



stMary's
STOKE BISHOP

**2016 Ministry Reports
for the APCM to be held on
25th April 2017**

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Worship and Teaching

Report from the Vicar

Dear St Mary's Church Community,

As I reflect on 2016 it seems to me that we moved on, beginning to gain some clarity about the direction God is calling us and some momentum in moving towards that. It was a good year.

As ever I am very grateful for my gifted colleagues on the staff team, leadership team and PCC, who together with me have prayed, worked, listened and served as one body, seeking to fulfill St Mary's desire to follow Jesus and make Him known. That statement is increasingly becoming a tool to sharpen who we are and what we are seeking to achieve.

Developing vision, values and strategy

At its heart 'following Jesus and making Him known' is about growing as disciples of Jesus who make disciples of Jesus. Growth as disciples of Jesus is *the* key to St Mary's moving on and serving not only the community of Stoke Bishop but communities in our local area. But how can we as an organisation enable and encourage that growth? What strategies do we need to adopt? Where should we focus?

Two images from our 24/7 prayer weeks (2016 and 2017) contributed to our understanding of what this means for us. Both images were boat based; 'Throw your nets on the other side' (do what you are doing differently) was from John 21; 'Set sail' (set off) was further explored in our significant and well-attended weekend at home, held in February 2016 – how might we become disciples who make disciples, and what would that look like for us as a community *servicing God in the world?*

Much of our strategic thinking and planning in 2016 grew from the fruit of the weekend at home. We have continued to explore prayerfully what changes we need to make and how we can make those changes in order better to equip one another to follow Jesus and make Him known. But it isn't just about what we do: it's about *how* we do it. It's about our culture.

Why is culture important? It's important because, to coin a leadership maxim, 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'. Any organization, including a church, can have a strategy for growth and change that can easily be derailed if attention is not paid to culture. How we do things is as important as what we seek to

do. If we want to be a church that is following Jesus and making Him known we need to create the right culture and environment for that to happen, bearing in mind our history, current context and vision for the future.

So, as part of this thinking, in October the PCC and I spent a day together identifying what we believed St Mary's values were. This exercise was about seeking to describe our church culture. How do we do things around here? What values do we hold that all churches hold? What values do we hold 'accidentally' that we might want to challenge? What values do we aspire to? What values are core to who we are?

As a result of that, two things have happened. Firstly, the leadership team has been working on trying to distill the core and aspirational values we have identified and to discern what we believe God might be saying to us through that. This work is coming towards its end and we hope to publish something before the summer. Secondly, we have begun to meet as a 'leadership community' to explore how we might help change the culture. This 'community' gathering is intended for all those who have influence in the church community, including team leaders of all ministries, from coffee team leaders to children's group leaders and preachers to house group leaders. They are open meetings and anyone can come and contribute. We held the first meeting in November and explored how we might become an increasingly all-age community.

During 2016 it also became clear that we didn't have enough information about where we are now, and it is hard to create strategic direction if we don't know where we are. That is why we planned the Renovo survey, which took place in February 2017. The results of this will provide a baseline to build our strategy for growth going forward. The main conclusions will be shared at our annual meeting.

The autumn of 2016 provided us with another major strategic challenge. The Bishop of Bristol invited us to become the resource church for the new pilot mission area. The PCC and I agreed that this would be an exciting and challenging project to be involved in. We hope and pray that as we move through 2017 the implications of this will become clearer for us and our partner churches in Sea Mills, Lawrence Weston, Avonmouth and Shirehampton. (The mission area is spoken about more later in this report.) I believe it is a part of God's call for us as we seek to grow as disciples.

As part of this mission-area scheme we will welcome a new full-time training curate, Steve Harre-Young, and his family, in July, and a new full-time Associate Minister in September 2017.

Sunday worship and teaching

It has been really encouraging to see new people coming to worship at St Mary's on Sundays and at Mini Church on Saturdays. The quality of our worship continues to improve and the standard of our welcome is high. Thank you to all those who enable our worship and welcome – from the welcomers and wardens, readers and coffee makers, intercessors and those who clean the building and the linen to the youth and children's leaders, musicians and rota writers, flower arrangers, bellringers and preachers, sound and visual technicians, and those in the office who support us all. Thank you.

Changes have included the re-launch of the choir as the St Mary's Singers, and a welcome increase in the number of musicians leading musical worship at the 10.30 am and evening services.

We have enjoyed sermon series on Philippians, Problematic Parables, The Creed, Luke's gospel, 1 Timothy, Acts, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the life of Joseph, summer series on Genesis and Psalms, and of course our festivals of Christmas and Easter and seasons of Advent and Lent.

Average Sunday Attendance remained static compared to previous years, although there is a shift in attendance with some people moving from 10.30 am to 9.00 am or 6.30 pm. Services, and new people coming to each of those services from across the age groups.

A number of people left in 2016 to go to new homes in other cities and a few moved to other churches. The latter include Julia and Jason Parker, who felt called away from St Mary's to support the church in Lockleaze for this next season. We prayed for and commissioned them as they left.

Attendance patterns seem to have changed a little, with fewer people coming every week. I suspect this is mainly due to visiting relatives and friends and other pressures. Do let me know if I am wrong about this. Overall I am encouraged by the numbers we have in worship but believe we need to improve our prayer, invitation, service and discipleship in 2017 in order to see the growth to which God is calling us.

It has been very encouraging to see the growth of Toddler Worship (monthly on Wednesdays) and the continuation of Mini Church in a new form. These

services and all our youth and children's work is in good shape and may well be the spearhead for growth going forward.

Thanksgiving for all who serve and have served

I am constantly thankful for all in the community at St Mary's. Together we are the body of Christ in this place. I would like to say a special thank you to those who give of themselves, often sacrificially, to serve God in their work, directly at church and through volunteering for service away from St Mary's, such as at the Crisis Centre. Thank you also to those who move chairs, carry out minor repairs, tidy up, volunteer in the office, act as hosts, maintain the garden, and to those whose ministry is more public. Thank you. The Church of God would not function or serve others without you.

I also want to take this opportunity to give thanks to God for all those from our community who died this year. We said a sad goodbye to a number in 2016. They are much missed.

Looking ahead

There is much to be thankful for and there are many challenges ahead. I look forward to 2017 at St Mary's as I and my colleagues seek to serve, equipping all the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13). I look forward to worshipping and praying and serving with you as together we seek to follow Jesus and make Him known. Let us pray that God will equip us and use us for his purposes and his glory in Stoke Bishop and beyond.

**Yours in Christ,
Mat**

Report from the Director of Musical Worship

2016 has been a great year for the music ministry, with a lot of changes and developments! I hope what I set out here will give insight into the musical life at church and how you can get involved, support and pray for this ministry.

My main focus for 2016 was working to develop the 9.00 am choir. My targets for this group were to increase membership; give rehearsals a more enjoyable community feel, where people felt welcomed; improve the quality of singing; find new musical settings for various services that enabled more congregational participation; and develop a more consistent team of organists.

In March we decided to have a six-week break from choir while I worked to plan a whole new re-launched choir: The St Mary's Singers. I ordered new folders and new robes, as no money had been invested in these for some 20-plus years. I also designed a new format for rehearsals so that people could get to know each other and grow in community. I wanted it to be an environment where people from the 9.00 am congregation could feel part of a team, and really serve the 9.00 am service, but also where others from the church could sing with the choir, as well as being a place where people could invite their friends. I introduced a more fluid membership system where people sign up to sing with the choir on a term by term basis, and this allows for more entry points in the year to invite new people to join. At the first rehearsal we had 20 people come along, which was amazing!

