

# ANNUAL REPORT OF ST. MARY'S PARISH CHURCH BARTON FOR 2016

## Vicar's Report

It will come as news to no-one to be told that the usual round of services has continued this year, that the lighting is getting dimmer and that the heating has continued on its cantankerous way. Consequently I won't say anything about them. Similarly, the staffing issues in the deanery are well enough known to everyone, though I do want to mention Canon Mike Burson-Thomas' generous taking over of much of the North Wolds work, which has made it possible these last few weeks at least occasionally to get back from the Low Villages for coffee here. The new incumbent for North Wolds and Brocklesby Park with Croxton is to be licensed on June 27<sup>th</sup>, and the transfer of the Ulceby group of parishes to the next door deanery is in progress.

You'll note in the Treasurer's report that we really do need to do something serious about our income, and the most painless way (as well as the most Christian way) to do anything about this is to grow our congregation, both in depth of faith and in number. This is something we're discussing at Deanery level as well, but it's worth taking specifically about St Mary's, even if only to make sure everyone knows that there is a clear vision for the parish over the next five years.

There are two very simple dimensions to what we are called to be. One is the field of *Service*. Christianity must never be a club delivering privileged status to its members, and Christians are called to serve those among whom we live. It is a simple act of witness to how God is at work when a community is enriched and supported by the faithful and generous work of the Church. There's already a lot going on: apologies for those I overlook, but Foodbank, Toddler Time, support in the residential homes and Operation Christmas Child are very obvious examples of such service. So, for that matter, is our insistence on making the building itself available, both for events and for private prayer. (If you don't already know how much that matters, have a look at the prayer board sometime.) And alongside is all the individual, private service from members of St Mary's in their everyday lives.

Once upon a time, like when I started out, people were apologetic for not going to church; increasingly, for all sorts of reasons, people without a religious faith feel themselves morally superior to those who do. A church clearly committed to loving service helps to drive that tide back, so our service is a form of mission, and despite our limited resources, and in conjunction with the other churches, we must maintain and deepen our work here. Initiatives are welcomed.

However, we're not do-gooders; our service is rooted in a servant God. So the second dimension is that of *Prayer*. When someone wrote (anonymously) to the diocese five years ago complaining that there was too much teaching on prayer I didn't know whether to be shocked, indignant or wryly amused. Generations of Christian have been let down by being taught either that prayer is really mainly for clergy, or that there's only one way to pray properly, or that it's an optional extra for enthusiasts. So, bluntly, prayer is what Christians do, in whatever way seems to work for each of us. Prayer is opening ourselves up to God (it doesn't matter two hoots whether you do it in Latin like mediæval monk or in wordless wonder before the glories of creation), and, through that opening up of ourselves, being changed. And change is a thing people notice, often in others more than in ourselves (where it's gradual). Mission and evangelism goes a long way when people start to say to themselves, 'There's something different about so-and-so these days.'

Thus anything which encourages people to that engagement with God – prayer – must be a priority. We're trying to engage with the 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative, and there are other ongoing programmes, but it's for all of us to engage with in the way which best works for us. Write to the bishops to complain if you must, but better still, join in.

Finally, a few words of thanks and appreciation; to Geoff and Val (and Ian Wilson and Brenda Skinner, their deputies) for the hard – and often unseen - work they put in. To Alan Mabbott and David Dukes for their painstaking work with out accounts and Gift Aid. To my ministerial colleagues, lay and ordained – clergy, readers, ministry team, baptism visitors and residential home worship leaders– for the variety of different takes on ministry which they bring. To the PCC, who have the task of keeping us on track in so many ways. To Mavis and Michelle, for Toddler Time, to Julia for Operation Christmas Child and to Penny for the Foodbank and Traidcraft. And to the servers, readers, musicians, choir members, tea-makers, cleaners, flower-arrangers and sidesmen and women who keep the place fit for worship. Carol Jacklin continues to keep the parish office going with her usual efficiency, and I'm particularly grateful to Rob Smith, who has taken on the role of parish administrator and is already transforming the way our admin works.

I'd also like us to mark with gratitude Jan Petch's long service as Sacristan, and thank Bill Shakespeare for taking over, and also Beryl for her patient work with Hall Bookings as she seeks to hand this over at the end of the year. I know I'll have missed some important part of St Mary's life – come to think of it, I met David Crosskell busily exterminating weeds on the Church path yesterday – but please do know that this is down to failing memory and not to wilful neglect!

*Fr David*

### **Electoral Roll**

The electoral roll stands at 104 there having been 7 removals.

