

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN PARISH CHURCH, WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE,
WITH ST. NICHOLAS OF MYRA, OZLEWORTH

The Parochial Church Council
Annual Report and Financial Statements
for the year ended 31st December 2018

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The Parish of St Mary the Virgin, Wotton-under-Edge, with Ozleworth Legal and Administrative Information for the Year Ending 31st December 2018

St Mary the Virgin Parish Church is situated on Culverhay, Wotton-under-Edge. It is part of the Tyndale Benefice within the Wotton Deanery of the Diocese of Gloucester in the Church of England. The correspondence address is *The Parish Office, Culverhay, Wotton-under-Edge, GL12 7LS*.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted by legislation from registration with the Charity Commission. 'Elected' PCC members are elected for a three-year term, with three members being elected each year.

PCC members who have served from 1st January 2018 until the date this report was approved are:

<i>Incumbent</i>	The Reverend Canon Rob Axford	(retired 24/09/2018)
<i>Associate Priest</i>	The Reverend Christine Axford	(retired 24/09/2018)
	The Reverend Peter Marsh	
<i>Assistant Curate</i>	The Reverend Morag Langley	
<i>Licensed Reader</i>	Mrs Sue Plant	
<i>Churchwardens</i>	Mr Alan Bell (from Archdeacon's visitation 05.06.17)	
	Mrs Jacqueline Excell (from Archdeacon's visitation 05.06.17)	
<i>Assistant Churchwardens</i>	Vacant	
<i>Deanery Synod</i>	Mr Adrian Davis	from 26/04/2017
	(<i>PCC Vice Chair</i>)	
	Mrs Irene Perks	from 26/04/2017
	Dr Roger Wyse	to 11/04/2018
	<i>Position vacant</i>	from 11/04/2018
<i>Elected Members</i> (3-year term)	Mrs Joan Deveney	from APCM 2016
	Miss Hilary Varlow	from APCM 2016
	Mr James Yarker	from APCM 2017 to serve for 2 years
	Mr Geoff Hill	from APCM 2014, re-elected 26/04/17
	Mrs Anne Parry	from APCM 2014, re-elected 26/04/17
	Mrs Sarah Guy	from APCM 2017, elected 26/04/17
	Mrs Kate Tutty	from APCM 2015, re-elected 11/04/2018
	Mrs Lynda Durrant	from APCM 2018, elected 11/04/2018
	Dr Roger Wyse	from APCM 2018, elected 11/04/2018

Other key persons:

<i>Treasurer</i>	Mrs Joan Deveney	
<i>PCC Secretary</i>	Mrs Elizabeth Stanley	to 10/01/2018
	Mrs Lucy Chandler	from 10/01/2018
<i>Electoral Roll Officer</i>	Mr Graham Smith	
<i>Safeguarding Officer</i>	Mrs Kate Tutty	
<i>Sidesmen and Sideswomen:</i>	John Buist, Gillian Carpenter, Robert Chidlaw, Joan Deveney, Mary Downs, John & Pat Forster, Brenda Francis, Jean Fryer, Ken & Joy Green, Douglas Hinton, Jenny & Terry Jordan, David Kendal, Jenny Marrison, Dot Moss, Anne Parry, Irene Perks, Trudy Pilkington, Jackie Ramsdale, Roger & Shirley Wyse.	
<i>Independent examiner</i>	Mr Richard Goodenough	
<i>Bankers</i>	National Westminster Bank The Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, London.	

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN

Wotton-under-Edge with St. Nicholas, Ozleworth

Annual Report 2018

1. THE BENEFICE

The ecclesiastical Parish of Wotton-under-Edge is united with Ozleworth, and forms part of the *Tyndale Benefice*, together North Nibley and Alderley & Tresham.

- a. The present church of **St Mary the Virgin, Wotton-under-Edge**, was consecrated in 1283 on the site of an earlier church and is an excellent example of a Cotswold wool town church. It is particularly spacious and light and is noted for its fine tower, Berkeley brasses and the Schrider organ. The Church is found in Culverhay on the Tetbury Road out of Wotton-under-Edge. We maintain a full complement of three Sunday services, plus seasonal and weekday services and a variety of styles of worship.
- b. **St Nicholas, Ozleworth**, is well cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust and remains consecrated for occasional use. The Churchyard remains open for burials and is in our care. The population of the parish is about 50. Our pattern of principal services has been established for many years now: Easter Eve at 11am, Corpus Christi 7.30pm, and a Christmas Carol service. In 2018 the Christmas Carol Service was held on Monday, 17th December.
- c. **St Martin's, North Nibley**, is a separate parish with its own PCC and at least one service every Sunday, North Nibley's population being about 800. Evening Prayer is said in the church on Wednesdays at 5pm and the leader is normally joined by at least two others. A separate Annual Report is made by St Martin's Church, which has about 35 communicants and 12 children.
- d. **St Kenelm's, Alderley** and the **Chapel of Ease, Tresham**, each have a monthly Sunday service. St Kenelm's services were well supported by Rose Hill School until the school moved to Westonbirt in the summer of 2009. We welcome Old Rose Hillians who help with the choir and have organised special services. There are about 20 communicants and five other worshippers. Tresham attendance is about ten.

2. THE TOWN

St Mary's Church is the Parish Church serving the small market town of Wotton-under-Edge, which has a population of 5,726 (*data from Wotton-under-Edge Town Council, Jan 2019*).

