

The Parish of St Thomas and St Edmund Salisbury

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE PARISH 2017



The Rectors Welcome

Welcoming Praying Transforming - that is the mission statement of this parish. It puts in three words much of what we are about. Arriving as Rector in 2017, I was pleased to find that our teams, groups and committees really are committed to making that statement a reality. It is evident that certain parts of our mission statement are embodied in the work of certain of our teams. For example: our welcomers welcome, our prayer-offerers pray and our pastoral carers bring transformation. I would suggest that the real test of our sense of mission is to look for the mission statement in less obvious areas: a choir that welcomes, a garden team that prays, bookstallers who bring transformation, and so on, and so on. Everyone at St Thomas's has a role in every part of God's work at St Thomas's no matter what their particular interest or capacity. Welcoming Praying Transforming: under God, in union with Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Safeguarding Report

The theme of safeguarding is now an integral foundation stone which underpins all our activities in the parish. A full year has now passed since the appointment of the Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs) following the adoption of the Parish Policy in September 2016. In July 2017 the PCC approved a Policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders.

Following the guidelines issued by the National Church's Safeguarding Team regarding attendance at training sessions our current contingent of volunteers are all up-to-date. This we achieved because three trainers undertook the 'Train the Trainers' course run by the diocese which has enabled us to hold our own sessions at times that suit our congregation. Saturday mornings from 9:30am for a couple of hours have been the most popular times and have overlapped with the usual coffee morning which has been mutually beneficial.

During 2017 we held six C1 Foundation Level safeguarding and two Mental Health Awareness sessions, to which a total of eighty-six members of the congregation attended. In addition, a number of First Aid sessions have been provided as a result of participants' concerns. We are aware of the advantage of repeating both of these additional initiatives and have these firmly in our plans for our ongoing training provision.

We have continued to use the Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) to check the background of our volunteers, as required. Twenty-five people have required clearance during the year, this being necessary because of the roles they perform. The process is now relatively easy as the diocese pays to use the online facility

offered by the Access Personal Checking Services Ltd (APCS), who also provide out of hours support.

The Safeguarding Review Group in the parish is made up of all members of the clergy, the churchwardens and the PSRs, who meet bi-monthly to review and instigate all aspects of safeguarding in the parish. The PCC receive written reports at most of their meetings.

The tri-fold safeguarding leaflet is currently being reviewed and the completely re-written Parish Handbook is in its final draft stages. Publication will follow at or soon after the 2018 APCM.

The Safer Recruitment process has now been rolled out and used for the establishment of the group known as the 'Welcomers', although the Sunday Children's work has met with a hitch as the named leader has now moved on. This project continues to be 'work in progress'.

The recruitment of a chaperone for the choir rehearsals has been completed, in addition to the implementation of various safeguards in the way that the choir operates. Similar discussions have taken place with the leaders of the Care and Connect group.

Those involved in the recruitment process need to have attended the S1 training course and so to help us comply with the requirements of the process, the selection and training of a small pool of volunteers is being undertaken. This will now mean that the onus can be shared, whenever new volunteers are identified to be needed.

Careful planning and risk assessments have been the focus for various groups, including the organizers of the Christmas Tree Festival and the forthcoming Festival of Flowers, Music & Art. An understanding of the basic C1 foundation level principles are desired for all those involved so that each planning groups looks at the safeguarding aspects of everything that is being discussed. The onus is upon us all, not just the PCC and the PSRs.

Behind all of the activities, initiatives and thinking mentioned above, there are a great many people who have contributed this year by supporting or driving the changes which the parish were required to make. We now have shaped and adapted our processes and general outlook. We are indebted to all those involved and for the willingness shown by many in our community to share in the responsibility. There is still much to accomplish, but it has been a 'good year'!

Bridget Trump & Michael Humphreys, (PSRs)

Bellringers

We have continued to ring for most of the Sunday Parish Communion and Evensong services exceptions being the few occasions when we could not summon up enough ringers. We have also rung for several weddings and Mayor making and, as last year, we rang for Christingle and Carols for Busy People. An especial pleasure was to ring for the induction, in July, of our new rector and to welcome him to the ringing chamber to chime one of our bells during the induction service. Once a month we hold an advanced practice that brings in ringers from a wide area and allows us to practise methods we could not ring on our own. This has led to several of our ringers extending their repertoire. Many of our ringers also support the ringing at St. Martins and at Britford.

We held two tower open sessions for the public on St. George's Day. Another tower open day was held in September as part of the nationwide Heritage Open Days scheme. We rang for the BBC Music Day in June. We laid on a display in church for the Volunteers' service. All these sessions were greatly enhanced by Andy Teed's further developed CCTV system allowing the bells and ringers to be displayed in the ringing chamber or the church.

