

ANNUAL REPORT OF SAINT MARY'S PARISH CHURCH, BARTON-ON-HUMBER FOR THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 2017

Vicar's report

As usual, a review of things both local and not-so-local, accompanied by my apologies for being called away to chair another APCM elsewhere in the deanery- such are the perils of being a rural dean.

In view of recent high-profile publicity in the national media, it's worth touching on the subject of safeguarding. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse spent three weeks in March examining shortcomings in the diocese of Chichester and the submissions do not make for comfortable reading: people 'didn't like to say', or thought 'so-and-so wouldn't do something like that', or didn't believe it was their business or responsibility to pass on concerns.

Training in safeguarding is something about which we'll be hearing more, since volunteers like church members have a real and important role as whistle-blowers. It's increasingly clear that proper safeguarding isn't primarily about using a DBS to weed out high-risk individuals, though that has its place: it *is* about educating those of us in contact with potentially at risk people of any age so that we can notice if something isn't quite right, and know what to do if we are concerned. A recent training day for Spiritual Directors was invaluable in helping us identify signs that someone might be on the receiving end of something nasty, and it's part of our duty of pastoral care for the whole person.

We all know that being a worshipping Christian is neither easy nor popular, and knowing that the problems we face aren't limited to Barton, the Church of England or Western society in general is small comfort. Words like 'Mission' and 'Evangelism' get bandied around at every level of the Church, but there's no simple solution to an issue which will become (it has been suggested) one of the great talking points of historians; 'Why did religious belief collapse in the West?' The Bishop of Grimsby is on record as saying that although churches that grow tend to share certain characteristics, there are plenty which grow which break all those rules, and plenty which do all the right things and still struggle.

There are some things we're pretty good at:

we have good relationships with the wider Barton community (but less so with those who live here but interact very little with any aspect of town life).

Pastoral care: even though the clergy are not able to do nearly as much active visiting as we'd wish, we have a good network of pastoral visitors.

Service to the community-Toddler Time, OCC and the Foodbank are obvious examples of this, but there are others, including our offering of our facilities. Less obvious, but very important is the use made of St Mary's by people who simply need some time to be quiet.

Worship: we probably take a lot for granted, for those of us who get out and about a bit don't find generally the same standard of music, or as full participation in the liturgy of the whole people of God, or as wide a range of worship on offer.

Schools: we have a good engagement with all our primaries, all of whom are visited and visit the Church regularly.

There are significant challenges to face, though:

The near universal issues which surround a congregation where the rate of replacement is less than the rate of 'promotion,' where costs and building issues threaten to outstrip our ability to meet them, and where those willing to stand for office become fewer and fewer.

How are we to engage with those who are 'spiritual but not religious'?

How are we to deepen our own faith and spirituality in a time-poor environment?

In a culture which increasingly looks for instant fixes, how do we commend a faith which expects disciples to be challenged and changed over many years? We don't offer plastic surgery of the soul, but an invitation to a relationship - and relationships take time and effort to build.

We are exploring some ideas to answer these challenges, but they do depend on the support of the whole people of God. We believe strongly that the Church - even the funny old Church of England - still has something worthwhile to offer our communities, even in an age when most of the British define themselves as 'No Religion' (which in itself sets out the scale of the challenge before us)

We are fortunate, though: many parishes and congregations would love to be where we are, and enjoy the fruits of the hard work of so many people, both within the worshipping congregation and beyond. Naturally, the parish officers and colleagues in ministry will spring to people's minds, as will those who are very visible in their work, especially within worship (except for the one on the organ bench behind the pillar who does tend to be invisible. He makes up for this by being audible). It's easy to overlook the work of those who toil away behind the scenes, taking care of administration, or keeping us legal with regard to charity law or safeguarding, or keeping the church clean and decorated, or getting the magazines out. It's a long list, and we owe them all our thanks - they're all volunteers, and certainly don't do it for money or kudos.