- a. We enjoy strong links with the town, hosting the annual Arts Week service, Town Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday and a variety of Carol services and concerts. Church members are to be found in practically every corner and society of Wotton life.
- b. We enjoy and value our friendships with the other churches in Wotton. Holy Cross RC Church, the United Church in Bradley Street, the Baptist Church in the Ropewalk, the Quakers, the Oliver Memorial Chapel in Synwell, and are specifically linked with three other churches who signed the 'Churches Together in Wotton' covenant (i.e. RC, Baptist and United churches). With Churches Together we hold ecumenical services/worship for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Good Friday, Easter Day, Christian Aid Week and the Living Crib before Christmas. In

previous years, we held 5th Sunday get-togethers, when Anglicans, Baptists, the United Church and Holy Cross would rotate for the evening service. However, numbers were limited and so we now hold evening services together on special occasions.

- c. The ARK coffee shop in the High Street, a St Mary's initiative and financially backed by us, is an ecumenical venture with a particular mission to the young. The original purpose of the coffee shop was to guarantee a Christian presence in the High Street. A separate report on the ARK is attached.

3. THE SCHOOLS

- i. **The Blue Coat** (VA) Church of England Primary School. The school retains its high standing locally and is unable to take all those who apply for places. The clergy lead worship in the school.

In 1999 Blue Coat became a Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School (i.e. St Mary's PCC nominates a majority of School Governors). From 1st June 2015 the Governing body was reconstituted, the composition of Governors at December 2018 is detailed below.

The Instrument of Government dictates that the Governing Body shall consist of 18 members as follows:

10-number Foundation Governors (i.e. nominated by PCC to Diocesan Board of Education, including the Incumbent *ex-officio*):

Rhona Crew: until 30/06/2019

Rev'd Morag Langley: until 31/10/2019

Jackie Woodall: until 31/10/2019

Andrew Baird: until 31/01/2021

Paul Shanes: elected 1/03/2018

Chris Kinch: elected 1/09/2018

Three lay vacancies (as of 31/12/18)

Three members reached the end of their term in 2018:

Rev'd Canon Rob Axford *ex-officio*: to 2/09/2018)

Mary Buckley: until 31/08/2018

Gillian Carpenter: until 31/08/2018

2-number Parent Governors

Joanne Pascoe: elected 22/12/2022

Demelza Yeoman until 17/11/2019

Sally Easton: until 22/12/2018

1-number Local Authority Governor

Claire Milne (Chair): until 6/07/2019

1-number Headteacher Governor

Mark Ryan: *ex-officio*, from 1/09/2012

1-number Staff Governor
Emma Fisher until 25/09/2019

3-number Co-opted Governors
Amy Brice: until 6/07/2019
Dominic Knill: until 29/09/2019
Darren Rowe: until 27/03/2019

In addition, currently in office are:
Jo Roberts: Associate Member until 2/10/2021
Anne Robinson: Clerk to the Governors

- ii. **British School**, a Primary School of Non-Conformist Foundation. There are friendly relations with the school, whose classes visit St Mary's and who hold their carol service here. Members of St Mary's assist in the schools and have introduced the Christian story telling scheme '*Open the Book*' with great success. The clergy have been warmly welcomed by the school on several occasions this year.
- iii. The secondary School, **Katharine Lady Berkeley's School (KLB)**, comes annually to St Mary's for its carol service.

4. THE ALMSHOUSES

There are three sets of Almshouses in Wotton-under-Edge:

- the Ann Bearpacker Almshouses in Adey's Lane;
- the Perry and Dawes Almshouses in Church Street; and,
- the Roland Hill Almshouses - registered as a housing association, originated under the Congregational Church in Tabernacle Pitch.

St Mary's has official links with both Ann Bearpacker and Perry & Dawes Almshouses. Our official links with Bearpacker and Perry & Dawes are as follows:

- i. The **Ann Bearpacker Almshouses** were founded in 1839 by Ann Bearpacker, whose family memorial may be found in the Catherine Chapel. They are for ten poor, retired people of good character who are members of the Church of England and resident in the Parish at the time of appointment.

The Trustees are: Christopher Eccles (Chairman), Beryl Jarvis (Clerk to the Trustees), Sharon Dove, Jean Fryer, Dot Moss, Glenn Wedlake (gardener and maintenance) and Rev'd Canon Rob Axford (co-opted until such time as a new incumbent arrives).

The Almshouses also have 'Chums', a special rank of dedicated friends: David Marsh, Irene Perks and Pat & John Rogers. Glen Wedlake has been artisan extraordinaire and is contracted for regular maintenance.

There is a very positive and happy spirit in the Almshouses and a lovely feeling of community. We continue on Maundy Thursday our recent custom of presenting gold Easter eggs to the residents, and every new resident gets a handbook with the history

of the Almshouses, containing a copy of the original rules as well as a more modern greeting!

- ii. **Perry and Dawes Almshouses and Chapel** are administered by the Trustees of Wotton-under-Edge General Charities (Reg: 203464). Contact: The Clerk (clerk-at-pandd@live.co.uk). Seven co-operative Trustees are appointed from those residing or in business in or near the Town, each serving a five-year term of office. In addition, four Representative Trustees are appointed by Wotton-under-Edge Town Council from among the elected members; each may serve a four-year term, reviewed annually.

In the Chapel, representatives from St Mary's conduct a weekly Service on Mondays at 10.00 am. On the first Monday of the month this is a Service of Holy Communion; on the other Mondays, a non-Eucharist service of prayer is held. A Carol Service is also held annually in the days leading up to Christmas. Residents and visitors are welcome at all these Services.

