



St Mark's Church Bedford



Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mark



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

15 April 2018

Leadership Team Report

Church Leadership Team Report 2018 by Wendy Waters

As a Church community we are most fortunate to have strong and vibrant ministerial and Leadership team. I would like to thank them all for their continued commitment and support over the past year. We continue to have a close relationship with Putnoe Heights where our ministers regularly lead worship and preach. Partnership News remains a joint publication enabling us all to keep informed about each other's and the wider communities news. We are most grateful for St Mark's office staff and Charlie who produce this every week. During the year we celebrated the 20th anniversary of Sam's ordination when he came to St Mark's, thanking him for his diligent, wide ranging service to the life of St Mark's and Putnoe Heights over the past 20 years.

I recently heard a minister from elsewhere say 'God doesn't need our money but churches do!' So particular thanks must also go to our Treasurer Ian Farthing and our Gift Aid Administrator Jim Williams. Between them they put in many hours of work every week ensuring our finances are in order and adhering to the current rules and regulations as a charitable organisation and employer, without which we could not operate as effectively as we do. In addition they are alert to the latest ways of maximising our income, for example 'text giving'.

Our thanks also go to Avril Williams, and her band of loyal helpers, for their fundraising efforts through the Bank Holiday Monday Car Boot Sales, raising £3916 and the Christmas Fayre, which raised over £3,000 making this the most successful fundraising event ever!

During the year the Leadership Team (and the Church Council) reviewed our Safeguarding Policies to ensure they were up to date with current diocesan and wider policy and guidelines. This is an area of church life which the whole church takes very seriously and we are grateful to Janet Day, our Parish Safeguarding Officer for all her work in this area. A number of people went on various Safeguarding courses and training events during the year.

We also updated our Data Protection Policy and practice in accordance with revised legislation.

Mission

This year's Autumn Mission Appeal, in conjunction with Putnoe Heights, raised £4,916.60, including Gift Aid, for the Mavuno Village, a family style orphanage, in Tanzania to fund the building of a school. We also gave £500 to Kissizi Hospital, a previous mission appeal recipient, after it had been flooded.

We also had some social events over the past year and these are a good opportunity to invite people into the church in an informal and relaxed setting. They are greatly appreciated by all who come and our thanks go to the team who organise these events so capably.

Church Community Centre

The Church premises which are a vital resource for ourselves and the wider community are expertly managed by Wendy Rider and her dedicated team of volunteers. Our thanks go to them all for their commitment which enables the office to be open 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday Friday. A high number of regular bookings, 56 plus per month, has been maintained and in addition there are frequent one off bookings. We receive extremely positive feedback on the facilities we

provide.

Regular maintenance of the premises, inside and out, is essential to retain the high level of hirers and to ensure the facilities are suitable for our Preschool. Particular thanks go to our cleaners Dave and Janet and Mick Ovenden and Jim Williams, who are excellent handymen and always willing to help Wendy Rider with her task. Rooms are frequently redecorated as needed.

We are also fortunate to have a large number of willing volunteers who are on rotas for, setting up the church for Sunday Worship, preparing and clearing the room for Open House, opening the Chapel every Saturday and cutting the grass.

Unfortunately during the past year, despite our high level of security, we were burgled three times. One in May 2017, and two others on the same Sunday, by the same person, in February 2018.

However we have used this as an opportunity to review our security systems and there are several upgrades as result. New metal fire doors have been fitted in the church, rear kitchen entrance area and stronger doors to the office window. The CCTV has been upgraded with new cameras and a new alarm system will be installed in April with a panic alarm fitted to the office. Ecclesiastical Insurance readily agreed to pay for the damage caused with the church covering the cost of upgrades.

Children and Families

Our activities for children and families continue to flourish with Chat and Play, Chat and Make, Story Box, Junior Church and Messy Church. Chat and Play and Chat and Make are ably led by Janine Rolfe. Chat and Make, now in its second year, has a consistent weekly number of 10 – 15 children plus their mums or carers. Several regulars come each week and others come every now and again. The numbers are appropriate for the size of the room and the toys and crafts that can be stored and played with at one time.

The Thursday morning group is busier with an average of about 30-35 children coming along most weeks. Sometimes we do have only 20, but we have also had just over 50 on occasions. We have a few child minders that enjoy bringing their children along too, and also 4 sets of twins that have started to come regularly. Many of the parents we come have been coming along for a number of years with older children that have now gone onto preschool and school. This group has been running many years, with Janine leading it for nearly 4 years. Everyone that comes along seems to enjoy it and has positive things to say about it.

