England (formerly known as English Heritage).

We will keep people up to date with progress through periodic letters and items in the Yellow Sheet.

Paul van Rossum

Safeguarding – Promoting a Safe Church

It is the aim of St Mary's Church to develop the spiritual and social life of the children and young people in church in a safe and secure environment and to protect them from harm whenever possible.

St Mary's Church also aims to provide respectful, pastoral care for adults.

We endeavour to follow the Safeguarding Principles of the Church of England which are:

- ⤴ The care and nurture of and respectful pastoral ministry with all children, young people and adults.
- ⤴ The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable.
- ⤴ The establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

St Mary's continues with its requirement that all those wishing to work directly with children or to undertake pastoral visits on behalf of the church must go through our internal vetting and also obtain DBS clearance.

We are very fortunate at St Mary's to have so many volunteers who appreciate the need for the safeguarding of both children and adults and who are willing to go through our safeguarding recruitment process.

We currently have 32 volunteers who have been cleared to work with children. 10 volunteers have also been cleared to do pastoral visiting.

During the past year we have had a couple more people who have obtained DBS certificates and several who have done their 5 year renewals.

The church office keeps an up to date record of all the DBS certificates, date of issue (renewal after 5 years), level of clearance, whether children's or adult work is undertaken and also what safeguarding training has been done.

There is now the expectation that everyone working with children or undertaking pastoral visits should do the Bristol of Diocese basic on-line Safeguarding Training. This takes about ½ hour at home, on the computer and is a very useful reminder of things we should all be aware of when we are with children or visiting people who may be vulnerable. The training is accessed by logging on to **bristol.cofelearning.org**, our parish is **Almondsbury** and our reference is **52/021**

Thank you to those who have undergone the internal vetting and DBS clearance procedures or have renewed their DBS certificate this year. Their commitment to Safeguarding in our church is greatly appreciated as is the support from Philip Rowe, the Ministry Teams and Group Leaders.

*Sue Hewson
Safeguarding Officer
St Mary's Church Almondsbury*

Almondsbury Choir report

We are very pleased with our new choir master Matthew. He is very committed and encouraging. After Matthew has had a cataract removed we are looking forward to learning new music that he will be bringing to our church.

Blessings

Sandy Thompson

Praise Group Report

The Praise Group has developed well during the year. It currently comprises singers and musicians who can play the saxophone, trumpet, drums, guitar, keyboard and pipe organ. We welcome any others, singers or musicians, who have a heart to lead worship and would like to join us.

We are currently introducing some new songs, including some new versions of old favourites, to extend the variety we use, whilst retaining many familiar and well-loved songs. Our prayer is that everyone will be drawn to worship God in a fresh or deeper way as a result of the lead we offer.

Mike Jenkinson

Catering Team Report

A catering team was created during 2016 and currently consists of 7 members led by Alison Rowe.

We have provided the catering for several events during 2016 which included the Vintage Tea Party in the Vicarage Garden (September), Songs of Praise Service (June), Outdoor Service and Lunch for Rob Foster's leaving (July), Harvest Supper (September) and provided food for

the arrival of the Ugandan team (October). Also, we ensure that the coffee rota is kept up to date each Sunday morning, as well as help out at Messy Church and various events that are held within church.

There are many volunteers who provide food for these events who are unseen and we are grateful for their help. If anyone is interested in joining the team, please speak to Alison or myself.

Liz Tierney

Report on Bristol West Deanery Synod

Bristol West Deanery Synod met three times in 2016 – in January (at St Edyth's Sea Mills), May (at Christ Church Clifton) and October (at All Saints Clifton). Topics discussed included the following:

- Bristol Street Pastors – three street pastors spoke about their work caring for those in need on Saturday nights, especially vulnerable young people.
- Care for the Family – Katharine Hill presented resources to strengthen family life in such areas as parenting, teenagers, bereavement and relationship difficulties.
- Creating Connections – Bishop Mike spoke about the diocesan strategy, including its three themes – connecting with God, connecting with each other, and connecting with our communities – and its three priorities – making disciples, growing leaders, and engaging younger generations.
- Engaging Younger Generations – Dan Jones, Diocesan Youth Adviser, encouraged us to see young people as disciples in training, not in waiting, in need of opportunities to use their gifts and abilities for ministry.

In June, at St Mary's Stoke Bishop, the Revd James Lawrence of CPAS led PCC tonight, a Deanery Forum exploring how to make PCCs better.

