

## **ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 18/4/2018**

### **Report on Children's Work**

#### **MIDWEEK CLUB**

The Midweek Club meets during school term time on Wednesday evenings between 6pm and 7pm. Most sessions are held in the Vicarage and we are grateful to Vicar David and Lesley for allowing us to meet there.

Eight children hardly ever miss and two or three others attend when other activities allow..

The Club is led by Debbie Groom and myself, with Millie Groom regularly assisting. Both Debbie and Millie do a tremendous job and our thanks go to them. Alan Goodall, Natalie Meara, Margaret Garman and Lisa Jones also contribute, as required, and we thank them too.

In February of this year we celebrated the second anniversary of the formation of the current Midweek Club.

Over the year we have enjoyed various craft exercises, games, word searches, and refreshments with biscuits. The children love biscuits!

Teaching relevant to modern living has been delivered, mostly biblically-based, using gentle (yet effective) methods along with plenty of good humour and interaction.

When possible we spend time outside on such activities as playing games, a nature walk, and chips & games at the Recreation Field.

Just before Christmas, as in the previous year, we spent an hour or so singing carols around the village; something the children suggested and were eager to do.

We also performed our Nativity Play in Church and took part in other First Sunday Family Services; all very well received by the congregation.

At this meeting last year we stated our desire to do even more in terms of visibility and help in the community. To this end we held a Coffee Morning which was well supported and raised over £100 for the Church Building Fund. The children made and served some of the refreshments as well as demonstrating their craft skills. We plan a similar event this year, a litter-pick, a picnic and attendance of The Big Church Day Out which is to be held at Capesthorne Hall in early June.

So, a busy year with lots of ideas for the future, including occasional (perhaps monthly) special events aimed at the older children. But, please, we welcome your ideas and any help you can possibly give.

Philip Goodall

April 2018

REPORT FROM THE PROJECT GROUP TO ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING  
18th April 2018

It has been very frustrating trying to get agreement from the DAC for our project. We started preliminary work 7 years ago, our actual application started 5 years ago and we are still waiting for the granting of a faculty so that we can apply for grants. It is disappointing that David will be leaving before the process is completed and I would like to thank him for his help and advice during his time here. We have met 6 times during the year plus 2 meetings with our architect. Two of us have also attended courses at Church House concerning grant applications and there was a meeting with a representative of Tarporley Baptist church who have completed a similar exercise. Thank you to all the members of the sub-committee for their work and support.

The DAC have put 2 reservations on their approval concerning the heating and lighting. Although approval was given for the underfloor heating system 3 years ago subsequently objections were raised a year ago after we had applied for a faculty. They did not approve of the lighting suggested but new lights are coming on the market which may be acceptable. We are confident that these issues will be resolved satisfactorily. Our architect Robin Wolley who is very experienced in the adaptation of listed church buildings and sits on the Liverpool DAC has been very patient answering all the queries.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the money raised thus far. Our scheme is one that is difficult to break down into stages because the bulk of the cost concerns the floor, heating, kitchen and toilets but if we do not raise sufficient funding we may have to delay some items. However it remains our objective to complete the whole project.

As a postscript it is interesting that Chester Cathedral have recently changed their seating to the same type of chairs we propose to use in the building.

**REPORT ON THE ELECTORAL ROLL**  
**FOR YEAR ENDING APRIL 2018**

**FOR**

**THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST**  
**ASHTON HAYES**

**We presently have 128 names on the Register, with no forms outstanding.**

**I have re-issued the Register several times, due to additions and deletions and the copy in the back of the Church is the latest.**

**If there is anyone that you think may be eligible to join, or may wish to, would you please let me know and I will approach them.**

**AVRIL LEWIS**  
**Electoral Roll Officer**

## Report on the Fabric, Ornaments and Goods

The following is a brief account of the works carried out during my first year of office as Churchwarden.

1. Asbestos management survey and report carried out in March / April 2017 by PKL Consultants Ltd.
2. Repairs to the electrical system following the report on the installation.
3. Central Heating boiler serviced. New thermostat had to be ordered. Engineer failed to put the switch off in the boiler house (which overrides the control settings) resulting in extreme high temperature in the Church.
4. Rubbish removed from boiler house and floor cleaned.
5. General repairs to roof slates and guttering by John and Diane Eldridge.
6. Colony of very large bees found nested in the old kneelers stored in the base of the tower. Bees removed by Bee-Keeper David Rounethwaite and the area cleared of all debris.
7. Clock annual service by Smiths of Derby.
8. Repairs to organ, pipes and seals, by Harold Davis.
9. Lightning Protection system tested. Failed. Repair work carried out by Bailey International.
10. Fire Extinguishers tested and serviced by Thameside Protection Company.
11. Cleaning of roof gutters, gullies and drains by John and Diane Eldridge.
- 12 Churchyard working party tidied Churchyard, hedges and bushes.
- 13 The central heating pump failed on one of the coldest weekends of the winter. New pump ordered and fitted within 24 hours.
- 14 Outstanding Items: Replacement of broken light fitting on Disabled Access.  
Broken lock on Alms Wall Safe.

