

SALISBURY ST MARK

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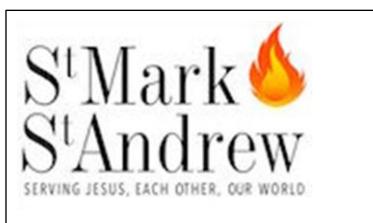
LAVERSTOCK ST ANDREW

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2017

Mission Statement:

Serving Jesus: Each Other: Our World



Churchwardens' Report (St A's) 2017 has been quite a year. The Breakfast@9 service established itself, and one member commented recently what a lovely congregation it has. Probably the highlight of the year was when several members from both St Mark's and St Andrew's congregations were baptised by full immersion in the river Bourne. Rows of chairs were set up by the river, the sun shone, the candidates used the cricket pavilion as a changing room, and a wonderful, inspirational time of worship and fellowship was had by all – followed by a picnic in the churchyard! The churchyard was also the scene of celebration when Ed, our Youth & Children's Minister got married to Sarah in May, and we served tea and cake under a gazebo with bunting fluttering gently in the wind!

A different form of celebration took place when Deirdre Milhench, one of our longest serving members of the congregation, went to be with her Lord in the summer, and though she had been unable to attend services in recent times, her cheery face and ready smile is much missed.

Once again, we are hugely grateful to everyone who so faithfully serve within our church, in many different ways. It is a privilege to be part of the body of Christ in Laverstock and although we face challenges not least the absence of an Incumbent, we look back over the past year with thankfulness and forward to the next year with trust and anticipation.

Mary Terry & Sue Gallagher

Churchwardens' report (St M's) This last year there have been many changes and we are expecting more in 2018. One example is that the expected progress on the improvements to the annexe and its access have been put on hold. The principle change (effective at the end of July 2017) has been Jim, Mags and Jo, Ben and Luke moving to a new church in Bournemouth. Jim had been our Priest-in-Charge and then Vicar at St Marks for 10 years and he had overseen so many things that we can praise God for. We do thank him (and Mags too!) for their loving care and concern for everyone both in the congregation and those connected to it (such as schools). But above all we give thanks for their evidenced commitment to Jesus.

We are very grateful to Matt Earwicker, Jill Offer and Peter Dominy for assisting so effectively and thoughtfully with clergy related responsibilities. That gratitude is extended too to Jo Inman and Morris Munns for their leadership of Together@ten and for those so ably participating in the preaching rota: Margaret, Phil, Pennant, Ed, John and Mary. Sunday by Sunday we have been fed with the truths of God's word and the revelation of Christ in the scriptures. So if we as a congregation don't live a life worthy of Christ's calling then it is down to us!

We have been encouraged to see Ed (and now Sarah too!) spearheading the work amongst our young people. The "all age starters" are memorable to say the least and often there are numerous children who seem to appear from nowhere to fill up the annexe. Ed has support too from Jacinta both within St Marks and as he goes out to schools. (Ed will explain Jacinta's role in his report and the tremendous encouragements from running Flipside at the Pavilion). We must remember as members of St Mark's that the work amongst young people is a joint responsibility but that, of course, for many of us means prayer support rather than hands on volunteering.

On the issue of volunteering this is where we as churchwardens can easily miss someone out for particular thanks. But (taking a risk) we would like to thank Prill and her team of flower arrangers, all those who assist on the rota/coffee, the welcome team, Karen who prepares communion regularly, those that come in to help clean (including these days Linda and Martyn all the way from Melksham). Morris (again) for running the website and for all those doing often unseen jobs.

The year ahead will be a tough one for both churches in the parish. We ask that if you have any ideas which might improve our church life that you speak with us. We would love to hear from you.

Charles Dew-Jones and Jo King

PCC Members 2017:

Elected: Elizabeth Bunting, Rachel Beswick, Bryan Evans, Nicky Gowenlock, Sarah Hardy, Steve Hardy, Mark Inman, Laura Lawrence, Pauline Munns, Joan Prior, John Read, Amanda Robertson, Julian Sobucinski, Mary Sobucinska, Maureen Snook.

