

The Parish of St Lawrence with St Paul, Longridge



REPORTS FROM THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL MEETING, 29th April 2019

The Vicar's Clergy report is printed within The Log

Churchwarden's Report, *presented by Vernon Kinrade*

The past year could be said to have been characterised by two opposite, yet complimentary, perspectives: On the one hand, as we know, we've been "Celebrating the Past", on the other, we've been "Looking to the Future". Let's face it, If you don't know where you've been, it's hard to know where to go.

Well, the frenetic level of activity and commitment that went into preparing exhibitions and events to celebrate our 150 years as an Ecclesiastical Parish left us in little doubt as to where we've been and we're grateful to all who worked so tirelessly to make the celebrations such a resounding success, especially Dot Little, the main driving force behind delivering the initiative. With Rev'd Mike still relatively new in post, 2017 was very much a year of taking stock and then establishing solid foundations for future growth. That's why the PCC, under the Vicar's guidance, set about the process of canvassing opinions from our worshipping community. What do we think works well? What are our strengths - and where are we weak? The exercise threw up some interesting points and, perhaps not surprisingly indicated that, while we like to see ourselves as an active church family, on the whole, we're not in the first flush of youth and, if we are to survive as a healthy parish, we need to grow our congregation by engaging families and younger people. Out of this, at length, was borne the concept of "Following Jesus in Loving Community", articulating our wish to bring new people to faith and enliven our witness.

We then did two things that we've been talking about doing for a number of years; firstly to assess - formally - the talents which exist within our congregation and secondly to encourage prayerful thought into how we can continue to fund our activities and our two churches on a better and more predictable footing - both of which will greatly assist the process of achieving our aims. Thank you all for your positive response.

I'm sure the Vicar will elaborate on this subject within his report, so I'll not dwell further at this time, other than to acknowledge his not inconsiderable skill and tact in steering the PCC and encouraging frank discussion in areas we have too often preferred to steer around.

It is my intention to step down from the role of Churchwarden. I've been doing this "second stint" for two years - which is a year longer than I had intended.

In leaving office, I'd like to express my thanks to those who have supported me in the role, especially deputy wardens Dorothy Laver and Mae Heys, who have kindly agreed to continue in their roles a while longer. I'd also like to thank the loyal band of sidespeople who have proved themselves not only competent in assisting to set up for Sunday worship but also - and just as importantly - in welcoming members of the congregation. We've lost a few sidesmen and women over the past year, but it's good to be welcoming some new faces as a result of the "time and talents" exercise and I see that succession as a healthy sign. One sign that's less healthy and continues to be a cause for concern is declining attendance at the 8.00 a.m. Sunday service. Should we reach a position where numbers regularly fall below ten - including clergy and sidespeople - logic dictates that the service may become a casualty within the context of providing a range of Sunday worshipping options with the aim of growth. I'll be handing over *my* baton to Chris Page, with whom I have served as warden in the past and whom I know to be a safe and capable pair of hands. I know Chris will echo my disappointment, though, that we have been unable to identify, from within our number, another warden to serve alongside him. While being a Churchwarden is quite a responsible task, it is made a good deal easier when it's a shared ministry and with two churches in our parish, it could be argued that we'd not be over-represented by two pairs of wardens. I would commend the issue to your prayerful thought.

We are indeed blessed to be part of such a vibrant church community and it's good to see links with our Church School becoming stronger under Mrs Parkin's headship.

I'd like to thank all who contribute to the life of our church - it's often surprising how things just get done through small acts of kindness and dedication and it would be invidious to pick out one group for fear of overlooking another. What's important is that we all act as a team and are all pointed in roughly the same direction. That's what loving community is, after all - and that's how we'll best serve our Lord.

Report on Fabric – presented by Vernon Kinrade

We know, because we all live in houses or flats, that the fabric of buildings is something that requires constant monitoring and attention. Well, if it's true of our own homes it's certainly true in the case of God's House – but on a somewhat larger scale. It's this scale which makes many of the tasks in our church buildings challenging and costly. Working at Height legislation, quite rightly, demands the use of scaffolding for access in all but the simplest situations and, more often than not, the provision of appropriate access equipment will be the largest cost constituent of a maintenance task. It's no longer possible to just send a man up a ladder!