These open sessions and Margaret's attractive poster display in church resulted in our acquiring seven learners and one ringer returning after a gap of many years. Recognising the urgent need for more ringers, my wife Ali and I had attended a Teaching Bellringing course run by the Association of Ringing Teachers early in the year. Later in the year, we were assessed on a teaching session in the tower and were accepted as trained teachers. To accelerate the learners' progress, extra practice sessions were held at St. Martins and Wilton plus tied clapper sessions at St. Thomas's. More learners are still wanted; they need to be reasonably fit and between about 12 and 60

Our social events continued with curry evenings and this year also a summer's evening meal in the garden of a pub at Burcombe, the organiser being our dynamic Social Secretary, Penny Ibbs. We had a tower outing in July organised by Louise when we visited 6 towers in the Zeals area with an excellent lunch at a Zeals pub. We held a ringers' barbeque in our garden in August. We continued to man the second Saturday coffee mornings in the church and this year split the takings equally between the church and the reordering fund. Our December coffee morning coincided this year with the Tree Festival so was exceedingly busy. Members of the band have undertaken church-organised training for safeguarding and resuscitation.

As part of our ongoing review of tower safety, we arranged a visit from the local Fire and Rescue team to look at all aspects of rescuing people from the tower. This resulted not long afterwards in the surprise appearance at the west ringing chamber window during one of our practices of a fireman on a hydraulic platform extended from their vehicle in St. Thomas's Square.

For further information, audio and video links and contact details, see our website which can be accessed via the church website (hover over "Getting Involved" and click on Bellringing).

Nigel Orchard, Tower Captain
Margaret Romano, Deputy Tower Captain

Bookstall Report

The Bookstall has enjoyed another successful year with a steady stream of good quality stock coming our way, thanks to the generosity of a wide range of donors. The annual total takings of £2,865 are a considerable raise on last year, so a big thank you to all my team. We have been joined by a number of new members on our rota which is always pleasing and helps to maintain a high level of enthusiasm! Well done everyone!

Geoff Bishop.

Care and Connect

Care & Connect have continued to meet on the third Tuesday of each month (apart from August). The group is for those church members who find it difficult to get to church.

We meet firstly in St Michael's Room in St Thomas's Church, where we have coffee and conversation usually followed by a short talk from a member of the clergy. We then make our way across to St Thomas's House where volunteers prepare a two course lunch for us all. We are also most grateful to Jill Bushnell and her team who prepare the coffee in readiness for our guests. It is a real joy to witness our guests' fellowship and friendship in the company of new and old friends.

We draw on a church allotment to pay for the hire of the Community minibus and also towards the expenses for food etc. Donations are voluntarily received from our guests and team members respectively.

Some of our guests make their own way to church, while others are collected and returned home, by minibus, and we are indeed most grateful to Alex and Eileen Lomax, who act as driver and chaperone for each journey.

Since Pantry Partnership have stood aside from preparing the lunches for our guests, the onus has fallen upon volunteers from our congregation, and special thanks to Sheila Holt for all her assistance. With their support we have been able to continue with this ministry of outreach.

At All Saints', we prepared a display giving full information about our Group. In December we enjoyed a most delicious Christmas lunch at Robert's in Britford. Next year we hope to arrange a couple of outings, eg. a cream tea and a December lunch.

Several of our volunteers have attended the necessary Safeguarding Courses, and also a few have attended First Aid Courses.

As a team, we are determined to ensure that this ministry of outreach continues, and we can only do this with the help and assistance of volunteers from our congregation. However, we will have a dilemma in December 2018 when Alex Lomax will no longer be available to drive the minibus. We will, therefore, need to recruit a new driver, and if you can help please contact Di Durnford, Jenny Vokes or Pat Inglis.

A huge THANK YOU to those volunteers and everyone who has supported us this past year.

Patricia Inglis

St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity

PCC St Thomas & St Edmund Fricker Charity

Two charitable funds are distributed under the auspices of the parish: (a) the St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity and (b) the parish's share of the Fricker Charity. The Trustees of the St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity are: The Rector (ex officio), Sally Vaughan (PCC Nominee and Secretary), Nigel Orchard (Co-opted, Treasurer), Bobbie Chettleburgh (Salisbury City Council nominated) and Martin Inglis (Co-opted). The Rector of St. Thomas's is the designated recipient and distributor of the parish's share of the Fricker Charity funds; David Linaker chose to use the St. Thomas's Charity trustees to advise him on distribution of the Fricker funds. In David's absence from August 2016 this arrangement was continued. Permission was obtained from the Archdeacon for Bobbie Chettleburgh as a churchwarden to receive the Fricker distributions and to chair the meetings of the trustees and distributors. From July 2017, Revd Kelvin Inglis was the rector and has for the moment continued the arrangements.