We now have around 25 singers on the books, and usually have between 10 and 18 people at our weekly rehearsals. This has also been an environment where people on the fringes of church have been accepted and welcomed with open arms, which is a real highlight for me. I have also made term plans with at least one or two fun events to look forward to. As well as weekly services, we have sung twice in Bristol Cathedral, and have sung at two church events so far, with more exciting plans for 2017. Christmas was a personal highlight. Both carol services were amazing, both in terms of the standard of singing and the commitment of the singers that was just remarkable.

We have had a number of people join the 10.30 am and Café Worship music teams this year, which has been wonderful. It has been especially great to see some of the young people serve on these teams and grow in confidence through youth band and also through playing with other adults in the congregation. A high point for me was the church weekend at home. The musical standard was very strong, and people went out of their way to volunteer and practise for that weekend, with some people playing two or three times over the course of the weekend.

The Café Worship team now has lots of volunteers and pretty much runs itself, which has been a really great thing to see develop over 2016. The evening service has also introduced more extended times of musical worship and begun to develop its own identity with the help of the musicians, which has been wonderful to see. Certain people have really taken ownership over the music at this service and serve on a regular basis.

At the 10.30 am service we have introduced ten new songs during the course of the year, and the standard of playing has improved. This has been helped by people attending weekly rehearsals to prepare for Sunday mornings; these rehearsals take place on either Thursday nights or Sundays at 9.00 am I have struggled a bit in 2016 to have a large enough number of people committed to the 10.30 am music group, and often bands have been small and inconsistent month to month, which has limited what has been possible with the music at this service. However, towards the end of 2016 we had five new people join the music team for 10.30 am, and this has really helped to provide more consistency. This is an area that I am currently thinking a lot about, and I am working on ways to grow the musicians involved in the 10.30 am group. I have run a guitar workshop, with an eye to organising more training in the future, and more recently we have started running 'Worship Central'. However, attendance for both has been extremely sparse. This has led me to begin thinking of alternative ways of engaging people who currently serve on the 10.30 am team, and I would appreciate prayer in this aspect.

So there you have it, my 2016, and a bit of 2017, roundup! I hope that it will have been helpful and painted a picture of where the music ministry is currently at!

~ **Joanna Leighton**

Café Worship Report

Café Worship is now in its second year in its current format and is continuing to go well. Over the past year we have seen the core group of attendees grow, with many now coming only to this service. In the summer, the McClellands passed on the oversight of Café Worship and I am really grateful for all their hard work in leading it into the place it is today. Café Worship continues to be a place where younger leaders have a safe place to learn along with our ordinands, and it has been good to see them get involved in leading, preaching and musical worship alongside others. We have had some brilliant teaching throughout the year, which has looked at 1 Timothy, 'Big Questions', 'Problematic Parables' and The Creed.

~ **Tim Smith**

Prayer Ministry Report

“Do not be anxious about anything but by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:5

Prayer is the communication link between God and us. Jesus is our Great Intercessor who receives our prayers. There are many ways in which we pray at St Mary's. We have a prayer team of about 15, and we are seeking to enlarge it with younger members. Two members are always available on a monthly rota to be present during and at the end of 9.00 am and 10.30 am services to pray with people before they leave. *Healing ministry* is available during or after communion services.

The *Ring of Prayer* operates as a confidential service through Jennifer Hall to support people in a crisis situation. Urgent requests can be sent to a number of people quickly. There is an email address for people requesting urgent prayer (prayer@stmarysb.org.uk). There is also a simple form to complete when someone is asking for prayer for themselves or another.

An hour of *Corporate Prayer* takes place on Saturday mornings at 8.30 am, which focuses on Sunday services and prayer needs for the church family. Prayer requests posted on the prayer tree are also regularly prayed for.

Prayers for youth and children's ministry are held every Tuesday at 8.30 am. Everyone is welcome to attend these corporate meetings.

The *Blessings Ministry* established at Ffald-y-Brenin, the Christian retreat centre in South Wales, is being introduced to the prayer team, as another method of prayer distinct from intercessory prayer.

The *24/7 Prayer Week* on the theme 'The path to growth' was held for the seventh year during October 2nd to 8th 2016 and was inspired by the idea of disciples travelling together on a pilgrimage. It was well supported with 90 participants on the rota and about 30 others praying in different groups throughout the week, at home and also overseas. It undoubtedly raises the profile of prayer in the church and encourages wider participation. The prophetic word given to us for this year, 2016-17, is that we will experience spiritual growth as we follow the path of discipleship, developing a deeper relationship with the Lord as we worship Him wholeheartedly both in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

We will continue to seek God's prophetic word at St Mary's as we follow Him in obedience, listen to His voice and pray for His will to be done in our church and our nation through wise leadership.

~ **Angela Cattell**

Film Focus Report

After a shaky 2015/16 season in terms of numbers, the current 2016/17 season has enjoyed a revival. The January showing of 'Everest' had 40 people attending. Numbers apart, those who come enjoy the films shown and many stay on for the discussions afterwards, which are invariably of a high standard. A number of our regulars do not come to church but are happy to partake in the Compline that is held at the end of the afternoon. The films chosen continue to be from the popular movies of the previous year, but our choice is restricted, as always, by the terms of our licensing agreement.

~ **Keith Sheather**

Bellringing Report

April 2016 marked the 30th anniversary of my appointment as Captain of the Bellringers. During the first 20 years I taught bellhandling and control to nearly 30 people and, along with the rest of the team, helped them to make sufficient progress in change-ringing to become valuable members of the Sunday service band. Nearly all were recruited from within St Mary's, or introduced by existing ringers. Many were young people who have long since left Bristol; but there were always others to take their places when they or other ringers moved on. In the last 10 years this supply has virtually ceased, despite repeated appeals for help.

We now have only five ringers (only three of whom worship at St Mary's), so we cannot ring all six bells without help from outside. In addition, up to three of the five are quite frequently not available because of work/family commitments. I was particularly sad that the bells stayed silent on Christmas morning, and that we were unable to ring in the New Year, and then rang on only two of the five Sundays in January. In short, we no longer have a viable band, and it would be very difficult to train new ringers with so few to help them progress. St Mary's Henbury has had no Sunday service ringing for some years now: it looks as if St Mary's Stoke Bishop may be next!

~ **Carol Speedyman**

Flower Arranging Report

The year I took over as the Church Flower Arranger there were 18 weddings, and I inherited a book filled with the names of those who wanted arrangements of flowers 'at the altar' in celebration or in memory. At church festivals, windows were arranged by a church organisation – Women's Fellowship, Mothers' Union, Wives' Fellowship, two Guide troops and two Brownies groups. For Mothering Sunday we arranged posies to be delivered to a church where mothers were unlikely to receive them.

With plentiful weddings, and sometimes three on a day, I did a basic white pedestal or two, and dashed in between services to whip out the first bride's orange roses, and add the next bride's pink. On one occasion the middle wedding had run over time, and early arrivals for the third wedding watched as my daughter and I stowed in the yellow! A loud remark was obviously meant to be heard: "Florists these days! They leave everything to the last moment. I wouldn't pay them!" As the brides had shared the costs, and we laboured for love, we did laugh.

