



St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury

Annual Parochial Church Report

Presented at a meeting held on 22 April 2018

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 2017 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 2017.

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

PCC Members:

Rev Philip Rowe (Vicar)	Paul van Rossum (Associate Vicar)	
Liz Tierney (Churchwarden)	David Thomson (Churchwarden)	
Margaret Roberts (Lay Minister (resigned as a PCC Member))		
Mike Jenkinson (Lay Minister)	Astrid Domingo Molyneux (Lay Minister)	
Nick Roach (Treasurer)	Judi Thomson (PCC Secretary)	
Alison Rowe (Deanery Synod)	Clare Jefferis (Deanery Synod)	Bob Sharp (Deanery Synod)
Rosemary Griffiths	Mo Pearson	Jean Badman
Pam van Rossum	Corné Human	Dick Avery
Sandy Thompson	June Curry (resigned during the year)	

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 Pilning with Compton Greenfield, 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 MISSION AND WORSHIP REPORT

The mission of 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'. We are implementing 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.

We encourage each other to deepen our discipleship through Sunday worship, sermon series, daily devotions and small groups. We are growing leaders by encouraging everyone to use their gifts and offering the growing leaders course. The Messy Church and Oasis ministries continue to engage with the younger generation who find Sunday mornings difficult. Also, our children and young people's groups on Sunday mornings continue. I am grateful to all those involved in the ministry to our young people who have had to take up more responsibility after Joseph Nicholls moved on. We are now part of the proposed South Severnside Benefice linked with the parishes of Pilning and Compton Greenfield. This year we sold 14 Church Road to the Community Shop. At the time of writing we are waiting for the proceeds to be transferred from the Diocese. In due course the PCC will consider how this can be used to further the mission of St Mary's.

I am very grateful to all those who work so hard as part of this mission at St Mary's. Most of this is unseen, but I can assure you that is not unappreciated. It is truly amazing how much voluntary work is invested in this. It seems wrong to mention any names, but I would like to acknowledge two people whose terms of office come to an end at the AGM. The first is Sue Hewson who has

been our safeguarding officer for at least 22 years. In fact, her service goes back before safeguarding to child protection. She has performed this vital role with clarity, calmness and care for all the people touched by this. The other is Liz Tierney who steps down as Churchwarden to be our new safeguarding officer. She has worked incredibly hard keeping us organised including a year as the only warden. I am grateful to them and all who have worked hard over the past year. I would also like to acknowledge the personal support and hard work of Paul van Rossum as our Associate Vicar in bringing our re-ordering plans to being ready for applying for a faculty. Also, to Nick Roach for taking on the responsibility for being treasurer. A big thank you to all who have contributed to God's mission here.

Looking into next year we continue to work towards our three priorities. We hope permission for the reordering of the Church will be granted this year. This will enable us to be in better contact with each other and the community whilst retaining the prime focus of the use of the building to connect with God. We aim to continue to develop our Sunday worship and other groups during the week to grow our discipleship. I would ask us all to be positive in encouraging everyone to use their gifts in God's service so that we may grow in leadership and be able to identify future Church leaders. And in particular, with regards to engaging with the younger and all generations I am asking the PCC if we should focus on these three questions:

How can we bless the community?

How can we improve our invitation?

How can we improve our welcome?

Above all let us remember this is God's work for the glory of Jesus Christ. Please pray and do join me in praying on the last Saturday of each month at 9am in the Vicarage.

With my gratitude and prayers,

Philip Rowe

CHURCH WARDENS

It is the responsibility of the churchwardens to ensure the smooth running of services, along with the help of Duty Wardens. We have been encouraged that the additional services that have occurred over the past year – many of which have had increased attendances from previous years. Also, for these bigger services like Remembrance and Christingle Services, we have ensured 2 Duty Wardens to be available which seem to work well.

Both churchwardens have attended Training sessions provided by the Diocese as well as a Quiet Day especially for Churchwardens. Both have benefitted from these sessions.

The last 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. Another one has been arranged for March 17th 2018 which we will be serving bacon rolls.

I would like to thank those who help with the cleaning and maintenance of the church and church rooms. Also, we have a good team of flower arrangers, banner makers, and a good coffee rota for serving coffee after 9.15am and 10.45am services.

Liz Tierney is standing down as Churchwarden this year and she wishes to thank everyone who has supported over the past 4 years.

Liz Tierney and David Thomson

FINANCE AND BUILDINGS

This report highlights the main activities covered by the F&B Team. A more detailed report can be found in Appendix A.

Re-Ordering Proposals: George Chedburn presented the revised proposals to an open meeting on 14th November, and the PCC approved in principle these proposals. The final proposals are to be submitted to the DAC for a Faculty which will hopefully be granted during 2018. The currently estimated cost of the re-ordering is £130,000.

Refurbishment of the Bells: Faculties have been granted including the turning of the 7th bell. During the year, the ringing chamber lighting has been repositioned and a large access hatch in the bell tower has been reinstated, to allow the bells to be removed.

Fund raising has progressed slowly, and the bellringers are setting up a sponsorship scheme, with permission from the PCC. By the end of the year, approximately £13,000 of the current target of £97,620 had been raised.

Repair and Maintenance of the Church Fabric: The following items of repair and maintenance were carried out during the year: Turret Roof, Lightning Conductor, Church Doors, Porch Lighting and Choir Lighting.

The following items of repair and maintenance still need to be carried out: Damp Remediation of the South Wall of the Chancel and of the Lady Chapel, and various Masonry Repairs:

Appointment of Church Architect: George Chedburn had been appointed our church architect, replacing Paul Richold.

