



St Michael the Archangel, Mere, Wiltshire

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

2 May 2017

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THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL, MERE

ANNUAL VESTRY AND PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

2 May 2017 at 6:00 pm in The Parish Church

A G E N D A

Welcome

Opening worship

ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING

1. Minutes of Last Annual Vestry Meeting – 26 April 2016
2. Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of Last Annual Meeting – 26 April 2016
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Report of the PCC
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of members to the Deanery Synod, Parochial Church Council
7. Appointment of Sidesmen and Independent Examiner
8. Re-ordering presented by Rev'd Vickie Goodman
9. Parish Priest's thoughts for the future
10. AOB
11. Closing Prayers

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held in the Parish Church of St. Michael the Archangel, Mere, on Tuesday 26th April 2016 at 7.30pm

The Chair, Rev'd Carol Wilson-Barker, welcomed everybody to the meeting. There was a short act of worship at the beginning of the meeting led by Rev'd. John Page.

55 parishioners were present. Parish Administrator in attendance.

ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING

- 1. The Minutes of the Annual Vestry Meeting of 29th April 2015** were accepted and signed as a true record. Proposed by Mrs. Isabel Howell, seconded by Mrs. Elizabeth Howden, nem con, 4 abstentions.

- 2. Election of Churchwardens**

There were only 2 candidates for the 2 posts of churchwarden. The candidates both spoke briefly,

Mrs. Elizabeth Howden and Mrs. Lynette Elliott were elected as churchwardens unopposed.

Rev'd. Carol Wilson-Barker expressed her thanks to Mrs. Elizabeth Howden for her work as churchwarden over the past year and to Mr. Mike Marsh, who had now stepped down as churchwarden and she presented Mike with a token of the church's appreciation

The Annual Vestry Meeting was declared closed.

Signed ...

Date ...

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Mr. Christopher Stephenson, Mrs. Patricia Stephenson, Mr. Peter Mason, Mrs. Jane Mason, Mrs. Christine Marsh, Mrs. Judith Thompson, Mrs. Angela McDonald.
- 2. Minutes of APCM of 29th April 2015:** were accepted and signed as a true record. Proposed by Mr. Giulio Bianconi, seconded by Mr. Mike Marsh, nem con, 4 abstentions.
- 3. Matters Arising:** None.
- 4. Annual Report of the PCC:** The annual report of the PCC and its committees was presented to the meeting. There were no questions. It was pointed out that last year it had been agreed that, wherever possible, the annual report should be emailed to parishioners: the Chair apologised that there had not been time to do this in 2016. Acceptance of the reports was proposed by Mrs. Elisabeth Barrett and seconded by Rev'd. John Page. **Agreed by a majority.**

Rev'd. Carol Wilson-Barker thanked the members of the Fabric Committee, many of whom were standing down from those roles, for their sterling work in maintaining the fabric of our fine church building. She praised the leadership of Mr. Graham Avory on forging a strong and effective team and made a presentation to him on behalf of the PCC. She also mentioned the work of Messrs Tony McDonald, Peter Knapp and Martin Eyles

Mrs. Isabel Howell, as chair of the Grove Building Management Committee, thanked Mrs. Judith Thompson for her work in checking the Grove Building daily and replenishing supplies.

5. **Electoral Roll Officer's report:** In the absence of Mr. Christopher Stephenson, Mr. Mike Marsh reported that there were now 164 names on the new Roll, a net increase of 8 over 2015. **Noted.**

6. **Treasurer's Report:**

Mr. Bianconi reported on the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2015. He commented that the overall income and expenditure position at the end of the financial year was a deficit of approximately £32,000, but that this was offset by some £10,500 reclaimed Gift Aid tax, which had not been received by the end of the financial year, and transfers from the Assistant Curate's Fund, which had not been completed within the financial year, which together gave a true deficit of approximately £10,000. Mr. Bianconi commented that income had fallen by approximately £22,000 over 2014.

In response to a question, Mr. Bianconi commented that organ tuning in 2015 had been funded separately by those organising a concert. The Administrator commented that tuning was now due for 2016 and would be arranged shortly.

The accounts were approved; proposed by Mrs. Pat Isom, seconded by Mrs. Lynette Elliott, **unanimous.**

Rev'd. Carol Wilson-Barker expressed the PCC's thanks to Mr. Giulio Bianconi for his work as Honorary Treasurer.

7. **Election of members to the Parochial Church Council:**

The following members continue their term of office on the PCC:

Mrs. Chris Bixby, Mrs. Ann Dethick, Mrs. Elisabeth Barrett, Mrs. Julia Rankin

The following new members were nominated:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Proposed by</i>	<i>Seconded by</i>
Mr. John Heap	Mr. Mike Marsh	Mrs. Elizabeth Howden
Mrs. Pat Isom	Mr. Peter Knapp	Mrs. Julia Rankin

Elected unanimously.