I mention this to give a sense of context, because what it means is that upkeep of our Church buildings is a costly business and is one of the reasons why we need to budget realistically, setting aside appropriate sums for maintenance. If we don't, then we will always be reliant on ad-hoc fund-raising initiatives in order to tackle the kind of work that typically arises out of the Quinquennial Inspections at both churches.

The aisle roofs at St Paul's are a case in point. We've made good progress in raising funds, which now stand at a little over £61,000 but we are now into our third year of fund raising and, with the exception of a donation from *All Churches Trust*, we have so far found difficulty in engaging the support of third-party fund-holders. Having now enlisted the experienced support of Ali Ng and Rosemary Lyons we are in useful dialogue with, among others, the Heritage Lottery Fund, upon whose advice we are now minded to tackle the project in two halves. Inevitably, it will cost more to do it this way (again, because of access) but we are at a point now where if we don't act soon on the North side - where the problem seems most acute - we feel we are likely to be risking serious damage to the underlying roof timbers.

Whether we are ultimately successful in gaining financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund to complete the project or not, we are now - mostly through the generosity of parishioners and the local community - at least in a position to make a start and the PCC thanks you for your continued generosity and patience.

Meanwhile, there are some issues related to the tower at St Paul's which also require attention. Again, because of the height, scaffolding is likely to be a big element of cost, when we can get round to it.

At lower level you will probably have noticed that many of the issues to do with masonry pointing at St Paul's have been attended to and some of the large copings of the car park wall have been set straight and re-bedded. A similar list is to be attended to at St Lawrence's over the coming months.

Routine checks and servicing to the electrics, gas boilers and fire extinguishers are up to date at both churches, as well as the roof alarm and lightning conductor at St Paul's and the clock at St Lawrence's. Smart electricity meters have been fitted at both churches during the course of the year and a smart gas meter at St Paul's. We await conversion at St Lawrence's, where the current gas meter, due to its tight location, proved incapable of being replaced without modification to pipework.

One of the big success stories of the year has been the refurbishment of the Memorial East Window at St Lawrence's, recently completed. The work occasioned the closure of the church, when we were able to experience the more intimate surroundings of the Eckton Room for Sunday worship.

The project, part-funded by the War Memorials Trust, was expertly overseen by Messrs Jubb Clews, local conservation surveyors based at Salesbury. As part of the restoration, several panes have been expertly replaced by craftsmen at Pendle Glass and the exterior of the eastern wall has been completely re-pointed by stonemasons, Mather & Ellis. The main problem causing water ingress was believed to be the proximity of the old protective plexiglass to the window itself, leading to trapped condensation. This has now been completely replaced with an appropriate air gap left and the whole job looks very neat; although the brilliance of the window does lead one to the view that the programme of repainting, undertaken some months earlier at the opposite end of the church, now needs extending to include the chancel.

At the end of September, we were persuaded by a concerned neighbour in Fell Brow that the large sycamore tree hard against the churchyard wall had the potential to endanger his property. It was a tree whose roots had been causing the wall to belly out for some years and we had been maintaining a watching brief. A tree survey was rapidly undertaken and the surveyor suggested that because of the size and density of the canopy, the tree might indeed represent such a threat under certain wind conditions. Thanks to further intervention by the aforementioned resident, permission from the council to fell the tree was rapidly accelerated and its removal promptly arranged.

That was an otherwise healthy tree and it's sad to note that it may soon become necessary to apply for removal of other trees along the perimeter of the churchyard due to die back - it's an issue that Terry Lewis, in his valued role as groundsman, is monitoring.

As usual, I'd like to express my thanks to you all for your vigilance in pointing out issues to do with fabric at each of the churches, so that potential problems can be nipped in the bud.