Churchyard: There have been 2 'Graveyard Parties' during the year where volunteers were encouraged to sign up to maintain their chosen grave plots.

The following items are still outstanding: Placing of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission sign, Safety of the Gravestones and Tombs report, and work on the safety of the ground gutter.

No.14 Church Road: The sale of 14 Church Road to ACSA completed on Monday 22nd January 2018.

Finance and Giving: Nick Roach accepted the appointment of Church Treasurer. The 2016 annual accounts were accepted after work on reconciliation of the accounts. The PCC approved an increase from £45,000 for 2017 to £48,750 for 2018 for the Annual Parish Share to the Diocese.

Conclusion: Graham Jeffery has decided to relinquish being Chair of F&B, and David Thomson will take on the role. Graham thanks the members of the Team for their work and support during the years of his tenure.

Graham Jeffery

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Having taken over as Treasurer in late 2017, I am grateful for all the support that I have been given to help me come up to speed on Church matters and to help me understand the complex (at least it was to me when I took over) financial history of the 2017 accounts.

Thanks to the hard work undertaken last year to tackle the growing deficit and the considerable generosity of our congregation, the 2017 account shows a significant improvement in our financial position. Not only have we been able to increase our contribution to the wider church in the Bristol area, we have also been able to increase our giving to missions and charities both in the UK and overseas.

A large team of voluntary helpers are involved in the challenging task of raising the funds needed to support our Church and our Mission. I have been pleasantly surprised by the large number of different activities that go to support this exercise from those who manage and contribute through gift aiding, donations, collections, running our fetes, creating and distributing the Lich Gate, coffee mornings and much more. And we must not forget all those who give their time to prepare food, cakes and the like for our many social occasions. This is a real community effort and deserves the heartfelt thanks of all who benefit from this hard but rewarding labour. We do however need a continual supply of new volunteers to maintain this good work, so if you have some free time we would be most grateful for your support.

Despite the relatively healthy position we find ourselves in, this coming year will present challenges. We have to find the funds to support major works— such as the Church remodelling and extending the life of our bells as well as the routine but very expensive work to maintain the Church fabric as it suffers attack from weather and the passage of time. We have also decided that we should increase our “Parish Share” – our giving to help those Parishes less well off than ourselves. These projects are essential to the continuing good health of the Church for us and future generations but totally dependent on our ability to raise the necessary funds. And of course this must not be at the expense of the many overseas and home based missions and charities that depend on us.

We have now sold 14 Church Road to the Village Shop Association which may sound like a source of new funds but in reality is a transformation of a generous gift to the Church (made several decades ago) from a property asset (with an associated high cost of ownership / repairs and maintenance) to an investment asset currently held in the safe hands of the Church of England fund management team. Last year, the rents from the village shop made a considerable contribution to our funds but I suspect that income from the Fund will be nowhere near comparable.

Nick Roach, Treasurer

CHURCH REORDERING

This report summarises the activity which took place in 2017 on the plans for the development of the church building to ensure that it best meets our needs.

Following consultations with Historic England (previously known as English Heritage), the Church Buildings Council and the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (the DAC) the PCC has fine-tuned the detail of the proposed works.

They are now:

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 house a small kitchen and servery. Social and circulation space would be along the North aisle and across the back of the church.

2. To move the font to the South East corner of the nave. Drawing on Olveston's experience of doing something similar this would provide a better location for baptism services as well as improving access to the new servery.
3. To improve access into and within the building by:
 - a. Installing a glass porch at the West Door and moving the Portico to the North Door.
 - b. To modify the steps into the church from the North Porch and add handrails.
 - c. To improve and make permanent the current temporary deep shallow steps between the choir stalls and the chancel which enable wheelchair access to the chancel.
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 redecorate the walls and ceiling of the Church on a like for like basis.

These plans will be considered by the DAC in March 2018 as the final informal stage of the process. A formal application for a faculty will then follow. The process for this includes opportunity for everyone to comment on the plans direct to the DAC.

Paul van Rossum

SAFEGUARDING – PROMOTING A SAFER 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.

The church endeavours 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.

In terms of Safeguarding, it is the duty of the PCC, with the incumbent, to promote a safer church for all in the church community, and to ensure there is a plan in place to raise awareness of, promote training and ensure that safeguarding is taken seriously by all those in the church community.

Because St Mary's Church provides activities for children and young people and provides pastoral care for vulnerable adults the PCC is classed as a charity. Members of the PCC, as trustee of that charity, are now eligible for DBS enhanced checks under the recommendation of the Church of England and Charity Commission.

St Mary's Church also 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 procedure and obtain Enhanced DBS clearance.

We currently have 34 volunteers who have been cleared to work with children. 11 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 4 people who have come off the list.

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 what safeguarding training has been done.

The Church of England now expects that all church paid staff and volunteers receive Safeguarding training appropriate to their level of involvement in church activities. The list of those eligible for training is quite extensive. At the moment, we are focusing on ensuring that all PCC members, Church Wardens and those working with children and vulnerable adults do the basic Church of England on-line training (C0). This can be accessed through <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/> Those volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults should also attend the taught Foundation Course (C1) provided by the Bristol Diocese. It is hoped that as many people as possible attended the course at St Helen's Church on Saturday 24th February 2018. Details will be sent to those eligible of future courses available. Church office will keep a record of all training undertaken so please notify the office of any C of E Safeguarding training undertaken.

