



**Annual Reports
of
Church Groups and Activities
2016**



REPORTS OF CHURCH ACTIVITIES & GROUPS

The following reports have been received from various church organisations and activities January – December 2016. The absence of a report does not mean that the activity is not happening, merely that no report was received.

BAPTISMS

Beverley Stockill

Baptism is an important start for babies, children and adults on their journey of faith. I am pleased to report that 27 babies and children and 8 adults were baptised in 2016

We had only one person to deliver baptism preparation sessions, Lynne Legrove, valiantly supported by husband Bob. Lynne and Bob are away several months of the year and Will Pearson-Gee and Danny Rogers have been doing some of the monthly sessions and will continue to do so. Our thanks go to these people for their invaluable service.

Being a Baptism host involves delivering a baptism preparation session lasting about an hour once a month. This is explaining the meaning and responsibilities of baptism, and being present at each baptism to welcome the families once a month, and organise as necessary.

If you feel that you would be able to help in this important ministry please contact myself, Lynne or Church office.

BELLRINGERS

Andrew Spencer

Bellringing arrangements with ringers shared with Maids Moreton and Stowe have continued with ringing for services on rota. Following on from last year's open day at Maids Moreton we have been concentrating on training new recruits and have a number of new ringers developing useful skills and starting to make a contribution to our service ringing.

We reinstated our traditional bellringers outing with an enjoyable day visiting village Churches in Oxfordshire and ringing on their bells during October. We also organised a skills training day using the bellringing simulator on the bells at Olney where ringing training can take place without any disturbance to the neighbours.

A diocese bell maintenance training course was hosted during October, a few problems were identified and subsequently resolved.

BOOKSTALL

Zena Greig

In 2016 the bookstall had six different selections of books available during the year. The bulk of the stock is obtained on a sale or return basis from St.

Andrews Bookshop in Oxford, other books have been specifically ordered when requested.

Approximately 150 books were sold in 2016, 20 of which were bibles, mainly study bibles which is an encouraging sign. Other books included children's books and books on prayer and bible study, biographies, current issues, apologetics and marriage and family life. A selection of CDs of hymns and worship songs has also been introduced. The bookstall was open for the three main Sunday services and supplied a selection of books for the Marriage course and the Autumn Alpha course.

The long-term viability of church bookstalls is in question due to the increase of on-line sales and e-books but I believe they still have a role to play in bringing to our attention the wide range of excellent Christian books available which challenge and encourage us in our spiritual growth.

CATERING & KITCHEN DEVELOPMENT

Chris Armstrong

Our catering philosophy is to give support to evangelism, to foster fellowship within the body and on holiday, allow busy parents some time off.

We are planning a kitchen with the kit to allow anyone who has an everyday knowledge of cooking the confidence to provide a meal for thirty people and the more experienced to provide meals for 100-200 people.

We are over halfway with this project and with the addition of some mixers, refrigeration and storage reorganisation we should soon be there. We have extra money ring-fenced specifically for this so will not draw on general church funds.

For the future, we need to consider the cooking within the context of ever-growing hygiene regulations. This will not be particularly onerous but will be essential as the catering demand increases and the church grows.

Our agreed budget per head with an appetiser, main course and dessert is around £1.70.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES

Bitternes Afloat

Will Trevitt

Bitternes Afloat is a Christian Sailing Cruise for 11-18 year olds run every Easter on the Norfolk Broads. We take young people primarily from our 5 partner churches of which St Peter and St Paul's is one.

Each day of the week we aim to encounter God through morning bible study and evening activities and to learn how to sail on the rivers and lakes of the Broads.

In 2016 we spent the whole week looking at worship; What it is, Who it is about, Why we do it and How we do it. The last evening featured many alternative ways to worship God to encourage the young people to think of worship as central to their lives, not an add-on to Sunday worship.

In 2016 we took 19 young people from Buckingham and 6 adults. It was a week filled with worship and joy in all sorts of ways.

BPC Kids Groups

Emma King

This year has been very exciting for our children's groups! They continued to grow throughout 2016, and after splitting JAMmers into two separate groups (KS1 and KS2) in 2015 and having JAMtots meeting downstairs, we reached a natural point to re-evaluate our current provision. From this we made some appropriate changes to cope with the continuous growth.

In September we launched our new set-up, under the overall name of BPC Kids. JAMtots moved upstairs and is now called Stepping Stones (Ages 2.5-5), co-ordinated by an amazing leader Kelly Ingle and her awesome team. We now have Sparks (Year 1-2) meeting in the Ringing Chamber, and Dynamite (Years 3-6) meeting in the North Room.

As well as many new faces joining the groups, we have also seen lots of incredible people join our team of leaders, who meet regularly to plan and pray for the groups.

To make sure the groups are exciting and relevant, each half-term we have introduced an overarching theme. These have been: Superhero's, Inside Out (a very well-known Disney film based on Emotions), Miracles and Soldiers of God (focusing on the Armor of God). This has been really fun for both the children and adults, and enabled them to learn more about God and grow in their faith in an exciting and relevant way!

In September we also launched the Play Zone which is in the Tower Room downstairs. This is a space created for parents with young children, who may need a quieter room to enjoy the service on the TV. This room has toys and comfy beanbags for children (and adults) to enjoy!

Big Story Sunday has been a huge success for our children's groups. Usually on the first Sunday of half-term instead of going upstairs, children stay down for all-age worship. This is organised by a small team of creative and committed leaders. The services are shorter to enable time for socialising at the end (and sometimes bacon sandwiches!) They usually involve lots of all-age songs, a drama, a creative and engaging talk, and an interactive response.