5. ST MARY'S VISION

2017 – 2022: Faith, Fellowship, Sharing

In 2017 the Local Ministry Team, PCC and congregations worked together to produce a new Vision Statement for the Church based around the themes of growing in faith, building a sense of being the community of faith so that we can share the love of Christ. The Vision Statement says:

“We all seek to deepen our faith and fellowship and to share the transforming love of Jesus Christ in the community.” We will do this through:

Faith

- Deepen our relationship with God through prayer and worship.
- Grow our knowledge of and enthusiasm for God through study and exploration.

Fellowship

- Develop our relationship with one another through hospitality, friendship and sharing.
- Develop our understanding of our identity as the body of Christ.

Sharing Christ's love

- Be welcoming, accepting and imaginative.
- Live and share the transforming love of Christ in our daily lives.

6. SERVICES & ATTENDANCE

Baptisms

In 2018 we had:

- 7 baptisms for children under 1yr;
- 1 baptism for children ages 1-4yrs;
- 0 baptisms for a child between 5-12yrs; and,

- 0 baptisms for youths/adults
- 1 Service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child under 1yr

Confirmations

In 2018 we had:

- 0 children confirmed
- 0 adults confirmed

Marriages

In 2018 we had:

- 5 marriages at St. Mary's

Funerals

In 2018 we had:

- 13 funerals/services of thanksgiving; and,
- 8 services conducted at a crematorium

Average church attendance on a normal Sunday in 2017, (includes Baptisms, but excludes major festivals)

- 96 - Adults ;
- 6 - Children and young people (under 16yrs)

7. ELECTORAL ROLL

A completely new electoral roll was completed on 1st April 2019 in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. **109 names were entered.** Four application forms were received after the closing date and will be added after the closure of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

Graham Smith, *PCC Electoral Roll Office*

8. SAFEGUARDING

We, at St Mary's, follow the safeguarding responsibilities for our church as outlined in the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policies and Guidance Practice. To that end, safeguarding is on the agenda at each PCC meeting and the Children and Vulnerable Adults policies are reviewed annually at the PCC meeting in May. DBS checks are carried out on a five year rolling programme and everyone who volunteers or works with children /vulnerable adults is encouraged to attend a training course once every three years run by the diocese.

This past year a Lone Worker Policy was approved by the PCC for Kate Cropper, our Parish Administrator, and an intercom system installed in the Parish Room. Also, Risk Assessments have been reviewed for the choir, Little Church, Messy Church and the Games afternoon.

Kate Tutty, *Safeguarding Officer*

9. ST MARY THE VIRGIN PCC REPORT

St Mary's PCC met in January, March, May, July, September & November, with the Vicar taking the chair for the most of the meetings, and the Vice-chair leading the final two meetings. The Finance Committee met on the alternate months.

The PCC began putting measures in place to start the Reordering works, following the receipt of the Faculty in late 2017. Geoff Hill was formally appointed as Project Manager, and works subsequently began on the drain works.

The retirement of Rob & Chris Axford was a major consideration in the second half of the year. The PCC supported the wardens in managing St Mary's during the vacancy, and we have an active role in supporting the selection process for a new incumbent. Members of the PCC contributed to the Benefice Parish Profile, while Kate Tutty and James Yarker were selected to the interview panel.

We continued work to live our Vision, with the Mission Committee considering actions, though this work was slightly overshadowed by Vacancy.

A dedicated Stewardship group considered giving to the church, then planned and enacted the 'Seasons of Giving' series of services that were held on four Sunday's in the middle of the year.

We monitor the link with Bluecoat school, and we made to proposals for new Foundation Governors (Chris Kinch and Susannah Willis).

Safeguarding was considered at every PCC meeting, and thankfully no issues were reported. In parallel the Health & Safety committee completed a series of risk assessments and put certain measures in to place.

The PCC started working on the national Eco Church initiative, which saw us twinning the two Parish Room toilets with latrines in developing countries.

We considered and contributed to the future of Churches Together in Wotton, who experienced difficulties in filling certain key roles on their committee, and who prepared a new 'Covenant'.

The GDPR rules came in to force, and the PCC ensured that we had suitable procedures in place to ensure compliance with the regulations.

Lucy Chandler served as PCC Hon Secretary from January 2018, though stood down due to personal commitments in December. We are grateful for her support of PCC and Finance Committee during her time in office.

Adrian Davis, PCC Vice-chair

10. FINANCIAL REVIEW & ACCOUNTS

Please refer to the full report, accounts and balance sheets at the end of this report.

11. CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT ON THE FABRIC, GOODS & ORNAMENTS

Annual inspections of the church tower lightning conductor, church tower bells and clock, along with the servicing of the gas boiler and inspection of the fire equipment were all carried out during the year. Additional work was needed on the lightning conductor to meet safety standards. Repairs were also needed to the south east finial pinnacle of the church tower.

The replacement of the loose merlon capping stones identified in the last quinquennial inspection still need attention. Also an area of damaged stonework to the east end of the sanctuary wall requires repair.

Prior to the start of the Reordering project, some ornaments and pictures were taken down and stored away for safe keeping.

On behalf of Jackie and myself, I would like to thank everyone for the help and support you have given us during the past year. The role of a churchwarden is not an easy one. To have your support makes our involvement so much easier.