By the time this report is published the annual Parish Safeguarding Audit will have been completed and returned to the Bristol Diocese.

The Safeguarding Policy and guidelines have been reviewed and rewritten using the Diocese of Bristol format. The policy was submitted in November 2017 to the PCC for approval. I informed Philip Rowe that I wished to step down from the role of Safeguarding Officer at the end of December 2017; having been in the role for many years. However, I agreed to stay on until the Annual Church Meeting in April 2018 so that Liz Tierney, who had agreed to take on the role, would be able complete her term of office as Church Warden. I wish Liz well in her role as PSO.

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

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

ALMONDSBURY CHOIR REPORT

This report covers the activities of the choir since I took up the post of organist and choirmaster in February 2017.

The choir currently numbers 11; five sopranos, three altos, one tenor and two basses, although recently two members have been absent through illness. We look forward to their return to the ranks shortly. Grateful thanks go to the supernumerary members of the choir, Mike Jenkinson and Astrid Domingo Molyneux, for their readiness to reinforce the choir for big services.

The choir has continued to sing weekly at the 9.15 service, singing choral settings of the Eucharist, including Common Prayer once a month, and canticles at Morning Prayer, held on

the first Sunday of the month; these services always include an anthem, which the choir sings either unaccompanied or supported by the organ. The choir sings at other services as they fall due. 'Last Hour' on Good Friday saw a performance of the fine devotion 'The Cross of Christ' led by Margaret Roberts; the Advent service of six lessons and carols was also well received. The choir also sang at several weddings last year and the members continue to be happy to volunteer their services for funerals.

Hymns, anthems and psalms are chosen by the choirmaster; without sticking rigidly to the lectionary, they are chosen as far as possible to be in keeping with the liturgy as the church year proceeds. The library contains much fine devotional music which deserves a wider audience. Last year the choir performed Caleb Simper's fine anthems 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem' and 'Seed Time and Harvest.' We will be singing these again this year, also Rutter's arrangement of "All things bright and beautiful" and Croft's "Comfort O Lord, the soul of thy servant".

My aims as choirmaster continue to be to enlarge still further the choir's repertoire of anthems and hymn tunes, and to introduce a stronger focus on Psalms. In this connection I was delighted to be presented by the choir with 'Life in the Psalms', a beautifully written essay on the pilgrimage through Lent to Holy Week, viewed through the prism of the psalms. As I am writing this report during Lent Patrick Woodhouse's book has a particular resonance; it has pride of place on my bookshelf.

In respect of psalm singing, we have reverted to singing psalms in parts, rather than antiphonally; in my view this is more satisfying musically and more rewarding for the choir.

In January of this year Philip, our Vicar, was licensed to St. Peter's Church, Pilning, and the choir attended the special service. As in the past, the choir combined with their Special Choir; three hymns were sung and John Rutter's Clare Benediction. It was a privilege to mark the occasion with this example of teamwork, and I hope there may be more opportunities in future for this pleasant collaboration.

There is a wealth of experience and enthusiasm in the choir. However, more members are needed, particularly basses and tenors. There were no replies to a call for more members in Lich Gate last autumn, so the issue of recruitment will again be addressed over the next few months.

It has been, and continues to be, a great pleasure to work with the choir and with the entire church community.

Matthew Thomas, Organist and Choir Master

PRAISE GROUP REPORT

The past year has seen the Praise Group develop, in terms of both style and members.

We have gently evolved our style of leading worship to include the occasional use of quiet music over prayer, giving prominence to particular instruments at certain times and generally trying to provide an appropriate backdrop in which people are drawn to worship God. We have received positive feedback to date, so will continue to try and evolve in this area, with sensitivity and humility. We thank God for the blessing of having a congregation which responds so well to the leading we attempt to give.

The group varies according to who is available at any one time; it currently includes Sandy (Guitar/Vocals), Astrid (Saxophone/Vocals), Steve (Trumpet), Susan (Bass guitar) Joe/Jenefer (Congas), Sue (Vocals) Simon (Guitar) and me (Keyboard/Vocals).

Much as we enjoy playing together, we love it when others join us, for one week, or longer. If anyone is nursing a desire to be involved in this way, or would like to explore their gifts further, we would encourage them to talk it through with either me or Sandy Thompson.

Mike Jenkinson

REPORT ON BRISTOL WEST DEANERY SYNOD

Bristol West Deanery Synod met three times in 2017: in February at Holy Trinity Westbury-on-Trym; in May 2017 at St Mary's Stoke Bishop and October at St. Peter's, Henleaze.

During the year, Synod heard presentations on:

- Reflections on the discussion from last October's synod on **engaging younger generations**
- Yvonne Penn, who spoke about the **Sailors' Society**
- Welcome to new members and a presentation and discussion on the **Role of the Deanery Synod**
- A presentation from Nadine Parkinson of **Tearfund** on the **Participatory Evaluation Process (PEP)** - a programme by which churches can support work in Uganda by bringing radical transformation to communities in Uganda;
- A presentation from Clare Fussell, **Diocesan Giving and Resources Adviser**.
- Presentation, small group discussions and prayer time for the **appointment of the next Bishop of Bristol**, led by Mat Ineson
- Rebecca Cross from St Edyth's Sea Mills spoke on **Transforming Lives for Good (TLG)**, an initiative which supports children struggling in primary schools, mobilising churches to help and support local schools. TLG can assist with resources and training.
- Regular updates from the Uganda link committee

At the next synod meeting following these presentations, there was feedback from group activities carried out at the meetings.

