

REPORTS TO THE ST MARY'S CHURCH CONGREGATION AGM 18th MARCH 2018

Dear friends

Welcome to these written reports which are presented to the 2018 St. Mary's Annual General Meeting, describing particular highlights from the previous 12 months of our Church's life, as seen from the perspective of our Church Council – together with our focused hopes and aspirations for the coming year.

During 2017 there were two main themes given high profile in our life together : we participated fully in the "Year of the Bible" called by our Diocese of Chichester, and we launched our major "Thanks a Million" fundraising campaign to enable the restoration and refreshment of our Church buildings.

While both these themes will feature richly in the reports that follow, as always I am very aware that one could equally dwell upon what has taken place spiritually and pastorally in our midst. I hope to reflect more fully upon that more personal dimension of our church family life in my Chairman's remarks at the AGM.

For the moment however, I am delighted to note the following wide range of "ministry happenings" this year, running alongside the regular & established features at St. Mary's:

- For the "Year of the Bible" we offered a wide programme of study and devotional events. For example :
 - We encouraged every church member to read through the whole Bible in 2017, with recommended aids and resources to follow
 - We completed an ambitious 33 part series of teaching sermons, preaching through every book of the Bible
 - Learning events included a dramatic performance of the Gospel of Matthew by Candlelight; the Diocesan Lent Course "Hear the Word of the Lord"; two Parish "Walk through the Bible" training days; a Deanery Bible Roadshow with New Testament scholar Dr Andy Angel; Home Group study courses; etc
 - Our Flower Festival "Journey through the Bible" explored famous Bible characters, including a devotional trail to aid reflection & prayer
- For "Thanks a Million" our Church Council set up 2 important working groups of church members, one focused on the Church building & the other upon the Church Centre. Between them they helped coordinate a range of projects, such as :
 - Prayer for the project, including personal prayer materials and prayer stations in church

- Grant and faculty applications, followed by the commissioning & supervision of extensive conservation and essential repair work on our Church Roof (more details in the Building & Fabric section of these reports – with profuse thanks to Nigel Stalley, Steve Benson, Glynn Wright & everyone involved. It is so good to have scaffolding down and a greatly improved roof as a result)
- Appointment of new architects for our Church Centre renewal project; and research into possible grant-making bodies
- Fundraising through our “Lent Angels” voluntary job scheme; our Flower Festival; “Ride & Stride” participation; Church and Preschool social events (including “Start a Heart” emergency training); plus Sponsorship of the Curate’s much appreciated beard removal!
- A major “Thanks a Million” Church Family Gift Day and fundraising held between Easter & Pentecost, aiming to raise £50k in 50 days – achieving a wonderfully generous £103k, for which we are so grateful to God
- At St. Mary’s we aspire to be “a Church inspired by God’s Passion for the World”, so it was important that the 2017 focus on Bible study & church buildings didn’t make us unduly inward looking. In the Summer we arranged a series of sermons reporting on the main mission agencies we supported in 2017 : Teach Beyond, Bible Society, Coco Foundation, Impact Foundation, World Vision, and Anchor Counselling.
- For a sixth year St. Mary’s took responsibility for staffing the Sunday shift of the Night-shelter for the homeless, set up under the auspices of Horsham Churches Together. Huge thanks are due to Denise Herrington and Manny Holden who coordinated our many volunteers, who between them covered evening, night & breakfast shifts every Sunday for 3 months.
- Church Social events included 2 sold-out Jazz evenings; a Godparent/grandparent tea-party; a Children’s Easter Party; 2 Newcomer Welcome Teas at the vicarage; monthly Sunday lunches for folk on their own; a Church Family Harvest Lunch (with presentation on the work of World Vision); and hosting a sold-out Christmas Concert by “The Mediaeval Babes”.
- As a Church Council (& with our constituent MAP teams) we oversaw a wide variety of ministry & mission developments. For example we reviewed & refreshed the coordination of our pastoral visiting scheme; introduced a fortnightly Informal Evening Service with new worship band; experimented with a new evening service time of 5.00pm (and then opted for a seasonal split of 5pm from October to March, followed by 6.30pm from April to September); we planned the detailed programme to enable 2018 as “The Year of Prayer”; etc etc.
- Profound thanks are especially due to Delysia Hill as DCC Hon Secretary, our Hon Treasurer Keith Burgess, & all our dedicated Council members; and also to Caroline Crook our St. Mary’s Safeguarding Officer, and Joyce Brown our Parish Safeguarding Officer. Secretary, Treasurer and Safeguarding Officer, together with Churchwarden, are all highly responsible and important roles in the life of the local Church – and