Alan Bell, *Churchwarden*

12. WOTTON DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Wotton Deanery Synod met at Bluecoat School on four occasions. At each meeting a key presentation was given:

- **February:** Christian Aid representatives spoke about the SALT Network, for business leaders, to challenge each other and bring faith into their business, and Global Neighbours, which is a Primary School Accreditation scheme, run in partnership with the C of E Education Office.
- **June:** The Lay Chair spoke about the Parish Giving Scheme, the 21st century solution to static giving, run by the Gloucester Diocese, introduced 7 years ago and widely used in Gloucester and beyond.
- **October:** Stephen Youngs gave a presentation on Germinate from the Arthur Rank Centre. The objective is to help rural churches and communities flourish through offering resources, training and support.
- **November:** Different church talked about Courageous Worship, which encourages new and different ways of worship which connect with more people. Examples included: Charfield (how to connect with people who do not come to church); Wotton (Stewardship & Seasons of Giving); Chipping Sodbury (Exhibition of Remembrance 100); Slimbridge (Soldiers of Remembrance).

At each meeting an update for the Diocesan LIFE initiative was give. This included central events to which all are invited, and examples of local events organised under the LIFE umbrella.

The apportionment of the Deanery Parish share, as allocated from the Dioceses, is the responsibility of the Synod. The same format was used in recent years, with the Deanery share being split among Benefices, with each parish within a Benefice deciding how to divide-up their allocation. The global increase across the Diocese this year was 6%, and this was passed on to each Benefice.

Adrian Davis, *Synod Representative*

13. LOCAL MINISTRY TEAM REPORT

The Local Ministry Team is here to ‘*pass the baton of ministry and mission*’ to enable the gifts and ministries of others. Activities include nurturing, linking up, developing, reflecting, questioning, taking an overview of ministry and mission, looking for new possibilities and opportunities as well as considering forthcoming events. All with a focus on how we can be faithful to God’s call in new ways which are relevant to today. LMT meets monthly examining issues within a PCC agreed framework.

A key activity for the latter part of 2018 has been to support the Church Wardens and our congregations during this time of holding ‘the baton of ministry and mission’ before it passes on to a new Vicar, whom we are all praying for. This includes holding the vision, support for ensuring activities get properly advertised and encouraging others (and ourselves) to lead some of the weekday and evensong services. Alan Bell has taken on the chairing of the LMT meetings. We were delighted to welcome Lynda Durrant who joined the LMT during the year. She has brought renewed freshness and enthusiasm with her commitment particularly to prayers and healing

LMT in 2018 sought to take forward practical steps in taking forward the St Mary’s mission statement: “We all seek to deepen our faith and fellowship and to share the transforming love of Jesus Christ in the community.” Activities included:

- Feedback from the 2017 ‘teach sessions’ in the 1-:15 services connected through to a 2018 pocket sized ‘Lent challenges to deepen our faith’ for St Mary’s.
- Alongside reviewing Messy Church and Little Church, developing and encouraging Children’s Church to provide dedicated children’s activities during some of the monthly Sunday services (other than family service)
- Supporting the Introduction of ‘tea and chat’ into the Ark.
- At the request of the PCC, looking at the terms of reference for reviewing the role of the Mission Committee in St. Mary’s
- Rev Christine Axford encouraged us to look at sharing our faith and a small group of some LMT members and others met together for the Faith Pictures course. A second course was held later in the year. This provided a different window into sharing faith.
- Participation in Wotton community events such as the Clubs and Groups Fair.
- A farewell celebration Indian supper with Revs Rob and Christine Axford.

The Pancake Party and the Viney Hill weekend away continued to be popular events and are a regular part of our Church life and celebrations. Likewise working with our Organist, the choir and congregation in learning new worship songs and music at sing and social evenings.

The current members of LMT are Alan Bell, Adrian Davis, Joan Deveney, Martin Dove, Lynda Durrant, Jackie Excell, Rev’d Morag Langley, Irene Perks, Sue Plant and Teresa Pottinger.

Martin Dove, *LMT Member*

14. VICAR’S REPORT

While we are within a Vacancy, we have taken the opportunity to write a brief review of 2018, much in the form that the Vicar has in recent years. From the perspective of St Mary’s, the year was dominated by the retirement of Rob & Christine Axford from full time ministry, but there are so many things for which to be grateful. Here’s a brief summary:

- We maintained a full pattern of worship throughout the year, with three services on Sunday (8am BCP, 10:15 Parish Eucharist or Family Service and 6pm Evensong, Choral on the third Sunday), plus daily morning prayer and weekday communion services on Wednesday and Friday;
- Holy Week & Easter were celebrated in the usual pattern, and we were able to provide a full schedule of services over Christmas, with record attendance for our two Christingle services;
- A weekly Prayer Space has continued on Wednesday, together with pre-service quiet prayer before Sunday 10:15 service;
- The Commemoration of the World War One Armistice was marked in November. The most visible event was the display of poppies from the tower, with knitted poppies from around the world, put on with wide support of the church and town, and achieving great publicity. Experience Remembrance in church was a special form of commemoration, while the service on 11th November was the largest for many years;
- Both Little Church and Messy Church continue to offer alternative forms of fellowship for families and children.
- The regular service of Healing & Wholeness continues on a bi-monthly basis, with growing support.
- The LMT organised a number of key events, including Pancake Party, Viney Hill weekend and a couple of Sing & Social evenings.
- On 19th August we celebrated the 735th anniversary of the consecration of St Mary's.
- At the end of 2018 we prepare for the first phase of the long-anticipated Reordering works, with the construction of the toilet & servery due to start in the first week of 2019.