Ark

Amanda Marshall

Ark continues to grow in numbers – around 80 children most weeks and a similar number of adults. The number of men and grandparents has grown as well as the numbers of people from other cultures. We have run a parenting course and Alpha alongside Ark this year. We also put on a nearly new sale and helped Sophia Jones raise money for Samara's Aid.

We have also launched a system that offers pastoral support by neighbourhoods and devolves responsibility for groups of Ark mums across the planning team.

The numbers responding to my monthly emails inviting them to Ark has grown.

The members of the planning team that run Ark are fantastic, but most will leave at the end of the summer term 2017 as their last child starts school. Prayer would be appreciated for a new team.

Blaze (11-14's Youth Group)

Emma King

2016 has been a great year for Blaze as we've continued to develop and grow. Before the summer holidays we were seeing the average attendance of 20 young people, which was very exciting!

In September the older members of the group moved up to our new youth group Fuel. Although numbers dropped for a few weeks, Blaze has continued to grow. We've spent time looking at topics such as, 'Who is Jesus?' looking at Jesus' life and characteristics, and how to deal with relevant situations young people face today, such as gossip, stress, anxiety and exams. After free-time and games, each session has a short talk before we break off into smaller discussion groups to chat further and pray.

This year we have also started to provide toast and drinks for any young people who might appreciate this when coming along. We've also had regular socials to encourage the group to invite their friends, including: Laser Quest, Pizza-making Nights, water fights and bowling. We take regular trips to Soul Survivor Celebrations throughout the year, which is a church service in Watford for Christian youth groups all over the UK. They love going to this and engage in worship, talks and meet hundreds of others Christians.

Fuel (14-18's Youth Group)

Emma King

At the beginning of 2016 some members of Pathfinders were struggling with regular attendance, so Chloe organised regular social events instead of meeting weekly.

In September, we launched a new weekly youth group called Fuel. We currently meet at The Centre on Thursday evenings. The first half of the evening is free-time, to allow the members of the group to relax and socialise with each other. Often this time is spent chatting, baking, drinking hot chocolate and playing football outside. During the second half we usually have an icebreaker, catch up formally, a faith-based talk and split into groups for discussion and prayer.

Since September we have focused on topics such as, 'Godly Friendships', 'Who is Jesus?' and hearing leaders testimonies. We've had a great start and on average are seeing between 8-10 young people each week. We also take this group to the Soul Survivor Celebrations as mentioned above and half-termly socials. We are planning to take them away to the Soul Survivor Summer Camp in August 2017 which is very exciting, please do be praying for this!

Holiday Club

Emma King

For one week in summer 2016 the annual ecumenical Buckingham Churches Holiday Club ran for 4-15 year olds. The theme for the week Guardians of Ancora, looking at 5 events from The Gospel of Luke where people met with Jesus and their life was changed. The main focus behind this was encouraging the children and young people that their lives can be changed today by meeting with Jesus.

The Holiday Clubs were split into two age-specific Venues: Venue 1 (Year R-5) met at the Parish Church, and Venue 2: (Year 6-9) was held at Grenville School. The week consisted of worship, relevant stories and talks, prayer, discussion, crafts, games and time to get to know each other and leaders. We had some great feedback from the children, who are already looking forward to Holiday Club 2017. We also were very thankful to have a great team of adults and older youth who were able to make Holiday Club 2016 happen and help out during the week!

Messy Church

Amanda Marshall

Messy church is growing in numbers. Now averaging around 80 plus each week. We have a regular team that support it, some help every week and others every other week. The banner in town has helped encourage people to come and the emails to the Ark mums, but the best way to encourage people to come is through personal invitation. Three pen portraits for you.

Krishna came to Messy Church from Ark. Her husband works away as a pilot and she brings all three boys. She is lovely, committed and open to the gospel, but has not yet decided to attend Alpha.

Jo came to Messy Church through Anne, recently did Alpha and is now on the planning team. She is an enormous support to me.

Jessica came to Messy Church from Ark. Her husband is Muslim and she has three children. She has recently decided to join the planning team for Ark.

The team from church is great – some actively leading, others helping to run the day. We have had some great new members of the team, but could do with someone to emerge who could step up to lead the whole team.

The Lighthouse

Beth Tubridy

The Lighthouse has been running for just over a year; we are a small Tuesday-morning toddler church group for parents and pre-schoolers.

Although our numbers have remained small, with typically 5 or 6 children attending each week, it has nevertheless been a fruitful endeavour. Our little ones, some of whom are from church families and some who aren't, enjoy a weekly craft, a healthy snack, worship songs and a bible story, as well as forming friendships. We also run to serve the parents who are able to relax with a hot drink and chat about anything from questions of faith to tummy bugs and nappy rash!

In the year ahead we would appreciate your prayers for a bit more help in hosting, for a few more families to hear about us, and for the Holy Spirit to continue to guide us.

The Schools Assembly Team

Emma King

Churches Together have a small team who go into the local Buckingham primary schools throughout the year to run assemblies. Often this is done in pairs and written by one of the team members.

Unfortunately, many children don't know any stories from the Bible or who God is, so this ministry is so important. This year some of our themes have been: The Parables, Christian Festivals, Miracles and learning lessons from people from the Bible. The children always seem to really enjoy these assemblies and we often get great feedback from the staff.

Alongside this, with Well Street Church we put on two events, Easter Cracked and Christmas Unwrapped. This is where the schools bring a year group into both churches to learn more about the real Easter and Christmas stories. This is done using creative stations, crafts and games.

Again, this is a really important part of our ministry and such an amazing opportunity to get to meet with the children in our town.