Deanery Synod: Alan Ely, Linda Knapp, Jo King

Ex-Officio: Jill Offer, Matt Earwicker, Diane Roberts, Ed Haycock

Co-opted: Jill Browning, Debi Coveney

Churchwardens: Jo King, Charles Dew-Jones, Mary Terry, Sue Gallagher

Electoral Roll

The revised Church membership will be presented at the APCM and the current membership of 241 of which 166 (69%) are resident and 75 (31%) are non resident . Alan Ely, Electoral Roll Officer

PCC Discussions and decisions made in 2017: The PCC have met 5 times in the past year. They agreed to support the Parish Giving Scheme which has been promoted within the Parish. All PCC members to be DBS checked and complete the Diocese C1 Safeguarding Course, which all members have completed during the year. The Annexe refurbishment has been put on hold. The PCC are in the process of approving new Hall & Church Conditions of Hire. Thelma Claydon gave notice that she wished to stand down as the Parish Safeguarding Officer, a new Officer is being sought. The Leadership Team and Core Strategy Group are reviewing the Job Description and Person Specification for re-advertising of an incumbent.

Maureen Snook, PCC Secretary

LAY PASTORAL ASSISTANTS' REPORT

Lay Pastoral Assistants (LPAs) are those members of the church seen to have the gift of caring for others. They have all undergone training and, having fulfilled the necessary requirements, have been commissioned by the Diocese. Our churches have an excellent team of LPAs who play a vital role in the care of those needing it within the parish, both in the churches and outside them.

Our LPAs visit all the Nursing Homes and Residential Homes in the parish regularly. Communion is given to the residents who wish to receive it, either together or individually as is appropriate. We are in close contact with the managers and are invited in when there is a crisis or an emergency. We always receive a warm welcome when we go. We are also privileged to welcome some of the residents to worship with us.

Our LPAs also visit those in hospital and regularly respond in situations of illness and crisis care of the elderly and lonely still living in their own homes. They visit and take Communion to those no longer able to join with us on a Sunday. It is a privilege to be with those nearing the end of their lives and with their families.

Other LPAs visit families requesting baptism and have the joy of being able to explain the gospel to these young people through the meaning of baptism. They get to know these families and encourage them to come to church before the baptism takes place and to continue afterwards.

There are many wonderful opportunities of providing pastoral care within the church and way beyond it, that our team willingly respond to, with help and support from us and we are greatly encouraged as we share with them what they have been doing.

Mary Fisher/Diane Roberts

Serving Jesus Group

Our new pattern of services have continued this year, and have continued to provide spiritual nourishment for their various congregations. Together@ten and Breakfast@9 in particular have continued to flourish, the latter in spite of losing the energy and creativity that Jim brought to it.

Prayer has been a focus for the vacancy, and Sarah and Ed led us through an encouraging 24 hours of prayer at the end of November. In particular, we were encouraged to listen to what God has to say to us rather than just asking him for things. This need for us all to listen was one of the themes of 2017 and beyond, starting with the Lent Course focussing on Spiritual Gifts - something for everyone. The loss of Jim's leadership has also meant that the rest of us have had to take more responsibility for hearing God's leading.

Amongst the usual (and very exciting) baptisms of children throughout the year, we also had the pleasure of watching 5 people of different ages being baptised at Pentecost in the river Bourne at the back of St Andrew's Church, followed by a picnic in the churchyard. And then as the year neared an end, we had another young man baptised in the baptistry at St Mark's.

As usual, the Christmas services were a source of much joy, whether in the form of a greater number of schools using our buildings, or the carol and crib services held at each church.

Home Groups have continued to provide community, support and teaching to many in our congregations. This year has seen a new group of Mum's meeting every two weeks in the Barrington Centre, a new leader for an existing group, and a youth home group on Wednesday afternoons. Other groups have struggled, and some have closed or merged, but overall a large number of people from our congregations continue to benefit from this aspect of church life.