Today, I am ably assisted by Val Ackland and Rosemary Havers, and at festivals by Barbara Spedding, Glenda Lindsay, Rosanne Carwardine and Jennifer Pope – who drives from Dorset to decorate the window that years ago her mother used to do. Would you like to join us? Flowers give such joy and comfort; they 'uplift the soul'. "Consider the lilies of the field..."

~ Pamela Halford

Youth and Children

Report from the Youth and Children's Ministry Lead

There have been many signs of encouragement since September. Numbers attending groups have been consistent, many good questions about faith have been fielded, and young people have been serving across the church. One of the biggest encouragements has been the number of those volunteering their time to lead and support groups on a Sunday morning. Many more slots have been filled in the spring term than the autumn term. This means that we are operating in a safe and professional way. On Sunday mornings we want children and young people to be challenged and equipped

to live out their faith day to day in their various contexts. This is done through talks, stories, testimonies, games, crafts and activities – dependant on age.

Café 4T

Those who are 14-18 years old (school years 10-13) meet from 5.00 pm to 6.30 pm on a Friday. We share snacks, chat and play games together. Young people now have very busy lives with many pressures, so having somewhere to relax and unwind is important. There is a strong foundation in this group as we look for ways to reach more young people with the love of Jesus. Weekly attendance varies between 12 and 16.

[e]Merge

[e]Merge is for the younger youth (11-14 years old; school years 7-9). This group already has outreach potential. About 30% of the young people who attended have no other contact with the church. We currently start the evening with a short evangelistic talk before we move into activities and games. The balance to be found in this group is between encouraging some of the young people to start following Jesus and building up the faith of those that already do. Weekly attendance ranges from 18 to 24.

Outside events

There have been various opportunities to venture outside the church.

- The Mix is a city youth event in Bristol hosted by Woodlands Church and led by a cross-churches team. The number of St Mary's young people attending the September event was disappointing but after conversations and reassurances the numbers at Christmas and in February were much improved. The Mix combines worship, testimonies, teaching and ministry. It is a great opportunity for young people to see how God is working across the city and across their peer group.
- Leading up to Christmas 38 young people went ice skating together at the Winter Wonderland at Cribbs Causeway. Four young people joined us who had been invited by their friends and had had no previous connection to St Mary's. It was a fun time with no injuries.
- The youth had a fantastic time at the recent church weekend away where they took over The Beacon. 33 young people had amazing fun taking part in the adventurous activities of climbing, crate stacking and the zip wire. The theme of adventure was woven through the spiritual content of the weekend too. The young people were encouraged to step into the unknown and trust God in faith. Some community members

shared their stories of how God had taken hold of them and brought them to where they were. There was a wonderful sense of community.

~ **Simon Russell**

Report from the Children and Families' Worker

Kids Club

Kids Club (school years 3-6) meets weekly every Thursday evening. It is a lively group, attracting children from our two primary school catchment areas, both with and without a church background. The aim of Kids Club is to promote knowledge of Jesus and the Bible, and the evening consists of a social time, a teaching time, and crafts and games. During the teaching time, the group is divided into two smaller groups to allow for more in-depth discussions. A number of young leaders continue to support the team, providing positive role models for the children that attend.

Bright Sparks

Bright Sparks meets on Monday afternoons and is aimed at babies and pre-school children and their carers. It continues to be well attended and attracts a number of young families from the local community and beyond. The group provides a relaxed, safe and happy atmosphere where parents and carers can meet while their children play; there is an age-appropriate craft, a story and singing each week. We also hold a short service together in the church at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. We are also very grateful to members of the church family who help by serving refreshments.

Toddler Worship

Toddler Worship (0-5 year olds) is held monthly in the church. This provides an opportunity for children attending with their parents and carers to sing, dance and play instruments and also to hear a Bible story, while providing fellowship for those attending with them. It is an enjoyable morning and the group has welcomed some new faces over recent months.

~ **Rachel Powlesland**

Report from the Youth Intern

Soul Survivor

Last August, we took a group of 17 young people to Soul Survivor, their ages ranging from 13 to 18. It was a thoroughly enjoyable week and all the young people met with God in different ways. The theme for the week was 'Naturally

Supernatural', which covered topics from anxiety and knowing God in a real way, to talking to friends about God. The preachers were all fantastic and the young people were all really engaged. Soul Survivor definitely made an impact on the young people's spiritual development, addressing issues that hadn't necessarily been spoken about in church and allowing them to receive prayer. One of our young people believed she was healed from her anxiety and felt free for the first time. Seeing the young people pray for one another was really encouraging.

The worship really allowed the young people to connect with God on an intimate level as well as have a bit of a party, which the youth really loved. When we weren't in the meetings we had free time where the young people could attend seminars; then every evening we came together for a meal and had a chance to share what God had been talking to us about, and although most were quiet, for some He had really been challenging them. One highlight of Soul Survivor for most of the young people was the colour run one afternoon, which allowed them to get really dirty but colourful! We are looking forward to returning this year.

Being a trainee

Being a trainee at St Mary's has had its challenges but I have loved every minute of the past 18 months. Having unexpectedly to step up to a more leading role in the youth work after being at the church for just four months was rather scary at first owing to my not being familiar with a lot of the work; but I enjoyed taking on the responsibility thanks to the support of Rachel Powlesland. Building relationships with the young people has been a huge highlight of mine, and my absolute highlight has been seeing them meet with God, particularly at Soul Survivor. Trying to balance the work load within my hours as a SWYM trainee was particularly difficult when I was running the youth groups without the support of a qualified youth worker; but I loved doing the work and always felt that it was worth it at the end of the week. During my time at St Mary's my confidence has grown enormously and I feel I have improved in many aspects of youth work, including Bible studies and talks, owing to my being 'thrown in at the deep end' early on in my training. Being at St Mary's has made a significant development in my spirituality – having to rely on God more and studying/teaching on Biblical subjects I wouldn't necessarily have studied myself. Overall, I will be really sad to leave the role and the young people, and will miss it all very much.

~ Leone Ingram

Report on Links with Stoke Bishop Primary School

You may not be aware of the very close links St Mary's has with Stoke Bishop Primary School. The school has a Church of England foundation and is an Academy Trust. The school governors include a number of church members, each of whom is a 'Foundation Governor' approved by St Mary's PCC: Rachel Powlesland, Beverly Richardson, Sam Hands and Mat Ineson (Vice Chair). The Co-Chair of Governors is Paul Wake, who is a parent governor, attends St Mary's and was an active part of the Mini Church Team through 2016.

Alongside this involvement in governance Mat, Leone, Simon and James all take weekly assemblies at Stoke Bishop on Thursdays and Anni Davey and her team are involved in weekly assemblies on Tuesdays. In addition Rachel is involved in the regular prayer spaces and is very well known by staff and pupils of the school.

During 2016 St Mary's hosted and co-led two school services at St Mary's, at Easter and Christmas, and co-led two services in the school, at Harvest and the leavers' end of year service. Please do pray for those who work and study at Stoke Bishop Primary -- give thanks for them and the Christian Foundation of the school, and pray for the school's continuing flourishing and well being.