I'm always pleased when people - typically contractors - come in to either church and are clearly impressed with the general standard of their upkeep. I think it does credit to all who are involved in looking after our buildings and their surroundings; more importantly it does credit to the God whom we seek to serve and glorify.

Report and Accounts of St Lawrence with St Paul Presented by Graham Kelsall.

In 2018 we continued to raise funds towards the repair of the roof at St Pauls', and indeed, including Gift Aid recovered, the balance of the Roof Fund increased by £28,445 during the year.

We arranged many events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Parish, and whilst they were designed to be cost neutral, there was in fact a net income to general funds of £1,771 from these events.

For 2018, total receipts were £208,005, of which £157,302 was received as unrestricted funds, and £50,703 was received as restricted funds. However, it should be noted that we received £29,217 more in Gift Aid from HMRC than in 2017, and whilst this shows as income for 2018, in reality, much of this was claims due for previous years. Additionally a bequest of £21,425 previously held by the Vicar and Churchwardens was transferred to the PCC, both these events have made the income seem higher. Planned giving was £41,471, broadly similar to 2017, and collections at services saw a reduction of £794 over the previous year.

£165,422 was spent in total; to provide the Christian ministry from St Lawrence with St Paul, including the contribution of £77,512 to the diocesan parish share which largely provides the stipends, housing, training etc. for the clergy. Our required contribution to parish share was £7,106 higher this year, following a reduced request in 2017 following the interregnum. We also spent £6,000 on improving the sound system at St Lawrence's, as well as funds required in the run up to the repair and renewal of the East window.

With respect to the investments held, the Central Investment Fund share balance has seen an increase in value of £27,588, however £30,260 of 'cash' held within CIF was converted to shares, so in fact these saw a 'real' reduction in value of £2,672 whereas the United Utilities shares showed an increase of £1,259. Overall, following the transfer, our endowment funds increased in value by £28,847, but without the transfer in of £30,260, this would have been a loss of £1,413.

The net result for the year was an excess of receipts over payments of £42,583. However, it should be noted that as the restricted roof fund has increased by £28,445, and if you exclude the Gift Aid effect and the transferred bequest, then the true position is that expenditure was £36,504 higher than receipts. This was a higher deficit than last year, however following the setting of the 2019 budget, and the Resourcing the Vision series at the beginning of 2019, the PCC are looking to balance the budget this year.

A full copy of the accounts is available to review in both churches.

Deanery Synod

In Preston Deanery currently there are 14 clergy members (including our vicar) and 42 lay members (including our Vision Champion). In 2018-2019 Preston Deanery Synod met three times: at St Michael's Grimsargh, at St Andrew's Ashton, and at St Stephen's Broadgate where Bishop Jill spoke. Reports from these meetings have been given to the PCC and included in the Log. At the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2017, Jeff Warburton and Gwyneth Jones were elected to Preston Deanery Synod. Jeff Warburton has had to stand down due to other commitments. Our parish should/could have three lay representatives on Preston Deanery Synod. I hope someone can be elected at this APM for the remainder of the current term which ends 31 May 2020.

Note: The **Deanery Synod** is part of the way the Church of England gives people at different levels a chance to discuss key issues and organise the church's ministry and mission. It sits between the parishes with their Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) and the full diocese, with its Diocesan Synod. Deanery Synod is convened by an Area Dean and Lay Chair and consists of all the licensed clergy in the Deanery and lay people elected by the parishes at their Annual Parish Church Meeting to serve for three years. The lay members are 'ex-officio' members of their Parochial Church Council. **Longridge Parish, Preston Deanery Synod**

Lay member, Gwyneth N Jones

Safeguarding Officers Report

"The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all."

The Church of England Policy '**Promoting a Safer Church 2017**'

This has been a quiet year. No incidents of abuse or serious concern have been reported.

Following a year when we were almost bombarded with new or updated policy and guidance documents from the Church of England Safeguarding Unit, 2018/19 has been a time of consolidation.

Only 1 new volunteer was vetted and appointed. However another person was DBS checked to enable her to offer occasional specialist input to the Children's Church Team.