So that the charities can respond quickly to cases of need, the Secretary circulates details by email with a short deadline for Trustees to reply. If an application receives majority approval then the Secretary and Treasurer will make the payment. Only if an objection by a Trustee cannot be resolved by email will the application be held over to a meeting. The Trustees met four times in 2017.

The St. Thomas & St. Edmund funds arise from a Charities' Commission fund into which were consolidated the investments from 11 old charities ranging from The Charity of John Eyre (founded by a will dated 13th July 1599) to The Charity of Richard Earlsman for Six Poor Men dated 1st October 1940. The capital is now invested in the Charity Commission fund (COIF). In 2014, the opportunity was taken to move these funds into a more ethical fund run by the Charities' Commission. Only the income is distributed by the trustees; the capital is left intact.

The income from the Fricker Charity (arising from the rental of a shop in Salisbury and distributed according to the terms of a will made in 1696) is passed equally to the rectors of St. Thomas's and St. Martin's and the trustees of The Trinity Hospital, Salisbury. The Fricker distribution area covers the entire city, Laverstock and Harnham. The St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity funds are restricted to the parish and to Bemerton Heath.

The trustees would welcome anyone drawing their attention to potential recipients. Grants may be made to needy individuals or organisations serving the needy in the area of the scheme. The contact email is: StTCharities@btinternet.com or phone the parish office in the first instance: 322537.

In 2017, the St. Thomas & St. Edmunds Charity had an investment income of £3669 and distributed £4991, having carried over unspent funds of £4080 from 2016. As usual, a distribution was made at Christmas to certain needy parishioners. The Fricker fund income was £10,000 and £7868 was distributed in 22 grants (a big decrease over the 41 in 2016, attributable to a reduced number of applications). The trustees prefer to make grants on application from organisations so that they can vouch for the need, confirm that other sources of funding (where relevant) have also been approached and ensure that the grants are spent effectively and for the purpose intended. The trustees aim to distribute the full amount of the income taking one year with another. No expenses are incurred in the administration of these funds by the parish.

Each year the accounts of both funds are subject to independent examination. Copies of the accounts are available on request.

Nigel Orchard
Treasurer

Christmas Tree Festival 2017

The 2017 Christmas Tree Festival was again a very popular and successful community event. Some aspects of the success were measurable:

- 107 trees and nativity scenes were exhibited.
- c.13,000 visitors were checked (or clicked) in.
- Visitors from 33 countries logged their homeland on the map.
- About 1,000 children and adults sang and played music.
- About 100 litres of soup made by members of the congregation were consumed.
- £15,490.30 was raised from the retiring collection after expenses had been met. The charities Salisbury Trust for the Homeless and Wilton Riding for the Disabled Association each received £4900, and St Thomas's received £4890.16.

What cannot be statistically counted was the success of the Festival as a great inclusive event of Christian hospitality in celebration of Christmas. Human

creativity and hard work were in ample evidence in the months of preparation and the intense duration of the Festival. The home team of the committee, co-ordinators, caterers, stewards, musicians, publicists and those collecting and counting money was again a formidable and effective force. St Thomas's is also grateful to the many friends and relatives not members of the congregation who helped in setting up the Festival and in its running. Comments in the Visitors' Book summed it up:

Absolutely beautiful and moving... Wonderful!... Such a great way to start the Christmas season... Super and magical!... Stunning – a true Christmas gem... A very moving experience... A little piece of Heaven on Earth. God Bless You All.

John Cox and Diane Emsley (Organisers for the 2017 Festival)

Choir

Choir has had an exceptionally busy year with many highlights. Undoubtedly, the greatest was singing the services at Canterbury Cathedral the week after Easter. We were very well received and it was good to see familiar faces - the Dean, Revd Dr Robert Willis, and also Revd Nicholas Papadopoulos, who used to worship at St Thomas's.

The Choir has sung a number of major works during the year – Part 2 of Handel's Messiah on Passion Sunday; Parry's Blest Pair of Sirens; Handel's Zadok the Priest and Haydn's Missa Sancti Nicolai accompanied by orchestra at the September concert. On Remembrance Sunday we sang Fauré's Requiem at the Eucharist Service. The Summer Lunchtime Concert comprised the 10 favourite anthems chosen by the Choir. Over £3000 was raised for the Church and various charities through these concerts.

The Christmas season was particularly busy with some new engagements. The Choir sang at a carol service for passengers travelling with Steam Dreams from Ashford to Salisbury. The Chamber of Commerce also held a carol service in St Thomas's. In addition, we sang carols for a number of organisations including Wessex Stoma, Salisbury Trust for the Homeless and at Archers Court and Elizabeth Court. Church events revolved around the Christmas Tree Festival, Nine Lessons and Carols, and the Christmas Day services. The season finished with our annual visit to Salisbury Cathedral to sing Evensong.