Rev'd. Carol Wilson-Barker commented that there were a number of changes in the PCC with Mrs. Angela McDonald and Mr. Mike Marsh standing down and Mr. Tim Merrell having resigned during the year. Rev'd. Carol commented that Mrs. Sherry Dixon had indicated she was willing to take over as Honorary Treasurer from Mr. Bianconi after the fete and that she would be co-opted as a member of the PCC in the meantime.

8. Appointment of Sidesmen:

The list of people appointed as sidesmen was contained in the Annual Report:

Mrs. Ann Ridler	Mrs. Kathy Herbert	Mrs. Jane Fitzgerald
Mrs. Christine Marsh	Mr. Christopher Stephenson	Mrs. Patricia Stephenson
Mrs. Rita Taylor	Mrs. Myrene Coward	Mrs. Gilly Gristwood
Mr. Alan Gristwood	Mrs. Jean Knapp	Mr. Peter Knapp
Mr. Mark Lille	Mrs. Pauline Andrews	Mrs. Angela Eggleton
<i>Reserves</i>		
Mr. Hamish Bell	Mr. Richard Dearnaly	Mr. Tony Rankin
Mrs. Isabel Howell	Rev'd. John Page	

Approved unanimously.

9. Appointment of Independent Examiner:

Mr. Alan Gristwood had indicated his willingness to continue as Independent Examiner and Rev'd. Carol Wilson-Barker expressed the PCC's gratitude to him for his work. Proposed by Mr. Graham Avory, seconded by Mr. Hamish Bell.

Approved unanimously.

10. Churchwardens' Comments

(a) Stewardship

Mrs. Elizabeth Howden spoke briefly about the financial challenges facing the church. She echoed Bishop Nicholas' exhortation to the Diocese to "pray, serve, grow" and commented that resources were needed to allow this to happen. She stressed the need for all members of the congregation to review their regular giving in the light of this.

Rev'd. Carol commented that Mr. John Kilbee, Diocesan Stewardship Adviser, would be speaking to the PCC on 17th May.

(b) Church Re-ordering

Mr. Mike Marsh spoke about the work to look at redeveloping and re-ordering the church. A group had been created to take forward the work of the original working party, consisting of Mr. Mike Marsh, Mr. John Heap, Mr. Vernon Phillips and Rev'd. Vickie Goodman.

11. Incumbent's Comments

Rev'd. Carol Wilson-Barker spoke about change and how the church community deals with it, how we perceive change and how we need to accept that others will not necessarily change things in the way that we would.

She talked about the constant need to maintain and improve communications and commented that, to this end, she was instituting a weekly church leadership meeting at

10.30am every Monday involving the churchwardens, assistant wardens and LLMs. This group would also manage fabric issues until a new effective committee had been created.

She talked about the planned Back to Church Sunday and the opportunity this gave to introduce new people to the church.

She expressed her pleasure at the restoration of the Coat of Arms and her gratitude to the Friends for their contribution and commented that a faculty for the necessary lighting would shortly be prepared.

Rev'd. Carol then read a short poem – "The Quicker Vicar?"

12. Any Other Business:

Mrs. Elisabeth Barrett spoke about the plans for a flower festival in 2017. She commented that she believed it would be difficult to run both the flower festival and the fete in 2017 and that the fete should, therefore, be postponed that year. The plan was to hold a flower and music festival on 9-11 June 2017 with flower displays, music events and other activities, launched on the Thursday evening and with a closing service on the Sunday. Its theme was a celebration of our community and the church at its centre.

Mrs. Julia Rankin commented on her discouragement at some of the organisation of things in the church. Rev'd. Carol responded that she understood her frustration over the organist position but that it was not easy to find organists prepared to commit. Rev'd. Carol commented that she was working with Rev'd. Graham Perryman to apply for a joint curate for the benefices.

Mrs. Pat Isom commented that she would be disappointed if the fete did not take place in 2017 as it was a valuable community event.

Mrs. Jane Hurd queried who had decided the membership of the re-ordering committee.

13. Closing Worship

The meeting closed with the remainder of the Act of Worship led by Rev'd. John Page.

Signed

Date ...



St Michael the Archangel, Mere, Wiltshire
Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council
Year Ending December 2016

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the Year Ending 31 December 2016

St Michael the Archangel in Mere is the largest of the three churches in the Benefice that is part of the Heytesbury Deanery, in the Diocese of Salisbury.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission

The Mission Statement of the Parish & PCC of St Michael's

We dedicate ourselves to God, sharing his love, encouraging others and nurturing faith in our world

Members of the PCC for the Year 2016

Incumbent & Chairman: Rev'd. Carol Wilson-Barker.