~ **Mat Ineson**

Growing Disciples

Report from the Growing Disciples Coordinator

2016 has been a year in which we have tried to encourage people at St Mary's towards *whole life discipleship*, in order to strengthen, develop and deepen our faith, and in turn grow as followers of Jesus. This has been about us trying to follow Jesus all of the time – and not just on Sundays. It's about how we *live* our lives and about intentionally seeking ways to *grow* in our faith. We're all different, we're gifted differently and our personalities and characters are different; we are all also at different stages in our relationships with Jesus, so the way we each engage also looks very different. The challenge has been encouraging everyone to be *willing* to engage and participate.

Activities specific to 2016 have included updating information for our new website; encouraging Small Group leaders to attend training hubs led by the

London Institute of Contemporary Christianity; carrying out a questionnaire-based survey to help find out how we can best support people to grow as followers of Jesus; encouraging more people to join a Small Group, Prayer Cell or St Mary's Link; promoting New Wine across the Mission Area with a view to a group of us going together in 2017; holding regular Small Group leaders' meetings to help bring clarity to the purpose of Small Groups and support the leaders in their roles, and initiating a programme of Impact Events to provide opportunities for further learning.

We are thankful for David Baker, who has continued to act as key liaison for communication between Small Groups, and for Sam Carrier, who has taken on the new role of planning Impact Events. This resulted in St Mary's hosting Philippa Hanna, an international gospel singer-songwriter with a powerful testimony about our identity in God. The concert was fairly well supported but overall ran at a loss. Lessons were learned for the planning of future events.

The year ended with plans afoot to establish a designated noticeboard for Discipleship matters, for a new discipleship course entitled 'Freedom in Christ', and for the carrying out of an online external survey to gather data about our attitudes towards discipleship and the extent to which we participate as followers of Jesus. There is also the intention to establish further Small Groups as people step forward to lead or participate in these activities.

~ Jo Morris

GAMMA Report

This informal gathering has continued to meet fortnightly during term times on Thursday mornings at 10.30 am at the back of the church. We are a welcoming and caring group who meet to share around God's word after a social time with tea or coffee and cake, and with our meetings concluding in time for the Thursday lunch. During 2016 our studies centred on the person of Jesus, good reasons for hope found in Peter's first letter, and on Tom Wright's study guide to John's gospel. The studies are led by myself, Peter or one of the other ministers but with the group contributing as much input as they wish. Most of the regulars are of retirement age though we would welcome anyone who can meet at this time. Usually we are some 12 to 15 including the leaders and hosts, and we seek to keep in touch with former members who have had to move into care.

~ Jenny Robottom

Traidcraft Report

We have continued to sell Traidcraft products at our monthly stall in the Church Rooms. As a Fairtrade church we have continued to supply the tea, instant coffee and sugar for use at church events. Our Christmas sales were comparable to those of 2015. We are grateful to those who support this important contribution to help small producers in developing countries to be self-sufficient.

~ **Pauline and Albert Pearson**

Making Disciples

Report from the Making Disciples Coordinator

The Making Disciples team seeks to pray about and plan activities within the life of the church and the wider community which enable clear 'pathways to faith' for those seeking to explore, encounter and follow Jesus more closely. As we do this, two passages of scripture have been significant and continue to sum up the task in which we're engaged.

- Firstly, we feel the Great Commission, from Matthew 28:16-20, gives us a clear mandate for intentional disciple-making, which we define as seeking out, accompanying and encouraging people on their journey to a commitment of faith expressed, for example, through baptism.
- Secondly, I Corinthians 3:6 reminds us that, although we are called to this work of planting and watering, ultimately it is only God who gives growth and we need to keep mindful of the fact that we are aiding His work, which, in many cases, is already underway.

There is a helpful tension between these two passages, which demands discernment and helps influence where and how we prioritise energy and resources.

In the light of this, we have focused our efforts in three ways: seeking to *witness* to Christ in the community, to *walk* with those who are seeking Him, and to proclaim His *Word*.

Under the heading of *witness*, our aim is to stage at least one major evangelistic event in the community each year. In 2016, this took the form of

a community picnic to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday – a great social event which attracted many and included an act of worship with hymns and prayers focusing on the Queen's example of faith. We have also taken the opportunity to be more intentional about our witness at events such as the Winter Warmer – where we hosted an Alpha stall and gave out free Christian magazines produced by the evangelistic charity HOPE – and we expanded our community carol singing by having a presence at the Stoke Lane Traders' Christmas event in addition to our usual presence on Stoke Hill. Both events generated a number of opportunities for conversation, and we were able to distribute details of Christmas services. As in previous years, a church Christmas card was produced and church members were encouraged to distribute it to friends and neighbours with a personal message of their own.

We have tried to *walk* more closely with the many families who bring their children for baptism at St Mary's, and a team is emerging to review our approach to this important ministry both before the service and, importantly, by way of follow-up and opportunities to engage families in the ongoing life of the church. A particularly significant early example of this has been the decision to move our Christingle service from December to February (Candlemas) and to issue personal invitations to the families and godparents of every child baptised during 2016, resulting in a great turnout from that target group and feedback even from those who were unable to be there as to how touched they were to be invited in this way. We are excited to see how this work develops.

Alpha now forms the culmination (as opposed to the beginning) of our disciple-making work and is where we more explicitly teach and proclaim the truths of the Christian faith as revealed in God's *Word*. We held a short, introductory, daytime 'mini' Alpha course, attended by eight people, in June/July 2016, and moved the main course to February (rather than September), thereby enabling a longer and more effective period of promotion, including the various Christmas events and a targeted 'Season of Invitation' in the autumn, during which members of St Mary's were encouraged and equipped to embrace a culture of invitation across the life of the church.

~ James Harris

Mission Partner Report

I am constantly both encouraged and challenged by our commitment to our mission partners. I am encouraged by our on-going financial sacrifice: in 2016 we made grants of £21,500 to our mission partners, and a further £2,180 to other good causes from the mission fund. I am encouraged by our faithfulness in prayer, as Sunday by Sunday we are intentional in remembering of mission partners as part of our intercessions. I am encouraged by the welcome and concern we express when the opportunity presents itself, such as to Sthuti during her visit in the summer, and to our new mission partner, Malcolm Pritchard, just after the year end. And I am encouraged by the active involvement of so many church members in some of our local partners: the Crisis Centre, Sisters of the Church, OAC and Bristol International Students Centre. I am also aware of many faithful St Mary's folk who support sacrificially friends and organisations not represented in the inevitably restricted list of official mission partners.

In Philippians 4 Paul commends the church at Philippi for "sharing in his troubles". It is clear that the church's support was deeper than simply a financial one, although it was that too; and this New Testament model is one we should aspire to and measure ourselves against. Our mission is amplified and our reach extended as we share in the work of our partners in the UK and around the world.

And yet, like my school reports of old, there is always a sense of "could do better". This is not necessarily an observation of our giving financially; but I am challenged personally as to whether our expression of corporate commitment to our partners is reflected appropriately in my own prayer life. I suspect I am not alone in feeling an inadequacy here.

Looking ahead, I believe the way we express our support for our mission partners needs to develop beyond its current model. There is a growing trend for organisations to seek formal covenants with their supporters. Such covenants will typically set out what our commitment to our partners ought to look like. Whether or not we choose to enter into such arrangements, they often highlight a gap between what our partners need and value and what we are able to provide – even where we regard the relationship as close.