The Way (11-14's Youth Group)

Emma King

The Way has seen some changes over the past year. At the beginning of the year, a small group of young people would meet during the 9.30 service in the church office for a valued time of teaching, discussion and prayer. In the summer term we made the decision to move this group to the 6pm service, with the thought that it would be a more suitable time for young people to meet, and potentially enable more leaders to help out. This has been a very successful change, we are now seeing between 10-15 young people each week and overall the 6pm seems to be a more appropriate service for this age group.

The group stay in the service for worship and then head upstairs for a catch up followed by a talk and discussion. The young people that attend this group are amazing, they are passionate and bold about their faith, and love to go deeper and grow in their understanding of God and the Bible. We have focused on topics such as the Fruits of the Spirit and the Lord's Prayer, really focusing on what they mean for us and our life today.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Judith Bundock

As Christians we are all stewards of the gifts God has given us, our talents and our resources. We have a responsibility to generously use them according to his purposes in our daily lives and through his church.

2016 saw continued growth in our activities, in our membership and resources and in our staff team. This was all made possible through the stewardship of our Church family, whether financial, spiritual, practical, or, more likely, by a combination of all three. This report focuses on our financial stewardship.

By giving regularly to the general expenses of the church:

We acknowledge the importance of our giving in our everyday life and Christian Discipleship.

We enable the Church to manage its expenses and to allocate resources for new opportunities of ministry in our local community.

We enable the Church, where appropriate, to maximize our offerings through Gift Aid which adds 25% to gifts from taxpayers.

In 2016 the number of individuals or family units who gave regularly to the General Fund on a weekly, monthly, quarterly or annual basis, increased from 157 in 2015 to 163 in 2016, contributing £162,712 in the

year (£128,217 in 2015). £11,000 of this increase resulted from our Vision Sunday in October. HMRC increased our giving to the General Fund by a further £32,869 through Gift Aid plus £2,000 (maximum allowed) from the Gift Aided Small Donations Scheme.

If you don't already give regularly towards the growing Christian ministry within and through St Peter & St Paul's, or if you haven't reviewed your giving for some time, please prayerfully consider doing so now, and, if that is appropriate, sign a Gift Aid declaration. If you have any queries please contact me on stewardship@buckinghamparishchurch.org.uk

CHURCH CHOIR

Robert Tucker

The church choir is a welcoming and thriving group of children and adults, who sing a wide variety of choral music at the 11am, at Benefice services, and other occasions including Confirmation, carols for the Florence Nightingale Hospice Carol Service, and at the Villiers hotel.

We hold an annual dinner, giving thanks for the gift of music, with further recognition that singing is integral to our faith and enriches us in fellowship together. You can now find us on both Facebook and Twitter!

In September, we organised our second RSCM choral festival, including a wonderful choral evensong and tea.

The children particularly continue to make great progress with a special mention of Emily Adamson, for her commitment, dedication, and support for the younger choristers.

Huge thanks to everyone, noting Brian Hirst for designing the splendid new candle holders, and to Ray Mitchell, our assistant organist.

CHURCH FLOWERS

Valerie Hiron

We have had a busy year and continue our work of beautifying the church with flowers. Thank you to all who help in this way both through the year with flower arrangements on the platform and at the High Altar, at weddings and also with the lovely window decorations at Festivals. It takes a dependable team to ensure that things run smoothly.

CHURCH OFFICE

Jan Ballantyne

The office team have continued to provide the essential day to day administrative support in the church office. In addition to this they have taken on many other roles in response to the many and various situations and questions that arise during the course of any morning. We are very pleased to welcome Shirley Marshall as a new member of the office team,

to join Ann Bursnall, Anne Exelby, Jean Froude, Karen Lorenti, Ray Mitchell, Sophie Rudolf, Beverley Stockill and Gill Stopps who continue to carry out their office duties with great dedication, adaptability and enthusiasm. My grateful thanks to this wonderful team.

COURSES

The Alpha Course – 2016

Michael Greig

The Alpha Course is once again regarded as a key activity at BPC – as a means to help people explore the Christian faith, to refresh and encourage those who are on a journey of faith and to help those joining the church to understand the core theological values of the church.

In 2016, 2 courses were held – one led by Will Pearson Gee from April to June and one led by Michael & Zena Greig from September to November. Around 40 people attended for the first time, 6 for the second time and 6 as leaders.

Both courses were followed by a 4 week Post Alpha Course and then participants were encouraged to join a Connect Group.

2016 saw the introduction of the new Alpha Film Series and also of wonderful food provided each week by Liz Ogden & Chris Armstrong.

The aim for 2017 is to hold at least 3 courses with many more guests than in 2016.

The Bereavement Journey

Sally Siddique

We hosted this pilot five week course at the Centre in Spring 2016. An anonymous donor had kindly gifted a generous sum of money to be used to help with bereavement care. The team consisted of two facilitators, two observing volunteers, a welcomer and a host who provided tea, coffee, cakes and a wonderful array of sandwiches and refreshments.

We had an initial 9 participants apply and commit to the course - however only 6 arrived on the first evening. This would not be unusual given the difficulty of the subject matter of the course.

The bereavement journey is a free 5 or 6 week course produced by the Holy Trinity Brompton. It has been devised by experienced counsellors and the idea is to explore together the experience of bereavement, in order to gain some understanding and insight. It was a group experience so that the difficulties encountered could be shared together.

Although the group was small we did receive some positive feedback at the end of the 5 weeks. Most people wished it had lasted a little longer. Others struggled listening to other people's stories. The venue of the Centre was

invaluable for creating a warm, safe environment which could be accessed easily.