Together@ten during 2017

On the first Sunday of the month at St Marks the 9am communion service is followed by refreshments; people coming in to the building for the less formal Together@ten service join with those who have been at the communion service. We enjoy coffee and croissants together.

During the first months of 2017 we followed the Lectionary bible readings; our aim was to improve integration of Together@ten in the weekly flow of the bible readings.

Toward the end of January SpringySaturday@two was put on for the Together@ten congregation; crafts, a cream tea and bouncy castle/ball pit were enjoyed by many people. The idea behind this was to help friendships within Together@ten grow and flourish as people relax together and serve together.

In July a shared Together-in-Tents service took place on the Sunday morning at the church family camp. In August the team took a much-deserved break.

From September to December we followed a "Building and Belonging" theme for the services. Throughout 2017 it has been especially good to see new people become involved in leading prayers and activities at this service. We were pleased to welcome 3rd Salisbury beavers, cubs and scouts in March and October.

We use the actions from Messy Church during the Lord's Prayer, which we hope many find helpful in praying.

Our hope and prayer is that Together@ten will point to Jesus our Lord and Saviour, and be a place that encourages belonging, following Jesus, serving each other and Jesus.

Jo Inman

OPEN THE BOOK (OtB) Collective Worship (Assemblies) in St Andrew's School

We are now in our 5th year of using Open the Book for Collective Worship in St Andrew's School. OtB is run internationally. In a 3 year cycle churches go into primary schools each week to tell the important stories of the Bible to the children and teachers through an interactive presentation. At St Andrew's School we are now in our second time round, so some children are hearing the stories again and being reminded of them. A team made up from both St Mark's and St Andrew's – described by one team member as a 'motley bunch' - act out the story, with the help of one of the classes, as it is read from the Lion Storyteller Bible. Following the story there is a reflection relevant to the children and a prayer.

Preparation starts early on Wednesday morning in the Curtis Room at St Andrew's church. While the clergy get ready for the midweek Communion Service the Open the Book team discuss how they will present the story and who is going to play the part of the 'goody' this week and who the 'baddy.' Props and costumes are chosen from our store and we have an initial run through.

The simple costumes and props add to the visual aspect. Children taking part have costumes, usually Hebrew headdresses that might look like tea towels to some!! These give them a feeling of being special. There is very little time for rehearsal as the children are in lessons beforehand, but they do really well, as does the team. It is great fun and enjoyed by all.

The stories reach the staff as well as the children. Staff have said: 'It brings the Bible stories alive for children'. 'It's fun and they enjoy it.' 'It's visual and engaging.' 'It shows the Bible is not a stuffy old book but can be applied today.' 'It makes the children want to be involved.' 'It's the Reception Class's favourite worship.' Children have said: 'I love it because I like the characters and we get to act it out.' 'I don't know many stories in the Bible and we get to hear them.'

Anyone who feels they would like to join the team is very welcome. This does not have to be a weekly commitment. Team members come as often as they would like to. No previous acting skills are required, just a desire to present young children with the stories of the Bible.

Telling the children Bible stories and relating them to their everyday lives is so important in our present culture and it is great fun. Please talk to Diane if you would like to know more, and please pray for the children, the staff and the team each week.

Diane Roberts

Breakfast @ 9

"Everyone is so friendly and relaxed", said a young dad last Sunday who had come for the first time. Breakfast @ 9 numbers are increasing which is great to see and the age range of the congregation is from 0 to 80!! There are a variety of leaders both Lay and Ordained who put together services that are both fun and thought provoking. Breakfast, of course, is great! Bacon rolls, coffee and tea, fruit and yoghurt and toast and a chance to chat and get to know one another before the service starts. It is very exciting and encouraging to see so many new people to the church, attending on a regular basis.