Anything that happens within St Mary's only occurs because of the wonderful & diverse body that make up the Church within Wotton. This is even more obvious during the Vacancy, when we've pulled together to ensure that a full range of services and events are on offer throughout the year. Here is a short list of some of the key individuals that have worked so hard through 2019:

- Our churchwardens, Jackie Excell & Alan Bell, who on top of their usual duties, have taken on the lions-share of planning & organisation during the Vacancy;
- The ministry team of Morag, Iain, Sue, Peter, supported by the Local Ministry Team, retired clergy and other clergy from across the Dioceses;
- Those who support services, including the sacristy team led by Brian Reynolds, all intercessors, lectors, sidesmen and coffee makers;
- The singers and musicians who support worship, under the leadership of Eddie Garrard;
- All the members of the PCC and Deanery Synod;
- Joan Deveney for her role of Treasurer, the Finance Committee that work with her and all who help with collections and banking;
- Kate Cropper who works so hard in the Parish Office
- Those that work throughout the year to keep St Mary's beautiful, including the cleaners, flower arrangers and those that support the Garden of Remembrance
- The worshipping community of St Marys, who attend services in church or receive communion and prayer at home;
- The countless others who help in their special way, regularly or occasionally;
- And last, but by no-means least, Rob & Christine, who signed-off from full time ministry at the end of September. They have nurtured and guided us for the past 10-

years, and we've so much for which to be grateful. We send them with our very best wishes for a long & happy retirement in Chipping Sodbury.

Finally, as we look forward to the coming year, may we all continue to work together to support the work of the Church in Wotton, and pray for the process to select a new incumbent, that we may soon have a new Vicar to continue & develop the life of St Mary's.

Adrian Davis, *PCC Vice-chair*

15. STEWARDSHIP REPORT

The church accounts have shown over the last few years an increasing deficit which has had to be covered by using monies from our reserve funds. These funds are gradually being depleted.

During 2018 a small group of PCC members (Roger Wyse, James Yarker and myself) was formed to look at possible ways of reversing this financial situation. Rob Axford also attended most of the meetings. After much discussion and consultation, the group decided with the approval of the PCC to undertake two projects aimed at attempting to improve the finances of the church.

The first project was to run a four week course at the 10.15am service as part of the normal service of Eucharist and included one of the monthly Family services. The course, 'Seasons of Giving' included discussion and prayer centred on four readings taken from the Old and New Testament which described the generous giving of money and time by individuals in the name of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second project is to look at different way by which we can have a positive outreach approach to the community and will be centred around 'support from the town for the parish church' This could be in the form of a 'Friends of St. Mary's' project. This second project was put on hold during the vacancy due to the additional workload of the people involved on vacancy matters. We hope to resume work on this during 2019.

I would like to thank all those who found it possible to respond to our Seasons of Giving campaign.

Although we still have a deficit in our annual accounts, since the 'Seasons of Giving' course our giving has gone up resulting in a much smaller deficit this year.

Alan Bell, *Stewardship Secretary*

16. THE ARK COFFEE SHOP

The Ark has had another good year in terms of sales and customer appreciation, ending the year with a small profit in spite of ever increasing costs.

During the year we have invested in a new water boiler which is a significant improvement on the previous ones which kept causing problems. We also acquired a card machine allowing contactless payments and although this costs us overall it is widely appreciated by

customers, particularly those of a younger generation. Already about a third of sales are now through the card machine.

We have been open for every session in the year, come rain or snow, and have opened on Bank Holidays when other Wotton cafes are closed. We received Silver in the South West Fairtrade Business Awards for Best Cafe or Restaurant. We are up for an award this year too!

We are dependent on our volunteers, mainly from the churches, whose loyal service we greatly appreciate. We also value the work of our committee members and especially Nia, our Volunteer Coordinator, for her hard work and dedication which enable the smooth running of the shop.

The lease on our premises comes up for renewal at the end of 2019 and we have held an open meeting with over 50 interested supporters attending where we explored possible ways forward in changing times. Whatever develops the Ark will continue to be a Christian project expressing God's love and care to the people of the town, providing affordable, good quality and fairly traded refreshments in an environment of friendship and acceptance where children can safely play.

There were fears that Traidcraft might be closing at the end of 2018 but thankfully they will continue to trade, albeit with a reduced range, but we will continue to promote, use and sell their products. Thanks to Val's work we have an expanded and appreciated range of cards for sale too.

More space would be great and we are looking into some possibilities for expansion and preparing for redecoration and new flooring.

Please pray for us as we continue this unique and valued Christian ministry.

David Barter, *Chair, Ark Committee*

17. BELLRINGERS' REPORT

The last year has felt more positive in the Tower, with the turnout for both practices and Sunday services being much more consistent. Ringing was only cancelled for seven practices and Sunday services, some of which were due to poor weather conditions.

We have rung for five weddings, supported by other local ringers, meaning that on two of these occasions we were able to ring all eight bells.

The band were all present to ring on eight bells on Armistice Day. This was also the first outing for our new muffles, providing a very pleasing sound. Six of the band returned to ring the front six bells as part of the national *Ringling Remembers* event following the local Memorial service.

We ended the year providing a local band of ringers for all the Christmas services bar one. Finishing the year with ringing on New Years' Eve with six of our ringers present to ring out the old and ring in the new. Judging by the comments on the local Facebook page the next

morning, many residents were pleased with our ringing and what it added to the night as we welcomed in the new year.

Nikola Gawler, *Tower Captain*

18. BLUECOAT CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

At Blue Coat the four elements of the school vision, (Learning about Learning, Learning about Ourselves and Others, Learning with Technology, Learning with Spirituality), are supported by the core Christian values of happiness, creativity, respect and responsibility.