these folk have given many generous and faithful hours to our common life in the last year. Both Caroline and Joyce will be laying down their Safeguarding roles this coming year, so please pray (or offer!) for the right people to continue their crucial good work as we move forward.

- At Team Parish level we introduced the monthly “HOPE “(Horsham Open Prayer Evenings) with our 3 sister churches; held a joint New Year’s Service; started a new pattern of termly pulpit swaps between the Team Vicars; and restructured our finances to give more upfront mutual support to our currently weaker churches
- I am deeply and especially grateful to Jimmy Young and Alan Mayer my fellow clergy at St. Mary’s, and Karen Ind and Simon Quail our Readers, for their wonderful support again this year. On completion of his training curacy with us, we rejoiced in Jimmy’s exciting appointment to a church-planting post at St. John the Baptist, Crawley, which began part-time in the Autumn of 2017. Jimmy’s successor as Assistant Curate was also appointed during the year, and we look forward to welcoming Revd. Rebecca Tuck & her family upon her Ordination in June 2018.
- We are immensely proud of the staff of our St. Mary’s Preschool, who this year became the first ever Early Years setting in the country to gain official “Forest School” accreditation. This was the result of much dedicated training & hard work by staff - and is proving to be a popular recruitment asset, with children and parents expressing delight at the creative balance of indoor & outdoor learning it provides.
- Our Parish supplies a majority of the Governing Body at our St. Mary’s (Church Aided) Primary School, which celebrated its 50th Anniversary this year. During 2017 we said a fond farewell to Headteacher Mrs Shelley Dutson on her retirement, and we were delighted to appoint and welcome her successor Mr Alex Bird. Huge thanks are due to all our Governors for their commitment & hard work in serving the School, and to joint Chair of Governors Claire Swarbrick & Celia Hurren especially.
- Several Pilgrim Courses & a Youth Alpha course have taken place this year, with enthusiastic participants exploring and deepening understanding of Christian faith. Some of these groups have grown out of the “DODI” (Drop-off, Drop-in) coffee morning has continued to be very popular with primary school & nursery parents, held in the Leslie Room on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings..
- Growth in ministry with children & young families has once again been helped immeasurably by the creativity and dedication of Fiona Prentice our Family & Children’s Worker (who took a 3 month sabbatical this year) - working with her super team of leaders at the Lighthouse, wonderfully coordinated & led by Liz Lobb. Both “Kairos”, our twice monthly service for young families, and our Parent/Toddler group “Little Footprints” continued to thrive, and to link up with the fantastic work done by our St. Mary’s Pre-School staff led by Lai Brooking and Karen Inglis-Taylor.
- We give thanks for the great support for ministry with families across the Parish and beyond, provided by our Parish branch of the Mothers’ Union led by Sue Lismer.