Liz Bunting

SERVING OUR WORLD (SOW) GROUP

Grateful thanks to all those involved with this group over the year. There is an excitement about all things missional in the parish. As I mentioned last year, we split the parish into four areas – Bishopdown Farm/Hampton Park/Riverdown, Old Bishopdown, St Mark's and St Andrew's. Reports from all the areas of work are encouraging. There has been steady growth in the number of people attending the Breakfast@9 services with people being drawn in from Commnitea. In the St Mark's area, a small team have held and are planning events in the church garden during the year. They are continuing to deliver invitations to people living locally for any prayer needs they may have. Prayer meetings at the North end of the parish stopped when Flipside began running every Friday. However, prayer is continuing by individuals from many churches and before Christmas some of us met to pray together. Alongside the prayer, the Café on the Green has seen an increase in the number of people dropping in for refreshments and fellowship. Flipside has continued to grow (more of that in Ed's report). Crossbarr Community café continues to thrive in Old Bishopdown – grateful thanks to all who are involved providing both food and spiritual nourishment to those visiting.

The work we started last year on how people are welcomed into our churches continues. The welcome team at St Mark's met for lunch together and to share ideas of how we could do better. This has resulted in some changes being made which people attending the services have appreciated.

Our work in schools have continued (more of that in Ed's report) and the care homes / sheltered housing have been visited throughout the year by a faithful group of LPAs under the leadership of Diane Roberts and Mary Fisher

We continue, in accordance with the Mission Partner Support Criteria, to support the following missions for - Yei Diocese, David and Shelly Stokes, The Bridge, Alabaré Street Pastors. Alongside that we support the Trussell Trust at St Mark's by giving donations of food regularly.

The group tries, where we can, to support other mission initiatives within the parish – Mini Marks, Baptisms, Fun Day at Laverstock, Mini Marathon.

Like all the groups, we are always looking out for people who would like to join us – you can do as little or much as you wish. Come and pray, care and share Jesus in ways you are comfortable in doing. Look forward to hearing from you. Jo King (Chair SOW Group)

CommuniTea happens every Tuesday afternoon between 2 and 3 pm during term time. It is an opportunity for parents and their children to come into the church building and enjoy time together over a drink and plenty of biscuits!!

Whilst numbers have dropped over the past year, I think due to extra after school clubs, it is still very much appreciated by those who do come. I have been approached by a parent who wants their child baptised and I have encouraged them to come to the Breakfast @ 9 Service. Another family who come to CommuniTea have also been to the Breakfast service, this is great.

It is fantastic to have Ed, Mel and Jacinta running the craft table and talking to children at the same time. Thank you to them. Also thanks to Sharon, Mary, Diane and Di who play their part during these sessions and without whom it would be very difficult to continue.

Please continue to keep this group in your prayers as it really is God in action in our village. Many thanks.

The CrossBar Community Café

The CrossBar café has been open for 19 months. We are open every Thursday except for 2 weeks over Christmas, from 11.00am – 3.00pm at the Barrington Centre, Bishopdown.

We have a very faithful team of volunteers, who commit most Thursdays to the café, as well as baking cakes which they donate. We would find it very difficult to operate without them.

Over the time that we have been open we have made contact with over 100 different people but have 25 regulars on a weekly basis. We have got to know some of the regulars quite well, many of whom are older people who are lonely, and we have occasionally had parents with children.

Along with the home baked cakes and drinks we offer sandwiches and soup with roll, toasted T cakes and many come for lunch.

We are also a Trussell Trust Box pick up hub and we have seen an increase in the amount of people arriving at the café needing a food box, some of whom will stay for refreshments.

We would like more people to come to the café and are planning to do a leaflet drop on the estate in the near future, and would welcome any of our church family to visit us.

Helen Coomb/Mary Sobucinska

St Andrew's C.E Voluntary Aided Primary School Governor's Report 2018

Four members of St Andrew's Church are governors at St Andrew's School and each of us see it as a real privilege to be involved in the lives of the children, staff and parents with whom we have good relationships. Godfrey King is part of the team looking after the finance and premises, Kim Perree joins him on this committee, but is also extremely good at being able to read data and ask questions of the head regarding how weaknesses shown up are being worked on. Liz Bunting is on the Staffing and Curriculum committee and joins Diane Roberts on the Ethos Committee, looking at all things 'religious' as well as things contributing to the ethos of the school. As governors we visit the school regularly with a specific focus, looking to maintain high standards within the school. The Church has very close connections with the school through the governors' link with parents and staff, and other church members who go in to listen to children read. As governors we are not only involved with all things academic, but build relationships through taking part in other school events: the mini-marathon, tournaments, parents evenings... Recently our governor team – 'Godfrey and his Glamorous Governors' - came second at the Quiz evening, gaining full marks for our timing and choreography as we sang and danced to 'Raindrops keep falling on my head'! Being a governor can be hard work and time consuming, but is worth every moment of it as we have influence over the lives of these children and their futures.