The team met up again and were planning to run another course this year. However we only received three participants applications which is too small a number to facilitate the group. I am sure that there are still many bereaved people in our town who would value some kind of support - but perhaps this course format is not what is required, for the moment.

The Calling

Paul Wallace

The Calling started in January 2016 as a course for those who wished to explore the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, in what we hoped was a non-threatening safe environment. The course was followed by up to 20 people, who met monthly and was led by George Pinnegar and Paul Wallace. We looked at the inspired gift, gifts of revelation and of healing. The course came to an end after looking at sessions about Healing on the Streets. The Calling has been relaunched and will continue with its main objective of encouraging the development of Spiritual Gifts within the Body of Christ.

The Marriage Preparation Course

Steve and Helen Hallett

On the 6th February 2016 we had 14 couples come for Marriage Preparation in church covering similar topics to those in the Marriage course except we condense it in to one day with lunch provided. The aim of the day is to help couples start their marriage with good foundations by providing some tools to help them and provide them space to discuss together topics that they may not have considered before.

We are looking to run a catchup course in the summer for those couples who were not able to attend with the next main courses set for 4th February 2017 and 3rd February 2018.

The BPC Marriage Course January 2016

Alexandra Lee

It was while we were at Focus in the summer of 2015, sitting in a marquee in the middle of a soggy field that Michael and I thought we might be able to 'take on' The Marriage Course, listening to a talk which inspired us to "go for it".

Firstly we approached Will P-G and the response was a definite yes. Next, how to style it? If we were going to ask couples to give up a precious evening for seven weeks, the least we could do was to make it worth their while. A Date Night, all about focusing on the couple; candle light, a glass

of wine or two and a delicious dinner at a table for two on a Friday evening.

To help with planning, we needed to work out how many people we thought we could get to come... Michael being American has a very definite 'go big or go home' attitude. He came up with 22 couples. Thank goodness for Will giving us such huge support, along with many prayers being answered and our great connect group. Without them, we would never have achieved the final 22 couples.

Will's aim is still for every couple in the church to take the course and we can't recommend doing it more highly - it's entertaining, challenging, fun and fulfilling and gives you the chance to share some precious alone time as a couple, so please do sign up for the September 2016 SSPP Marriage Course. You just have to turn up, drink, eat, sit back and enjoy... and there's absolutely NO group-work!

The Parenting Course

Alexandra Lee

The Parenting course ran very smoothly with 10 mothers signed up, mainly from The Ark, two from St Bernadine's and one a church regular. We ran a crèche along side the course which was valiantly run by Alex Morten and Rachel Jones with extra help from Amanda Marshall when the numbers swelled. We couldn't have run the course without their help, so huge thanks to them for giving up 5 mornings.

Two of the mothers loved the course so much that they went on to do the marriage course and Morning Alpha.

The next Parenting Course and Parenting Teenagers courses will be run in the Autumn Term.

DEANERY

Paul Hiron

This has been a year in which some of the ministry tensions have surfaced. The two issues have been how to fit in the needs of Stowe, now the minister has to be paid for. The needs of Stowe School have turned out to be large, so there is little time for the village's pastoral needs.

The second issue has been the needs of Buckingham, with its growing ministry to the new estates, which require more resources than are available. Both these issues are ongoing.

The Lent Evensongs continue to be successful, in particular bringing fresh life to many small churches.

FABRIC

Donna Mills

Fabric is the term used to describe the physical aspects of the church building and the curate's house. Paul Wallace handed over the management of this in April, and I would like to thank him for his years of hard work, and his ongoing support.

2016 has been a busy year, and we have seen some big changes, such as the completion of the organ work, automatic doors installation, and the changes to the kitchen.

I would like to thank the numerous teams of people who worked so very hard to assist in getting these mammoth tasks completed. 2016 also saw the successful repair of a broken leaded window, alongside a few other minor repairs such as potholes and plastering. Good progress has been made with the ongoing lighting upgrade project, which will now be completed in 2017.

'FOCUS' Church Summer Holiday

Revd Will Pearson-Gee

Once again members of the Church joined the Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) annual church' summer holiday at 'FOCUS'. Having outgrown the Camber Sands site we moved to the glorious 7,500 acre estate at Somerley Hall in Hampshire. It was a stunning location set in a beautiful valley. Of the 7500 people attending 65 were from SSPP all of whom camped. This was almost double 2015 group's size. Once again the group enjoyed a wonderful week of fellowship and inspiring worship and teaching. Several people made commitments during the week.

GROUPS

Connect Groups & Small Group network

Michael Greig

The network of 19 Connect Groups (formerly Home Groups) and about 6 other small groups (e.g Prayer Groups, Theology Group etc.) has continued to grow and develop during 2016 as has their significance in the life of the church. Group leaders met three times during the year.

The role of Connect Groups is to help:

to implement the SSPP vision to be people who worship God, make friends and help to change the world.

people to form deepening friendships & a sense of belonging both within the group & the church.

to ensure that everyone in CG groups is 'cared for' practically & pastorally.

individuals to grow as disciples of Jesus & effective ministers, potentially becoming a source of new leaders for the growing ministries within the church.

to equip people to be effective Christians in an unbelieving world.

Several of the groups have links with Christians in other nations or support local initiatives such as the University Christian Union, Kit Kat Club, Grenville School & the Centre at Verney Close.

My role is to ensure that group leaders are trained, equipped and well supported, as well as encouraging as many regular church members as possible to join a group. There is now a close link with the Alpha courses to encourage those who have attended to join a Connect Group.

Fishers Field Connect Group

Gill and Keith Croxton

The group meets fortnightly on Monday mornings from 10.45 am to 12 noon at the home of Mary Meluish, 17 Fishers Field

There are 9 members in the group. We have recently completed a walk through Luke's gospel and are currently following the Paracletis course.