Meeting in different churches has enabled an appreciation of reordering projects.

The synod was kept abreast of parish vacancies and those filled within the deanery.

Elections for a new Deanery Synod and Deanery Leadership Team were held in the spring. Bristol West remains represented in General Synod in both the House of Clergy, and the House of Laity.

Please see Appendix B – a report from the Deanery Synod Branch Secretary.

Clare Jefferis, Deanery Synod member

THANKS

The PCC employs Matthew Thomas as Organist and Choirmaster and Judi Thomson as Personal Assistant to the Vicar. 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 13 March 2018 for presentation to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 22 April 2018.



St Mary the Virgin, Almondsbury

Reports from Organisations

Distributed with the Annual Parochial Church Report

Presented at a meeting held on 22 April 2018

MOTHERS UNION

2017 has been another busy and varied year for MU, and, as always, the generous support of MU members has meant that our fund-raising has been fruitful and enjoyable.

Philip kindly took the chair for our AGM in January, when all officers and committee members were re-elected for a further year. We welcomed Joy Latham who spoke to us about Tools with a Mission, St. Mary's outward giving charity for January 2017. In February, our Diocesan President, Aurea Hart spoke with real enthusiasm about MU and how she sees its future development.

Judith kindly hosted our March meeting, a Coffee and Bring and Buy evening for our MU charities. It was a successful evening, much enjoyed by all. Mike Jenkinson was the speaker at our April meeting when he gave us an interesting insight into his career with the police force. We're looking forward to the next instalment!

Members enjoyed a visit to Lindors Christian Retreat Centre in the Forest of Dean for our May outing, when Gill Carne was able to join us for the day. It was a beautiful day and the lovely gardens and lunch were enjoyed by all. In June, we had an in-house speaker when Margaret Roberts shared with us the life of St. Francis of Assisi with computer animation. We were all given a book mark showing St. Francis, as were some of the residents at The Glebe.

On July 2nd, MU members ran a couple of stalls at the vicarage garden cream tea, raising funds for our charities and towards the end of July we enjoyed our "summer supper" in Chris' garden. The weather was very kind to us and we were able to eat outdoors. The Deanery Lunch in August was held at Horfield.

In September, we welcomed John Poarch to lead our communion and "wave of prayer" service and in October we tried a games evening, which worked well. We had to meet in church at short notice as the floor in the OSH had been dug up for urgent drainage repairs. We also had our regular invitation to join St. Chad's Tuesday Fellowship meeting in October.

November means it's "annual dinner" time and 34 members and friends enjoyed a meal and entertainment. Mark Weaver provided the musical accompaniment and was so pleased with our singing, he's offered to come back next year!.....and so to December, when we joined with other branches for the MU Advent Service and then on December 18th, Margaret Hewitt led our Carols and Readings, an evening always enjoyed by members and friends. Ros very kindly played for our carols and the evening ended with the serving of mulled wine and mince pies.

Members continue to be involved in many activities within the church, the school, the village and the wider community. Lastly, but by no means least, our thanks go to Judith for her leadership during the year and for hosting our regular committee meetings.

Thanks also Philip and to John Poarch for their support.

Chris Coltham (Branch Secretary)

FRIDAY CLUB

The club has continued to meet on the first Friday of the month on a regular basis except for January and August when the hall is closed. Membership stays at 15. New members would be very much welcomed. Members enjoyed the Christmas party when the children from Almondsbury primary school came to sing carols and the Christmas Dinner at the Swan Tockington. Thank you, Almondsbury Charities for funding this. Tea at Pat Yards home was very much enjoyed. Thank you, Pat. Meals, out on the third Friday of the month have proved popular. The new year starts on the 2nd February 2018 at 2pm in the O.S.H.

Margaret Roberts

FLOWER ARRANGERS

We have had a good year flower arranging – week by week – including weddings. Thanks are due to all arrangers for their loyalty and willingness to do a ‘second week’ as we are now so few in number. We do our best to choose colours requested by wedding couples and keep to the colouring of the main Church festivals of Easter, Christmas, Pentecost, and Harvest too. We continue to do flower arrangements round the pillars for special occasions and festivals and appreciate the kind comments received from visitors to the Church and congregation also.

We would still like to have more flower arrangers – doing a pillar with four small arrangements might be a good start – so if anyone reading this would like to join us, please get in touch – telephone 01454 613824 for more information. We should be very pleased to hear from you.

Margaret Hewitt, Flower Organizer

THE LICH GATE

This has been a successful year for our magazine. We have produced a good quality, glossy colour publication, on time, each month that we publish. It does take a lot of work to get a 52 page magazine delivered to so many homes each month.

During the year we lost 2 stalwarts from our team. Sue Hewson stood down as the PCC representative and Jane Clark handed over the distribution manager reins after 15 years. We were very grateful that Alison Rowe and Raymond Daniels respectively offered their services as successors.

Advertising revenue has been maintained at a good level. We are indebted to Pam von Rossum for the excellent job she continues to do in that vital area.

Two new contributors have proved to be super acquisitions. Nick Davis has provided excellent features and photographs, including several cover shots, during the year and Andrew Western has regularly been featured via his top class paintings.

A whole list of local organisations, ranging from the Community Shop to the Little Almonds, consistently provide interesting articles which have been widely appreciated. But, we will always welcome more!

The new look web-site has been greatly appreciated and the number of ‘hits’ it is attracting bears that out very well. We are able to get contributions put on there within hours rather than having to wait for the next publishing date for the printed magazine.