The Fabric, Ornaments and Goods are generally in good condition but some cloths and covers are showing signs of wear because of their age.

# Deanery Synod Report

At Deanery Synod last July there were two presentations: one by the Director of the Committee for Social Responsibility — a committee which may or may not be changing its name in the near future to better reflect what it does. That particular presentation was about identifying the specific needs of individual parishes. Then Lyn Weston, our still relatively new Diocesan Missioner, described her vision for growth in our church.

The Annual Eucharist was well attended in September and the Cathedral's new Residentiary Canon — Barry Wilson — delivered an inspiring sermon.

The November meeting had to be cancelled due to the speaker being injured.

In February +Keith spent an evening with us, describing his vision for the future and taking questions from the floor. During the remainder of the evening we were entertained by a Baptist minister who just happens to be a Scouse Christian comedian in his spare time.

And somewhere along the way, I was elected as the Deanery's Lay Chairman.

Now, even though we heard some wonderful presentations during the last 12 months, speaking about it now all sounds very dull and I can almost hear you thinking, "so what?" It would be very easy for me to stop there having told you what has happened but I would like to spend a couple more minutes to tell you about, what I believe will be, a more exciting and productive future.

For many years, Deanery Synod has felt like a committee looking for a cause or just a necessary evil because it is members of the Deanery Synod who are elected to the "meatier" Diocesan Synod. Deanery Synod has, in my view, been treading water for quite a while and, on some occasions, it has felt as though it has been bypassed — but I now feel that is all about to change!

After the Deanery Eucharist last September, which was held in St James' Church, Christleton, we provided refreshments — cheese and wine — to try to persuade people to stay behind after the service to talk to each other and ... the place was buzzing with conversations.

We repeated the experiment during +Keith's visit which took place in Barrow and again people had some wonderful discussions with each other.

And now, we want the Deanery Synod to change: I'm not going to promise that there will be cheese and wine at every meeting but we no longer want the meetings to be places where people just come to sit and listen; we want them to be involved. We are going to leave more space to enable those conversations. We want parish representatives to actively share their ideas [and issues] with each other and we want them to report back what they have heard to their own parishes so that the information they have gleaned can be spread to as wide an audience as possible.

This is going to be particularly important in the coming years as we try to "Set God's People Free" — an initiative designed to enable the 98% of us in the Church of England who are not ordained to play our full part in God's calling — and I believe that our Deanery Synods are finally going to find their reason for being. So, when we come to electing our Deanery Synod representatives next year don't just look on it as a chore or a space that has to be filled: look on it as a real opportunity to make your voice heard and a chance to make a difference both here in Ashton Hayes and throughout the deanery and beyond.

In closing can I ask for your prayers: prayers for Deanery Synod; that it may find its real purpose and be productive, and prayers for the four parishes in our Deanery which are either vacant or about to become vacant. Christleton, Guilden Sutton and Plemstall, Plas Newton and of course here in Ashton Hayes.

Thank you.

Alan Downen

## **GAP report 2018**

For those who are unaware, 'GAP' stands for 'Growth Action Planning' and was an initiative created by the Deanery to encourage churches to think about the future. The initiative officially ended some time ago but we find it helpful as a structure around which to base our thinking with regards to the needs of our community. Indeed our motto continues to be, 'A church in our village for our village'. With the reordering of the church now taking on a life of its own, our three areas of concentrated effort are the needs of the lower and upper ages of our village and how best to communicate.

Last year I lamented the all-encompassing effects of social media on society. 'A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.' Proverbs 18:24

The internet has the ability to reach millions and nobody all at the same time. We now have a lovely and very interesting church website, that I encourage you to browse, a main Facebook page and a secure Facebook page for Young St John's, that I encourage you to join; if you need information about an event you will find it there but you need to be moved to look and I fear that we are lost in the overwhelming tide of notifications, somewhere between the school club reminders and the final scores. Communication channels are used in conjunction with the school but again we are by no means the only organisations or indeed companies doing this and many emails are probably just deleted or read too late to be of use. As far as the electronic age is concerned we may have done all that we can and yet News from the Pews is probably one of our best means of communication. A calendar would be great but we would need to organise ourselves and commit our time in advance. For the extremes of ages and those who are finding it difficult to get out of their homes, I think that we need to think about additional ways to communicate. That will inevitably need personal time but it would be time well spent.