Training is an integral part of being in the Choir and members have attended special classes and moved up through the RSCM Awards. Jamie, Arabella, Sophie and Cameron all received their Dean's Awards at the Salisbury Diocesan Festival Service at Salisbury Cathedral.

Musical skills and knowledge are gained through being a member of the Choir and it is particularly beneficial for the all-round education of children. Choir numbers have increased, but more children would be welcome to the main choir and the junior choir, who sang with great gusto at the Christingle Service.

We wished Johanna Schwarting all the best as she started her degree course at Leeds University.

It is a privilege and very rewarding to be part of the Choir which plays an important part in enhancing the worship at St Thomas's.

John Dempster: Director of Music Churchwardens

It was thrilling to be asked to take the role on as a couple and to be elected at the APCM. It's been a busy and exciting year for us and has crowned our 25th wedding anniversary year! We approached the role with the understanding that we had to reduce the burden of tasks that the Churchwardens at St Thomas's have traditionally had to bear.

The foundation for this had already been laid by the PCC initiating, and the congregation generously paying for, the employment of Assistant Vergers. Our first major job in post was to recruit the Assistant Vergers with Robert Lewis. Tamsyn and Andrew duly took up their posts in June and what they do in preparing for and clearing away after services and other events in church has freed us up greatly. This enables us to concentrate on the important aspects of the role, i.e. talking to people and understanding what is going well or not so well in the life of the church community. It has also meant that the Churchwardens do not have to be omnipresent and we feel this will make it easier for people with full-time jobs or other major commitments to consider taking on the warden role in future.

It was wonderful to welcome Kelvin and his family in July. The build-up for this in terms of preparing the Rectory, taming the Rectory garden and organising the Licensing service was the most amazing revelation to us of how fantastically "Team St Thomas's" galvanises into action when called upon!

We have been reminded of this time and again, for instance with the Remembrance Commemoration service when we welcomed over 600 people through our doors, the Christmas Tree Festival (13,000 +), Carols for Busy People (500 +), all the Christmas carol services and concerts and, most recently, the launch of the Appeal in January.

The work of the myriad voluntary groups within St Thomas's is also witness to its vitality. A new milestone was reached in January with the launch of the Welcomers, who are going to be so important to our mission. They are already providing a wonderfully useful point of contact for visitors, either in giving a personal welcome and 'tourist information' or in signposting others who are in need of pastoral or other support. It is our hope that the numbers of Welcomers will increase so that we can greet more people with that personal touch.

Quest 2020, our fundraising appeal, is the single largest project St Thomas's community has undertaken in living memory. It is wonderful to see the energy and imagination that is going into all the strands of work associated with it. We are aware that the congregation now needs to see a plan of action and a timetable for redevelopment to get under way and the Appeal Committee is working hard to sort the various chickens and eggs to make this happen.

We are tremendously grateful for the continued support of the Wardens Team and wish Fi Green and Michael Humphreys as fulfilling and enjoyable a tenure as ours has been.

Cleaning Teams

There are 5 cleaning teams in St Thomas's and they each meet at 10.15am on a Friday. The teams – of both men and women – are responsible for sweeping (or hoovering) the floors, dusting the pews, and hoovering the carpets, as well as cleaning the kitchen and toilet. More recently members of the teams have cleaned finger prints off the glass doors.

The loyal teams of cleaners make the church look fresh and cherished for the many visitors and the congregations of our services. I very much appreciate their hard work and dedication.

Rosemary Cox

Community Engagement

Community Engagement is a network within the Parish concerned with: Bible Study (See the Adult Education Report), Christian Aid campaigning and education (see Christian Aid Report), Ministry on the Streets – including Street Pastors, Parish-giving to organisations (See the Budget), Sudan and South Sudan, Eco-Church and our support for Community groups.

The three-monthly Parish Prayer Sheet continues to be circulated.

The Parish continues to support the work of Alabaré in Salisbury including the annual Sleep Out; the B.I.D.; the Salisbury City Neighbourhood Tasking Group, the Salisbury Refuge, Safer and Supportive Salisbury, Trussell Trust with the Salisbury International Pancake Race, Salisbury Baroque; the Salisbury Sinfonia; Alzheimer's Society and the Dementia Action Alliance; the Salisbury Homeopathy College, Headway and many other local organisations who make considerable use of St Thomas's House. St Thomas's remains a supporter of Fair Trade. In October 2017 St Thomas's hosted a photographic exhibition in collaboration with Send-a-Cow who were the focus of our Harvest Festival.