In July last year I informed the PCC that after some 10 years it was my intention to step down from the Safeguarding Officer role at the end of December. This would allow time for my replacement to be recruited and trained. As part of the changes Barbara McCormick, the new Parish Administrator, would take on some of the admin work requesting references for new potential volunteers and becoming the officially authorised DBS Officer.

Unfortunately the PCC were not able to recruit a replacement before the end of the year and between the New Year and April the Parish was without a Safeguarding Officer. I understand that Janet Redding has now been appointed to take up this role. This being my last report to the Parish I would like to thank everyone for their support during the past years.

Malcolm Welch

Vision Champion Report

Three years ago I was commissioned as Vision Champion for this Parish. The time has gone quickly and has been quite challenging.

Knowing the importance of prayer in every undertaking, I prayed for direction. I felt it would be appropriate to try and encourage everyone to pray for friends and neighbours. I made colourful bunting depicting each street in Longridge and asked people to commit to pray for everyone in the street where they lived. Until a few months ago this bunting adorned the side wall of St. Paul's, hopefully as a reminder of this commitment. I really hope that, even though the bunting is no longer there, we still remember to pray regularly for our neighbours.

Secondly, recognising the importance of making newcomers feel welcome, I made welcome cards to fit into the pews in both our churches. They are still in place at St. Lawrence's but have now been removed at St. Paul's.

Longridge has four care homes and a considerable amount of sheltered housing. Many elderly people suffer from loneliness and isolation. There is also a growing problem nationwide of dementia. One thing most people respond to is music; music can lift the spirits and bring back fond memories. With this in mind and with the extremely valuable help of Gerald Mack, we formed an outreach choir called Grace Notes. Gerald is our musical director. We sing on a regular basis in Alston View, Belmont, Plessington Court, Towneley House and Bethany House.

In addition to this we are about to sing for the first time at Burey Court and Bushell House and are hoping for regular invitations there. We always try to include a Christian perspective to our music where appropriate. Feedback from our visits has been really positive.

The Gospel is for everyone, including children. The Bible Society runs a children's programme called 'Open the Book'. A team of people dress up and act out Bible stories for the children and involve them as much as possible. The whole Bible is covered over three years. Having suggested to Rev. Mike that we consider doing 'Open the Book' in Berry Lane Primary School, Rev. Mike made enquiries from the Bible Society and at school; the result is that a team of ten of us now go into the school once a fortnight. During assembly we perform in front of the whole school and are never short of volunteers there to join in. The feedback has been tremendously encouraging.

I would have liked to achieve more, especially in the area of reaching young people on our streets with nowhere to go. Now, after three years, I believe it is time to step aside. At the Archdeacon's forthcoming visitation Karen Boardman will be welcomed and commissioned as our new Vision Champion. Karen is well-known and well liked and I am sure will be able to bring fresh ideas to the post. Please pray for her and help her in her new role. Along with everyone else, I wish her every success.

Muriel Anderson.

Bereavement Group.

The bereavement group has been meeting on the first Monday evening of each month, since February 2018. It is led by Karen Burdett and Gill Mack, who are both trained bereavement counsellors and involved, in different ways, with the care of the dying and those bereft. The group meets in the Centenary Room and is led on an informal basis with refreshments and a safe and confidential place to share the journey of bereavement with others. Although small in numbers, we derive comfort and confidence in sharing our sense of loss, our joys and our sorrows, and as we catalogue our memories of loved ones. It is open to anyone who is, or has been, bereaved: not just to those whose loss is recent.

We are not a morbid, introverted group: we share as much laughter as we do tears and we learn from each other coping mechanisms and strategies for dealing with loss on a daily basis. It is not a specifically or overtly religious meeting; but one in which we respect the views of others, sharing our deepest thoughts, and seeking to accompany one another on the long journey that bereavement entails.

Karen Burdett and Gill Mack.

Brewtime

Brewtime continues to be a popular meeting place for all generations of our local community. We are open for tea, coffee, crumpet, toast and cakes every Wednesday morning.