In September, Oliver Home (Diocesan Secretary) and Chris Priddy (Diocesan Head of Parish and External Relations) led a Parish Share Seminar explaining the principles behind the Diocese's new approach to parish share – take responsibility, be generous, and have faith. Bristol West pledged and paid an extra £60,000 in parish share in 2016.

Seven visitors from Uganda came to the Deanery for a fortnight in October. Most spent six days in two parishes each, in a visit that did much to strengthen relationships with our link dioceses. It is planned to take a group of young people to Uganda in the summer of 2017.

The Revd Helen Johnson was licensed as Priest-in-Charge of St Mary's Shirehampton in October. There are currently vacancies in North Severnside and at St Edyth's Sea Mills, following the Revd David Izzard's appointment as Rector of Radstock. Stoke Bishop, Sea Mills, Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston are now informally grouped together as the Avonside Mission Area, and Shirehampton has been invited to join.

In May, Bishop Mike and Synod expressed warm thanks to Canon Mark Pilgrim for his diligent and enthusiastic leadership of the Deanery over the last ten years. Canon Mat Ineson, Vicar of St Mary's Stoke Bishop, succeeded Mark as Area Dean on 1 June 2016.

A new Deanery Synod and Deanery Leadership Team will be elected in 2017. We also look forward to joining in the celebrations of Holy Trinity Westbury-on-Trym's 1300th anniversary in the spring.

Brendan Biggs

Deanery Secretary

Thanks

The PCC employs Matthew Thomas as Organist and Choirmaster and Judi Thomson as Personal Assistant to the Vicar (on a shared basis with Olveston). All other routine activities are undertaken by volunteers and the Council places on record its appreciation of these volunteers who give their time and skills to the church and community.

Adoption

This report was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 14th March 2017 for presentation to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 23rd April 2017.



St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury

Reports from Organisations

Distributed with the Annual Parochial Church Report

Presented at a meeting held on 23 April 2017

MOTHERS UNION

2016 has been a busy & varied year for MU, & as always, the generous support of MU members has meant that our fund-raising has been successful and enjoyable.

Ann Parker kindly took the chair for our AGM in January, when all officers and committee members were re-elected for a further year, and we welcomed 1 new member. We welcomed John Poarch to lead our February meeting and at the beginning of March, several members attended the Women's World Day of Prayer at Old Down.

Judith kindly hosted our March meeting, a Coffee, and Bring & Buy evening for our MU charities. At our April meeting, Alison and some of her fellow travellers shared the experiences of their Ugandan trip. On April 23rd, some members attended the Cathedral service in Bristol to celebrate 140 years of the MU.

For our May meeting, several members visited Hillfields Garden Centre for lunch. The Deanery Festival in June was held at Holy Trinity, Horfield and several members attended. Astrid was the speaker at our June meeting, when she shared some of her travels and also showed some contrasting pictures of Syria, "before" and "after."

July means it's summer supper time in the garden. The Deanery Lunch in August was held at Shirehampton and all participants were asked to wear red, white and blue.

August is the "quiet" month, but our "outward giving" appeal for rice during August resulted in many bags being delivered to the Refugee and Asylum Seekers centre in Bristol.. We resumed our meetings in September when John Poarch led our "Wave of Prayer" Communion Service..

In October many members enjoyed our annual visit to St. Chad's Tuesday Fellowship. Our October meeting took the form of a craft evening, and in November, 37 members and friends enjoyed our annual dinner and entertainment .Mark Weaver commented that we all sang with great gusto! On November 12th Denise Gunter hosted a craft afternoon in her home with proceeds split between MU and the Children's Society & on December 5th a similar event was held at Café Almondsbury and so to December, when several members joined with other MU branches for an Advent Service at Henbury. At our own December meeting, many members and friends enjoyed what has come to be a firm favourite over the years, Margaret and John's selection of Christmas carols & readings.

Throughout the year, members have been involved in various activities within the church, the school, the village and the wider community.

Our thanks go to Judith for her leadership during the year and for hosting our monthly committee meetings.