Story Box continues to be enthusiastically led by Jaana Swaby and Valerie Capon with loyal and unstinting support from volunteer's, mums and childminders. The efforts made by their catering teams, meet and greeters, musicians and storytellers and office support from Rosemary are really appreciated. Since September 2017, when several older children went to school, numbers have fluctuated and we currently average about 12 children each week. Jaana and Valerie are currently working on various ways of publicising the group. Donations, made by those attending, has proved financially effective. All aspects of Story Box are kept under continual review and changes made if necessary.

On a Sunday it is a delight for us all to see up to about 13 children running out to go into Junior

Church which is enthusiastically led by Linda Turner, who is supported by Janine Rolfe. We are also pleased that they now regularly support our adult musicians by playing musical instruments during the second hymn. On several occasions they have showed us what crafts they have made which are related to the Bible readings the wider congregation have heard, which maintains our mutual connection. During the past year activity bags have been introduced to give to the children at special services such as Harvest, Advent, Christmas and Easter. They contain a book, activities, and a gift based on that Sunday's theme. On Easter Eve several of us were delighted to witness the Confirmation of Aleta, the eldest member of Junior Church.

Messy Church, now in its eighth year, is thriving with regular attendance by some families and sporadic attendance by others. Several families have come via Story Box or Pre School. The average attendance over the past 10 sessions has been 46 children and adults, which is a little down over some previous years, but is still very positive. It is also more manageable, especially for catering purposes. Although the children's age profile appears to have dropped, we still have a number of 9 and 10 year olds attending who we try to include in the story telling and other ways. Bnf publishers, who sponsor and support Messy Churches in the UK and abroad, recently produced a book entitled 'Messy Science' which we use in the activities when appropriate. This is particularly good for engaging the older children. Messy Church, of which we are one of over 3,900 worldwide, requires huge commitment by our talented team of some 20 people whose roles include cooking meals; putting out furniture; preparing and supervising crafts, musical accompaniment; preparing and telling the stories, projector and sound operating. All this work with young people and families is invaluable and vital to sow the seeds of faith and to play a small part, often unseen, in transforming our community. Without the dedication of so many of our own congregation and others none of it would happen, so our sincere and deeply felt thanks goes out to them all.

Open House

Open House continues to go from strength to strength under the leadership of Narinda and her five enthusiastic volunteers. A wide range of activities are enjoyed each week by about 34 adults with learning difficulties, some of whom are accompanied by their carers. Narinda and her volunteers have worked hard to integrate all those who come enabling them to participate in choosing activities, setting up and serving the refreshments. They frequently enjoy outside speakers; dance; quizzes and walks round the garden. They are pleased that in May Bishop Richard will be making a return visit. Once again they held a fundraising morning for Children in Need, raising the grand total of £800. Narinda and her team are delighted to see how several of those attending have come out of their shells. The process of setting up Open House as a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation' has begun. The application has been submitted and five people have agreed to be Trustees. These are Jenny Cappleman, Laura Farthing (treasurer), Lynne Seymour, Morag Stewart (chair) and Richard Ledger. Up to now Open House has been funded by St Mark's, but once charitable status has been agreed the trustees will be able to apply for grants.

Bible Study Group

The Bible Study and Social Group, originally led by John Stubbs and, subsequently, his wife Mary, has been in existence from the early beginnings of St. Mark's. Margaret Standley, one of its original members still meets with us on a regular basis. During the past year we have studied books in both the Old and New Testaments usually using

short courses devised by writers from a variety of Christian backgrounds. Last year, after the St. Albans Lent course we studied together with some newcomers to the group, we went on to a Scripture Union course called "Resurrection". After this we studied a four session York course for Advent. In January we began another Scripture Union course, this time turning to the short Old Testament book of "Esther; character under pressure".

The social aspects of the group are important and we always include time for informal talk amongst ourselves and relaxation with tea and biscuits or cakes. We welcome anyone who would like to come and join us and please let us know if you need help with transport. We meet fortnightly on a Tuesday afternoon and further details can be found in Partnership News or by just talking to one of the group.

Garden of Remembrance

Since the 2017 APCM we have had 18 Interments and 4 Reservations. There are now over 600 plots which have been taken up. Our plans to extend the Garden to the front of the Church have progressed with the area being renovated with a two seated pergola added and as you have probably seen 3 new Columbaria's are going to be installed soon. 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 have many compliments on the Garden and it is really appreciated by all that use it. Our special thanks to Avril who manages the administration of the Garden, Linda who looks after the memorial wall and also to Mick and Jim who provide the plot digging services.