We enjoy discussing the Bible passage and sharing what that says to us as we seek to deepen our faith together. Fellowship, supporting and praying for each other are also important parts of our time together.

Tudor Meadows Connect Group

Gill and Keith Croxton

The group meets fortnightly on Monday evenings from 7.30pm to 9pm. We are currently meeting at 18 Eider Close.

There are 9 members in the group. We start our evening with refreshments and a time of sharing. We then move on to Bible teaching/study (which invariably includes lively discussions), prayer and fellowship. We recently completed a series on Hebrews and are currently now looking at Nehemiah

Connect Groups are about building relationships and friendships, supporting each other in prayer and practical ways, developing and deepening our faith together and having fun. We try, as best we can, to embrace all these. We are always delighted to welcome new members so do get in touch if you would like to join us.

Eroumen

+ Andrew Shergold and Steve Watkins

We have had a very successful year and there is much to report. We now have:

A Hebrew Group, An Advanced Greek Group, An Intermediate Greek Group, A Beginners' Greek Group, A Classical Latin Group

There are about 20 students over the three languages; the most popular being New Testament Greek, with Hebrew second and Latin third. Many students are studying two languages at the same time; this is perfectly possible and because the languages are dissimilar confusion does not result. Our students come from several different local churches; most are from Buckingham but four are from Milton Keynes and two from Winslow. The format of each lesson is that a language hour is followed by a 'Theological' (Hebrew) or 'New Testament' (Greek), or 'Literature' (Latin) Hour.

Hebrew

In the Hebrew Group we are progressing through Weingreen – A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew'.

Greek

The enthusiasm of the members of the various groups has been such that instead of using the book 'Wenham – Elements of New Testament Greek' I have now written my own Greek course, which includes much material that is not in the current teaching books.

A new ***Beginner's Group*** started in October 2016 and this progressing though the numbers have diminished somewhat.

The ***Intermediate Greek Group*** is about one-third of the way through the course.

The ***Advanced Group*** has almost finished the course and will shortly be starting on a study of Galatians. It is also anticipated that some Patristic writers will be read such as Irenaeus, the Letters of Ignatius or Athanasius.

Latin

The Classical Latin Group has now completed all three books of Oulton's 'So you really want to learn Latin'. We have also been reading Vergil's Aeneid and have completed Book II and are two-thirds of the way through Book III. We are now embarking on some Prose Composition and Unseens. Nineteen members from all of the Groups attended a conference in February at High Leigh in Hertfordshire on February 5 – 7 2016. There were two Groups, one studying the book of Ruth from the Septuagint, the other studying Ephesians.

The academic year, so to speak, is divided into three terms and for 2017 the terms are as follows: Hilary from 13th January - 1st April, Trinity from 5th May - 8th July, Michaelmas from 15th September – 3rd December.

We are aware that there is great interest in this course. If anyone would like more information about all this, please contact Steve Watkins on 07900 955149 or Andrew Shergold on 01296 733882.

Musica Embletonensis

Steve Watkins

We meet on the fourth Thursday in the month (except August and December) at 72, Embleton Way. The format is very straightforward: one of us chooses a theme and selects some CDs or LPs and we then listen to them. We have an interval at which we have a glass of wine and some nibbles. A couple of new members have joined this year.

For several reasons our meetings have been rather intermittent over the past year but we hope to make meet more regularly during the course of this year. We also hope to resume our Opera evenings as well.

The Friday Night Prayer meeting

Paul Wallace

Every Friday evening a small group of people meet to pray for the Sunday services, not just in the Parish Church but in the Village Churches as well. We focus on praying for the preachers and others involved in the services because we believe it is important to pray and because Jesus told us to. We meet in the Tower Room at 7.00 pm for just half an hour, with access through the Tower Door. It would be lovely to have others join us.

Theology Group

Steve Watkins

We now meet on the second Thursday of the month at 72, Embleton Way. We have a stable membership of 8 members.

We are continuing the book entitled '25 books every Christian should read'. From this we have selected 12, amongst which are 'The Divine Comedy' by Dante, 'The Incarnation' by Athanasius and the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

We expect to complete this book at the April meeting and then we shall choose another!

MINIBUS

Matt Killick

The minibus continues to be used frequently by various groups within the church family, including the Community Lunch and the Blaze and Fuel

youth groups. Over the past year it has also been used for longer trip such as the men's weekend away, staff retreats and Focus.

MISSION & OUTREACH

Keith Croxton

Mission and Outreach is a sub group of the PCC mandated to discern and respond to the spiritual and social needs in the community: reaching out to share God's love and compassion with others. 2016 saw a number of key developments including :

The first year of running The Centre in Verney Close

The adoption and support of our two mission partners: Emma Cottrell in the Middle East and the Courtman family in Peru.

Supporting George Pinnegar on a two week mission to Ibiza with the 24/7 Prayer Team.

The opening of the Emergency Centre in The Centre and the new ministry that has started there

The plans for the Parish Weekend in September 2017

Increasing the number of Alpha Courses

The following activities/initiatives also continued during the year:

Coffee Service

Keith Croxton

This continues to run on Saturday mornings between 10.30 am and 12 noon. Numbers vary considerably but it provides a welcome for visitors and a place for the church family to drop in for a chat.

Community Lunch (formerly the Soup Service)

Sheila Handley

The Community Lunch has now been running for over 3 years. Since last year the number of attendees has been maintained and we regularly serve 50 people, often more. We have welcomed many local people who are elderly, alone, single or widowed, students, the unemployed, alcoholics, visitors to the town, church members and leaders and so on from age 1 to 98.