Chris Coltham (Branch Secretary)

FRIDAY CLUB

Friday Club have met regularly during the year on the first Friday of the month, with the exception of January and August, with a meal out on the third Friday in the month, The club has a membership of 15 and enjoys social afternoons with an Annual Dinner, held this year at The Anchor, Thornbury. A Christmas Party when the children from Almondsbury Primary School entertained with seasonal songs. An outing to Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetland Trust and a Cream Tea at Sandays Nursery which were all enjoyed by members. We are indebted to the Almondsbury Charities and Almondsbury Parish Council for their generous financial support. We are always pleased to welcome new members.

Margaret Roberts.

FLOWER ARRANGERS

We have had a busy year – the highlights being the Queen's 90th Birthday celebration weekend on 11th/12th June, 2016. A wedding also took place on the Saturday here. We combined the cream/white flowers for the couple with pastel colours on the two front pillars, then working to the back of the Church each two adjacent pillars were decorated in colours we have seen the Queen wearing over the years; mid-pink, then violet/mauve, deeper pink, red and finally burgundy. The porch was regal gold and white, the Font, pink, blue and white. Other arrangements were done in apricot and yellow and white.

There were twelve weddings during the year, and arrangements included the main festivals of Christmas and Easter, and also Harvest and Remembrance. We are sorry to lose Sheila Fulton, an arranger for 25 years, who is emigrating with her husband, Fergie, to New Zealand in March. We wish them both every happiness there.

Thanks to all our flower arrangers for their lovely flowers through the years and we look forward to Easter with a burst of new colour after the quieter season of Lent.

Margaret Hewitt. Flower Organizer.

THE LICH GATE

This has been a year of considerable change for The Lich Gate, our monthly community magazine.

After doing such an excellent job as joint editors, Jackie and Frankie stood down after 2 years. I happened to read the plea for a new editor and, despite not living in Almondsbury, I offered my services. The offer was gratefully accepted.

Shortly after that, Hazel Hescott, the advertising manager, announced that she would reluctantly be giving up the job in April after 4 very successful years. This too proved to be a difficult position to fill before Pam van Rossum stepped into the breach.

One of my first projects as editor was to change the magazine to a glossy, full colour production. Several quotations were sought from printers and the contract was awarded to Motion Printers, a real local printer just down the road at Severn Beach. The switch to colour has proved to be a very popular move amongst both readers and advertisers; a real extra bonus of this decision was that print costs remained the same as the black and white version.

The distribution team, under Jane Clark's capable organisation, did have some problems with the extra weight that the new look magazine brought. However after a few months, in February we finally arrived at an excellent compromise. A quality colour magazine at a lighter weight. Hopefully this look will continue long into the future.

The Lich Gate is also making full use of its web-site, www.lichgate.co.uk which was previously just carrying a little contact information on one page. Each issue of The Lich Gate is now available on-line in its entirety. We are able to publicise extra events and other news items from within our area. Worthy material that would simply not fit within the printed version. Also news can be included which does not fall within our deadline schedule. The web-site is a very useful tool for those former residents now living away from the parish or those who prefer electronic media. At the time of writing the web-site is showing a rapid increase in the number of hits it receives. The magazine is also available (with some back issues) on the Almondsbury Life web-site.

We continue to publish 10 issues a year with no magazine in August and January. I have received several comments about that from people who point out that other community magazines in the area publish every month. Maybe this is something to consider.

Our deadlines are well publicized and the aim is generally to get the magazine on the streets around the 21st of each month, with the two 'double' issues for December / January and July / August appearing just a little later to allow as much news as possible to be included.

We are indebted to the many advertisers that we have. We are also grateful to all those people who contribute to the editorial – and we would love to have more! Almondsbury news is always the priority but we will fill any free space with worthy news from surrounding areas.

Feedback has been very gratifying but the production team are always willing to listen to any ideas that readers may have.

Our aim is to produce a community magazine that people actually read and enjoy!

Mike Lewis

Editor

CHILDREN'S WORK

The weekly All-Age Service has continued to be a focal point for our children's ministry.

The All-Age Service seeks to be 'a congregation of adults and children worshipping God together through an informal (but not casual) mix of music, prayer and teaching, as we seek to grow together in our faith in Jesus.' We split into age-related groups for the middle part of the service to receive age-appropriate teaching on the theme for the week. During 2016 the children's groups included a combined crèche/Key Stage 1 group (arranged by Celia Jenkinson), a Key Stage 2 group (Pam van Rossum) and a Key Stage 3/4 group (Corné Human/Joseph Nicholls).