As a parish we continue to pray regularly for the Sudans especially as internal conflict continues. The Salisbury Deanery link with the Diocese of Juba has stalled due to events in South Sudan. The Parish supported the 2017 Sudan Garden Party with our famous Bottle Stall.

Through the Friends St Thomas's supported the St Edmund's Community Group and the Milford Street History Project in the making of a mosaic for St Edmund's Church Street and the Juno Theatre Group which has begun work on a writing project based on the timeline of our church building.

Community Engagement Coffee Mornings continue and I wish to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped staff these Coffee Mornings – it has been hugely appreciated.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Parish Office for all their magnificent administrative support over the year, my Ministry Team colleagues, the Choir. It has been much appreciated. Together we continue to make a difference

Rev'd Jonathan Plows

Craft'nChat

Craft'nChat has been meeting on the third Friday of the month at 2.00pm in St Thomas's House for several years. We are a small group who meet to share our craft experiences (and others) in a friendly environment.

Members are from St Thomas's as well as those who drop in out of curiosity and stay. We have very mixed interests and we try to help each other. It is fascinating to see what we all produce and we enjoy delicious coffee or tea and biscuits.

We are grateful to the church for letting us use the room.

ADULT EDUCATION TEAM:

The Adult Education Team works to provide a range of opportunities for learning and spiritual growth within the congregation.

Membership:

Jill Britton; Fiona Hulbert (Chair); Mark Manterfield; Judith Marriott; Jonathan Plows; Linda Salter, Keith Thomasson.

Linda Salter stood down as a member of the team at the end of 2017 and was replaced by Wendy Pugh.

Groups

Ongoing groups include the Marriott's Bible Study groups (contact Martin or Judith Marriott) and Contemplative Community (contact Jill Britton). Newcomers are most welcome at these groups.

Lent 2017

The programme was planned as an accompaniment to our spiritual journey between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. In addition to church services special events included:

- a series of Tuesday light lunches with talks from various speakers

- a series of Friday lunchtime concerts
- Talks on Faith and Art from Revd Wendy Pugh
- ???

Interfaith Education

During 2017 we continued our programme of occasional events to give us opportunities to learn about other faiths, with:

- a Scriptural Reasoning session, with Rabbi Natan Levy, Imam Usama Hasan and Canon Guy Wilkinson discussing the topic of 'Encountering God' from their respective Jewish, Muslim and Christian scriptures.
- Bishop Nicholas and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg 'In Conversation' on Christian-Jewish relations and other topics of mutual interest

Retreats / Quiet Days

We held:

- A Quiet Day led by Ian Adams at Hazel Hill Wood in April 2017, entitled 'Contemplative Earth'.
- A Parish weekend at Hilfield Friary in Sept 2017, in which we explored various approaches to prayer.

Fiona Hulbert

Fabric Committee

The activities of the Fabric Committee for the past twelve months have been dominated by contributing to background work for the Appeal, mainly building up the portfolio of projects entailed and assisting in developing a coherent programme. Included in this activity has been the commissioning of several investigations of parts of the church by conservators; one of the most exciting of which involved the cleaning of parts of the Eyre Memorials and the ceiling in the Lady Chapel that has given a fascinating foretaste of what could be achieved with careful conservation.

The culmination of the year's work has been the preparations for applying to the Diocese for per-mission to undertake the 'Doom Plus' project of the essential repair and restoration work to the Doom Painting and the two bays of the Clerestory Window next to it on the South side plus restor-ing the first two bays of the ceiling by the Doom and cleaning the stonework around the Chancel which will produce a wonderful setting for worship in this central and focal part of the church and supplement the re-ordering

Nick Beard and team

The Friends

2017 was a year of further consolidation with our membership growing beyond 100 Friends and our funds growing steadily. The Friends were delighted to be involved in the development of the new Parish website making fund available for

this project. The role of the Friends at St Thomas's became clearer during the year as ideas on the Re-development project; the Organ Appeal and wider Fundraising crystallised. The Friends support all these and a wide range of community, social, heritage and cultural activities in and for the parish.

Rev'd Jonathan Plows

Grapevine

Grapevine is a social group for men, mostly, but not invariably, from St Thomas's Church which meets on a monthly basis at St Thomas's House. Our evenings start with a glass of wine and a few nibbles, usually followed by a speaker and questions.

We have had an eventful year in 2017. John Foster and Geoff Bishop who have guided us for a number of years handed the reins on to Michael Humphreys and Peter Horwood. John and Geoff have put much hard work into Grapevine over the years and it is a pleasure to acknowledge this.

This year we have had a number of interesting meetings, starting with holiday snaps from Antarctica, and ending with our Annual Dinner at the White Hart. In between we have had talks from various organisations, including Save the Children, Amnesty International and the Trussell Trust. We, at last, managed to have John Glen speak to us in the summer. John and Geoff have, for many years, tried to co-ordinate diaries with our MP John Glen, but the un-expected calling of the election stopped all Parliamentary business so John Glen was free to join us.