It's always risky to mention particular individuals, but I do think that it is fitting to note that, among those stalwarts whom we lost from St Mary's last year we should remember Brian Petch, whose hard work, advice and sheer ingenuity in dealing with the problematic bits of maintenance in various parts of the building must have saved us a fortune. His legacy will be with us for at least as long as the Church Hall kitchen lasts.

Keep praying, keep loving, keep serving. It seemed to work for the Early Church.

Fr David

Church Fabric

On Sunday April 2nd 2017 scaffolding was erected over the lobby between the church and the hall so that a leak in the roof could be repaired, and on 7th February 2018 the fire extinguishers in the hall and church were inspected and three of them were replaced. These are the only things in this report which are not connected with the Quinquennial inspection. The inspection was carried out by Don K on 5th October 2017 and while ladders were in place for the inspection, Ian Wilson was using them to clear gutters, drains and roofs before the winter.

Don felt that the two most pressing problems were the damp in the priests' vestry and the lifting floor in the north aisle. He suspected the problem in the aisle might be connected with a leak in the water supply. Anglian Water made no fewer than six visits to the church between November 2017 and January 2018. They established that there is no leak in our water supply, but they have installed a new meter which means that, for the first time, water used in the hall will be metered as well as water used in the church, and this should save us money. Don conducted a further inspection of the north aisle roof in January which was also inconclusive and it looks as though we shall have to take all or part of the north aisle floor up, probably with the assistance of an archaeologist as you never know what you might find under an old church floor.

This is clearly a very difficult problem and any solution is likely to be very expensive. It is important that we do not get stuck on this one problem. There are more straightforward matters to be dealt with - for instance the decoration of the porch interior and the replacement of the rotting doors to the boiler house. These should be put in hand while we struggle with more intractable issues.

One thing is certain: we need money if we are to make any progress at all. We are planning to establish a "Friends of St Mary's" which will combine support from the congregation and the wider community specifically for our church building. I suspect that any grants or assistance we may apply for will be tied to what efforts we make for ourselves.

GB

Treasurer's Report for the year ending 2017

In presenting my report for the year ending December 31st 2017 I would first like to thank both Val D and Geoff B who as Churchwardens lead their team of counters after services, particularly on Sundays which makes my role and task so much easier. Like all organisations it is the unsung heroes who work behind the scenes that mean that the job runs so smoothly. Thank you all once again.

As you will see from the accounts we have managed to hold our own this year and indeed have shown a small surplus at the year end. Giving has been slightly up and this combined with the reduced parish contribution has meant that we have been able to hold our own over the year. Things however still remain tight and I have to very carefully manage our cash flow in order to stay in the black. There have been a number of occasions where cheques have remained on my desk until I feel we have the funds to cover them. Our cost control remains excellent and it is to everyone's credit that we also look at the most cost effective way when looking to spend money on behalf of the church.

Turning to the respective funds within the accounts all show a credit balance and expenditure within them is limited. The only exception to this is of course the Fabric Fund which is the most important. We have now fully repaid our loan from the Church Repair Society following the window repair, but of course we have now had a further quinquennial inspection which has shown further works required. This is of course in addition to the ongoing project to improve the heating and lighting. We must therefore be very careful when looking at works to be carried out. Indeed there must be a certain amount of cloth cutting and prioritising before we can commit ourselves to any expenditure.

In closing this report I can only reiterate the importance of us paying our way as we go, we must remember that the funds we are managing has been passed on to us from previous generations and that it our responsibility to maintain this so that we can pass it on to the next generation.

ARM A. C.I.B. Treasurer.

St Mary's Choir

We had hoped to repeat our previous year's highly successful Evensong in St Peter's at the beginning of last July, but unfortunately English Heritage were short of staff and couldn't accommodate us this time, so we sang an equally successful service at Horkstow, another church which has acoustics that make singing a pleasure. All being well we shall be singing in Horkstow again this year.