A number of special services which have particularly involved the children have also been held during the year including, the Mothering Sunday Parade Service, Palm Sunday Service (including the regular procession around the village with a donkey), the Good Friday Activities Morning/Service in the Old School Hall, an Open Air service in the vicarage garden followed by lunch, the Harvest Parade Service, the Remembrance Parade Service, the Toy and Gift Service in early December and two very well attended Christingle Services on Christmas Eve.

Outside of Sunday mornings, a variety of other regular groups take place including, Oasis, Babies and Toddlers, and Youth Work all of which are reported on elsewhere.

Finally, I am very grateful to everyone who works to ensure that all our children grow and develop in their walk with Christ.

Paul van Rossum

BABIES AND TODDLERS GROUP

Toddlers is a lovely friendly group. Parents of all ages come with children up to school age even parents with new born babies come to make new friends. Pam, Alison, Celia, Joseph and myself make sure that no parent is left sitting on their own. Joseph is especially good with the kids. We had a large attendance for our Christmas party Joseph was Father Christmas and we finished with a video of the Christmas story and each child had the Christmas story book to take home. We are just making enough money to cover our rent charging £2 per family. Pam does crafts, I make playdoh and sing with musical instruments and dance, Alison makes teas and Joseph packs the cupboard at the end. All in all a good team!

Sandy Thompson

OASIS GROUPS

MARK 10:14: Jesus said,

“Let the little children come to ME for the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN belongs to them.”

This past year has been very blessed by the families and children who attend OASIS faithfully and enjoy the time together learning more about JESUS. The team of helpers are committed to the work and we greatly enjoy the worship led by Sandy, craft led by Sue and others and drama led by everyone! The children are learning to lead us in prayer and that is a delight. Extra helpers, Ro and Leona, come when they are free.

Thanks go to all parents/carers and godparents who support all the children's work at St Mary's and this corner of it. Some are very hands on in the clearing up and they support each other in the wider community. Michael is a pillar of support in everything.

We are taking as the theme for this year “THE PARABLES OF JESUS.” Sue and I often comment how much WE learn as we research and prepare for the teaching.

So far we have entered into the adventures and parables of the Lost Sheep and Good Shepherd, the Sower of the Seed, the Pearl of greatest price, the Lost Silver Coin and the Prodigal Son.

Numbers are not our goal and vary, and going deeper into the Bible teaching and life of JESUS is our main aim. We pray however MANY will come to know JESUS in many ways.

September 2016: Children – 19, adults (including helpers) 14 = 33

October – children 13, adults – 11 = 24

November – children 13, adults – 14 = 27

December – children 19, adults – 17 = 36

January 2017 – children 9, adults 10 = 19

February – children 14, adults 12 = 26

The bedrock of all this particular work since 2003 is PRAYER. Helpers meet beforehand to pray and attempt to pray with children during the worship times. This is of course a learning curve and the children teach us so much.

PSALM 107:1 “GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD FOR HE IS GOOD, HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER”

Dear Lord Jesus, We thank and bless You for your faithfulness to us and we entrust the lambs we tend in Your name into Your gentle care. We ask that You would fill their hearts with Your HOLY SPIRIT of love, joy and peace and be their GUIDE in the days to come. For Your name's sake and for Your glory we ask this, AMEN.

We value your prayers for the work and look forward to the year's challenges. Jan and team

Jan Cooper

YOUTH WORKER REPORT

Every week I have the privilege of helping out at a Toddler Group, doing activities at Messy Church, going into Local Schools both primary and secondary and the youth groups that are run on a Sunday.

In terms of what I do and the numbers of youth that come to every group it varies;

When I first started “Lighthouse” I had about 6 regulars and now I have up to 10 which is amazing and also what we're doing at the moment is a youth alpha and the conversations and discussions coming it are very encouraging.

The CU at Marlwood is quite a small group but again I'd say the number is not what we're looking for. Building relationships with the youth and speaking with them so I'm in a place to listen to and encourage them.

Similarly, to Marlwood my work in Almondsbury primary school is about building relationships with students and teachers, I help out in some of the lessons and I'm involved in their worship committee. Students from every year come together to plan an assembly.

Toddlers is for both the parents and of course toddlers, this is for listening and supporting the parents and by playing with their youth it allows them to socialise and have a little rest.