Our Summer Social Meeting in June, to which other halves are invited, was to have been a garden party. The weather however decided otherwise and the rain came down in buckets! Fortunately one of our members was able to accommodate everybody in their house and we had a most entertaining evening with a meal and children's party games! Our autumn started with a talk from Kelvin Inglis, who had only recently taken up his appointment as Rector. This gave us a wonderful opportunity to get to know him, and him us, a little better.

Mike Winterman again organised our well-attended Annual Dinner, held in the White Hart at the end of November. Our thanks to him for doing this.

Grapevine is open to any man who would like to join us, for further details do contact Peter Horwood or myself.

Michael Humphreys.

humphreys.m@clara.co.uk

Tuesday Coffee Mornings

We have had a very successful year raising £8636-71p for Church Funds, and £268-21p for the Organ Fund Appeal in October when we took a Saturday morning. We look forward to our Tuesday mornings, welcoming our regular customers as well as visitors from all over the world. Our cakes and scones are always very popular as they are mostly home-made. Coffee cake and cheese

scones are a great favourite followed by Old Fashioned Bread Pudding and Victoria Sandwich. We sometimes have a gluten free cake for those who have special dietary requirements. Do come and join us between 9.30 am - 12 noon. You will be assured of a warm welcome.

Jill Bushnell

Christian Aid

The Christian Aid Week collections, at church and on the doorstep broke through the £2000 mark in 2017 for the first time – thanks to our generous supporters and wonderful collectors. The week began with an oomph when Sunday's service centred around Christian Aid's work, and since this coincided with the civic service we also gained a councillor as a collector. The annual quiz night in January also did extremely well, and eventually £1000 was sent in, to be doubled in value by the government.

We also supported Christian Aid's Big Shift campaign. Climate change causes drought and floods around the world, leading to poverty and regional migration. One way that we can reduce the burning of fossil fuels that lead to climate change is to persuade our banks to stop investing in fossil fuels. The main high street banks made commitments to stop investing in fossil fuels during the Paris Climate Change Agreement in December 2015 – but they need to be reminded of these commitments. In October churches in Salisbury held a street stall to sign a petition regarding fossil fuel investment to take to the banks.

Put Sunday 22nd July in your diaries for a tea party in the Bishop's Garden for Christian Aid – the best possible way to raise money for a good cause and have a lovely afternoon!

Clare Tawney

Garden Team

Who's in the Garden Team?

RoseMary has a wealth of plant knowledge and she is the person we turn to for advice. Jonathan cuts the lawn; Clive keeps everything tidy, looks after the bins, picks up heavy stuff, weeds and much more. Bob, who joined our team last summer, is a very pro-active member and will turn his hand to anything. Malcolm looks after and tidies up the south churchyard pathways, the Church entrance and St Thomas's House entrance. These public areas have to be kept clean and tidy. It's amazing what people leave behind for him to clear away! The team demonstrations, that took place on All Saints Day last October in the Church, did attract a new team member – Guy, who joined our team in the Autumn.

During the dry winter of 2016, some of the yew trees in the South Churchyard (next to the Nero Café) died, and we had to replace them and the new trees are now growing well, During March we noticed that our trusty shed was looking a bit shabby and two coats of paint has made it like new again!

We are allocated a set amount of money each year from the Church to pay for new equipment, plants and repairs. This year we decided that it was about time to invest some money in a new garden table and chairs for the patio in St Thomas's garden. Many of our visitors sit in the garden during the summer months and now they can enjoy the stylish furniture. We still have the old table but some of the chairs were starting to break and had to be thrown away before anyone got hurt! The annual 'St Thomas's House Hedge Cut' reared its head towards the end of summer and it was decided to try and do the job ourselves and save the annual £200 we normally pay to professionals. After discussions we also took the even 'bolder' decision to cut the hedge to a lower level, under the street light! But first we needed to buy our own hedge cutter! With this in mind we dedicated the upcoming gardener's cake and coffee morning, on Saturday 26th August, to raising funds for this purchase. As usual, our friends in St Thomas's supported our Saturday morning event and I ordered a 'very' modern light-weight Gtech hedge-cutter that works on a battery, so we do not need to worry about electric leads! It did the trick and after some very hard work on behalf of Bob, Guy and Clive, the job was complete. We are hopeful to keep the hedge down to this lower level to make it easier to manage in the future.

We continue to add new plants and bushes to the garden to fill in gaps and replace old plants. There is always something to do in a garden! If you would like to join the team, please contact Meryl in the office and she can pass on your name to me, **Ann Horwood**.