I believe we are at capacity in terms of the number of organisations and individuals we can realistically support, and even now are in danger of diluting

our support too thinly. We need to prioritise, and this will involve acknowledging that ties to some partners are necessarily looser than others – an expression of solidarity with the wider Church rather than an ability to provide more intensive financial and prayer support. Over time I believe it would be sensible to give greater geographical focus to our support for overseas partners, which would complement our natural ties to various Bristol-based partners. This is beginning to emerge, with Joseph Bilal in South Sudan and our adoption of Malcolm Pritchard in Uganda, as well as the work of OAC Uganda. This also fits in with our Diocesan links.

I would like to see our prayer support become more ingrained in our daily church life. A number of small groups are faithful in their support for particular partners but there is scope to extend this. I would encourage all our small groups to ‘adopt’ a mission partner and to be proactive in writing letters, emails, and sending encouragement. I would also like to see our financial support move from a separate mission fund and grants being made ‘as funds allow’ to regular monthly distributions from our general fund. I believe this is a model that reflects better the corporate nature of our commitment and the doctrinal underpinning of our mission.

~ Mike Stewart

The Messenger Report

We continue to publish *The Messenger* quarterly and distribute to more than 3,000 homes. *The Messenger* has fluctuated between 20 and 24 pages this past year, depending on the amount of advertising. Our prime aim is to make it easier for folk to receive the good news about Jesus Christ by: breaking down resistances to traditional (and erroneous?) ideas about church and the Christian faith in our choice of language and articles; breaking down barriers in service to our community; building bridges between the church and the community. We also aim to speak to the St Mary’s church community.

We are indebted to Gillian Baxter’s industry and giftedness in actually putting the articles together into magazine form. We are also indebted to Felicity Pine and Jim Currie on the advertising front, to a good, prayerful and creative editorial team, who try to ensure the delicate balance of community/spiritual articles; to assiduous proof readers; to packers under the leadership of Pete Sargent and to those ‘on the beat’ who carry bundles of *The Messenger* and distribute them. We have much positive feedback, which keeps us feeling that this is a worthwhile enterprise.

~ Hazel Trapnell

Winter Warmer 2016 Report

Our annual Christmas fundraiser, the Winter Warmer, was held, as usual, in late November. We had donkeys in the churchyard again as these have been such a welcoming attraction. This year we saw many more members of the community come to visit us than before. The formula of having crafts and produce stalls in the church, with games and refreshments in the church rooms, is successful. As usual the lunches produced by Lynne and Caroline were very popular. An income in excess of £3,000 is taken during the day, with our policy of encouraging stalls from small craft businesses and charities and with church run stalls designating funds to Mission Partners; approximately £1,000 was then given to the Church Development Fund, which can be used for special projects.

Over the last two years there has been a greater intention to use this event to allow visitors to be given information about our daily church life, with the chapel set aside for prayer with various themed activities and many opportunities in engaging visitors in conversations. This year, there was a stall giving information about Alpha and the chapel with prayer activities received more visitors.

The Winter Warmer provides an opportunity for us to open our doors and attracts the community but it can only thrive with volunteer help. This year, there was a significant reduction in help from church members. Please put the date, 18 November, in your diary and offer your help for 2017.

~ Yvonne Penn

Pastoral Care

Report from the Pastoral Care Coordinator

We recognise that many people in the congregation are involved in providing pastoral care for friends and families but some people need a little more help. Small groups are particularly significant in caring for their members. In addition the pastoral care group has 12 members who have had some training in providing additional support where it is needed. The clergy and lay ministers are also available when needed. Do let us know if there are people who need more support. It is too easy for people to fall through the net. Communion is taken regularly into each of our residential and nursing homes and to people who are housebound.

We are grateful to everyone who has helped to support other people, and to members of the team who have organised flowers for Mothering Sunday and distributed harvest flowers and produce, and have organised tea before the annual service for those who have been bereaved during the year.

We have offered support to those who have been bereaved (36 funerals in 2016; 14 as of 31 March in 2017). A monthly group has been set up for those who have been bereaved, which provides a welcome opportunity to share what bereavement is like, what has been helpful and what definitely hasn't, and to make new friends.

During the year we have produced a handbook which explains what pastoral care is, gives advice about good practice, includes the church's policy on vulnerable adults and incorporates lots of useful contact numbers in the church and elsewhere. Ask me if you would like to see it.

We have experimented with various activities on afternoons after the Thursday lunch but need more ideas and help with transport. Volunteers would be welcome.

Wendy Hughes is trained to run parenting courses and ran one for the parents at Stoke Bishop Primary School and also at Lockleaze. Another has run parallel to Bright Sparks in 2017.

We have also co-ordinated with the prayer team to produce a form for those who request prayer, making sure that pastoral care needs are also identified. These forms are available at the back of the church.

~ Jennifer Hall

Thursday Lunch Report

A two or three course lunch is provided from 12.15 every Thursday during term time for anyone who would like to come, whatever their age. We are a team of eight enthusiastic ladies (with a bit of help from Peter Serjeant) led by Jan Serjeant and latterly by Lynda Bryan-Brown. Our £4.00 meal has become particularly popular during the last year when we started to offer a hot main course and cold dessert one week and soup, salads and a hot dessert the next.

We always welcome new diners and new ideas for menus. Tell your friends!

~Jan Serjeant and the team

Tuesday Coffee Morning Report

Tuesday Coffee, which runs from 10.00am to 12noon each Tuesday, was set up by Yvonne to provide a mid-week time of shared fellowship when people could also enjoy a cup of coffee and cake. From the beginning she created a warm, sincere atmosphere where all are welcome and which we aim to continue. Memories, current issues and personal concerns are some of the topics discussed in a light-hearted friendly manner. Pop in and join us at the back of the church as a regular or whenever you are able, and you will be assured of a warm welcome.

~ Pat Marval

Hospitality Lunches and Rota Report

Many loyal hosts have been signing up to the rota and offering Sunday Lunch to members of St Mary's and Newcomers for the past 12 years. Sometimes two people are welcomed at the table, at other times up to 18! Feedback has always been positive from hosts and guests, who enjoy real welcome and fellowship. However, the formal rota is unfortunately no longer running, as few volunteers have signed up over the past nine months. It is perhaps time to think of other ways to welcome our newcomers in particular.

~ Beverly Richardson

Resources

Report from the Church Manager

The church office is a very hectic place. There are so many things that happen on a daily basis that keep us busy. Sometimes it is hard to keep up with all that needs to be done in the course of any given day. Remembering the importance of this ministry in the life of the church and the community helps to keep us going as we strive to serve Jesus through the administration and operations of St Mary's.

Office staffing

- At the end of July we said goodbye to Yvonne after her many years of serving St Mary's as an administrator in the office. I miss her knowledge and her willingness and ability to be involved in so many church ministries. I am thankful for the countless hours that she spent going above and beyond what her role description required.
- In September we welcomed Carrie Patterson as Administrative Assistant to St Mary's and to the Area Dean. She has brought efficiency, kindness and a positivity to the office and I am so thankful for her.
- Lucy has continued on as our cleaner. She is a diligent worker and a thoughtful steward of the church. Again, I am so thankful for her.
- The office volunteer ministry changed somewhat in 2016. Helen Brady, Stephanie Wren, Pat Marval, Liz Tomlinson and Gina Tsoncheva have continued on in this important ministry. While Jenny Robottom, Judy Pullen and Gillian Baxter have come in more regularly, Dee Shurrock and Julia Parker both stepped down after serving for many years. I want to thank each of you for your commitment and your willingness to serve. I am grateful for the time and energy that these women have given St Mary's in this way. *(We are always looking for more people that are able to be a part of this team. Please let me know if you would be able to spare a few hours weekly, fortnightly, monthly or even just once. We can always find things that need to be done!)*

Contracts

Part of my role is to ensure good stewardship of our finances. In 2016 we started new contracts for our photocopier, gas, power, insurance and telecoms. I am happy to report that each of these contracts is more cost effective than the one we had previously.