Youth Events:

While I've been here I've been involved in a few events, one being the Ice Skating trip last December which was a social for Lighthouse. It was a lot of fun and the youth loved it! Other events have been a Light party which happened the day before Halloween. And this last half term I went with youth to a SWYM camp which was also brilliant.

Joseph Nicholls

Finance & Building Team Annual Report 2016-2017

Appendix A

Introduction.

This report covers those areas for which the Finance and Buildings Team has responsibility, on behalf of the Churchwarden and the Parochial Church Council. In addition to financial matters, the report considers relevant matters in respect of the Church building and its contents, the Churchyard, the Church Rooms and No.14 Church Road, which houses the village's Community Shop.

Quinquennial Report Items: Work Carried Out in 2016.

As reported last year, work to repair slipped slates on the roof, loose lead flashings and the clearance of debris from gutters and rainwater hoppers was carried out at the end of January 2016. However, one hopper taking rainwater from the vestry roof remained blocked and the accumulation of debris and vegetation from the flat roof over the kitchen and toilet area had not been removed. The contractors returned in April and carried out the necessary clearances at no extra cost.

In late 2016, it was noted the hopper taking rainwater from the flat roof was overflowing and was again found to be blocked. As it is easily accessible from a stepladder, it was immediately cleared, in order to avoid the damp problem that had previously affected the adjacent toilet cubicle.

However, it also appeared that the hopper taking rainwater from the vestry roof and discharging onto the flat roof, once again, had some vegetation growing from it. Unfortunately, the razor wire makes on the parapet makes access difficult, so the use of contractors will again be necessary and the intention is for the work to be arranged in the Spring 2017

The nave and chancel roofs were inspected as part of a damp survey (see below) and it was noted that there was a single broken and slipped slate on the roof of the nave, adjacent to the ringing chamber door. There has also been a fresh accumulation of twigs and debris in the gutters, courtesy of the resident jackdaws. Clearance of the gutters and hoppers could conveniently be carried out at the same time as replacement of the broken slate.

Removal of furniture and stored items from the south transept area (i.e., the Lady Chapel) cannot reasonably be done without detracting from the use of the area as a crèche. It appears that little can be done in the short term, other than to take more care. Accordingly, notices have been placed on the memorial, requesting that, in order to prevent damage, stacked chairs should not be pushed against it.

Clearance of the so-called 'ground gutter' or trench on the east and south sides of the building was carried out by a volunteer working party in May 2015 and several years of accumulated

debris and vegetation were removed. A fresh accumulation of autumn leaves was removed during the spring of 2016. Clearance will again be necessary in the near future and should be done on an annual basis. The toys are regularly sorted and tidied in the Lady Chapel.

Quinquennial Report Items: Work Recommended Before 2019.

Removal and replacement of stained damp plaster was recommended by the Quinquennial Report and the commissioning of a comprehensive damp survey was approved by the PCC in late 2015, with the intention of carrying out remedial work in conjunction with the proposed re-ordering.

Accordingly, on 12th December 2016, an extensive external and internal survey was carried out by Mr George Chedburn, our Architect for the proposed re-ordering, accompanied by his assistant, Mr Haydon Smith. A report will be issued in due course in an appropriate format, which can be forwarded to Almondsbury Charity, with the objective of soliciting a grant for remedial work. This and general redecoration would then proceed in conjunction with the re-ordering.

Following the concern expressed in the Quinquennial Report in respect of the bowed stained glass window on the south side of the chancel, an informal discussion with JH Stained Glass of Bristol suggested that there was no immediate danger to the window. Nevertheless, this and other windows should continue to be monitored, recognising that, in the medium to long term, expensive conservation and restoration will be necessary.

Attention was drawn in the Quinquennial Report to the condition of the roof of the turret giving access to the ringing chamber, which clearly shows signs of leaking, such that repairs will soon be necessary. The condition of the masonry forming the parapet of the turret was also a cause for concern.

It would, therefore, be reasonable to address the masonry work and the roof at the same time. As the work is identified in the Quinquennial Report, following a change in the rules at the beginning of 2016, a Faculty may not be necessary. However, approval from the Archdeacon, following consultation with the DAC, would probably be required. It is intended that quotations will be solicited in the near future.

Tower and Bells.

In January 2016, a director of John Taylors, Loughborough, visited to give advice on turning and refurbishment of the bells. Following this, in April, our Steeple Keeper and Tower Captain made a joint presentation to the F&B Team. It was identified that bells six, seven and the tenor would benefit from refurbishment of the clappers. This was subsequently approved by the PCC and, in the case of the tenor bell, also by the Archdeacon, with the work being carried out in September.