Blue Coat operates a curriculum based on a two-year cycle and topics run across two terms (of a six-term year), allowing for greater exploration and depth. With a successful two-years of the new curriculum completed, we are now repeating the curriculum cycle; the staff have reviewed the first two-years implementation and have refined some of the topics to ensure maximum pupil engagement and curriculum coverage.

Our pupils continue to demonstrate success in both sporting and academic activities with the indoor football team retaining the Riddiford Shield for another year, the girls football team placing first in a Gloucestershire football tournament, the Tag rugby team finishing top of the group in a locally organised event and a team of year six pupils placing first and winning some much-needed resources for the school in the annual Rotary Club General Knowledge Quiz.

Our site continues to be a hub for the local community with the Wotton triathlon using it for a base, our nationally award-winning play coordinator organising playing out events for all children within the community and our pupils running successful fundraising appeals for children in need, Operation Christmas Child, harvest supporting Stroud District food bank and donations to the St Mary's Church fete.

The school is still facing a challenging financial period, the Governors continue to scrutinize in detail the budget and identify where savings can be made which have minimal impact on the 'front line'.

Claire Milne, *Chair of Governors*

19. CHURCHES TOGETHER IN WOTTON (CTIW)

Our calendar started in 2018 with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with our usual half hour prayer times at a church or meeting place on alternate evenings. This always runs from 18th January until 25th and St Mary's by tradition have always offered an 'Open Table' Holy Communion for all, with the Eucharist for the Conversion of St Paul. We welcome all denominations to these services.

This is followed by the Lent house group or alternatively Lent Lectures. In 2018 we had seven house groups meeting on different days of the week. Always a good time to share our faith and meet with different people from the Churches.

The Walk of Witness starts from the Synwell Congregational Chapel, is always well attended and the walk from the Chapel to the Almshouses in Church Street as the first stop when a hymn and a bible reading takes place. We hand out Hot Cross buns *en route* to people in the

town. We finish at St Mary's Church where refreshments are served. Coffee, tea and hot cross buns are always welcomed after the Walk of Witness. All are invited to take part in the three hours devotion 'before the cross' for a time suitable to each individual.

Each Church alternatively takes on a responsibility for the Holy Week end. This year St Mary's organised the Easter breakfast after the Sunrise Service on Coombe Hill.

The AGM in May was better attended than in previous years. Unfortunately, no Church was able to find anyone willing to become Convenor or Secretary. St Mary's had been able to nominate a person from their congregation willing to take on the role of Treasurer but the constitution had lots of discussion and it was decided that representatives from all of the Churches would meet, chaired by Rev Tom Wharin to discuss how we could all move on together on our Christian journey. This took a while to get finalised but thankfully we have now been able to agree on how we now organise our input to keep the Christian message alive in the Town. Praise God for this!

The Prayer Evening usually organised for October was not held separately and it was decided that due to a lack of support from the previous year that this would not go ahead. Our prayers were incorporated into our own Church prayers.

We were all delighted that The Living Crib was again organised for the town by Roger Wyse and his wonderful team of helpers. Although the poor weather meant that some people did not join us we had approximately 80 people attend and warm apple punch and biscuits & mince pies were enjoyed afterwards. Our thanks indeed to Roger for his wisdom and enthusiasm.

We look forward to next year with exploring some new ways to meet and share our faith. Perhaps we will have some new ideas to bring from Churches Together in Wotton

Jackie Excell, *Parish Representative*

20. CHURCH CLEANING GROUP

This group of loyal volunteers continue to keep the church clean, tidy and with all silver & brass cleaned on a regular basis. We still do not have a coordinator for the group but the cleaners have established a routine of their own which is working successfully. We thank this group for their dedication and contribution throughout the year.

Alan Bell, *Group member*

21. CO-WORKERS OF MOTHER TERESA

Throughout 2018 the group continued to meet on the last Tuesday of each month, apart from December, but during the winter months changed to meeting in the afternoon rather than the evening, a change that was met favourably by the members.

With the help of several individuals, also the Ladies Fellowship, the Drylease Saturday Club and a group of ladies in Derby, the Co-Workers were able to continue supplying the usual outlets with a good number of knitted and crocheted articles. The large blankets and jumpers

went out to the Carter School in The Gambia, John and Rita Ballantyne took bags of hats to the Mission to Seafarers office at the Royal Portbury docks and small blankets and baby/toddler clothes were given to the Haven Nursery in Gloucester. Knitted hats, scarves and mitts were passed on to Janet Davies for the Christmas Shoebox scheme. Only five Co-Workers were able to meet in November to put together the customary parcels, which go to the Julian Trust night shelter in Bristol, however, a generous amount of goods had been donated by the group and consequently thirty parcels were made up.

In a year in which poppies played a very significant role across the country it was inevitable that the Co-Workers were involved in making poppies and helping attach them to netting, contributing to the amazing display at St Mary's, which will be remembered for a long time.

Dot Moss

22. FLOWER GUILD

It has been a quiet year for the Flower Guild. The flowers are arranged by a small but dedicated group of people, with extra people helping with the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Harvest. Whenever possible flowers and greenery come from the arrangers own gardens and produce lovely, natural looking arrangements. Anyone would be very welcome to join us on a regular basis, or just do an arrangement to remember a special person or anniversary.

Irene Perks, *Flower Guild Coordinator*

23. LITTLE CHURCH

Little Church thrived again during 2018, with between 8 and 15 children regularly attending with their parents, grandparents and carers.