Over the past few years, we have been successful in applying for local grants totalling £1,000. The money has been used to purchase new tablecloths, replacement cups, toasters and a new coffee machine.

The last twelve months have seen Brewtime receiving generous donations totalling £1,442.15. We have now surpassed £10,000 in total since Brewtime began a few years ago. All the donations have been paid into the General Church Funds account to help cover the cost of using the church facilities.

We have also offered a Saturday Brewtime, with proceeds of around £500 being donated to the Roof Appeal.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the PCC who kindly allow us the use of the church and to all our loyal visitors, their company and their wonderful donations.

Kath Cowell and Jacqui Laker.

Children's Church.

In April 2018, Children's Church expanded to provide two groups on every Sunday that was not an all-age service meaning that children now go out to Children's Church on weeks one, three and four of the month. Our younger group is called 'Climbers' and is for children up to and including Year 1 and the older group is called 'Explorers' and is for children from Years 2 to 6. Over the last year it has been a joy to see both of the groups become established and weekly attendance has become more consistent whereas previously it used to fluctuate.

The development of Children's Church continues to be made possible by a committed group of volunteers who are passionate about the development of children's faith whilst enabling them to have fun in the process! Climbers is primarily led by myself and Barbara McCormick with the Explorers group led by Emily Cooligan and Ali Ng. Emma Turver, Louise Squires, Emma Pettit, Katie Keighley and Kai Ng are all helpers without whom we would be unable to run the groups. Lisa Monks and Lauren Cowell both stepped down from the Children's Church team this year. We are indebted to both of them for all they did in setting up the initial Messy Church and then in helping to grow Children's Church, great thanks are due to them both.

Children's Church has continued to use Scripture Union's weekly 'Light Live' children's teaching resources and we have followed series on Creation, Joshua, Biblical Heroes and stories of Jesus over the course of the last year. On occasion we have temporarily followed the same teaching pattern as the main church, most recently when we followed the series relating to the new parish vision in early 2019.

The first Children's Church social event took place in May 2018 at Ribchester Park. We were blessed with good weather and children of all ages (and their grown ups!) had a wonderful time playing on the park, in the sand pit and joining in playing rounders and football. The same event is scheduled to run again in May 2019.

Over the next year, our prayer is that Children's Church would be a welcoming and fun place for the younger members of our parish to grow in their faith, that they would be excited about following Jesus and enjoy being part of a loving community.

Carolyn Barton

The Log

Our challenge each month is to produce a magazine to the highest possible standard, with the aim of keeping parishioners informed of Services, events and matters of interest in our busy and vibrant parish. Up to 450 copies each month are printed as well as details being available via the parish website, so we therefore see the Log as an important outreach tool reaching out to the wider community. The Town Council recognise this and we are always pleased to include their Community Link news, as do the 60 shops and businesses who advertise with us, which helps production costs considerably. Please do support those local tradespeople whenever possible. Our thanks must go to Val Wardley who personally visits all the advertisers and to Ray Saunders who ensures that they receive a complimentary copy of The Log each month.

On the production side we are most grateful to Lawrence Ingham and to Revd. Gill Mack who currently typeset The Log on alternate months. It's a job that takes a degree of time, skill and flare and possibly one that new people would like to become involved with as part of our parish Vision.

The Log subscription remains at £8 for the year or £1 per copy which we feel represents excellent value for money. It is no problem for the Risograph printer to produce more copies so if you are reading this and don't regularly receive the Log can we encourage you to do so. We are grateful to the volunteers who give up their time to print the magazines of a number of local parishes, thus making a valuable contribution to church funds. with the capacity to do more if asked. Here again there is the opportunity for new people to become involved on the printing side.

The annual report gives us an important opportunity to thank the whole Log team, editorial, typesetting, printing and distribution, involving over 40 people with everyone playing their part. Space doesn't unfortunately allow us to mention the full team by name but we must thank Tom Howarth, Kath Monks, Doug Bryden and Harry & Eileen Coar for the key role they play in getting the printed copies circulated to the teams who then deliver house to house.