More significantly, it was identified that the bells were in need of turning, in order to present a new point of impact for the clappers. The last time this was done was in 1903 and, if not done again in the near future, irreparable damage would probably result. However, the turning and the associated refurbishment should permit the bells to be rung safely for another century or more.

Accordingly, proposals were submitted to the PCC and approval given for an application for a Faculty at the meeting on 1st November. A formal application was submitted and considered at the November meeting of the DAC. Following advice from the DAC, minor amendments were made and the application re-submitted for consideration at their January meeting. This resulted in a recommendation for the granting of a Faculty by the Chancellor and the Consistory Court.

A formal Petition for a Faculty was submitted online on 15th January 2017 and, on 19th January, notification was received that a Faculty would be granted, subject to no objections being lodged. The required public notices, inviting objections, were duly displayed from 20th January to 19th February 2017.

Following the granting of a Faculty, the reinstatement of a closed-up trapdoor in the ceiling of the ringing chamber will be carried out in the at an early date, with removal of the bells planned

for 2018. The total cost of the refurbishment will be of the order of £80,000 and our Steeple Keeper and Tower Captain will be pursuing grants and funding for the work from relevant local and national organisations.

Electrical Installations and Lighting.

Following the full electrical inspection that was carried out during the autumn of 2015, damaged 'tails' in one of the junction boxes in the distribution cupboard were replaced. The Quinquennial Report had previously suggested that rewiring may be necessary soon and this was supported, specifically in respect of the nave lighting, by the inspection report. Rewiring work should, therefore, be considered seriously as part of the proposed re-ordering.

There have been repeated requests for some form of exterior lighting above the outer door to the church porch. Initially, this was resisted, on the grounds that a wall-mounted external light would mean drilling into ancient masonry and hence result in potential issues with the DAC. However, further consideration and creative thought resulted in a proposal for low intensity lighting, controlled by a sensor, to be installed in the timber infill between the Norman arch and the door frame proper.

However, it has been established that even this more modest proposal would require a Faculty, as is the case for all exposed external lighting. Accordingly, it has been determined by the PCC that such an installation should be included in the application for a Faculty in respect of the re-ordering. The installation could, nevertheless, proceed as soon as a Faculty was granted.

Further creative thought has suggested that, in addition to the proposed exterior lighting, similar concealed interior lighting, which illuminated the vault of the porch, would be useful. Although this would not directly illuminate the door, it might partially answer the perceived problem and may not need a Faculty. It could, therefore, be installed before the exterior lighting and may be investigated.

Concern has also been expressed in the past, in respect of the exterior lights on the buttresses at the west end of the church, as they cause an area of deep shadow across the path adjacent to the west door. It has, therefore, been proposed that replacement of the existing rather utilitarian lights, with lights on extended brackets, be carried out as part of the re-ordering work.

Boiler.

In January 2016, during a visit by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), a problem was experienced with the boiler timer, resulting in no heating being available, which was subsequently resolved. However, there are occasional but recurring reliability issues and, as suggested in previous reports, replacement and/or upgrading may be required in the medium term.

Vestry Wall Safe.

In late 2015, it was found necessary to call for the services of a locksmith, when the key broke in the lock of the vestry wall safe. The key could not be recovered and the only way that the safe could be opened was for the lock to be drilled into. This effectively destroyed the lock, which could not be repaired.

A proposal to install a modern, free-standing safe in addition was approved by the PCC and a quotation of £1,428 (including VAT) from Insafe, our insurer's preferred supplier, was accepted. A List B application was submitted, via the current online Faculty application procedure, which resulted in a request for photographs and a floor plan, showing the proposed position of the safe.

Approval was duly granted by the Archdeacon for the installation of the safe immediately in front of the blocked-up fireplace. After some delay, the safe was installed quickly and efficiently by Insafe's contractors on 2nd November 2016.

Re-Ordering of the Church Interior.

Revd Paul van Rossum continues to lead the work on the re-ordering proposals.

During his visit on 12th December Mr George Chedburn took the opportunity to outline issues that had arisen during his ongoing consultations with the DAC. There are unresolved problems in respect of the height of the 'pods' and the closeness of pews to them. The positioning of the 'social space' is also subject to further discussion, as the proposed repositioning of the font is not favoured.