The Lich Gate now has a regular deadline of the 3rd Monday each of the 10 months that we print. This is far simpler to understand and gives the various writers a little more time each month to include up to date news.

Print costs have risen by around 3% at the start of 2018. Hopefully we will maintain a healthy number of advertisers to maintain the quality and profitability of the magazine.

Finally, a big thank you to all those people who have taken the trouble to contact the team to say some (generally) complimentary things about The Lich Gate. It makes all the hours of effort each month worthwhile, whether it has been spent on design, print, distribution or obtaining advertisers.

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 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 2017 the children's groups included a combine crèche and Key Stage 1 group (led by Celia Jenkinson), a Key Stage 2 group (led by Pam van Rossum) and a Key Stage 3/4 group (led by Corne Human).

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

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

Finally, I would like to express our appreciation to everyone who works to ensure that all our children have the opportunity to grow and develop in their walk with Christ.

Paul van Rossum

BABIES AND TODDLERS GROUP

Our Toddler group is going well. We have had a lot of new mums join recently. Two new families, who have just moved into the village, saw our sign up, came in and enjoyed it. We have started having fruit and stories half way through the session which is working well. Sandy takes in story sacks from the library which keep the children sitting for longer so they eat more fruit. We are hoping to fundraise for a coffee machine similar to the one in church for the group.

Sandy Thompson

OASIS GROUP

This year has seen the ongoing growth of FAITH and FELLOWSHIP of parents, children and helpers of OASIS, as well as numbers. The theme of this year from September 2017 to July 2018 is "THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL POINT TO JESUS THE MESSIAH."

This has been an opportunity to see how the Old Testament and New Testament form one book written by GOD. Starting in September we saw how JESUS met 2 disciples after His resurrection on the ROAD TO EMMAUS and told them about the PROPHETS who saw His coming. The times of WORSHIP led by Sandy are a way of coming into God's presence as a community.

We began in OCTOBER with MOSES opening up the Red Sea and rescuing His people from slavery. Then we showed how JESUS rescues us from the slavery of SIN. We use DRAMA as a teaching tool and this is very popular with children and parents alike, though often very lively!

ISAIAH in Chapters 6 and 9 in NOVEMBER was the prophet who had a VISION of the LORD and that a SON would be born to us. Sue's CRAFTS are always an inspiration to all and bring a calmness on the gathering as children work with parents and helpers.

In DECEMBER MICAH in Chapter 5 told us about the PLACE OF JESUS' BIRTH in Bethlehem. Our nativity tableau gives the opportunity for PRAYER and remembering how both simple shepherds as well as wise people were drawn to JESUS.

In JANUARY ISAIAH informed us about the CHARACTER of the MESSIAH in Is. 42 and this was a way of taking hold of GOD'S HAND in TRUST like a child for the coming year, and to be assured HE is watching over us whatever happens.

February was cancelled due to a helper being away and an accident to another, so in MARCH we will look at DANIEL who had visions of the SECOND COMING of JESUS, His KINGDOM and the days before HIS RETURN. There His disciples will shine like STARS IN THE UNIVERSE and lead many to JESUS.

The team work together well and start with PRAYER before parents and children arrive. There is much HUMOUR and parents are very grateful for the commitment to them and their families, along of course with all the various activities in the rest of the week of the whole church family. Parents VALUE the time Philp gives when he comes in at the end of OASIS.

We value the PRAYERS of the whole church who support us and all children's work and would take this opportunity of thanking them for their encouragement.

Jan Cooper and team (Sandy, Sue, Ro and Michael)

MESSY CHURCH

We are thrilled with the way Messy church has been received in Almondsbury. It has been running for 2 years now and we meet monthly on a Wednesday afternoon. Food is a necessary requisite! This month its fish fingers and chips! to go with the story of Peter the fisherman, and last month we had a banquet with over 30 children enjoying cakes, jellies, sausages and squash.

Whilst sitting at long tables across the front of the church we were able to show the you tube of the great banquet whilst they ate!

It's followed by story, acting time and singing. A range of different craft activities around the church enable children to come and go, some come in after attending after school clubs. The ages range from 0-90.

Other events have included a summer trip to Avon Valley Country Park and a party in the vicarage garden complete with bouncy castle

It is as much about building relationships with families who can't always attend on Sundays and church in the week is a great alternative.

For many the Bible stories are new and so it's a wonderful privilege to share our faith.

Please pray as the work expands, more helpers are needed, it's great to see a new generation of young mums leading the groups and children having ownership of the church building.

Thanks to all who help

Ali Rowe.

CATERING COMMITTEE

The catering team consists of 6 members led by Alison Rowe.

We have provided the catering for several events during 2017 which included the Pancake Breakfast (February), Lent Lunches (March), a cooked dinner for Marriage Prep Course (March), a cooked meal for the African Children's Choir (May), Cream Teas at the Garden Party (July), Ploughman's lunch after the Open-Air Service (July), Harvest Supper (September). Also, we have devised a regular slot for volunteers for the coffee each Sunday morning, as well as continue helping 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

BELLRINGERS

The bellringers had another active year in 2017 ringing for Sunday services, every wedding that requested bells, and for four special services: the evening Carol service, one of the Christingle services, and for Remembrance Sunday when the bells were rung half-muffled. Attendance at practise was good and it was very rare that we did not ring all eight bells. We rang four quarter peals and touches of two methods we had not attempted before. We continued to train the three new ringers who joined in 2016 - all are making excellent progress.