We have a rota of drivers bringing in a minibus load of folks from all sides of Buckingham, a rota of table and chair 'putters-out and putters-back', a team of ladies who come every week to set the tables, serve the folks, wash up and clear, a rota of additional ladies who help monthly, a rota of soup makers, 3 per week, and myself who usually cooks the main courses. Beth Tubridy and Susan Mileham are both able to step in to cook in my absence. Donations have been more than enough to cover our costs and we have been able to donate £682 to the Church.

We once again served a full Christmas lunch to 70 people and 20 helpers, offering a free raffle, where all got a prize, and were entertained by the Swan Harmony singers.

We have been delighted with the new kitchen arrangements, ovens, warming cupboard, work surface etc. These are working a lot better for us. During the refit the service continued at The Centre, and this worked very well, although the maximum numbers for comfort and safety is 45 diners. We reduced the menu for this period as the oven there is not big enough.

There are so many people who continue to support us, in particular Michael Greig, who has ensured that the rota for the tables and chairs are sorted and the minibus is up to date, and the office team, who make sure things are ordered and friendly notices are put in the kitchen to encourage people to use it more thoughtfully!

There are people from the Church who come for lunch and sit alongside our diners, offering a friendly face and a listening ear, and for some it may be the only person they see or speak to that day or week.

Food Service (Food Bank)

Keith Croxton

During 2016 we delivered over 100 food parcels and made a special delivery of 45 Christmas parcels to families identified by our partners in the community. We continue to receive a steady stream of food donations so generously made by our church family as well as local schools and other churches.

Food Storage is based in The Centre managed by Beverley Stockill and Anne Mercer. The team of telephone coordinators and shoppers make sure the requests for parcels are quickly met and are doing a great job

Healing on the Streets

George Pinnegar

Healing on the Streets was launched in September 2016 by Tony & Hazel Allen. It has been going out monthly into the town offering to pray for people for healing as instructed in the great commission. There was some successful prayer for people with improvement in symptoms. After taking a break through the autumn and winter it will be headed up by George Pinnegar who is in the process of forming a team. We aim to be going out in pairs into the town, praying for people for healing and seeking people of peace to speak to.

Kit Cat Club

Christine Barrell

We are aimed at Primary aged children who are all referred to us and come for a variety of reasons. We have had another fun filled year with this group of amazing children and their parents. We meet every Thursday in the school holidays for games, crafts, a hot meal and it is a place for the children to be themselves.

Twenty seven children, a couple of the parents and a group of helpers had a fantastic afternoon at the Buckingham Community Pantomime production of Hansel and Gretel in January 2016. Seven of the older children had a week away over the Easter holidays at Bitternes Afloat. We took 23 children for a day trip to Mead Open Farm, where we had the opportunity to meet the animals, bottle feed the sheep, milk a cow, have a tractor ride, play in the sand pit, jump on trampolines and have a fantastic day. Can't wait to see where we go in 2017.

Men's Ministry

Keith Croxton

The men's breakfasts continued to take place on Saturday mornings at 8am. David Squibb and his team produced excellent breakfasts enjoyed by all. Breakfasts were interspersed with Indian and Italian nights out: the annual BBQ was also a splendid occasion.

Danny Rodgers now heads up men's ministry.

The best way of keeping in touch with all the breakfasts and events is to join the email list. Just let Tony Dines on 01280-816055 or tonydines@hotmail.co.uk have your email details.

New Estate (Lace Hill)

Keith Croxton

The small team visiting and welcoming newcomers on the new estate to Buckingham continued throughout the year. Information about the church is provided along with a splendid welcome cake thanks to Ian. We have seen a steady trickle of folk coming along to church and a number of regulars at the Soup Service are now from the estate.

The Recovery Café

Angelina Chilver and Team

The Recovery Café is a Family Support Service for Families affected by Substance Misuse

It was set up as a drop-in café to support families, relatives and individuals who are affected by the substance misuse of their loved one. We have had a few families who came during the summer period and a number of individual people across the year seeking advice and help. Most of these

came from the surrounding villages, schools and universities in the Buckingham area.

We were successfully able to offer them one to one counselling sessions, advice on finances and debts, NHS treatment, and advice on domestic violence. Many of these people were just happy to come and have a cup of tea, and chat to our team members about their problems, in a safe and caring environment.

We have promoted our services to other charities like AA and the NA and DRUGFAM. In the coming year 2017 DRUGFAM are very keen on collaborating with us to provide a permanent programme for the above, as there is no other family service of this kind provided in the area of Buckingham town.

I am grateful to all my team Steven Tayfield, Steven Smith, Helen McMorro, George Pinnegar, Janey Bowmen (reserve), Heather Purvis (reserve), Susan Mileham (villages) for their amazing support, and we will continue to pray and help families rebuild their lives.

Sanctuary

George Pinnegar

Sanctuary has been holding monthly events reaching out to people using dance music. Each event has an attendance of 30 people or so. We've seen two people get baptised and many more encounter God. We're entering a season of discipleship for those who are coming to a genuine faith, and have started a small group.

SOS Team

Matt Killick

The SOS team developed as a response to a number of homeless people turning up at the church looking for help. We try to show these vulnerable people that someone cares about them, and more importantly, that God loves and values them.

Initially, those turning up tended to be itinerant and simply needed some good food and a warm and dry place to sleep for a night or two. However, over the past year this has evolved and it now tends to be local people, who have found themselves homeless for various reasons, and we are having to adapt our response accordingly.

In addition to providing food and a safe place to sleep, we now attempt to address some of their underlying problems and, where appropriate, assist in finding work and longer term accommodation.