Woodland Burial

We continue to attract clients who are concerned for the environment and wish to give back to nature in a tranquil, simple way. Work has continued to maintain the trees and improve the site. Two new glades have been opened - Woodpecker and Merlin - and we will be plotting and opening 6 more glades over the summer. There has been a total of 464 interments and a similar number of reservations since we opened in 2007. Our groundsman Will Saunders is now also able to prepare graves which is a great help when Tom is not available. Recently Skylark have returned, they had not been obvious for some years. As always our Open Day was a huge success in spite of atrocious weather. The open day 2018 will be on Saturday 30th June.

This year we have updated our website and considerably increased our activity on social media, which has had a significant impact. The following comment was posted on the Woodland facebook page this week

Hello, I had the privilege of conducting a service at Keysoe. It was my first service at your beautiful burial grounds. Could you pass on how grateful I am to your trustee Edward for the patience and care he took in answering my questions and letting me know all the important things a celebrant needs to know when it's a first visit. The grounds were so well managed and just so tranquil, just everything a natural burial ground should be. Kindest regards Heather McKinlay

Pastoral Support

The support offered includes Telecare, Bereavement Support, Home Communion and Pastoral visits. These tasks are shared between our 10 dedicated team members, including Charlie, from both St Mark's and Putnoe Heights. We are pleased to have recently welcomed Mike Warren to join the team. There have been 23 bereavement referrals; this is 7 less than the year 2016/17. During the year all members have either attended, or completed on line Safeguarding Training. In

addition Margret Appleton takes flowers to members of the congregation who are in some form of pastoral need. We are grateful to Revd. Sam Cappleman for speaking at our Commemoration Service. This year, even though far fewer invitations were sent out, there were 63 in the congregation. Those who come are always appreciative for the opportunity to remember loved ones. Another successful Afternoon Tea was held in October. This has a twofold purpose of providing a social occasion which includes those who can't get out in the evening and raising money for Christian Aid.

St Mark's Preschool

Preschool continues to show progress in spite of challenging conditions. We are enormously grateful to Helen and her team for all the hard work which has seen number increase to 73 children on role of which 9 are on 30 hours a week. Some two year olds are funded for 15 hours and others pay by invoice. The Preschool has 12 staff and 10 of them are NVQ3. The Deputy is NVQ4 and the Head teacher/Manager has a degree.

The Preschool is open from 7.30am until 6.00pm for 47 weeks of the year and children can have all day care for only £37. Hot dinners are delivered by Caterkids each morning and about 10 children have one daily. There is a winter menu and a summer menu.

Staff have been on updated Health and Safety and Food and Hygiene courses and Safeguarding continues to be a priority with additional training in June. Preschool has been fundraising throughout the year with a fete, a stall at the Christmas Fair, a Toddle Waddle and concerts and coffee mornings. The photographer comes twice a year and this makes about £120 each time for preschool. OFSTED are expected to come at the end of this year or the beginning of 2019 for our next inspection.

Worship

Over the past year we have welcomed number of new people into our congregation, some have recently moved to the area and others have chosen to move from other churches. Numbers at our regular Sunday worship at 8:30 am and 9:30 am remain positive and in some areas show signs of growth which is encouraging. During the year the musical accompaniment of our second hymn has expanded to now include 3 guitarists, 2 clarinets and the children present on percussion. This is much appreciated by all the congregation and we thank Clive Simmonds for selecting uplifting hymns for this and his dedicated musical input. We are also indebted to Marion Prior and all visiting organists for their contribution to our worship. The high standard of our Bible readers and intercession leaders are much appreciated and off course not forgetting our preachers. Thanks must also go to Marion Prior and her talented team of flower arrangers. The recent introduction of serving fresh percolated coffee and biscuits after each service has led to more people staying for coffee, thus increasing shared fellowship and improving our welcome. Behind the scenes weekly preparation for our worship goes unnoticed but without which we could not operate. Thank you to all who fulfil the roles of setting out chairs, operate the PA, greet, give out service material, count the offertory and serve refreshments.

With Christmas Day 2017 falling on a Monday meant it was a very busy period for Charlie, Sam, the Leadership Team and others involved. There were large numbers of people in attendance at all the services and events which were held over Christmas, with some newcomers as always and we are grateful for the commitment and stamina of all involved.

The Lent Bible Study series, presented by Charlie and Sam, on four of Paul's letters was well received by some 20 people from both churches attending each week. Holy Week services of

Morning Prayer, Compline, Maundy Thursday Holy Communion and Good Friday Stations of the Cross were also appreciated by those who attended. Easter Sunday which included a Baptism was an uplifting service for both regular and visiting members of the congregation.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow Leadership Team members; Edward, Ian, Jim, Laura, Liz, and Mike, Richard Ledger and our minsters Charlie and Sam, for their unstinting support, especially during my enforced rest after breaking my ankle and again during my long winter holiday. I look forward to working with them in the service of God over the forthcoming year.

Wendy Waters 15 April 2018