Outside the tower we continued to monitor the clock and Church floodlighting and to tend our adopted flower beds either side of the West door. We hosted the District AGM raising £105 for the restoration of the bells.

After almost 120 years the bells need extensive renovation which will cost almost £100,000. During 2017 a beginning was made on this work. A hatch was installed in the ringing chamber ceiling to allow the bells to be removed from the tower and wiring which was blocking the hatch in the chamber floor was moved. New and much improved lighting was installed in the ringing chamber. The bellringers are now ready to remove the bells so that they can be turned meaning that the bell clappers will no longer strike on places where the bells are becoming very worn. This is the most expensive and most necessary part of the work and it cannot proceed until the bellringers have raised at least £48,000.

Adam Mead – Tower Secretary

APPENDIX A: FINANCE AND BUILDINGS FULL REPORT

Re-Ordering Proposals:

Progress with the re-ordering proposals for the installation of disabled access toilet and new kitchen/servery 'pod' facilities has been protracted, as a result of the necessary discussions and consultations with interested parties. During August and September, there were site visits from representatives of Historic England and the Church Buildings Council, following which further development of the proposals was carried out by the Architect.

Mr George Chedburn presented his revised proposals to an open meeting in Church on 14th November, following which the proposals were considered and approved in principle by the PCC. Accordingly, Mr Chedburn was asked to finalise his proposals in support of the submission of a formal Petition for a Faculty, which would be prepared by the Revd Paul van Rossum. However, with the possible requirement for further revisions, followed by the display of public notices and the consideration of any objections, it is unlikely that a Faculty will be granted before the middle of 2018.

The currently estimated cost of the re-ordering is £130,000.

Refurbishment of the Bells:

A Faculty for the refurbishment of the bells was granted in February 2017. However, tuning of the seventh bell had to be removed from the Petition, following an objection from the Church Buildings Council. In response to this, a detailed justification for the tuning was prepared by Mr Gerry Annis, our Steeplekeeper, which was forwarded to Dr David Knight of the CBC, who withdrew the objection.

The case was then submitted for consideration by the Chancellor and, after some administrative delays, a Further Order was granted on 29th November, which permits the tuning, together with an extension of the Faculty to February 2019.

The ringing chamber lighting has been repositioned and a large access hatch in the ceiling of the ringing chamber has been reinstated, in order to allow the removal of the bells.

Unfortunately, fund raising has progressed more slowly than was anticipated at the beginning of the year. Consequently, the bellringers requested permission to set up a sponsorship scheme, permission for which was granted by the PCC at its November meeting. It is also understood that the management of the Bowl Inn is considering a fund-raising scheme, following a takeover by a local brewery.

At the end of the year, approximately £13,000 of the current target of £97,620 had been raised.

Repair and Maintenance of the Church Fabric:

The following items of repair and maintenance were carried out during the year:

Turret Roof:

The lead on the roof of the turret, which gives access to the tower, was replaced with new lead in June, following approval by the Archdeacon on 24th May 2017. The total cost of the work was £1,728 (including VAT), which was funded by a grant of £1,440 from Almondsbury Charity. It should be noted that the VAT element of any repair costs is not met by the charity.

Lightning Conductor:

A continuity gap in the lightning conductor tape on the roof of the North Transept was rectified in May, at the same time as the rainwater gutters and hoppers were cleared by the steeplejacks. However, this work identified further problems with a high resistance connection of the conductor high on the spire and the need for more substantial repairs.

Rectification of this problem also necessitated the installation of a second conductor tape on the spire, in order to accord with recommended best practice. This work was carried out in September, at a total cost of £2,517 (including VAT), funded by a grant of £2,098 from Almondsbury Charity.

It was also brought to our notice that lightning protection for the building was deficient in that there was no cross-bonding with the earth of the 'house' electrical circuits, which would also require a surge protection device. The installation was carried out at the end of October at a cost of £1,190 (plus VAT). Not being a repair, the work was ineligible for a grant from Almondsbury Charity.

The lightning protection system for the Church is now fully compliant with the latest standards.

Church Doors:

Following a resolution from the PCC, the repair and repainting of the boiler room door, the turret and ringing chamber doors, and the west doors, in their existing Oxford Blue colour, was approved by the Archdeacon on 29th March 2017. Unfortunately, however, an error in the application process delayed the approval of a grant from Almondsbury Charity until September. Inclement weather also resulted in successive delays and work did not start until January 2018.

In the first instance, the west doors were not to be included in the work, as the PCC had determined that they should be done as part of the proposed re-ordering. Consequently, the grant of £1,200 did not include the west doors. However, work on them was started in error by the painters, which necessitated them being repainted.

Porch Lighting:

In March of 2017, following repeated representations because of health and safety concerns, concealed LED strip lighting was installed on the interior of the door frame above the north porch outer door. This was done on a temporary basis, pending a List B approval from the Archdeacon, which was subsequently granted on 29th August 2017.

Unfortunately, because of the arrangement of the electrical circuits in the porch, the current trailing lead connection cannot easily be replaced with permanent wiring. The problem is under discussion with our electrician, but a permanent solution may have to await the re-ordering work in the porch. As part of this work, it is also intended to add low-powered exterior lighting above the outer door.

Choir Lighting:

The floodlight luminaires in the choir have recently become increasingly unreliable, to the extent that one had to be removed during the year. It was not possible to source an exact like-for-like replacement and the use of a modern, but very similar LED equivalent was found to be necessary.