RoseMary, Ann, Jonathan, Clive, Bob and Malcolm- Autumn 2017

The Olive Branch

We have had another enjoyable year in 2017 when, I am pleased to say, our numbers have increased. However, we are always pleased to welcome new members.

We have had a variety of speakers to include an interesting talk about the Whistler Exhibition in the Museum; Yvonne Pope's sister came from Portsmouth to talk

about her church's mission to give 'St. Simon's Suppers' to those in need; 'Communicating Doors' at the Studio Theatre proved to be an hilarious evening. We also enjoyed Compline in the Chapel at Sarum College, taken by David Longford and a talk by our Rector, Kelvin Inglis.

As well as a very pleasant afternoon tea at Robert's, we also finished our year with lunch at the White Hart Hotel.

We look forward to seeing some new faces, as well as any possible speakers from our congregation who may have an interesting subject to talk to us about!

Jan Winterman

LPA Pastoral Care

This year at the time of LPA recommissioning 7 of our LPA's have decided it is time to stand down from this ministry. They are: John and Jane Gisby, Ken Dungate, Jenny Vokes, Rhona Bennett, Pip Baily and John Blake. We give huge thanks for all they have done within this ministry during their time as LPA's.

LPA's renewing their Licence for the next 3 years are: Di Durnford, Rosie Norman, Pat Inglis, Ann Foster, Angelika Sturzy-Merz, Kate Price, John Coupe, Pam Rae, and Bridget Trump.

The date for recommissioning was 21st April at the Cathedral. LPA's standing down have remained licensed until that time. The day ran from 10.30 to 4.00pm with workshops before the commissioning service.

There is now a new process in place for potential future LPAs to explore this ministry. Initial contact will be referred through to Kelvin and from there linking in to a Diocesan process to go through discernment with Benny Hazlehurst at Church House and probable attendance at a LPA taster day before training and licencing.

When applications have been agreed by the Diocese the training is then provided by those trained to deliver in this area. I am currently checking out who is listed and will be looking to undertake the Diocesan training to deliver the 10 session training if there is not already sufficient options available. It may well be that it will be most practical to look at this as a Deanery plan to provide training to a mixed Parish group, which as well as increasing viability, would also enrich learning within the variety of contexts.

Leaflets with more information are available in church and on the LPA board at the back of the church to encourage interest in exploring this ministry. And of course time for an informal chat with myself or Kelvin is always available

Once licenced all LPA's are able to access ongoing training days through the Diocese provision and will have ongoing support through the ministry team here at St Thomas's.

If you think it may something you would like to explore please do speak with one of the ministry team or the LPA's. There are many ways of offering this ministry and times would be according to your availability.

Rev'd Wendy Cooper

Organ Refurbishment Project

The official fundraising was completed in 2016 and the contract placed. Some additional, very welcome, donations have however been received during 2017. Despite little outward sign of activity, a lot of preparation and design work has been going on this year in preparation for the organ being stripped down after Easter 2018 and returned to service by Christmas.

New trebles have been manufactured for the bassoon incorporating old material where appropriate.

The pallets of the Great and Swell soundboards have been investigated and the findings incorporated into the design of the new action. The contractor is setting up a test rig so that the theoretical calculations can be proven to provide a substantial benefit to the action touch before committing fully to any alterations to the soundboards.

Further work has continued on small components for the coupler chassis.

More detailed investigation of the pipes in the organ has shown the possibility of getting the Choir section configuration back towards that of the original Samuel Green design. This will be further considered and costed in 2018.

Nigel Orchard
Project Manager

Sidesmen

This is not a particularly high-profile role in the regular life of the church but we would all immediately be aware if Sidesmen no longer existed! Incidentally, 'Sidesmen' is the correct title for such people, according to the Diocesan Office. Thirty-four members of the congregation are currently involved in this work at both the 8am and 10.15am services on Sunday mornings. Their role is to assist the Church Wardens in welcoming people as they arrive, giving them their hymnbooks, newsheets and any other literature they may need, helping to take up the collection and then, at the end of the service, collecting all the hymnbooks again and leaving the church in a tidy state. Most Sidesmen are on duty two, and sometimes three times a quarter. We enjoy our role and I would be happy to talk to anyone who would like to become involved.

Martin Marriott

“Praying Together”

The Church has many meetings and activities, beginning the week with the Sunday services and continuing each day with different groups meeting to further the on-going life and work of Wokingham Methodist Church. All of these meetings, and the people involved in them, need the foundation of prayer and this support is one function of the prayer group that meets each week at the Church.