Diane Roberts

Youth and Children's Annual Report 2017

2017 has been a significant year for the Youth and Children's ministry at St. Marks and St. Andrews it marks the first year that we have had a full time Youth and Children's Minister (Ed Haycock) and a SWYM placement student (Jacinta Harris), who both started in August 2016. This has brought with it a dramatically increased capacity for youth, children's and schools work throughout the Parish.

Youth and Schools Ministry Student (SWYM)

Jacinta is currently studying youth work and theology at Moorlands and is on placement with St. Mark's and St. Andrew's as well as the Bridge. Her role involves serving in both our churches and local schools, acting as a bridge between the community and our church family. She began her degree course in September 2017 and is expected to be on placement with us for 3 years.

Schools Work

We now are involved or lead weekly lunch clubs or Christian Unions in St. Marks Junior, St. Andrews Primary, Leehurst Swan and St. Edmund's. Alongside this we are involved in lessons, courses and assemblies in other schools. We have found both Christmas, Easter and Leavers services of great value in inviting whole schools into our building to hear the Gospel and attend Church.

Flipside (Friday Night Youth Club)

We started the year switching weekly between St. Marks Annexe and the Pavilion, Hampton Park, with approximately 10 and 15 young people respectively. However by Easter the team felt led to move to be at the Pavilion every week and open a session for young children (key stage 2) to come to. These changes were made in September 2017 and have proved highly successful, with up to 60 young people coming to the youth club each week. In order to tackle the increase in success the church and team are currently sorting a "Constitution" and formal structures to run and protect Flipside. We have found the relaxed environment of Flipside a fantastic place to get to know young people and on occasion share our faith. This success has led to increased sustainability as Flipside now pays its rent and can support itself.

Youth House Groups

SNY: Over the summer the decision was made to close SNY (Sunday Night Youth) due to the infrequency of attendance after our two regulars left. Instead we offer one to one mentoring for young people in that age group on a relational basis.

INC: We had felt led to open a younger youth house group which was at first incredibly successful with 11 young people attending, however after the summer this decreased dramatically to 6 and lower throughout the autumn term. This decrease was due to a number of young people moving on to secondary school and needing to travel, or people moving away. However we have found the lower numbers have given us an amazing chance to get to know the young people better and looking to 2018 we are keen to work with our small but dedicated group studying Matthew's Gospel.

Sunday Mornings (St. Marks) Groups:

We have continued to run both Smarkies (Children) and Inspire (Youth) groups during Family Communion Services, and a joint session during Morning Worship. However we have also seen significant decrease in the number of teenagers attending Sunday service and a number of volunteers stepping down over the year as such we are considering amalgamating the groups in 2018. We have a variety of team members who lead the sessions in different ways offering the young people a variety of approaches and experience week by week.

All Ages Starter:

These have continued weekly to be a slot where a member of the team introduces the topic in a fun and engaging way for the whole church, before we separate into groups.

Although we have seen decrease in volunteers and youth on Sundays, during the week the team are finding amazing opportunities to share their faith, disciple, and witness to young people in our church family, schools and community. Our sessions are going from strength to strength as relationships are developing and settling.

mini marks Annual Report 2017

This last year has been a year full of change with Mags, who faithfully led mini marks for 10 years, leaving over the summer, as well as secretary Oleepeeka stepping down over the summer and Sally Pocock stepping down as Treasurer, but remaining on the committee. The role as Chair of the committee was filled by Ed Haycock (Youth and Children's Minister) and Secretary by Steph Gay, and Sarah Piggot joined the committee. These changes have brought with it challenges but also opportunities for the involvement of new parents/carers in the running and management of mini marks.