In view of the noticeably different lighting quality, compounded by the reliability issues, it was decided that all four units should be replaced as a matter of urgency, which was done in early November. It should be noted that the new lights consume substantially less power than, for example, the four fluorescent tubes in the porch.

The installation was approved retrospectively by the PCC and it was agreed that the cost of the installation, £697-20 (including VAT), would be sought from the H R Stephens Bequest.

The following items of repair and maintenance have yet to be progressed:

Damp Remediation of the South Wall of the Chancel and of the Lady Chapel:

A comprehensive damp survey was carried out in December 2016 by Mr George Chedburn, following which a detailed report was submitted to the PCC. The report gave an estimated cost of £12,300 for the proposed work on the Chancel and Lady Chapel.

The F&B Team considered that, since the work would require a specialist contractor and effective project management, it would benefit from professional oversight. Accordingly, a proposal was submitted to the PCC that Mr Chedburn be appointed to provide a project management function, to include the identification and selection of suitable contractors. Mr Chedburn's fees would be 15 percent of the costs of the works, plus VAT and expenses. The proposal was approved by the PCC at its November meeting and Mr Chedburn was duly informed.

It should be noted that, following receipt of Mr Chedburn's report, the PCC had approved in principle an application to Almondsbury Charity for a substantial grant. The secretary to the Charity was duly informed of this intention. However, a formal application, accompanied by quotations, will be required before the Trustees can give it their consideration. Rather than requiring a Faculty, it is hoped that, with supporting information supplied by Mr Chedburn, a List B application may be approved by the Archdeacon.

Various Masonry Repairs:

Repairs to the following areas have been outstanding for some time: i) the plinths at the bases of the pillars to the left of the north porch door; ii) some coping stones on the drainage trench parapet wall on the south side of the Church; iii) areas of masonry on the turret on the south side of the Church; iv) masonry around the ringing chamber doorway.

Progress on these works has been held in abeyance, with a view to including them in the Faculty for the re-ordering work. However, with the changes to the rules in 2016, provided that the repairs are subject to professional advice, a List B approval from the Archdeacon may be acceptable, following consultation with the DAC.

It is hoped that, following discussions with our Architect, these works can be progressed during 2018-19.

Appointment of Church Architect:

During 2017, the PCC was informed that Mr Paul Richold was relinquishing his position as our Church Architect, in which, within this role, he is expected to carry out the five-yearly Quinquennial Inspection.

Mr George Chedburn had been selected competitively to act as Architect for the re-ordering, which the F&B Team felt accorded with the DAC's requirements for a selection process. Accordingly, the team felt able to recommend that the PCC invite Mr Chedburn to become our Church Architect, subject to a final approval by the DAC. This was agreed by the PCC at its November meeting and the decision was notified to the DAC.

Churchyard:

Tree Pruning:

Tree pruning, in accordance with current permissions, was carried out in November by Mr Mac Sleet, a retired tree surgeon. Dead branches, which represented a potential hazard to pedestrians, were removed from the tree in the north-west corner of the churchyard. However, the tree is considered to be in a poor state of health and, if it becomes a significant hazard, being so close to the road, it may have to be removed.

Flagpole:

The placing of a Commonwealth War Graves Commission sign on the base of the flagpole, which has been approved by the Archdeacon, is awaited. However, it is intended that the pole should also be repainted, which will require the use of a crane to lower the pole.

Churchyard Maintenance:

Mrs Alison Rowe organised two "graveyard parties" during the year, in June and October. Volunteers were encouraged to 'sign up' to maintain their chosen grave plots. The edges of the churchyard paths were also cleared.

In the spring, the ground gutter on the south side of the Church was cleared of accumulated autumn leaves, debris and growing weeds.

Safety of Gravestones and Tombs:

The safety of various headstones and tombs remains a continuing concern and securing those that might present a risk must be considered in due course. Unfortunately, a report from Dr Jonathan Berry, of Cadw, on our listed chest tombs and any relevant advice on conservation must await his recovery from a serious accident.

Safety of Ground Gutter:

The safety issues of the ground gutter on the south side of the church, which is over 2 metres deep, have long been of concern to our insurer. Plans were progressing for the installation of estate railings as long ago as 2009 but were abandoned for various reasons. Nevertheless, to

maintain our indemnity, we are expected to proceed towards a solution in due course, if only slowly.

It has been established for some time that estate railings continue to be acceptable to our insurer and to the Conservation Officer at SGC, notwithstanding a suggestion from a DAC representative that horizontal grilles should be considered. However, a Faculty will be required, probably also involving consultations with Historic England and the CBC. Listed Building Consent and planning approval from SGC will also be required. The bureaucratic process will, therefore, be protracted.

In the first instance, it was intended that a preliminary application for a Faculty would be lodged during 2017, with the intention of initiating the consultation process and establishing the acceptability of estate railings. Unfortunately, the workload described elsewhere in this report has delayed the preparation of an application.

Church Rooms:

At the beginning of the year discussions were initiated with Dr Lockyer, at his request, with a view to the practice purchasing the Church Rooms. These progressed during the year, with various issues arising, including the need for a Charities Act Disposition Report and the professional fees that this would attract.

During the latter part of the year, it became public knowledge that Almondsbury Surgery was in the process of negotiating a merger with Hanham Health. The outcome of this and whether the practice would wish to proceed with the purchase has yet to be clarified.