Communications

There are many aspects of communications that we have and continue to work on.

- In 2016 we launched our new *website*. Unfortunately it is still not fully functioning as we had hoped it would be and we are looking for someone who would be able to help us get it running as it should be. Perhaps this is something you could do?
- We have a St Mary's *Facebook* page and *Twitter* account. We hope that these will develop and become better utilised in 2017.
- Despite our best intentions, a new *welcome pack* never materialised in 2016. I'm excited that it is currently being worked on and should be ready by the summer.

Systems

In 2017 I plan to spend more dedicated time looking at our systems and ensuring best practice is implemented and followed in all areas of the church. Things that I hope to work on this year include: re-writing our hiring policies and practices for outside groups; encouraging the writing and adoption of clearly defined ministry descriptions for each ministry in the church; getting our new database and rota system running; getting our online diary and website fully functioning; setting up human resourcing systems to track holiday and sick days for staff and to ensure we have appropriate guidelines; getting financial policies and systems fully integrated.

~ Angie Coutts

Personnel Report

During 2016 we said a sad farewell to Yvonne Penn, who had tirelessly served St Mary's in both her paid administration and IT role, and through other voluntary roles. Yvonne left for an exciting new job as a public engagement officer for the Sailors' Society. We also said goodbye to our Youth and Children's Leader, Emma Dobson, who moved back to South Wales with John, Susanna and Laurie.

We said hello and welcome to Simon Russell, who joined us as Youth and Children's lead from Winchester with his wife, Hannah, and young son, Judah. In September we welcomed Carrie Patterson as our new Administrative Assistant to work for Angie in the office. Carrie also works for Mat as Deanery Administrator. Finally, in November Rachel Powlesland joined the staff team as part-time Children's Minister, working for Simon.

Our paid staff now number seven in total: Simon (Youth & Children), Rachel (Children), Leone (Youth & Children), Angie (Church Manager), Carrie (Administrator), Joanna (Musical Worship) and Lucy (Cleaner & Minor Maintenance), all of whom work alongside valued volunteers to serve the ministry of St Mary's. Do pray for and encourage them when you see them.

~ Mat Ineson

Fabric Report

Relatively little by way of significant works was necessary to the fabric of the church or church rooms during 2016, though consultations and investigations continued into ways we might modernise and enhance the church rooms complex, including addressing the difficult accessibility for those with disabilities or children in buggies from either the road or the church. By the time of the APCM we may be in a position to display plans and indicate the sums of money that would be required to achieve solutions to the currently perceived problems and deficiencies.

Apart from routine maintenance and rectification of defects when they arose, the works that were undertaken included the installation of a second matching handrail to assist access onto the dais near the lectern. We were very grateful for a generous donation that covered the great majority of the cost and to our inspecting architect for devising a means of affixing the handrail without risking damage to the underfloor heating while still being able to obtain clearance for the works under an Archdeacon's Certificate. New floor coverings were also fitted at 1 Laud Close.

Otherwise works were primarily to upgrade emergency lighting systems, internally and externally; rectify external intruder lighting; install dimmable lighting in the Evans Room, and install additional sockets adjoining the servery at the back of the church. These works were undertaken by PRW at a total cost of £2937.95. Some further electrical work is required and may have been undertaken prior to the APCM.

You will have noticed the removal of the wooden crosses from the roof of the Lychgate. These were badly rotted. Richard Elderton has kindly undertaken to carve and install replacement oak crosses matching the originals. This work has been authorised by the archdeacon. You will have seen Richard's skill in the beautifully carved wooden cross he has made so that a cross can always be on display in church when the silver cross is locked away during the week.

This brings me to my thanks generally to those who have assisted either practically or in exploring possibilities for enhancing the halls. On the practical side, I would particularly like to thank Richard Elderton, who has undertaken many works of a nature that would previously have been contracted for; also Mike Chant and Jason Parker, and, in relation to care of the churchyard, David Swithinbank and Shan Stock. Ruth Marson, after caring for the roses for many years, now feels that it is right to hand on this task. We owe Ruth a particular debt of gratitude for improving the condition of the roses significantly over this period. As for preparatory work for enhancing the church rooms, Chris Thomas has been tireless in his evaluation of many alternatives as we strive for cost-effective solutions.

While I would have liked to have ended simply on this note of thanks, I am afraid that I must add a note of disappointment. For the last two years at APCMs I have light-heartedly sought to encourage everyone to leave the church and church rooms in a neat and tidy state, as this does not happen by magic! I am afraid that I have seen very little evidence that everyone recognises their responsibility in keeping our premises in a manner that brings honour to the God whom we serve. Please do replace books neatly in book boxes (spine outwards), take away Church News, remove rubbish or out-of-date literature, consider the layout required for the next use of the church, and stack chairs in the church rooms clear of radiators and curtains etc. Such tasks should not be left just to a few.

~ **Peter Robottom**

PCC Report

In 2016 the Parochial church council (PCC) consisted of 12 elected members (to include the treasurer), one co-opted member (the secretary), two wardens, two diocesan synod representatives, four deanery representatives, five members of the clergy (including the vicar in the role of chairman) and two lay ministers, making a total of 25 members (as three people had two roles on the committee). The youth leader and music leader were also invited to attend. There were six meetings held at the back of the church, on the second Wednesday of every alternate month starting in January. There was also one away-day at the Tithe Barn in Shirehampton on the 8th of October. Members of the PCC attended a 'PCC tonight' event on the 9th of June, held by 'CPAS' at St Mary's.

During the year 13 people were accepted onto the electoral roll and 11 letters of correspondence were dealt with. At each meeting reports were received and discussed from the leadership team, on the accounts, on the fabric of the church, on mission, on youth activities and on health and safety.

Under a heading entitled 'Vision and strategy', various topics were discussed:

- How the PCC operated and could improve communications – as a result the vicar has been sending a summary of meetings to house group leaders.
- Evangelism – making Jesus known. Many ideas are being processed.
- Whether the weekend at home worked well – generally this was positive and was proposed as an alternate year event.
- Reflection on the 'PCC tonight event' and on improvements that could be made by the PCC – in summary, with minor improvements, St Mary's PCC appeared to be functioning at an efficient level.
- A response to the diocesan paper 'Creating Connections', where the vicar and PCC responded to questions on how our church helps our parish to connect with God, connects with the parish, and is making disciples and growing leaders.
- At the PCC away-day, with Emma Ineson acting as the facilitator, the PCC looked at the values and culture of St Mary's – much of this will be used in forthcoming months.

