



St Mark's Church Bedford



Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mark



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

23 April 2017

Leadership Team Report

Church Leadership Team Report by Elizabeth Bean

On behalf of the Leadership Team and the Congregation I would like to give my sincere thanks to Charlie and Sam for their spiritual leadership, inspiration, commitment and support. Also to our Reader Wendy Waters and Richard Ledger for their support in the ministry of the church and their preaching on a regular basis. We are truly blessed here at St Mark's.

Our Church is well served by our Treasurer, Ian Farthing who works tirelessly throughout the year and our Gift Aid Administrator, Jim Williams who also supports Ian in the financial work which is now such a huge undertaking. They have also both carried out professional training on employee working pensions for pre-school staff. Thank you doesn't seem enough but your work is very much appreciated.

This past year has been our first as an Anglican Church. The decision not to continue as a Local Ecumenical Partnership was taken as the only way to preserve continuity of ministry at St Mark's following changes made by the Methodist Circuit. The outcome in terms of stability of ministry at St Mark's has been welcomed and St Mark's continues to welcome everyone from whatever religious background or none. We continue to enjoy many shared activities with our sister church Putnoe Heights, including our weekly Partnership News. This year we said farewell to Deacon Jane Mills who last August moved into her new roles, one being a Circuit Review Enabler.

Mission

Our Autumn Mission Appeal for last year was the Lee Abbey Small Missional Community in Knowle West and A4S in Bedford. We raised just over £2,000 for this good cause.

Church Community Centre

Our Church Office is a very busy place, I can vouch for that working in the office on a regular basis. Our sincere thanks go to Wendy Rider our Centre Manager, and her team of volunteers, Milly, Rosemary, Linda, Rose and Erica. The office could not be maintained as it does, open 5 days a week from 9.00am to 5.00pm, without this dedicated team. We have over 60 regular clubs attending, with another two just coming on board, along with a number of one off bookings. We also act on behalf of Bedford Credit Union, opening up new accounts and customers can also pay into their share accounts and make loan repayments.

The car boots and Christmas Fayre organised by Avril Williams have raised approx. £6,600 in the past year. The clothing bank is still proving very popular, and brings in extra revenue on a regular basis. I would like to say thank you to the number of volunteers who support and help run the Church groups that meet here, without their help these groups could not survive. I have not named them all individually for fear of missing one out but they know who they are.

This year we have carried out extensive work on our church community centre roof. Work is almost completed and we are extremely grateful to charities who have supported our own fundraising to enable this work to go ahead.

Chat & Make

Since moving from a Monday afternoon to a Tuesday morning they have increased their numbers from 3 to about 10-15 each week along with their parent/carer. Most of the children attending this are up to 3 years old. **Chat & Play** also continues to grow and their numbers are between 35- 50 weekly. Some of the children attending this group also go to Chat & Make. Thanks to Janine for all that she does in working so hard to build these groups

Story Box

This has been another busy year for Story Box and we have been so fortunate in the loyal and unstinting support we have received from all the volunteers, mums and childminders. We really appreciate the work of Jaana and all of her caterers, meet and greeters, musicians, storytellers and office support. Valerie Capon has continued to be a committed and invaluable supporter of our team and we are always pleased to welcome others to the group. We continue with the format of sandwich lunch followed by a story, songs and action songs with the occasional craft session. This works well and the children are always keen to come in. We have an average of about 20 children each week. We have continued with our donation system which has proved financially effective. All aspects of Story Box are kept under continual review and we make changes, if necessary.

Messy Church

This is now in its 7th year and continues to be popular with families, a few of whom have been coming since we began. The average attendance over 10 sessions has been 55 children and adults, the same as in the previous year , plus 15 or more helpers. Our perception is that families tend to come and go more frequently than in the past and the children's age profile is lower. Three of our families, who first came to Messy Church, are also now committed and active members of our Sunday congregation. Wendy Waters and Richard Ledger continue to lead the

dedicated team. We are sorry that, due to other commitments, several founding members of our team have moved on, we are however delighted that Morag Stewart has joined the team and taken on much of the vital administration and communication tasks. More help would always be gratefully received.

The majority of the team have attended the Diocesan Safeguarding Training. Others will attend future sessions.

Increasingly we are using short, dramatised versions of Bible Stories, with children and adults enjoying building the sets, making the props and acting the characters. Messy Church is a truly team effort, making Paul's teaching on 'One body, many parts' a reality, without each team member using their particular gifts there would be no Messy Church. Messy Church gives us the opportunity to spread the seeds of faith to those who may not otherwise be members of a church.

Open House

This continues to flourish with on average 25 people attending each week together with some of the carers and six volunteers. This is a free service open to all.

Narinda, who works for Luton Mentoring, manages this group and she keeps them busy with different programmes each week with the help of the volunteers. They have had farm animals visiting, line dancing, quizzes, cooking, to name a few. One of the members manages the coffee shop and another helps with the register. Narinda likes to involve some of the members, within their capabilities, and they seem to really enjoy the responsibility. They held a Children in Need event to raise money, even making some items themselves to sell, they managed to raise £800 in the process.

The Tuesday afternoon House Group

Our afternoon House Group meets on alternate Tuesdays, they have enjoyable and stimulating meetings and new members are always welcome.

Woodland Burial

Our environmentally friendly woodland burial site continues to grow and has become more established each year. Linda and Edward Parry are so dedicated and are supported by a string team of Trustees. We now have a total of 378 burials/interment of ashes documented in the burial register. We are in the process of opening 7 new glades, these will not be available until next year but with the recent fine weather our groundsman is working to establish them.