We are so thankful to God for the provision of The Centre, where we have been able to create emergency accommodation and without which this ministry would not be possible.

The Centre

Keith Croxton

At the heart of The Centre's work is to be a presence in the heart of the town where God's love and compassion can be experienced as the church responds to the needs in the community. The Centre is open every weekday morning between 10 am and 12 noon for coffee and company and every Monday afternoon between 2.30 pm and 4 pm for tea and chat. These are important times especially for those who live on their own or feel lonely or isolated. There is a community of 38 volunteers who ensure there are two present each time to give a warm welcome.

The Centre is also the base for the Food Bank and from October has housed the Emergency Room for those who are homeless.

We also make the building available and welcoming to community groups who are themselves meeting needs, thus making The Centre an important part of community life. A full list of the groups using The Centre can be seen under The Centre on the church web site.

Team: Steven Tayfield, Steven Smith, Helen McMorrow, George Pinnegar, Janey Bowmen (reserve), Heather Purvis (reserve), Susan Mileham (villages).

Women's Breakfasts

Ruth Newell

The women's connect bible study group revived the women's breakfasts on a Saturday morning at the Centre, where 50 women enjoy continental breakfast from 9am with a speaker at 9.30am. The cost is £3 and includes, warm croissants, jam or cheese, fresh fruit, Greek yogurt, honey and granola, and fruit juices and fresh coffee.

Our first one was held in May 2016 and Fiona Courtman gave a wonderful talk about her forthcoming move with her family to Peru via Latin Link, which employs less able people to make crafts and jewellery. We were able to donate £80 towards Fiona's project.

Our second wonderful Speaker in September was Gussie Walsh who made us laugh and talked about being joyful. There were some wonderful quotes, as Lewis Smedes says - To miss out on joy is to miss out on the reason for your existence. C S Lewis writes that Joy is the serious business of heaven. The apostle Paul says - rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. It appears that Joy is a COMMAND -for joylessness

damages Christ's face to the world. Laughter is God's joy spilling out of heaven... In addition we had a collection for transport costs for Samara's Aid and raised a tremendous total of £311 in donations and profit from the breakfast.

PASTORAL

Prayer Ministry

Mary Williams

The Prayer Ministry Team continued to grow in number (now 26 members) and in the way it has been used at the 9.30 a.m., 11.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. services. When there is an invitation for people to receive prayer following the talk at the 6.00 p.m. service greater numbers of the Prayer Ministry Team are involved.

We want very much to provide an environment for prayer in which people are respected and able to be heard as they share what is on their hearts. This has not always been easy in a busy bustling church but we do pray that it can be achieved.

As in other years we led an Advent Evening which was much appreciated.

A small team is working on the Prayer Chapel with the aim of making it welcoming and, especially for those who may use it outside the services, a peaceful place of prayer.

As a team our prayer is that we are channels of God's love and healing power.

The Prayer Chain

Gill Croxton

The Prayer Chain has continued to be used over the past year and has provided comfort and blessing to those who have asked for confidential prayer either for themselves or for someone known to them. It is very encouraging to see and hear that our prayers have been answered in many cases although we do not necessarily seek the outcome. Details of the contact number are on the notice sheet each week so please let us know if we can pray - we don't need lots of information just the need and we will pray.

SACRISTAN & SIDESPERSONS

Gerry Causer

Sacristan

A big thank you to the team of Servers and Chalice Assistants for their help during the year. I always find it a challenge to prepare the rotas and share out the duties as fairly as possible. Towards the end of the year we were joined by Matt Lambert on the server's team.

The number of chalice assistants has remained constant, but as always just a few extra on each team would enable me to spread the duties a bit more easily. Neither role is particularly onerous, but they do contribute greatly to the smooth running of the services.

Preparing the Altar before the service, frees the priest to prepare themselves for the service, and clearing away afterwards enables the priest to engage with the congregation as they leave church. If you are interested in helping with either of these roles, please speak to me.

Sidespersons

The number of regular Sidespeople for the 11:00 am services, is 15, with 3 people for the 8 am services – a big thank you to you all. My perception, is that the 11 am service now has a greater proportion of visitors and fewer regular attendees. This results in a small pool of people available to carry out the variety of roles – Readers and Intercessors, Welcoming and Coffee, Server and Chalice. I am aware many of the current Sidespeople will be on one or more of these other rotas. But of all these roles, that of the Sidesperson is probably the most straightforward and therefore a good starting point in contributing to the life of the Church if you don't do so already. Please prayerfully consider if you could be involved in this way and speak to me if you would like to know more.

SERVICES

Revd Will Pearson-Gee

8am BCP Service

Numbers at the 8am congregation remain about 11. Numbers at festival services were constant. The congregation travels to either Radclive (1st Sunday) and Thornborough (3rd Sunday) when the early morning services are there. With the set-up time needed for the 9.30am service, after consultation, we have dropped the sermon to ensure that this service can end by 8.30am. We are extremely grateful to the retired clergy who take many of these services allowing the Rector and Curate to focus on the three main Sunday congregations.

10am Midweek Communion Service

The midweek communion service (using Common Worship) has moved location up to the Chancel and has experienced something of a revival. The average attendances increased and we now see 20 attendees regularly. We have introduced refreshments after the service on the first Wednesday.

This service continues to offer a spiritual interlude in a busy week which may explain its increasing popularity.