Complete removal of the nave carpeting has been carried out, revealing somewhat worn flagstones and iron grilles, which have required covering for health and safety reasons. A decision on partial or complete replacement of the carpet will be the subject of consultation with the congregation.

The temporary shallow steps at the entrance to the chancel now appear to be generally accepted. It has been demonstrated recently, at our All-Age Services, that they greatly facilitate access by a wheelchair user, albeit with some assistance.

External Faults Not identified in the Quinquennial Inspection Report.

The deterioration and spalling of the plinths forming the bases of the twin pillars of the north porch Norman arch has been a cause for concern for some time, as has that of some coping stones topping the parapet to the so-called 'ground gutter'. Since, the defects are 'cosmetic', rather than structural, they have not been given high priority.

It is now proposed that the necessary repair work be included in the application for a Faculty with the re-ordering. Advice on the source and quality of the stone to be used would, however, be required from a competent authority.

During the Autumn of 2016, our Steeple Keeper drew attention to the fact that the doors to the turret giving access to the roof and the door to the ringing chamber were in real need of redecoration. He requested that arrangements be made for them to be repainted, in the hope that this could be done before Winter.

However, it was considered prudent to seek approval from the PCC for this, in view of the potential cost. Approval was duly given, with a suggestion that a grant be solicited from Almondsbury Charity. Such an approach would also require an application, via the online Faculty application procedure, for approval of the work by the Archdeacon.

Accordingly, an application was submitted, which elicited a response quoting the fact that the same doors had been described as "recently repainted" in the Quinquennial Report and asking for photographs. These were duly submitted, resulting in an opinion being returned by the DAC that the present blue colour is not "historically authentic" and that a mid or dark brown colour would be more appropriate. It will, therefore, be necessary to discuss this further at the F&B Team Meeting and forward the matter to the PCC. Regrettably, this will significantly delay any early work on the doors.

Churchyard.

The potential danger in relation to the low parapet of the so-called 'ground gutter' or trench on the south side of the nave has been a matter of concern for some years. Approvals for the installation of 'estate railings' from the relevant authorities were being sought as long ago as 2008-09, following concerns raised by our insurers. However, whilst a faculty was granted at that time, which included an approval for 'estate railings', problems were encountered with local authority planning approval and listed building consent. In consequence, the work did not proceed and the Faculty effectively lapsed.

Following advice from our insurers, there have been moves during the past two years to pursue reinstatement of the proposal to install 'estate railings'. This would require new applications for a Faculty, listed building consent and planning approval, plus consultations with other interested parties.

A recent approach to the DAC for advice elicited a response from the Chair, suggesting that a horizontal safety grille would be considered favourably by that body. This opinion was conveyed to Mr Ian Gething, the Conservation Officer at South Glos Council, who replied, clearly favouring

the 'estate railings' option. He suggested that, for such a structure to be safe, in the event that people might walk on it, the grille would effectively resemble an industrial walkway.

Mr Gething's opinion was forwarded to the Secretary to the DAC, who has advised that an application for a Faculty should be submitted. The objective of the application would, in the first instance, be to solicit more formal and considered advice from the DAC, together with informed opinions from Historic England and the Church Buildings Council.

Accordingly, the PCC has approved such an application, on the grounds that, initially, it will not attract any cost. Preparation of the application must, however, await other more immediate matters. In the light of further advice in response to the application, it may be advisable to consult our insurers again as to their attitude to the proposed solution.

Following the requisite approvals, a dead tree that stood adjacent to the heating oil tank was removed during 2015 and a further approval was granted late in 2015 for more pruning and removal of dead wood. However, it was considered appropriate to wait until after the trees were in leaf, so that any dead wood might easily be identified, with the work eventually being carried out in the early Autumn.

During the summer of 2016 and with the agreement of the PCC, Dr Jonathan Berry, an Inspector of Ancient Monuments with Cadw (the Welsh equivalent of Historic England), undertook (at no cost to the PCC) a detailed survey of the chest tombs in our churchyard. His intention was to document them historically and to submit a report, which would include recommendations as to their conservation.

Unfortunately, we have recently been informed that he has been involved in a motor cycle accident, was seriously injured and will be unable to work for some months. Nevertheless, he wishes to continue working on the report, albeit slowly, and will submit it in due course.