The third Sunday afternoon of the month brings Village Praise in the parish rooms with informal worship and cake led by a variety of people from different denominations, punctuated by special services such as Light up a Life and Meals of Friendship. The Koinonia meals are always a time of great blessings. These gatherings, organised by a local home group, were initially set up to address the needs of a large elderly population within the local villages, the loss of the Methodist Chapel and the realisation that many people (particularly those who had lost a life partner) struggled with the concept of getting out there, either physically or emotionally. The numbers of people attending these meals has decreased this year as many of our friends have passed away but they are still well received. The latest meal had a musical theme that may well become a blueprint for informal praise in the future. Having recently attended a New Song evening worship session run by the Wirral Methodist circuit, there is clearly huge potential for café-style churches for all ages of the community to

enjoy together (our current attendees ages range from 10 years to people in their 90s). It may be time to have a look at this in more detail.

We have struggled with availability of the Village Hall this year despite assurances, leading to one potential meal being abandoned. The reordering of the church cannot come soon enough to ensure that opportunities for outreach are not missed in the future.

We continue to have connections with the school. Regular assemblies are taken by David, Alan and Philip and services are held in the church to which families are invited. In addition the children from the village nursery also attend the church for special celebrations.

Young St John's is a somewhat unpredictable affair! Sunday Club meets on the second Sunday of the month with uncertainty of numbers and the potential of a challengingly wide age range but always the certainty of fun, creativity and learning. It is a real privilege to be able to get to know these children better as individuals. This year we have added to our lasting presence with a row of bright windmill poppies, a completed poppy banner, an altar piece and bird feeders. We hope shortly to also add to natural diversity with the introduction of more wild flowers in the grounds. I never cease to be amazed at the ability of our children to grasp and accept quite profound concepts. This is not without probing, mind, and you need to be on your toes when it comes to biblical teaching, but that can only be a good thing. We also continue to offer a Sunday Film Club on the fourth Sunday (when festivals allow) with bacon butties and beautiful views. This format of sharing food and creating a space and time to talk (as Philip was discussing only this week) is a winner and attracts different children from Sunday Club with life topics raised and challenged by the films on offer. We also offer a Midweek Club. The challenge though (in addition to problems with venues) is finding a time that does not clash with a hundred other clubs. Other times may need to be considered but given that I work full time, this would need to involve other church members. We also need to address the gaping hole that is secondary school.

Members of the current team were fortunate enough to spend an evening with Jonathan Masters, the Youth, Children and Families' Missioner for the Chester Deanery. I personally found this most encouraging. There can be a tendency to make a decision (subconsciously or otherwise) not to do something because only a few people will turn up. Equally there is a tendency to assume that a church with dozens of children must be doing something better than we are. Or an event is only successful if we run out of chairs. While there may be some truth in that, it isn't the whole truth.

When Tom was very small, one of his favourite stories was the parable of the lost sheep. He knew it by heart. Now he conjugates Latin verbs. How time flies. God is not interested in the 99 sheep who are already in the fold; He is after the one that is yet to join them.

As Jonathan explained, most of the children from large Sunday Schools will drift away. I think that the ones we already have are keepers and building on them in ones and twos is just fine and I continue to believe that it is worth all the effort.

Another theory of mine that he confirmed is the undeniable fact that children are more likely to go to church and continue in their faith if they are included in the services regularly and their families also go to church. In the end, we can offer a million and one things for children to do but until they are old enough to make their own decisions and justify them adequately and make their own way, their attendance is dependent on their family and cultural pressure to compete to be the best at each and every activity you do and not to just be who you are (or just how God made you). When children are nurtured they make extraordinary decisions to do amazing things like build homes in Ecuador or eat beans and rice to raise money for children who have nothing because they recognise that it is the right thing to do and God moves them to do it.

Some of our most memorable events have been when families were enabled to do something together, events like the harvest faith meal or the Rose Queen. This Christmas we again ran a craft session in Ashton House Nursery (because we couldn't get in the hall) that allowed families time to just be together. This also led to the creation of our nativity figures. These figures were painted on pieces of reclaimed pallet and then hung around the village as part of a nativity trail for families to follow. This was one of the highlights of the year. In the week before Christmas, the figures were marked by night lights, also made by the children, and led the way to church where we served mulled village-grown apple juice, mince pies and robin biscuits. The figures were then brought in to the church for the Christingle service which did need extra chairs.

We need to stop thinking in silos of age and entertain the idea that any event should be accessible to anyone who wants to come to it. The nativity figures were meant to be for everybody. I encourage you all to get involved in initiatives that will encourage and include whole and extended families in church life. There are very few things that can be enjoyed together by all ages in today's society but we can offer that. We have a unique selling point.

I have been given an image of an ark. It is filled with all the good things that we would want to take with us if we had to choose: art and craft, music, literature, nature, conversation, pizza, rounders- the things that remind us of God's greatness and his plan for us. My head is filled with ideas but I just cannot physically or mentally make them happen without help and coordination.

*Natalie Keera*

15/4/15