### **Report on the church fabric**

The usual maintenance routine has followed its usual course. Gutters and drains have been cleared, leaves have been removed from the roof, fire extinguishers have been inspected, and the heating system has been serviced.

In February Ian Wilson re-decorated the hall lobby and toilets, and at the same time a new outside door to the hall was fitted. The re-decoration is not yet complete. For instance, Ian is waiting for the better weather before putting the gloss on the new doors, and he is hoping to do more painting in the hall itself when a more suitable time slot can be found. We also have the necessary approval for re-painting the church porch, and we hope to get that done over the summer. Meanwhile, Roger Lord has installed new and brighter lighting in the clergy vestry and persuaded the light outside the hall entrance not to shine twenty-four hours a day.

There is some water getting through the roof of the hall lobby. At the moment we are considering two quotations, with the further option that Ian might be able to do something about it himself.

It may seem a long time since we had major repairs done to windows in the north aisle and the chancel, and wire guards placed over windows in the tower, but a group of us have been steadily paying off the cost and our task will be completed this autumn. Thanks are due to all those people who have been part of this scheme. And this will probably coincide with our next quinquennial inspection.....

In the meantime it is my pleasure to record the gratitude of all at St Mary's to David Crosskell (leaves), Roger Lord (electricity) and Ian Wilson (painting and all sorts of other things)

*Geoff Brown.*

## **St. Mary's choir**

There have been two obvious highlights over the past year and both of them were innovations. After some prolonged negotiations with English Heritage we were granted permission to sing Choral Evensong in St. Peter's in July on the Sunday closest to St. Peter's Day. St. Peter's is a good place for singing and we took full advantage, with three anthems, settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, and the usual psalms and hymns, all unaccompanied. There was a congregation of sixty, three times our usual congregation when we sing Choral Evensong in St. Mary's. We shall be back in St. Peter's singing another Choral Evensong on July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

In many ways the Carol Service on Christmas Eve is the high point of the choir's year, and this Christmas we did something new, inviting anyone who was willing to have a go to join the choir for this one service. This initiative was successful beyond our wildest dreams. We had a choir of over thirty singers. It sounded good and everyone enjoyed both the service and the practices. Some of the volunteers also sang at the midnight service and the Advent Procession, and two have joined the choir permanently. This is something we shall certainly do again next Christmas.

Of course we must remember that between these highlights comes the regular cycle of weekly practices and services, and St. Mary's owes much to those who sustain our music through the year. We still need more people who are willing to help us do this. It is perhaps worth mentioning that ladies who can sing soprano would not find it difficult to sing the choir's regular weekly music, and we do particularly need a few more sopranos, just because they are the people who most of the time sustain the tune. Why not join us?

*Geoff Brown*

## **Mothers' Union**

We have met twice each month with an average attendance at meetings of nine and six at corporate communion. We have attracted thirteen different visitors. Ladies from Trinity Fellowship joined us twice and we visited them in April for their annual rally. St Mary's hosted "Women's world Day of Prayer" in March when we were joined by ladies from other denominations together with several year six pupils and the head teacher from St Peter's school.

Four members attended a Lady Day Eucharist in St Mary's Church whilst a Glanford group Eucharist was also held in St John's Church, Brigg. In February we were given background to life in Cuba in a talk, by the speaker Ruth Blythe in connection with the "Women's world Day of Prayer".

Father David led us in a quiet afternoon during Lent and we celebrated H.M. the Queen's 90 birthday and 140 years of the Mothers' Union with a short service, cake and old photo's in June.

Four of our meetings have been in house focussing on prayer and our afternoon of carols and readings brought our year to a close. Each week we have provided flowers for the Trinity Altar and we prepared and provided 100 posies for Mothering Sunday.

We have also supported Brigg branch financially to serve coffee in St Benedict's on our behalf. A Christmas wreath celebrating 140 years of the Mothers Union was on display during the Christmas season, we have raised funds for St Mary's through our efforts at the garden party and autumn bazaar and the Mothers Union through our subscriptions and donation to "Count your blessings" and the overseas fund.

We regularly support each other and the Parish through our commitment to prayer.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> January at the AGM Linda Bromfield Mothers Union branch leader and Brenda Skinner branch secretary stepped down from office and after deliberation Angela and Kevin Henson offered to take over for a year as leader and branch secretary with the support of us all.