Also, during the Summer of 2016, Ms Jackie Hartley offered to become involved in the maintenance and improvement of the churchyard, with wildlife and ecology particularly in mind. Unfortunately for us, however, her business has now increased to the extent that she is unable to help as she had originally hoped to do.

Having been encouraged by Ms Hartley's interest, it is hoped that we may be able to encourage a wider community involvement in the upkeep of the churchyard. To this end, Mrs Alison Rowe has organised meetings, with the intention of engaging local people, families and other groups, encouraging them to 'adopt' one or more graves and undertake simple maintenance of the surroundings.

Church Rooms.

The boiler continues to give cause for concern, in terms of its reliability and longevity, providing no hot water and only limited heating. Servicing also presents an ongoing problem, as it appears that the majority of service companies are not interested in working on LPG boilers.

Refurbishment of the emergency lighting in the building, as required by the Surgery, was carried out on 12th November 2016, with the PCC's proportion of the cost being £388-80 (including VAT)..

The Surgery has solicited quotations for the external redecoration of the building, as required every five years under the terms of the lease. The work will probably take place in the Spring of 2017, with the PCC's being expected to bear 40% of the cost, amounting to approximately £2,000.

No.14 Church Road.

Following refusal of planning permission for the installation of replacement uPVC windows at No.14 Church Road, it was agreed that ACSA would solicit quotations for the repair of the existing windows, subject to a cost limit of £5,000. ACSA would provide day-to-day project management, while the PCC would retain oversight.

The work was initially scheduled to start as early as January 2016. However, weather conditions delayed a start until the Spring, with the work being completed in April. The final cost of the repairs was reported to be £3,500, with the cost of painting adding a few hundred more, the total being well within the prescribed cost limit.

Early in 2016, ACSA made known its wish to discuss with the PCC the possibility of purchasing No.14 Church Road outright and initial discussions, without commitment, were approved by the PCC. However, due to a misunderstanding, no further contacts were made with (or by) ACSA until late in the year.

Following a meeting in December 2016, between the PCC's nominated representatives (Ms June Curry and Revd Paul van Rossum) and those of ACSA (Mr Alun Evans and Mr John MacLeavy), it was confirmed that ACSA wish to continue with their proposal. However, ACSA would not wish to proceed without some assurance that the PCC would continue in discussion, without necessarily making a definitive commitment to a sale.

Accordingly, at its January 2017 meeting, the PCC agreed that it was prepared to continue with exploratory discussions, without giving any definitive commitment to a sale. Clarification was required by the PCC that there were no restrictive covenants on a possible sale and the subsequent use of the proceeds. Valuations and additional financial information would also be required, in order to make an informed decision as to the advisability and benefits of a sale.

Church Finances.

The deteriorating state of the church's finances was reported to the F&B Team in January 2016 and subsequently to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in April. Direct giving during the previous year had reduced by approximately £10,000, with increases in expenditure exacerbating the situation. Consequently, a proposal by the F&B Team that the annual Parish Share payment be reduced from £45,000 to £42,000 was accepted and approved by the PCC.

In September 2016, a letter from the Diocese on the subject of the Parish Share was placed before the PCC and forwarded to the F&B Team, with a request for a recommendation as to the amount to which the Parish should commit for 2017. To permit full and informed consideration, Revd Paul van Rossum prepared a discussion paper, which was presented to the October meeting of the F&B Team.

Following the identification of some inconsistencies and errors, Revd van Rossum undertook to revise his paper. However, after much discussion, the F&B team made a recommendation to the PCC that the Parish Share for 2017 be maintained at the 2016 level of £42,000.

At the PCC meeting of 1st November 2016 Mr Oliver Home and Mr David Clarke were present, in order to outline the Diocese's financial situation and explain the changes that had been made by the Diocese in the methods for calculating the proposed Parish Share figure for each parish.

As a result of the presentation, the PCC decided that the Parish Share for 2017 should be increased to £45,000, albeit with a proviso that, in view of the deficit financial situation, it might be necessary to reconsider and reduce the sum during the course of the year. Nevertheless, with the intention of encouraging an increase in giving, it was also decided that a simplified budget be prepared and placed before the congregation before the New Year, to be followed by monthly updates.

Footnote.

The members of the F&B Team would wish to register their gratitude to Mr Barry Coltham for his services as Treasurer and to welcome Ms June Curry to the role.

G J Jeffery

22nd January 2017