The PCC has an obligation, in accordance with the terms of the lease, to pay a proportion of maintenance, service and repair costs for the building. During October, urgent repairs were required to the roof, because of a leak that had affected a consulting room in the surgery, which required a contribution from the PCC.

In addition, both exterior and interior redecoration had become due during the year. Accordingly, the surgery management had arranged for the exterior redecoration to be carried out during the autumn. Because of inclement weather, the work was not carried out and remains outstanding. Interior redecoration of the Church Rooms is also outstanding. The PCC is responsible for a proportion of the costs of the former and the full cost of the latter.

No.14 Church Road:

Following amicable discussions between the PCC and ACSA Ltd, the sale and purchase of No.14 Church Road was agreed, at a purchase price of £350,000. To fund this, ACSA issued a prospectus for the purchase of community share in October. It is understood that the total subscribed covered the purchase price, plus an amount for urgent maintenance.

Exchange of contracts and completion took place on Monday 22nd January 2018.

Finance and Giving:

Treasurer:

Following the resignation of Ms June Curry earlier in the year, Mr Nick Roach accepted an appointment by the PCC as our new Treasurer. He was welcomed as a member of the F&B Team for the first time at its October meeting.

Annual Accounts:

Difficulties were encountered early in the year in respect of the finalising of the annual accounts for 2016. Reconciliation of the accounts took some time and professional advice was sought, prior to their acceptance by the PCC.

In view of the problems that were experienced, it was recommended and agreed that, for consistency of accounting from year to year, a computer-based accounting package should be purchased.

Parish Share and Giving:

With the position of Treasurer being vacant at the time, the F&B Team was unable to make a considered recommendation to the PCC in respect of the Annual Parish Share before the end of October, as required by the Diocese. Nevertheless, the PCC felt able to respond positively to the proposal from the Diocese and approved an increase from £45,000 for 2017 to £48,750 for 2018.

Proceeds from the Sale of No.14 Church Road:

Following the sale of No.14 Church Road, it was recognised by the F&B Team that the disposition of the proceeds will require due consideration by the PCC, since it may be prudent to consider using a proportion for capital expenditure. Accordingly, the Treasurer and the Team stand ready to offer advice on this matter during 2018.

Conclusion:

With increasing absences due to family and other commitments during 2017 and further absences planned in 2018, G J Jeffery decided that he must relinquish his position as Chair of the F&B Team. He does, nevertheless, wish to continue as a member of the Team. Having acted as Chair for the last time on 2nd January 2018, he wishes to thank the members of the Team for work and their support during the years of his tenure.

More particularly, thanks are due to the Revd Paul van Rossum for his dedication and persistence in, almost single-handedly, progressing the re-ordering proposals through the numerous and protracted administrative processes. Thanks, are also due to Mr Gerry Anniss, our Steeplekeeper, and Mr Stephen Crane, our Tower Captain, for their dedicated work in support of the bells refurbishment project.

Beyond these current high-profile (and high-cost) projects, there will be the more mundane, but very necessary repair and maintenance activities for the F&B Team to address, which will continue to arise in such an ancient building. In addition, there will almost certainly be other high-cost works, which will emerge in future years. *Graham Jeffery.*

APPENDIX B: BRISTOL WEST DEANERY SYNOD BRANCH SECRETARY REPORT

Bristol West Deanery Synod met three times in 2017. The meeting in February, held at Holy Trinity Westbury-on-Trym, began with a look forward to the celebrations to mark the parish's 1300th anniversary held later in the year. Synod discussed ideas for engaging younger generations and heard a presentation about the Sailors' Society, which provides pastoral care to seafarers.

The triennial Deanery Synod elections took place in the spring, and the newly elected Synod met in May at St Mary's Stoke Bishop. Thanks were expressed to David McGregor, who stood down as Lay Chair after nine years' service; Helen Clifton was elected as his successor. The new Synod spent some time in small groups discussing ideas for future Synods, including sharing ideas for best practice, social and political issues, and local mission. There were presentations from Clare Fussell (Diocesan Giving and Resources Adviser) on resourcing ministry and mission, and Nadine Parkinson (Tearfund) on PEP (Participatory Evaluative Process), a community development programme in northern Uganda, in which Christ Church Clifton is taking part.

The October meeting, held at St Peter's Henleaze, was given over to a presentation and group discussion on the appointment of the next Bishop of Bristol. Members of Synod and others present spent time in prayer for the appointment and discussed in small groups what impact they thought the next Bishop should make and what qualities he or she will need; the views expressed were passed back to the Vacancy-in-See Committee.

The link with northern Uganda continues to be active, and we will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2019. A fund has been opened to assist the one million south Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda.

The new Avonside Mission Area – comprising St Mary's Stoke Bishop, St Edyth's Sea Mills, St Mary's Shirehampton, St Peter's Lawrence Weston and St Andrew's Avonmouth – was launched in October. The Revd Simon Potter has recently been appointed as Associate Vicar for the Mission Area, a new post funded by the Church Commissioners' Strategic Development Fund.

The Revd John Monaghan was instituted as Vicar of Sea Mills in October, and the Revd David Moss was licensed as Priest-in-Charge of North Severnside in November. There is an ongoing pastoral reorganisation of the Severnside parishes under way. When this is complete, David will be responsible for North Severnside (Alveston, Olveston, Elberton, Littleton-upon-Severn and Aust), and the Revd Philip Rowe for South Severnside (Almondsbury, Compton Greenfield, and Pilning and Severn Beach). David, Philip and the parishes are already operating in these partnerships.

Brendan Biggs
Acting Deanery Secretary