Will Saunders has upgraded the roadway making an excellent job, he also works tirelessly to keep the gravel roadway level. Through the winter we had a lot of maintenance work done on the trees and preparation for the new glades. This has improved the area so much. We are hoping to have a Lodge in the future, people

have been generous with their donations but there is still a way to go.

The Open Day last year was, as always, a great success. This year it will be on Saturday 9 September. Thank you to all those who support us and keep us in your prayers.

Garden of Remembrance

Since the 2016 Congregational Meeting we have had 26 interments and 5 reservations, with another 4 interments booked for May and June. Plans are being made to extend the Garden round to the front of the Church. The ground is being prepared as this will tidy up the front area until the Faculty has been approved.

We are indebted to our Garden Administrator Avril Williams, also Mick Ovenden who prepares the plots and Jean & Malcolm do a fantastic job keeping the Garden tidy. On behalf of the Garden of Remembrance Committee we would like to thank them most sincerely for all their hard work in keeping it looking so beautiful and well kept. We would also like to thank all the volunteers that regularly cut the grass. We have had many compliments on the Garden and it is really appreciated by all that use it.

The Pastoral Support Team.

Our Reader Wendy Waters continues to lead our Church Pastoral Support jointly with Putnoe Heights. The key roles are Bereavement Support, Telecare, Home Communion and Pastoral visits. Over the past year 30 Bereavement support contacts have been made, 44 people are contacted every 2 weeks by Telecare and 3 or 4 people receive Home Communion. Each Week Margaret Appleton takes flowers from both churches to congregation members, perhaps if they are unwell or to remember them for another reason. Additional pastoral visits are also made as situations are drawn to the teams attention. Most of our team members have, or will, attend Safeguarding Training during 2017. The Reverend Bill Davis, retired Methodist Minister, gave the Address at the Commemoration Service on 6 November, which 96 people attended.

St Mark's Church Pre School

This is now open for 47 weeks each year from 7.30am to 6.00pm, hot meals are also provided each day from Caterkids. Extensive advertising has been happening since September last year. A colourful flyer went out to all children and a leaflet drop around the Woodlands area. The number of children attending for 2016/2017 is currently 63, there were 100 children in the previous year. The drop in numbers are due to schools opening up Nurseries within their school. Mini Marks and Preschool are both full in the morning. There are still afternoon places. However, due to ratio

of adults to children, more staff would be required in the afternoon, in both rooms. An Ofsted inspection is due this year, the last visit was three years ago when we received 'Good' for the outcome. We are currently in the process of formulating our Business Plan for the coming year. The playground is in need of repair and renovation and Preschool have received quotes, one for £21,000 and the other for £18,000. The children and staff have made a small allotment to grow vegetables and fruit. This will be an ongoing topic for the staff and children to enjoy over the summer.

Safeguarding Basic awareness was updated in June 2016. Food and Hygiene to be updated this year by all staff, this will be a bespoke training session. Preschool and Church were inspected in December for Food and Hygiene and both got a 5 rating.

Church Worship

Our services continue to be well supported and our membership numbers are being maintained at our Sunday 9.30am service. We continue to have alternate 8.30am Sunday weekly communions with Putnoe Heights and our midweek Holy Communion on Wednesday at 10.00am always attracts a good attendance.

Christmas Services, as always, were very well attended and were up on the previous year. The Carols by Candlelight was especially so, as additional chairs were put out as people poured in through our doors. As previously, Bedford Town Band played for us for our main carol service as well as carols in the Car Park. It was most enjoyable. Over Easter we have had daily prayers in the morning and also evening compline and also a Lent Course which was very well received by those who attended.

We have produced new worship service booklets over the past year and these will continue to be printed, including of course our new logo of St Mark the Evangelist alongside the Diocesan Crest. These will soon be produced on new church noticeboards which will also be updated with details of the new St Mark's website www.stmarkschurch.com which operates alongside www.thisischurch.com. This website is exclusively for St Mark's and includes all of our constitutional documents, minutes and agendas of church council meetings.

We now welcome up to 16 children to our Junior Church, aged between 4 and 11 years old. If the number of children increases any more it may be necessary to divide them into two groups. We would like to thank Linda Turner for all her commitment and hard work in this area. When it is announced through the service "*now the children are going out to their activities*" the looks and smiles on their

faces tell the story. They also like to come in towards the end of some of the services to show what they have produced during their time spent with Linda. I would also like to thank Janine for covering the creche, when she is not busy in there she helps Linda in Junior Church.

Sincere thank are due to our organists, Clive Simmonds and Marion Prior and all of the visiting organists who play for us at our Services. Many thanks also to Marion Prior and her team of flower arrangers who produce some wonderful arrangements for our Sunday Services.

A special thank you to all the volunteers who give so freely of their time here at St Mark's, it is very much appreciated. Without volunteers to put out and put away chairs, run the PA, make coffee, or any of the other tasks on our rota, our services would just not be the same.

I would also like to offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to the other members of the Leadership Team Margaret, Wendy, Edward, Mike and Jim for all their support and commitment, especially throughout this past year. I feel that we have worked together as a strong team. Also, many thanks to Laura, Morag, Mick and Jean. As Margaret and myself step down from the Leadership Team today I welcome new members onto the Leadership Team and hope that they enjoy the next six years as much as I have the past six years. St Mark's continues to be a thriving Church with so much to look forward to, but we must continue our work with God guiding us forward.

I would like to finish by saying thank you to everyone for your support and thank God that we are all part of the Church we call St Mark's. Thank you from us all.

Elizabeth Bean 23 April 2017