- Matt Lee, in the mid-year of his 3 year youth-work training placement at St. Mary's, has done a brilliant job of leading our Friday night youth club "TGI" (with Judi Cox for much of the year) as well as our oldest Lighthouse group for young people ("CIA"). During 2017 we "allowed" Richard Herrington and Alistair Inglis-Taylor to retire, with very warm thanks following their many years faithful service as CIA leaders.
- We continue to be most grateful to Alison Carré and her office team of willing volunteers who bring great warmth, patience and professionalism to our administrative life across the board; also to Keith Burgess for his dedicated and faithful work in looking after our financial affairs; to Delysia Hill our wonderfully efficient DCC Secretary; and to Jane Gorrie who is a most diligent and helpful verger, providing an unfailingly warm and friendly welcome to our many visitors. Jane is greatly assisted by a dedicated team of helpers, including Paul Kirkbride who began an additional role this year as assistant verger & also centre manager at the Barn.
- Jeremy Weaver & Mike Overend continue to do a fantastic job of leading our musical life as ever, which is such a blessing to our weekly worship at St. Mary's as well as the deanery, diocesan & civic special services we regularly host. It has been very encouraging to see a raft of enthusiastic new choristers welcomed this year, ably trained by Val Lintott yet again.
- In addition I am immensely grateful to Billy Crook who (alongside his GCSE & sixth form studies) has inaugurated and led our excellent new St. Mary's worship band this year. Ably assisted by Mike or Jeremy, and a range of St. Mary's musicians & singers (plus Bram van Huet Lindeman giving technical support) the band have made possible a broad spectrum of inspiring worship at our Informal & Kairos services.
- We are of course also hugely blessed with faithful teams of sidesmen (co-ordinated by Laurence Windwood for an amazing 60 years!), servers, sacristy helpers, collection counters, flower arrangers and coffee teams who all enable our worship to run smoothly – as well as a skilful & dedicated band of ringers who call us together morning & evening every Sunday.
- We again staged a very popular Flower Festival & Civic Service (on the theme of "Journey through the Bible"), as well as a fully booked, vibrant and immensely fun Children's Holiday Club - both events welcoming many to explore Christian faith at St. Mary's. We also again collaborated with our Church Primary School, in staging a week of "Prayer Spaces" that welcomed all their pupils to use the building for interactive prayer and worship exercises.
- A number of minor maintenance works have been undertaken by congregational volunteers – and we are so grateful to all who have participated in a wide variety of ways (decorating, churchyard gardening, cleaning & fixing, etc).
- During 2017 the vicar completed a 12 session training course in Spiritual Direction, and was commissioned for that ministry within the Diocese. He continued to support neighbouring parishes and clergy in his additional role as rural dean of Horsham, and also to serve as honorary chaplain to the Chairman of Horsham District Council. He

was privileged to give a second after dinner speech to Horsham Rotary, to chair again our constituency hustings for Parliamentary elections, and to preach for a second time at the Anniversary Service of Trafalgar Road Baptist Church.

However, such cherry-picking is always in grave danger of omitting other important developments in our midst - and the reports that follow seeks to provide a rather more comprehensive survey of our life together. As with the last few years, the reports follow the structure of our 7 "Mission Action Teams" which oversee between them, on behalf of the Church Council, all aspects of the mission & ministry of St. Mary's.

Finally I was amazed to be reminded just how time flies this year. 2017 saw the 30th anniversary of my ordination, and also my 10th year as vicar of Horsham. Ministry is such a deep and immense privilege, that Jebb and I are so thrilled to share with you all in this lovely place. I continue to be deeply and sincerely grateful to all my fellow ministers in this Parish, which (if you are taking the time to read this) almost certainly includes you, as a fellow member of the Body of Christ!

It is always dangerous to single out individuals, but in particular I would like to pay tribute to Jimmy Young, Alan Mayer, Karen Ind, Simon Quail & our pastoral visitors for their diligent care & visiting, and to my fellow Leadership Team members : Liz Lickiss, Steve Benson and Nigel Stalley who have all been marvellous to work with, and for whom I offer great thanks to God. As well as meeting fortnightly as a team, when they are joined by our gifted and wonderfully dedicated employees Alison, Fiona, Jane, and Matt, they also each take responsibility for the operation of our 7 mission action teams, each composed of 7 or 8 Church Council and congregational members, to all of whom I am enormously grateful for their amazing enthusiasm, commitment and effectiveness in the Lord's service.

In this Year of Prayer especially, please join me in asking fervently for God's continued blessing and leading as we move forward as His pilgrim people and become, by His grace, more & more truly from year to year *a Church inspired by God's passion for the world ...*

With my warm thanks as always for your partnership in the Gospel, and with Christian love

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