Since September we have continued to operate in a similar manner but responsibilities for craft and songs have been shared out amongst the team. This has been really successful in engaging more people in the leading and increasing diversity or approach to sessions. Over the winter months we saw a decrease in attendance, however we believe that this is due to the weather and time of year. We have also made changes to our admitted ratio of parent/carer to children which has unfortunately caused upset, however, these changes have meant that we adhere to legislation dictating ratios of child minder/carer to children and have been supported by Diocesan Youth Support Worker.

Looking ahead to 2018 we are excited for new opportunities to make changes and shape mini marks to continue to meet the ever shifting needs of parents/carers who are joining us week by week.

Ed Haycock

Churches Together/Deanery Synod

Deanery Synod with CTS Meetings this year have highlighted mission and the particular need to reach out to the new housing developments. We have considered the way our church buildings and other public venues could be used and looked at the encouraging work already underway especially with young people, including the developments in schools. We have identified the need for a new and updated Deanery Plan. We also listened to the presentation by John Kilby, Diocesan Mission and Stewardship Advisor, of the Parish Giving Scheme which is providing more secure financial support to anglican churches in many areas by inflation proofing giving and returning gift aid promptly. We have also heard about many of the regular inspirational activities carried out by churches of all denominations across Salisbury.

Linda Knapp

Salisbury St Mark and Laverstock St Andrew - Report on Safeguarding 2017

Developing a safe church community

Ensuring that our churches are safe communities involves being vigilant about the safety and well-being of everyone who attends our church services, social events and in situations where we are involved with the wider community. The PCC can ensure that the correct procedures, DBS Checks and access to safeguarding training are in place but none of these, in themselves, will actually keep people safe. It is only other people who can keep people safe. If you have concerns about the safety and well-being of a child, young person or adult at greater risk of abuse or think that some aspect of church life could be putting people at risk, please speak to the Parish Safeguarding Representative (PSR).

Safeguarding Concerns

I have dealt with two safeguarding concerns in the past year, the details of which need to remain confidential. However, I would like to place on record how much I have valued the support and advice of Heather Bland, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor when these situations have arisen.

Safeguarding Policy Procedure and Guidance

The parish Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Guidance has to be endorsed each year at the ACPM.

The Procedure was completely revised in April 2017 so I have only had to make some minor revisions (mainly in respect of DBS Checks) this year. Once endorsed by the ACPM, copies will be made available in all church premises and on the church website.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

DBS Checks can only be carried out if a specific role meets certain criteria. This assessment is made when a role description is drafted and applicants need to be made aware from the outset that a DBS Check will be required. All applications for DBS Checks are now made on-line but assistance is available for anyone who might find this difficult. Salisbury Diocese require DBS Checks to be undertaken every five years.

Safeguarding Training

Salisbury Diocese provide a range of training on safeguarding and safer recruitment. This is in line with the recommendations of the C of E National Safeguarding Team. Anyone who is in a role that requires a DBS Check is required to undertake a basic Safeguarding Course (C1) every three years. In our parish 82% of those required to complete C1 have done so. The fact that this percentage is so high has been greatly assisted by the fact that three people have completed the Safeguarding Training the Trainers course and have been able to offer the C1 Module in-house. Clergy, LLMs, LPAs, PSRs and others in positions of leadership are required to undertake additional training modules. A big thank you to everyone who has given up their time to both deliver and attend safeguarding training.

Safer Recruitment

In January 2016 the PCC adopted a parish Recruitment Policy and Procedure. This set up a system to be followed when any new appointments are made both to paid and to voluntary roles within the two churches. In July 2016 the House of Bishops produced further guidance on recruitment and the National Safeguarding Team has developed a training module (S1) to support this. In view of this new guidance, I have revised the Recruitment Policy and Procedure and this was adopted by the PCC in March 2018.

Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group

The DSMG is an independent body responsible for overseeing arrangements for safeguarding in Salisbury Diocese and to report and, as appropriate, make recommendations to Bishop's Council. Since 2015 I have had the privilege of being one of the two PSRs, on the DSMG but I have now stepped down from this role.

New Parish Safeguarding Representative

This is the last report that I will be making to the ACPM as I am standing down as PSR. Thank you all for your support which I am sure you will extend to my successor.

Thelma Claydon: PSR Salisbury St Marks and Laverstock St Andrew

Curate's report

This time last year we were in a strange situation: looking back on a very positive year of God at work and growth in our services, but looking ahead to Jim's imminent departure. This year we are also facing challenges. Whatever others with a better grasps of the timescales of vacancies might say, I imagine many of you, like me, hoped to see our new incumbent standing up the front leading our APCM. The reality is, we come to this APCM in a time of uncertainty over the future, with another application process underway, and with Nele and myself shortly to be heading 'up north' with the boys.

But that is only part of the picture, because in this past year, and especially in the half year since Jim and Mags' departure, we have seen much to celebrate and praise God for. It is not just that 'life goes on', we have grown in many ways, and held firm in others. In spite of the massive hole that Jim's departure has left in terms of manpower, very little has had to be cancelled – for which I am immensely grateful to you all. Breakfast@9 continues to flourish and Together@ten continues to adapt to the needs of its regular congregation. Add to these the more formal services, and we have managed to maintain our commitment to being a place where anyone can worship God, and to achieve this has called forth a wealth of generous commitment from so many.

While I am grateful to each and every one of you, I hope you are not offended if I single a few out for particular gratitude. First, the four churchwardens, whose year has been considerably busier and more complicated than usual. They have risen to the challenge, and been willing to accept a share of the responsibility for our growth and spiritual health as churches. This is not something they were trained for, and certainly don't get paid for, and while they do not do it for praise, it is appropriate to recognize their hard work, along with that of the rest of the CSG.

Secondly, we are only able to offer the range of services we do because of Diane, Jill and Ed's willingness to do more than their fair share, and go the extra mile, and that with enthusiasm.

But what I have most loved seeing this past few months is how ministries which were once linked to particular individuals are now shared by so many; and this can only benefit all of us. I was reflecting the other day how much people used to talk about Jim as one of the draws to our churches. And that

was appropriate: both as a vicar and as a person, Jim was a good reason to join our churches. But church is not about any one person, however special, and over the last few months I have heard the comments change from being about Jim (and Mags, who was just as wonderful) to being about the churches and about Jesus – and that's exactly how it should be. Every single one of you has risen to the challenge to make our churches a place where people feel welcome and accepted, and meet with Jesus. Thank you!

And not just our churches. The work in the schools, cafes and wider community continues unabated. To name just a few, we have had summer (not-)festes and Christmas craft days, carols at Crossbar, Nintendo in the pews at Communita and volunteers serving coffee at Bishopdown Farm. And beyond these we have had the daily small acts or words of kindness to neighbours and people met on the road. That is Jesus at work in and through us.

We do face challenges ahead. While our financial situation looks good—thanks to hard work by Debi and the resources team, a willingness to work on reduced budgets, and everyone's generous giving—we are still running at a slight deficit, and any plans for future growth will need us to be willing to reconsider how much we give.

We also face the challenge of the ongoing uncertainty regarding our next incumbent – who will God send to us, and when? How are we going to maintain our level of involvement and hope?

When I was a student many years ago, I learned a valuable lesson about God's provision. Sometimes I allowed myself to look at how much I was doing for God, to feel proud of my commitment, and to allow myself to feel virtuously exhausted: it became increasingly hard to keep going. At other times, I knew I couldn't manage by myself, threw myself on God's power, and felt myself not only carried on eagle's wings, but sometimes not even tired. Yes, I was annoyed at not being able to tell everyone how tired out I was from serving God, but it did free me up to help others see how much God had done for them in Jesus. "for it is God who works in us, to will and to act according to his good purpose" Philippians 2.13