For many years Lisa Jones has done a wonderful job seeing to the distribution admin. and finance but would now like to stand down giving the opportunity for a new person to join the team.

Lastly, we must thank the regular contributors who month by month ensure it is such an interesting and informative read.

Producing the log remains an incredibly efficient operation and a privilege to be part of.

Dot Little on behalf of the whole Log team.

PS. This report would not be complete if thanks were not expressed to Dot, whose enthusiasm and hard work make our Parish Magazine one of which we are all proud. Lawrence Ingham

The Director of Music Report

Junior Choir

The Junior Choir are singing well; it was an unsteady start due to many of our older members leaving for High School at the end of 2017 and then having to almost start from scratch teaching the new young ones the ropes. We feel they have done a brilliant job and are singing well. We will be starting/continuing with the older ones, the Voice for Life training in September after they have had a full year of singing. The Junior choir have been enjoying writing the Zebradillo article for the Log and we have encouraged them to do so. Many thanks to Kitty and Lily who have been fantastic in showing the younger members the way, they have been great team leaders.

We really need an adult volunteer to come and help with toast making. If this is something you would be interested in please speak to Rev Mike or Rebekah.

Senior Choir

Senior Choir has had a great amount of changes this past year but we can now comfortably say that we have 12 members who are committed to either one or both Sunday Services. Personally, I feel that the senior choir is singing very well together and we have in the past six months seen a huge increase in the amount of music we are getting through which has been really exciting.

We have made some small changes, such as red robes only (no whites) at All Age Worship; this is intentional and is to make the junior choir feel more at ease and part of the whole choir.

We have also begun to incorporate Choral Evensongs once again, aiming for alternate monthly, this has been an exciting development and has given the choir a great deal of focus which has been good.

We have had several choir workshops which have been brilliant and we regularly incorporate what we learned at these into our singing.

There is some on-going discussion surrounding the Choirs involvement in some services and looking at how we can be the most effective and what being involved in appropriate ways means.

We have had a new member join us, Wendy, this has been lovely and we really enjoy her company and her singing with us.

Choir growth is an issue however, the choir understands that there are so many people in church who are already committed to so many areas. However we would like the congregation to seriously consider if they would like to join the Church choir for some services, once a month or evening services only etc. etc, there are many options. We do not feel it is fair for the burden of growth to solely be on the shoulders of the choir members, after all we are the Church Choir and therefore we need the voices and people of the church to step up and join us.

Church Music

In general we try to mix the hymns so that there is a progression through the service and a healthy mix of old and new.

Generally we err on the side of caution and hymns are selected for optimum congregational enjoyment, we feel the congregation like to be familiar with the hymns so they can join in fully.

Musical Interludes

Christmas and Easter have seen the inclusion of musical interludes, this has only been incorporated to enhance the worship and to give even more depth to the events at hand. We hope this is something people have enjoyed and we will be including more in the future.

Music Group

We had a trial with Suzy Talbot joining us to lead the music group and felt this went well and was reasonably well received by the congregation. We would like to include more of this at the All Age Worship Service so that the young children get the opportunity to experience both traditional choir/organ music and music group music. They are very different styles and we are sure many people will or will not like aspects of both, however as a bottom line praise and worship is an attitude of the heart and neither style is 'better' than the other as worship is worship in both forms and there is a richness to being able to experience both. Ultimately good quality is what we are aiming for in all things.

Music Before Services

We have taken to including a combination of CD, Organ, Piano or Silence before services. It was just felt that each of the above sets a different tone to the service so a healthy mixture of all three would be a good way forward and would give some flexibility depending on the demands of the service.

Rebekah Okpoti

Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade (Brigade)

We continue to meet regularly on Wednesday in school with the support of the PCC. We currently have 28 young members, which is higher than the average of national trends with the Brigade.

We remain financially viable, continuing to be responsible for our own fundraising, this has allowed us to pay our annual capitation fees of £700 to National Headquarters with minimal increase to the parents, Due to our fundraising success we have also been able to donate to the church roof fund.