After starting the year with our usual look at the story of the three kings, we learnt about Moses, celebrated Mothering Sunday and used a lovely book called Wonderful Earth by Nick Butterworth to learn about the world.

Our Easter activities included our now traditional donkey racing in the church and the excellent Easter Egg hunt in the vicarage garden. We also had an egg and spoon race which was hotly contested – mostly by the adults, including Rev Rob! After Easter we enjoyed the puppet show of St George and the Dragon, performed brilliantly as ever by Sue and Jackie!

Noah's Ark was enjoyed by the children as we headed into May and then we focused on some great stories from the parables of Jesus, including the lost sheep, the two sons, the good Samaritan, the little gate and the precious pearl. The beautiful summer weather meant that we enjoyed a sunny Teddy Bear's picnic and games in the vicarage garden (where we ate the leftover cakes from our stall at the Church Fete).

The summer holidays included our annual visit to Symond's Hall Farm, the very popular stream walk (including paper boat sailing this year) and picnic at Coombe and a lovely morning at Bournsteam

Autumn saw us learn all about Jonah and the Whale, David and Goliath and Daniel and the Lions. We celebrated harvest and talked about remembrance. Visiting the amazing Experience Remembrance event in the church was a highlight for all of us. We also remembered those in other countries less fortunate than ourselves by filling two shoeboxes for the Samaritan's Purse appeal.

During Advent we heard about angels visiting Mary and the shepherds and the birth of Jesus. Our Christmas party was once again a huge success. The children love the Catherine chapel decorated as Santa's grotto and obviously a visit from Santa himself is always a hit!

Thanks must go again to all those that give up their time for us, be that providing our snacks and tea and coffee every week, or leading on the craft activities, and especially to Sue and Jackie who continue to help and support us.

We will be losing a few regular members later this year as the children will be heading off to school in September. This includes core-team members Catherine and Barry who have done so much to help run and support Little Church. I am hopeful that some other parents will step up to help me continue to run the group.

Kirsty Beasley, *Little Church coordinator*

24. MESSY CHURCH

2018 was the eighth year of Messy Church at St Mary's, and a regular group of people meet every month to share the love of Jesus through eating together, discovering different parts of a story by means of a variety of activities, and joining in a time of celebration to bring the story together with songs and prayers.

During the year we explored stories of people like Zacchaeus and Noah; we explored themes such as healing; giving our time and money to God; Remembrance 100 years on. We explored the Christmas story, and the story of Jesus accepting children. Activities often involve a selection of the following: food, paint, glue and glitter, LEGO models, parachute games, quizzes around the church.

We spent a day last April in the company of Lucy Moore, the originator of Messy Church, and people from several other Messy Churches in this area. Lucy led us in thinking about what Messy Church is and who it is for. We got creative during parts of the day, working in teams as we discussed the idea of discipleship within Messy Church.

In 2018 Messy Church expanded into providing a selection of activities to explore Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and Lent. This happened at the Pancake Party organised by the Local Ministry Team. It proved very successful in giving children and adults a focus after pancakes and been eaten and races run. It was decided to follow a similar pattern for 2019. The Messy Church Team are looking forward to the day when the re-ordering of St Mary's is completed, and we can look again at how Messy Church is organised and adapt it to the different space in the church.

Morag Langley

25. MOTHERS' UNION

Throughout 2018 the members of the Mothers' Union branch at St Mary's have contributed to the life and work of the church in almost every serving capacity. Our service is integral to promoting the objectives of the organisation which encourages and supports family life, through prayer and action, in both good and difficult times. This is in spite of the fact that many of our members are growing frail through old age and now require pastoral support themselves. Attendance at the 3rd Wednesday Corporate Communion has remained steady.

The branch has been active in raising money to support the work of Mothers' Union worldwide. During the year we held a coffee morning, a cake stall at the Mothering Sunday service, we sold mystery parcels before Christmas after the 10.15 service and made a donation from the Christmas tea for members. We are very grateful to our members for their generous support of all we do. And we hope that fun is a part of all our fundraising events! Our members take an active role in supporting most church events, including the Church Fete and the numerous social occasions requiring refreshments.

New members would be very welcome and we are happy to see visitors at all of our meetings. Many of our speakers would appeal to a wider audience. Our grateful thanks to everyone who has supported our work throughout the year,

Sue Plant, *Mothers' Union Branch Leader*

26. MUSIC AT ST MARY'S

Throughout 2018 the choir has sung a motet at every Sunday morning Eucharist service and also at every Evensong service. At every Choral Evensong service the choir has been joined by other local singers, sometimes increasing our numbers to at least 30. This Choral choir sing settings of the responses, of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis and an Introit anthem as well as a longer anthem, a different setting each month.

On Passion Sunday the choir performed the Faure Requiem as a continuing preparation for Lent and Easter. In November we welcomed singers from around the areas to join our choir in a performance of the Mozart Requiem and Vivaldi Gloria. The soloists for both of these works came from our own members. The proceeds from this concert were put into the Reordering Fund.

There is now more emphasis on amalgamating the choirs and the younger members are becoming more involved with the adult choirs in both practice and services. I believe that the standard of each choir has improved considerable during the year. New members in every section of the choir are always welcome.

I must record my thanks to all the choir members and organists that have worked with me and particularly Hil Varlow and George Richardson for all their help.