## **St. Mary's Ladies' Group** 2016-2017

The group continues to thrive with a membership of over 90 this year, still providing an evening meeting for ladies of different or no faith background. Once again we have enjoyed a variety of speakers including Rachel Atkin, a local beautician, a chocolatier from Market Rasen. The Ladies enjoyed the usual high quality Harvest supper catered for by Cooks of New Holland, and a superb Christmas meal at Elsham Golf Club with music provided by the band 'Identity Crisis' from Burton Stather.

We have had several informative history talks: Brian Peeps speaking about 'Sloops and Keels' in the Humber and area; Laurie Robinson telling us about 'The Barton Pals' and money being raised for memorials for this brave group of friends. Both illustrated their talk with many photos.

A trip to Leeds to find out the history and origin of Marks and Spencer's, and a talk given about the life and work-novels and paintings- by Nick Turner of Ted Lewis ( who was a Bartonian).

Geoff Bryant is also giving the members a guided tour of St. Mary's Church in April to find those aspects of which they are unaware!

As you can see our programme is varied and we also raise a lot of money both for the church bazaar and Garden Party and for local charities - this year the 'The Young Carers', The Children's Society. Barton Pals, The Foodbank (including generous donations of food from the members for Christmas).

We supported the Church by having cake stalls at the annual bazaar and Summer Garden Party. We also help with church cleaning and making Christingles for the Christingle service in December. Refreshments are provided at the Ash Wednesday Service.

The meeting aims to provide something of interest for everyone, not forgetting our church 'roots'- originally as an offshoot of the Mothers' Union for 'Young Families'. New members are always welcome on the first and third Wednesdays of the month (except during August).

*Sue Wright (secretary)*

### **Toddler Time**

Toddler time continues to be large and lively group. We have sixteen mums/dads/carers that attend our sessions (some weekly and others when time and work commitments allow) bringing with them up to twenty two children. We continue to start at 9.30am which benefits our mums coming in directly from the school or playgroup run. The service part of our sessions continues to start at 10.15 to give everyone plenty of time to arrive. Mavis and I continue to be the only leaders of Toddler Time and it still works very well. The parents and children alike appreciate familiarity and that in turn enables us to develop good relationships with one another.

We continue to incorporate a craft type activity in the sessions which is always well received by both parents and toddlers alike. The money for the materials used for these activities is taken from our toddler time account.

We have this year made the decision to no longer run sessions in the school holidays due to both Mavis and I having increased commitments to our immediate and extended families. The poster on the outdoor notice board continues to bring us some new mums along with the smaller flyers at the back of the church and word of mouth.

A huge thank you to Mavis for her time and all that she does for the group and special thanks to Auriol (and her band of reserves!) for providing the refreshments and giving generously from the money she collects.

*Michelle Wright*

## Social Committee

Once again we have had a profitable year. The Midsummer and Harvest Suppers were well attended and both made reasonable profits. The Summer Fair and the Autumn Fair both made good profits – better than we thought they would. The books and jigsaws make small profits – but not all are paid for. My thanks to all who have helped at these events. If anyone would like to help in future, please have a word with me.

*Auriol Trubshaw.*

## TREASURER'S REPORT 2016

In presenting my report for the year ending December 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 I would first like to thank the two Churchwardens Val and Geoff together with their Sunday morning team for the work they carry out after all Services. As with all organisations it is the unsung work that goes on behind the scenes that enables an operation to run smoothly. This is very much the case at St. Mary's, once again thanks to you all.

As you will be aware we were unable to meet our Parish Contribution in 2015, but the one advantage to this is that we entered the year with a small credit balance to enable to start in the black. I am therefore please to report that this year we were indeed able to meet our Contribution and generate a small surplus at the end of the year. Although overall giving was down again on the year we were fortunate to receive a number of donations which boosted this shortfall. Together with our continuing cost control we ended the year on an even keel. Whether we shall be able to continue this in the current year remains to be seen. We are currently reviewing the heating and lighting to the church, and of course the Quinquennial is due, none of which will be cheap and will give rise to serious thoughts about fundraising to meet these costs.

Turning to the funds within the accounts, there has been very little movement and I think they explain themselves. Following the independence of the Foodbank and the opening of their own Bank accounts we no longer act as their bankers and have transferred that holding to them. One thing I would like to mention is the scheme Geoff set up a while ago whereby several people increased their giving by a specific amount to cover the cost of the window loan. This is then transferred to the Fabric fund which as you will see meets the loan repayment. This is perhaps something to bear in mind when looking at future projects we may have in mind.

In closing this report I can only stress that as a church we must pay our way as we go along to maintain the status quo. If we are not able to do this then the legacy we have inherited will not be passed on.

*A R Mabbott A.C.I.B. (Treasurer)*