Major proposals passed by the PCC during the year that are not covered elsewhere in the Report include the following:

- To finance a block of toilets for a school in India and a single toilet in Uganda.
- To become the 'Resource Church' for the new pilot 'Mission Area' as part of the Diocese 'Creating Connections' strategy.
- To increase the number and hours of the youth team.
- To employ an Administrative Assistant to work with the Church Manager.
- Discussion of the BCP Morning Prayer service, following a congregation questionnaire. The PCC decided to keep the current service pattern and monitor attendance compared to those of Common Worship services.
- A new safeguarding policy.
- Following a visit from Bishop Mike and John Risdon from the Simeon Trustees, the PCC agreed we were content for the Bishop to offer to relinquish his patronage and appoint the Simeon Trustees to be our patron.

~ Wendy Hughes

Electoral Roll Report

On 1 January 2016 the total number of people on the electoral roll was 304.

Between 1 Jan 2016 and 31 December 2016 there were 13 members who joined the electoral roll; 8 members who moved away; and 8 members who passed away.

The total number of members on 31 December 2016 were 294.

~ **Jenny Baker**

Stewardship Report

Once again our main focus for stewardship took place in the autumn. We continued to face the challenge of meeting our parish commitments while at the same time providing support to the diocese through Parish Share. Indeed, this year we agreed to increase our salaries' overhead by investing in a new post of Children and Families Worker.

Our *Week of Thanksgiving* ran from Sunday 20th to Sunday 27th November 2016. As in previous years, all members of the Church Electoral Roll and other regular church members, including several families new to the church, were invited to complete a Stewardship Commitment Card. This gave individuals an opportunity to increase their giving for 2016 as well as to review their prospective planned giving for 2017. In a continued attempt to reduce reliance on the giving during this *Week of Stewardship* to meet our annual budget, there was, once again, a particular emphasis on encouraging people to begin a new programme of planned giving (if they were not already giving in a planned way) or to increase their giving for 2017. Teaching on Stewardship took place in the main morning services on both Sundays.

The number of people who felt able to respond this year was similar to previous years, and the financial outcome of the week was in line with what had been forecast. The increase in pledges was encouraging, and a number of new people joined the planned giving scheme for the first time.

During the year it became clear that the diocese intended to change the way it was dealing with Parish Share and that the total amount required across the diocese is going to increase in the coming years. Meanwhile the diocese has also appointed a new Giving and Resources Adviser.

~ **Tony Hughes**

Financial Report

St Mary Magdalene Stoke Bishop

Financial report

	2015 Actual £	2016 Actual £	2016 Budget £	2017 Budget £
INCOME				
Monthly standing orders	186,313	205,355	193,125	212,400
Envelopes	15,162	14,315	15,000	15,000
Cash collections	13,422	11,283	17,052	10,800
Sundry donations	19,221	13,285	9,450	10,698
Church rooms	18,345	12,322	19,500	10,200
Rent received	9,600	5,800	9,600	10,200
Other income	4,969	6,100	2,640	2,640
	<u>267,032</u>	<u>268,460</u>	<u>266,367</u>	<u>271,938</u>
EXPENDITURE				
Parish share	132,000	138,600	138,600	145,000
Insurance	4,032	3,913	4,008	4,008
Repairs and maintenance	15,245	12,238	12,000	12,000
Electricity and gas	10,214	9,230	10,430	9,180
Salaries				
Church office	27,165	26,383	28,984	28,976
Cleaner	5,199	5,408	5,400	5,576
Organist	6,372	4,145	3,600	3,600
Music director	3,667	11,000	11,184	11,360
Youth ministry	30,767	16,045	22,826	37,500
Telephone, stationery and postage	8,662	11,854	8,160	7,560
Youth ministry expenses	5,191	10,666	12,384	12,000
Other expenses	25,429	18,295	22,906	28,596
	<u>273,943</u>	<u>267,777</u>	<u>280,482</u>	<u>305,356</u>
Deficit for the year	(6,911)	683	(14,115)	(33,418)
Gift day income	15,704	21,848		
Surplus for the year after gift day	<u>8,793</u>	<u>22,531</u>	<u>(14,115)</u>	<u>(33,418)</u>

The full accounts as required by The Charity Commission are contained in a separate report this year. The above is a summary of the income and expenditure of the church for the year.

The figures presented include the actual results for 2015 and 2016 and the budget for 2016 and 2017. This allows for comparison with what we planned and what we have achieved.

Income

The total income for the year was higher than that budgeted. It was very encouraging to see that committed giving rose by 10%.

Two figures that were significantly lower than expected. Income from the hire of the church and the church rooms was lower because there were not the same number of functions during the year and there were fewer day-time bookings because a replacement for the morning playgroup, which ceased in 2015, was not found. There was also a fall in the rent received in the year. This rent, which is the amount we receive from St Laud Close, was lower because Emma and John left in the spring and the house was empty for five months. We did try to let the house but as it was unfurnished and not available for very long it was not possible to find a tenant.

Expenditure

The overall expenditure for the year was lower than the previous year and lower than we budgeted. The main reason for this is that the departure of Emma meant we did not have a youth worker in post for five months and also a significant proportion of Emma's salary was maternity pay, which was paid by the government.

Reserves

There are items that are not included in the above figures:

The mission giving for the year was £23,684 (2015, £23,746).

We received a legacy of £5,000 which has been allocated to the Development Fund. This is money we have set aside for the redevelopment of the church rooms. The current balance of this fund is £38,750.

We have set aside £6,000 to the building fund. This fund now has a balance of £82,636 and will be called upon should there be any significant repairs after the next quinquennial review.

Budget

We have set ourselves a challenging budget for 2017. It is a sign of our trust in God that we have not taken the safe choices. We have increased our parish share by nearly 5%. This is not an overhead but our commitment to growing the Church in Bristol. We also appointed a part-time children's worker.

We will need to meet this increased expenditure by each of us looking at our role and our commitment to St Mary's in terms of our giving and by encouraging others to come to and join.

~ **Caroline Owen**

Safeguarding Report

At the beginning of the year the Safeguarding team comprised Lucy Swithinbank, Parish Safeguarding Officer for Children; Barbie Whitby-Smith, Deputy Parish Safeguarding Officer for Children, and myself as Parish Safeguarding Officer for Vulnerable Adults.

Following Lucy Swithinbank's decision to step down from her position, I took over responsibility for safeguarding children with effect from 1 September 2016 and am now, therefore, our Parish Safeguarding Officer for both children and vulnerable adults. Lucy has kindly agreed to stay on as Deputy Parish Safeguarding Officer, and Barbie continues her role also.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Lucy Swithinbank for the enormous amount of work she did in establishing the safeguarding policy for children and for setting up procedures for safe recruitment of volunteers. I am also grateful that she has stayed on as a deputy and that we have not lost her years of experience. With Barbie continuing her role as Deputy Safeguarding Officer we have a strong team.

During the year, on behalf of the PCC, Steve Fairbairn reviewed our Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People and was satisfied with its content. To test that the policy was being adequately implemented, he went around the various children's groups one Sunday unannounced to check the ratios of adults to children, to see that proper records of attendance were kept, and to confirm that leaders were aware of the location of the first aid kit. He also checked that the church office was aware of first aid kit locations and the need for a child safeguarding policy. He examined the church insurance policy and established that the relevant sections covering the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults had been duly completed. He concluded that we have a sensible child safeguarding policy in place and that it is being implemented in a competent manner by the various leaders of children's groups within the church. I am very grateful to Steve for his painstaking efforts in this review.