Eddie Garrard, *Director of Music*

27. PASTORAL CARE

In the summer of 2018 Pauline Latimer, Anne Parry, Irene Perks and Kate Tutty were commissioned as Diocesan Lay Pastors by Bishop Rachael in the cathedral.

Joan Deveney leads bereavement visiting and Anne Parry continues to co-ordinate transport for hospital and other visits. Initial enquiries to the Parish Office are passed to the pastoral care team. Further work will be done in 2019 to improve the communication within the team.

Anne Parry

28. PERRY & DAWES ALMSHOUSES CHAPEL

A service of Prayer Book Holy Communion is held on the first Monday of each month, with the sacrament offered to all who wish to receive it. A simple service of Morning Prayer is held on the other Mondays' of the month. A short homily or sermon is given at each service. Attendance has been well maintained with several new residents becoming regular worshippers and we are often joined by others from the community. During the interregnum, on the first Monday of each month we are being well supported by the Reverends Langley, Evans and Marchant.

The annual Christmas Carol service was held on the Monday prior to Christmas and was well supported with Trustees of the Wotton General Charities joining the residents. We are very grateful to Helen Bowker who is the regular organist, who arranges deputies as necessary and who also shows a great pastoral care for the residents.

The Chapel is open daily for prayer and meditation.

Michael Sykes, *Clerk to Perry & Dawes Almshouse*

29. ANNE BEARPACKER'S ALMSHOUSES

The residents at Ann Bearpacker Almshouses continue to thrive and make a happy, self-supporting and independent community together. Over the past year we have been sorry to lose much loved residents but these residences have been filled quickly. There is a new resident arriving in the next month who we are looking forward to greet which means all ten residences will be full.

The Almshouses are kept in very good order and some of the baths have now been replaced by showers. The residents take pride in their lovely gardens which provide a special place for them to meet and spend time together.

Highlights of the year include the wonderful evening put on by the Wotton Beavers who came and sang carols around the Christmas tree in the garden. A tasty Christmas lunch was enjoyed by all in the Swan. A special time at Easter when all the residents are given a chocolate, golden Easter bunny.

Sharon Dove, *Trustee*

30. REORDERING PROJECT

At the start of 2018 we had been awarded a Faculty for church reordering and our architect was developing detailed plans so that we could invite tenders for the work. In the spring we had enough information to invite tenders for laying the foul drain from the church to the existing sewer in the Vicarage garden. We had carried out pre-assessments of suitable contractors and invited suitable contractors to tender. The tender was won by J.B. Young & Sons Ltd and being within budget was awarded to them. Work commenced in September. Drain laying progressed well and was overseen by an archaeologist. Nothing was found. Close to the finish of drain laying a potentially live water main was encountered exactly on the line of the drain. This caused delays which led the works to run into the displays around Remembrance Day so extending the delay. Eventually we were advised by Severn Trent Water that the pipe was almost certainly disused. This proved to be the case and the obstruction cut out allowing the work to be recommenced.

In the meantime we had gone through a similar process with a contract for installation of toilets, servery and flower cupboard. This contract was awarded to DTP Ltd late in 2018. Work commenced at the start of the New Year.

Geoff Hill, Reordering Project Manager

31. ST MARY'S HOUSE GROUPS

Our four house groups have continued to meet, with the frequency ranging from weekly to monthly throughout the year. The membership of each group is different; some have six members, the largest has 14 (if all are free to attend).

The common ground is learning about the person and story of God as revealed in the Bible; no-one is a qualified theologian, so we find advice from those who are and who have published their advice in easy-to-use booklets on the various books of the Bible. It is a process of discovery through discussion, as the group's "leader" is not "6 feet above contradiction" in the pulpit!

A major part of the benefit is meeting with like-minded enquirers, and talking over coffee and cake! All groups welcome newcomers. Details of the four groups can be found in the Parish Magazine.

Roger Wyse, house group member

32. HEALING AND WHOLENESS GROUP

Rob and Chris Axford started the Healing and Wholeness services around eight years ago and for the last few years we have held them six times a year on the last Sunday of alternate months; January, March, May, July, September and November.

Since Rob's retirement, the planning team has been focussed on maintaining this pattern of services whilst being open to new ideas in the way the services are put together. The Team meet on the third Monday evening of the month in the Parish Room; so we have two planning meetings for each service. We share the roles and tasks for each service as members feel able to respond. We focus on intercessory prayer at the end of our monthly meeting when we bring to God any needs and concerns known to us.

We use an Iona healing service format but adapt it to our theme and season of the year. The service provides a quiet, reflective space with hymns, quiet background music, intercessions, time for individual prayer ministry (with two team members in the Catherine Chapel) and an opportunity to light candles. We feel the ‘wholeness’ element of our title is equally important and include the wellness of ourselves, our community, our country and the wider world in our prayers. We welcome anyone who would like to find out more to contact a member of the Team or to come to one of our services – just come as you are.

In recent months, we have been encouraged by contact with the Diocesan Advisory Team for Healing and Wholeness led by Bishop Rachel. We joined their Celebration Day at the beginning of March. Later some of us enjoyed a trip to Harnhill for one of their weekly services. We also hope to run a two-day course, sponsored by the Diocesan Team, called ‘Growing a Healing Ministry’ in our Parish Room during the early summer, inviting people from the Stroud parishes to join us.

The current members of the Planning Team are: John and Mary Downs, Anne Slann, Irene Perks, Rev’d Morag Langley, Canon Iain Marchant, Jean Yates, Jenny Mayston, Lynda Durrant and we thank Eddie Garrard who plays the piano for us.

Lynda Durrant

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