Once again we invited volunteers to sing with us at the Carol Service on Christmas Eve. The result was as successful as it had been last year and I hope this has become a regular tradition. The important thing is that the volunteers come to choir practices during November and December, and consequently feel truly part of the choir by Christmas Eve.

Between these special occasions, the choir sings a regular pattern of four morning and two evening services each month (except August). We have been pleased to welcome three new members since Christmas, and I think we can be optimistic about the future.

GB

St Mary's Mother's Union

The A.G.M. meeting on January 18th 2017 saw the stepping down of Linda B as Leader and Brenda S as branch Secretary. After some discussion by members Angela H was duly elected leader, and Kevin H was duly elected as branch Secretary for a provisional one-year term which would be reviewed at the next A.G.M.

In March there was a presentation to Linda and Brenda and a thank you of orchids for recognition for their hard work and dedication in leading the group. Janet P also received an orchid for her work in the group after stepping down to care for her husband, Brian.

The average monthly attendance of members at corporate Communion was 8 and average attendance for the monthly M.U. meetings was 12. A program of monthly speakers reflected a varied set of topics that were challenging and interesting in keeping with the aims of the Mother's Union.

The Lady Day service was well attended by members in March and 80 bunches of daffodils were made by members and given out at the Mother's Day Service at St Mary's on the 26th March.

May 3rd M.U. corporate communion saw the enrolment of Margaret S as a new member by Father D. Rowett, presiding. A photograph was taken, and it appeared in M.U. Diocese of Lincoln News magazine.

July saw members busy making a food hamper that raised £111 for St Marys Summer Fair and in October, with the help of the congregation, members raised £70 that was used to buy chocolate treats for Palestinian children in The Child of Bethlehem refugees schools and camps project, in Israel's West Bank.

The M.U. Winter Warmer Hamper Raised £97 for St Mary's Christmas Bazaar.

During August a group of 9 members went to the Red Lion Hotel at Redbourne North Lines for afternoon tea which has been arranged again. There will be more chances to have meals together next year.

We have had an open-door policy on our meetings to try to bring in people to try out the meetings and this has proven very fruitful and we look forwards to new members as a result.

With great sadness we record that Iris Ward passed away on 17th April 2017, aged 88. For several decades Iris was an active member of the M. U. and was a person who was always sensitive, joyful, cheerful and caring she will be missed by us all.

AH.

St. Mary's Ladies' Group

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 backgrounds. Once again we have enjoyed a variety of speakers including Paul Cooper, a local auctioneer, Sue Woodcock a Yorkshire Post journalist Josephine Wallace from Winterton, demonstrating Christmas flower arrangements and Charlotte Smith from the Barton Dental surgery, giving an illustrated talk on dental hygiene.

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 Del Vikings.

We have had several informative history talks: Marylin Roberts on the Mitford Girls and Geoff Bryant will be conducting a tour round St. Peter's Church.

As you can see our programme is varied and we also raise a lot of money for local charities - this year the 'The North Lines. Young Carers', the Children's Society, the Foodbank (including generous donations of food from the members for Christmas). We also held a fashion show in the Lecture Hall, Holydyke and raised over £1000 for Lindsey Lodge Hospice and gave toiletries to the Women's' Refuge in Grimsby.

We have outings during the year and have been to see 'Chatsworth House at Christmas' and 'Piece Hall' in Halifax.

We supported the Church by supporting the cake stalls at the annual Bazaar and Summer Garden Party and money from the jewellery Stall. We also help with church cleaning and making Christingles for the Christingle service in December.

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). Also to come along to our Singing Group held on the second Wednesday of each month led by Fiona T.

SW (secretary)

Social Committee

Once again we have had a profitable year.

The Midsummer & Harvest Supper both made reasonable profits. The Summer Fayre & the Autumn Fair both made good profits, much better than we thought they would. The Books and Jigsaws still make a little profit but not all items are paid for. My thanks to everyone who help at these events. If anyone would like to help in future please contact me.

AT