Whilst we remain constant with our numbers we have seen a few new members joining, however we have not advertised for members. We continue to struggle on a weekly basis to meet our child to adult ratios. We have a committed core group of leaders, however we are also dependent on our younger leaders who have other commitments and try to support us as best they can. We have had to consider closing some nights, due to not having enough staff. At present we could not cope with an influx of new members. If this trend continues, as our leaders get older and if no new leaders join us, we will have to begin to consider making drastic decisions about how we move forward.

As Officer in Charge I am supported by an amazing group of leaders, who give of their time freely to work with the children. Our programme remains varied and we always incorporate Brigade values of Fun Faith and Fellowship. I never cease to be amazed at the imagination of the leaders which is shown in the fantastic displays that they put in church.

We are very fortunate to continue to receive the support of Rev. Mike and the church. Rev. Mike meets with me regularly and visits the company at least once per term to spend time with one of the sections.

I myself remain active in CLCGB nationally being the Battalion Training Officer and having just been nominated to the CLCGB council. Officers David Hartley and Laura Salisbury remain active members of the National Band and I am always very proud to hear their praises at a National level.

Major Janet Redding

Officer In Charge

Craft Group

Our members continue to enjoy companionship, plus a brew whilst working on projects in hand or tackling new projects as needed for the church, or charity donations. The group project for the Christmas Fair is always popular. The diverse talents of our members contribute many items for the Spring and Christmas Fairs.

Last year we were sad to lose one of the Group's founder members, Brenda Warburton. She was an inspiration.

Craft Group meets in the Centenary Room, usually on the last Monday of the month, at 1.30pm and finishes at 3.30pm. New members or visitors are always welcome to drop in.

Helen Bailey, Julie Kirkham, Ruth Ball

Gracenotes

It came as a bit of a surprise that GRACENOTES has already experienced three Christmases! Despite two residential homes deciding that we were no longer required, we seem busier than ever and encouragingly appreciated. We don't set out to be performers. Not all of us can read music perfectly. We understand if some can't make every practice or visit. We are – in the broadest sense – ministers of the Gospel and channels of healing. The memory of my first public solo piano performance (at Dover Darby & Joan club when I was 7 or 8 years old) has just popped into my mind! Even then – pitifully shy and stumbling through a few simple pieces – I was aware that my surprisingly positive “audience” were enlivened by an emotion I could not understand. I still don't understand *how* the power of music works. But in GRACENOTES we witness tired and confused faces relaxing and smiling, rigid bodies moving with the rhythm; we experience forgotten tunes and words bringing lost memories alive again; music enlivens worn-out minds and bodies and stirs tired hopes and dreams. I am so grateful for *all* who freely give of their time and energy to keep this healing ministry of music alive. I am particularly grateful to Muriel and Gill, who in their subtle and direct way encourage and challenge (and remind me when I forget the things I promised to do!) I also want to make a special mention of little Alby. He is just over a year old. His Mum brings him along to most practices and “performances”. He smiles and chuckles, or just sleeps contentedly in his mother's arms. He brings light to weary faces and never fails to inspire me. As Jesus said, “The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.”

Gerald Mack

Handbell Ringers

Due to the ill health of Brian Smith we have had to make changes. We have four new people learning the skills of bellringing. I have taken on the role of trying to keep time! For the moment the biggest problem is having music simple enough for learners but with enough parts to include all the team. We will get there but it will take time. We are progressing and enjoy the privilege of ringing the parish handbells.

We don't hold any funds.

Judith Kaye

Mothers' Union

Membership has stayed at 20 this year. We try to have an interesting programme of speakers related to the interests of the branch members but as membership dwindles we are a little restricted to speakers who don't cost too much. The Mothers' Union, in my opinion, has a very dated image but if people took the time to find out just what Mothers' Union does I think they would be very surprised. Gwyneth Jones has, again, been very proactive in the last 12 months, writing something in The Log each month highlighting some of the issues that MU is involved in. Mothers' Union in this country runs crèches within prisons. When parents have separated in acrimonious circumstances there are places where Mothers' Union can supervise the non resident parent spending time with their children, this gives peace of mind to the parent the children live with. In the African countries Mothers' Union have some paid workers who work with the members and the local communities to improve their lives, the work on that continent is amazing. Unfortunately the Mothers' Union doesn't seem very good at publicising their efforts beyond the membership.