Praying

Together This group meets on Tuesday mornings from 10.00 to 10.30am
Tuesday in church in the St Michael's Room.
10.00am

The Tuesday Prayer Group continues to meet in St Michael's Room at 10.00am – 10.30am every week throughout the year. Our numbers vary from two or three to seven or eight, or twelve, but we are always conscious that as we join together with a single purpose, God is with us.

Prayer needs come to us in different ways: via personal request; the weekly notice sheet; the parish prayer diary; the prayer board situated in the Lady Chapel; the work of our church and other churches in the Diocese; awareness of local issues; the national and international news. Never forgotten either are the needs of our own church family, and we hold all those in any kind of trouble or distress in our prayers. The Christmas Tree Festival Prayer Tree also brings forth prayer requests from visitors, known and unknown.

We pray for people, places and events for which we have concern; All information and requests remain within the Group and are treated with confidentiality.

We strongly believe in the power of prayer and that it is a vital resource for the life of the church. We also believe that with prayer we can achieve much, but without it we can do nothing. We are sure that there are many in our Church who would appreciate sharing with us and we would love to hear from you. Do join us if you can.

It is my privilege to lead the Praying Together meetings, and I wish to extend my personal thanks to the very loyal and supportive members of Praying Together. I greatly value their prayers, support and encouragement.

Pat Inglis

Saturday Coffee Mornings Rota.

There is some important information about the Saturday morning Coffee Rota this year.

On the third Saturday of each month the proceeds will go straight to our own St Thomas's Fundraising Appeal. Any volunteers willing to run one of these events, or be on a team, will be warmly welcomed. Please let Mike Winterman or me know. The twelve Saturdays for "outside" charities are all taken, Jonathan has his four for Community Engagements and the remaining Saturdays are booked for supporting other St Thomas activities.

Serving Team

In the period from the last APCM to January the serving team has enjoyed stability with few practice changes and we have seen our youngest servers grow in confidence and ability, culminating in being crucifer during Lent 2018. However, since January a number of servers have, for personal reasons, requested either reduced serving, temporary withdrawal, or to be taken off the serving team. In Apr 17 there were 15 servers; at the time of writing (end of Feb 18) the team is 11 strong, with one of those on reduced serving. The team will reduce further at the end of the current rota (20 May) to just 7, which is not sufficient to operate in the current format.

After 17 years of serving at St Thomas's, with about 14 of those as Head Server, I have decided to retire.

If you feel your vocation includes helping our congregation in a quiet and, hopefully, unobserved role (despite wearing white and being at the front each week), please come and have a chat with me, one of the clergy or Church Wardens.

It has been a privilege and pleasure to serve at St Thomas's.

Simon Green
Head Server

Toddlers

After our summer break which finished with a good number of children and carers we are faced with very few children. We start to reason that perhaps Toddlers in its 9th year has had it days.

But fast forward a few weeks and we will be nearly up to 12 which sadly is our maximum, due to space in the Canterbury room. The warmer weather gives us few problems as the children can access the garden.

Some children come as babies and leave just ready for school. We have been told many times that Tommy's Toddlers is their favourite group. We wonder why because all we do is put out toys, create a messy area, sing songs, eat strawberries, and give adults a cup of tea or coffee.

We interact with children and adults throughout the afternoon. Sometime the young parents confide in us their concerns and occasionally ask for advice. We enjoy the afternoons and wonder whether our 'soft touch' contributes to the local Mumsnet kind comments. Several of the Toddlers babies have been christened in our church, and carers and children have enjoyed participating in the Christmas Tree Festival and Christingle.

Whatever leads to the continuing of our group we know it is a privilege to share part of their lives.

Jenny Vokes

Communications

Information is imparted to the congregation and the wider world by St Thomas's through paper and information technology. During 2017, the parish office continued to produce the weekly Noticesheet and the monthly Diary. The Friends generously funded a new website for the parish, which is an ever more important means for many people to access good information. It is an impressively presented website and now contains links to recent sermons and to the Quest 2020 appeal.

The Welcomers

This is a new group of people which has been established to provide a welcome for those who visit the church during the week. It has taken a little time to go through the required processes of selection but we began our work on 15th January, 2018, having been commissioned by the Rector at the 10.15 service on 7th January. Our role is to welcome those who visit the church, to give them a pamphlet about the church, engage them in conversation if they so wish, and try to meet any needs they may have, such, as wanting to speak to a priest. Those involved may volunteer for as many hours a week as they wish, on whatever day and at whatever time they choose, but there must always be two welcomers on duty at any given time. We have 16 Welcomers at the moment and between them they cover 20 hours a week. They wear a smart blue and gold name label as well as a sash of the same colours, so they are easily identified. Each of them has a Handbook explaining their role. Although we have been in operation for only a few weeks so far, we are convinced of the importance of our role and would welcome anyone who might be interested in becoming a Welcomer.

Martin Marriott