9.30am Service

The 9.30am service has continued to grow with new families joining. It seeks to provide a relaxed environment with outstanding children's groups as well as solid adult teaching (which is shared with the evening congregation). Finding band members early on a Sunday morning has proven difficult and this, coupled to the very limited time available to set-up for a band, has meant that we usually have just a guitarist and drums. This is not ideal but we can't see a way around this. We now regularly see 40-50 children and 50-60 adults. Although we now have the use of the Ringing Chamber we are now actively seeking extra rooms off-site to cater for the growth. The service is live-streamed via YouTube and the sermon remains on YouTube for viewing at a later date.

11am Parish Communion Service

The 11am Parish Communion service has remained unchanged and has seen growth in the number of young families in the congregation and the choir. The introduction of Communion on the 1st Sunday has been a success although this is a said service to provide space for baptisms at 12.30pm. The teaching has tended to follow the lectionary although we do arrange the readings as a sermon series to aid continuity. Numbers overall have remained stable but we do seek ways to grow this congregation.

6pm Contemporary Evening Service

'The 6 o'clock' as it is known continues from strength to strength. The quality of the band-led worship has continued improving under Tim King's leadership. The band has grown in size and competence new leaders are being encouraged. The teaching has been challenging and accessible which has brought yet more people in. It continues quite a 'gathered' congregation with some 15% drawn in from other churches and villages. These people still are members of their home churches but enjoy a modern, lively service. The style has intentionally become more charismatic with more prayer ministry. Continued work on the creative lighting has resulted in a stunning ambience. Numbers over the year increased from about 100 to 130 – a significant increase. The service is live-streamed via YouTube and the sermon remains on YouTube for viewing at a later date.

TECH

Tim King

We are very blessed with the equipment we have in church, which enables us to do so much of what we do. Having a reliable and current system has helped enhance weddings and funerals, our Sunday services, courses such as the marriage and alpha course and also external bookings from schools and the university and also charities. We constantly get complimented from people who come in and are impressed with the quality of sound and visuals we can provide.

In 2016 we managed to get the livestreaming up and running, which has been well received by people who haven't been able to get to church and also relatives of people getting married. We have had viewers from abroad, some even from Australia! We recently had our first attendee to church from someone who started watching online first before coming in person. The next step with livestreaming is to see if we can get it into Care homes and into houses where people aren't able to come but would still like to watch.

We also installed a TV in the tower room, which has been helpful for parents with babies who have to leave the nave. They can watch and not have to miss anything. We also sourced a TV for the Centre which has been a real asset for the youth and Alpha, and also anyone who needs it. The people who serve on the Sound and visuals teams have really embraced the system well and without them, we wouldn't be able to do half as much as we do on a Sunday.

THE ORGAN

Ray Mitchell

The project has taken longer than originally envisaged, but the organ was brought back into use shortly after Easter 2016.

The restoration has been well received particularly after the organ was used for an RSCM day in the autumn, for the confirmation service with the worship band and the Christmas services. Following several months use some final adjustments will be made during 2017.

THE SPIRE

Joe McMorrow

The Spire has gone into a period of indefinite hibernation after the present Editor turned, erm, lets say thirty, and finding his free time consumed with - well - exciting manly things that your average Thirty Something would get up to. You know the kind of thing, Water Skiing, Mountaineering and Scuba. Terribly Manly the lot of it. This is nothing new, Editors taking up

life threatening activities, such as braving the vagaries of the A40 into London every day.

So, the Spire has crept into a paper lined cave to slumber and dream. But it will re-emerge into the Editorial Sunshine in the future, a beautiful paper Butterfly breaking free of the Chrysalis! All that is needed for this miraculous transformation is a willing volunteer! Its next regeneration (just like Dr. Who) will see it return better than ever, maybe sporting an unfeasibly long scarf and a Sonic Screwdriver?!

THE WORSHIP TEAM

Tim King

2016 has been a great year for the worship team. We have seen some amazing new people join the team. We have all grown together both musically, but also spiritually as a number of the team attend mine and Emma's connect group.

The 09:30 team is smaller and has a more 'acoustic' feel to it, often just being myself leading and George on the box drum. This is both an intentional decision due to the time constraints we have with the 8am and the 11am, but also it can often be harder with such an early start to get people keen to join.

On the weeks where the 08:00am service isn't on, I try to add a couple more members to the band. I constantly receive positive feedback about the musical provision at this service, people seem to enjoy the flavour of the 09:30.

The 6pm is a whole different ball game with a complete full band setup every week, the church gets transformed with a contemporary feel including lights and smoke for effect. The band members who serve in this service have really come together and a lot of them help with the setup. We have had 'unhindered worship' on the 1st week of the month, where at the end of the service we intentionally plan to create a space where people can carry on worshipping longer than normal weeks. This has been great for the band to step out from a normal week and to be led even more by the Spirit.

TRAIDCRAFT & FAIR TRADE

Tina Mitchell

Purchases from Traidcraft in 2016 amounted to £2366.22, another increase over the previous year of some £240. Easter Eggs and Advent Calendars from the Meaningful Chocolate company are popular with Ark families.

In March 2016 the Big Brew raised £122.60, which was sent to Traidcraft Exchange to help with their work with farmers in some of the poorest communities, to improve crop yields and farming practices, so that they can work their way out of poverty.

I have been pleased to support Fiona Courtman and the Nuevas Fuerzas group in Arequipa, Peru, through Craft Aid International. Some £300 of jewellery made by the group was sold at Ark and elsewhere. I am looking forward to being able to sell some of Fiona's designs later this year.

WEBSITE

Revd Will Pearson-Gee

There is little to report on the website other than it remains a vital tool in attracting people to the church and for informing our members on what is going on. We introduced a weekly video update which has proved popular as a way of very briefly updating the church on the week ahead. Registered users have risen from 405 to 465 – a healthy increase. We would like more people to register and also for everyone to upload a photo of themselves to the address book.