The branch funds are accounted for within the Diocesan Mothers' Union figures and so can't be recorded in parish funds.

Judith Kaye

Tuesday Club

Tuesday Club members enjoy a varied, interesting and informative programme of speakers put together by Secretary Adrienne Atkinson, who we would very much like to thank.

In many ways its been a mixed year for the club as our Chairman Brian Smith had to stand down due to ill health; his place taken by Fred Little and Treasurer of 30 plus years Bert Laker retired, handing over the balance sheet to his wife Audrey. We would wish to thank both Brian and Bert for their many years of loyal service.

We currently have 41 members, which is a healthy figure but are finding that numbers attending month by month are decreasing. Although the Tuesday Club is open to all age groups, most of our members are elderly and find it difficult to come out in the evenings during the Winter months. In view of this those attending the May meeting will be asked to consider moving the Tuesday Club to the afternoons from September. This is a big decision which needs careful thought and the change will not be made unless the membership agrees to it.

The Tuesday Club is pleased to support both the Christmas and Spring Fairs.

Our balance of funds opened at £1729.06 and closed at £1962.60, the main expenditure being the cost of Speakers and the hire of the Centenary Room.

Fred Little (Chairman)

Walkie Talkies (Mother and baby group)

Numbers have been steady with a few new mums trying out the group, everyone likes the fact that there are not too many at each session and there is a nice, friendly atmosphere each week. The children enjoy the house area with wooden kitchen and bedroom, they love the soft play area and the mums with babies play in the cushioned mat area, all enjoying refreshments during the session. With the funds this year we have been able to donate £55 to the Children's Society and £240 to the much-needed church roof fund.

Hannah Green

Youth Group

The Youth Group settled into a good fortnightly rhythm in the period since the last APCM with an average of about 10 young people turning up for each session. Each time we meet we have about 40 minutes of topical games and bible teaching and then enjoy pizza and fruit to finish. I am indebted to a fantastic team of helpers consisting of Lisa Jones, Jacqui Taylor, George Green, Jennifer Smyth and Callum Turver who make sure the evenings run smoothly.

Friday evening after school will never be the best time to discuss questions of faith and spirituality but this year we have covered some reasonably substantial topics as a way of supporting our youth in the day to day issues they face. The ever-increasing pressure to conform to the norms portrayed on social media is certainly one concern along with the secularisation of society which largely misunderstands faith and therefore ridicules it.

I therefore truly value the insight I get from our secondary school youth and it's brilliant to be able to offer them a safe space to discuss life issues. However, my heart yearns for our church to be able to support them more, especially in the area of relevant discipleship and collective worship. One example of how this could happen is in the form of a church service particularly designed to appeal to their age range. We trialled this in the Contemporary Service held during the last week of our 150th Anniversary celebrations and the feedback I received suggested this was a success. However, the struggle going forward is how such a service could be resourced given my capacity and other responsibilities.

In this regard some serious strategic thinking and action is needed if we are to keep our teenagers engaged in church at an age when they are most susceptible to negative outside influences. In this regard I have had further meetings with the Diocesan Youth Officer, Ben Green to talk about how *Following Jesus in Loving Community* could translate into our youth work provision inside and outside our church.

The solutions still aren't immediately obvious but with a good number of the confirmation candidates potentially stepping up to join Youth Group the matter remains a pressing one. If you have a heart for our youth provision I'd encourage you to join me in prayer and conversation.

If you're interested in seeing what we get up to then feel free to pop along to one of our meetings before the summer break. We meet on Fridays in St Paul's Centenary Room between 5-6pm. The dates before the summer break are: 10th and 24th May, 14th and 28th June, 12th July.

Rev Mike Barton.