Simon Russell was appointed as the new Children and Youth Ministry lead in September 2016, and Rachel Powlesland was appointed as our Children and Families worker in November 2016. I met with both leaders in January 2017 to discuss safeguarding issues and recruitment procedures and found that they both take safeguarding very seriously and work hard to ensure the safety of all the children in their care.

In December 2016 we completed the annual 'self audit' for the diocese and were pleased that we are compliant in virtually all of the areas reviewed. The main area that needs to be addressed is that of safeguarding training for newly appointed leaders and volunteers; and we are awaiting notification from the diocese of the next available training dates.

With regard to safeguarding vulnerable adults, the Pastoral Care team has produced a handbook outlining best practice when providing pastoral care to adults who may be vulnerable. The handbook is a valuable reference for all those involved in pastoral care and includes a copy of our safeguarding policy. This demonstrates that the Pastoral Care team members are fully aware of their responsibilities and that they take safeguarding very seriously.

On a more general note, I would like to reiterate that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone; not just the PCC and me. We have a thriving weekly children's ministry and our holiday club is attended by over 70 children each year. It is the responsibility of all of us to:

- *Be aware.* Our safeguarding policies are displayed on the safeguarding notice board.
- *Respect boundaries* where children's groups are taking place – *DON'T WANDER* into or through areas where children's activities are taking place!
- *Express any concerns* you may have about the safety of children or vulnerable adults to me in complete confidence.

Together we can make St Mary's a safe and welcoming place for all.

~ Stephanie Wren

Mission Area Report

During 2016 St Mary's was invited by the Bishop of Bristol to become a Resource Church for a scheme to be known as a *Mission Area*. Our own Mission Area is one of three pilot areas across the diocese, covering three different contexts: urban/suburban, rural and new estates. The objective of these mission areas is to test whether informally grouping churches together and investing in them can kick start and accelerate growth in making disciples, growing leaders and engaging younger generations through the spreading of good practice and sharing of resources. The pilot will initially last for five years and involves sharing what works and what doesn't across the diocese, with a view to enabling other mission areas to be formed.

The Mission Area we are a part of includes St Edyth's Sea Mills, St Andrew's Avonmouth, St Peter's Lawrence Weston, and St Mary Shirehampton.

What is a Resource Church? Across the country the Church of England is investing in Resource Churches that are making disciples, growing leaders and sharing their resources of finance and gifting to renew mission within and outside their parishes. Here in Bristol the investment will begin in 2017 in the form of a new post of Associate Minister based at St Mary's, with the appointed person working with Mat and others across the Mission Area; increased involvement in the training of new ministers across the Mission Area, including ordinands in partnership with Trinity College; and the provision of support for the leadership teams in the Mission Area via an external consultant and appropriate training for both them and their congregations.

In order to fund the three pilot areas, the diocese put together a bid to the Church of England Commissioners' *Strategic Development Fund*. This bid was successful and the money will be released in 2017. Part of that bid was about expected outcomes of the investment in the Mission Area, including predictions of church growth of around 5% a year for St Mary's Stoke Bishop.

In preparation for the formal launch of this Mission Area in June 2017 we have been meeting together as vicars and churches, in the latter case through three prayer meetings during this year, where we have prayed together and got to know one another. I have been tasked with leading this Mission Area.

Do please pray for the development of the Mission Area and our part in it. It promises to be both exciting and very challenging.

~ Mat Ineson

Deanery Report

Bristol West Deanery Synod met three times in 2016 in different churches within our area. Alongside normal agenda items we had presentations from Bristol Street Pastors, Care for the Family, and Diocesan Strategic items on *Creating Connections and Engaging Younger Generations*. The Deanery also held an extra meeting with CPAS, here at St Mary's, exploring how to improve PCCs. We were also invited to a seminar about Parish Share and the ideas: take responsibility; be generous; have faith.

Seven visitors from Uganda came to the Deanery for a fortnight in October and it is planned to take a group to Uganda in the summer.

There have been various changes within the Deanery, with Mark Pilgrim handing over the mantle of Area Dean to Mat Ineson in June. Helen Johnson became Priest-in-Charge of St Mary's Shirehampton and David Izzard moved to Radstock. Rev Roly Bain, Associate Minister at Olveston, died in August. Avonside Mission Area, of which we are part, was formulated with greater development over the coming year. A new Deanery Leadership team is due to be formed during 2017, and Holy Trinity Westbury will be inviting us to join in their celebration of 1300 years.

~ Yvonne Penn

Diocesan Report

We are part of the Diocese of Bristol. Whilst you may be aware of Diocesan Bishop Mike, Suffragan Bishop Lee (Swindon), and Archdeacon Christine, you may not be aware of the diocese staff who support us as a parish. This support includes stipend (salary) and housing for Mat; training and support for all seven of our clergy and lay ministers; safeguarding training support for our children's and adult activities; buildings advice, and many other areas.

We contribute financially to the diocese through paying Parish Share; and our ministers serve across the diocese in various capacities, including Area Dean, Bishop's Council, Finance Committee, Board of Education, Diocese and Deanery Synod, and the taking of services in parishes in vacancy.

During the past year, under the oversight of the Bishop's and Diocese Synod, the diocese has reviewed and renewed two key aspects of its life: The first is that the parish share system has been renewed. Each parish in the diocese has been asked to review what it offers in parish share in light of three

principles: take responsibility; have faith; and be generous. This review was the result of declining parish share receipts, which meant that diocesan expenditure was exceeding its income by around £0.5 million. For its part the diocese has reduced its central costs and is seeking to maximize its grant and investment income.

St Mary's was asked to consider increasing its share, and the PCC agreed to do that. Our share pledge for 2017 is £145,000 (2016, £139,000). As a church in 2016 we received around £68,000 of financial support; this included Mat's costs (including stipend, pension and housing), our contribution to the training budget for curates and ordinands, and our portion of central support costs. We therefore contributed around £70,000 in 2016 to support ministry elsewhere in the diocese. Share requests as a whole will continue to increase in the coming five years in response to a need to train 50% more priests and continue to balance the books.

The second major aspect of review and renewal was the Diocese Strategy. This strategy is being driven by the recognition that we need to pray for, work for and seek growth. We are being encouraged to review our ministry under the banner of 'Creating Connections with God, with one another and with our communities'. Diocese Synod has agreed three priorities for mission and growth. These are: engaging younger generations; making disciples, and growing leaders. To be clear, this is not the diocese telling us what to do but rather asking us to review and renew our ministry in these areas. Further information can be found on the diocese website.

Looking forward into 2017, a major presenting issue is that in September Bishop Mike will retire. His leaving service will be at the Cathedral on Saturday, 23rd September at 3.30 pm Bishop Mike has made an enormous difference to the diocese and will be greatly missed. Towards the end of the year the somewhat involved process for finding a new bishop will begin. It is likely that a new bishop will be announced between Easter and summer 2018.

If you would like to know more about the diocese please do speak to Yvonne Penn (Diocese Synod) or Peter Robottom (Diocese Synod, Board of Education, Bishop's Council, Diocese Finance Committee, Vacancy in See Committee) or Mat Ineson (Area Dean, Diocese Synod, Bishop's Council, Diocese Finance Committee, Vacancy in See Committee).

~ Mat Ineson