Churchwardens: Mrs. Elizabeth Howden
Mrs. Lynette Elliott

Representatives to the

Deanery Synod: Mr. John Page, Mrs. Isabel Howell, Mrs. Elizabeth Howden

Elected Members: Mrs. Ann Dethick (resigned summer 2016)
Mrs. Chris Bixby
Mrs. Elisabeth Barrett
Mrs. Pat Isom (from April 2016)
Mrs. Julia Rankin
Mr. John Heap (from April 2016)

Others who are not PCC members: Mr. Giulio Bianconi (from April 2014) as Treasurer
Mr. John Berry (from November 2016) as Treasurer
Mrs. Sherry Dixon (from September 2016) PCC Secretary
Mr. Ian Treece Minutes taker until summer 2016

Sub-Committees of the PCC: Ministry Team, Standing, Fabric, Worship, Grove Building
Other Groups: Children & Young People, LPAs' meeting

Friends of St Michael's A separate charity consisting of supporters of St Michael's from both the congregation and community who raise funds for the refurbishment and additions to the church.

The Parochial Church Council has met 7 times over the last year.

The Sub-Committees have met between PCC meetings and minutes of their deliberations were received by the full PCC and discussed, and approved where necessary.

Copies of the Minutes of PCC meetings and sub-committees are kept in church, for examination by the congregation.

The Electoral Roll has been duly revised. The number of names on the roll is 152, of which 143 are names of persons resident within the parish and 9 are of persons resident elsewhere. The number of names on the roll last year was 164.

Events

2016 was a year of a diverse range of activities within the Church and nearby.

We were fortunate with the weather for the successful Church Fete in June which was themed to coincide with the Queen's Birthday. This was followed by a church service honouring the Queen when children from Mere School led the prayers and the congregation enjoyed celebratory bubbly and the Union Jack cake made by the chef at the school.

There was a wonderful atmosphere at the Military Wives Concert in July, then James MacDowell Scott joined the Church in September and, shortly after his arrival, organised an organ recital on a late summer afternoon. Concerts arranged by Friends of St Michael's and Gracenotes also continued with the musical theme, not forgetting the September concert for the Rosemary Goddard Centre.

Harvest was enjoyed at a Supper and Song Evening in the Grove Building and Remembrance Sunday was acknowledged with a special service which started at the town clock tower. With the onset of Advent Christingle was celebrated and 'From Darkness to Light', a candlelit service of nine lessons and carols, went ahead just before Christmas.

A wedding preparation day, in collaboration with the Rev'd. Graham Perryman, Upper Stour, proved very positive. This event looked at the spiritual side of marriage and was attended by couples planning to marry in 2016.

Five members of the congregation were confirmed at a service taken by Bishop Ed in the early summer joined by people from other parts of the Deanery.

Successes and Challenges in Meeting our Objectives

Every year throws up fresh challenges and opportunities. Sometimes a success is marked in financial terms like the +£1000 the church raised by collaborating with Mere Cancer Research and hosting the Military Wives concert. Other times it is trying something new like the Christmas Memorial service where 22 people came to remember their loved ones in a gentle contemplative service before Christmas. As a church we are called to be both people of this world – who don't ignore our financial commitments and responsibilities - and prayerfully aware people seeking to serve and reach out to others in Jesus' name.

Several challenges facing the church include effective communication and carrying out the legal requirements on us. But it is important not to get weighed down and distracted from our core purpose of prayer and sharing the gospel news. After the last APCM the vicar set up a Ministry Team which has met every Monday morning. It consists of the Rev'd. Carol, Mrs. Sherry Dixon, PCC Sec., Mrs. Elizabeth Howden and Mrs. Lindy Elliott Church Wardens and Mrs. Isabel Howell and Rev'd John Page, Asst. Wardens. The meetings have been a good place to share information, get organised

for upcoming services, talk about urgent business and generally assist with the smooth running of the church. Brief minutes have been passed on to PCC members and relevant matters have continued to be fully discussed at PCC as necessary. We have all worked hard to improve communication and in particular Mrs. Sherry Dixon has been invaluable in her role.

Priest in Charge's Report

Life in the Benefice of Mere with West Knoyle and Maiden Bradley has continued to be varied and interesting and St Michael's does take a good share of my working time. The Ministry Team has been a great innovation for us allowing me to share ministry with a number of your elected people to ensure we work more effectively. I'm really grateful to the Team members who give up their time for this every week.

A list of things I have been involved in include running a healing course, being part of a MU Fun Afternoon in February, fronting a presentation to our community about the reordering project, supporting the LLMs by attending their 150th anniversary service and a symposium in Bristol about reordering churches and hearing Bishop Nicholas speak about St Martin's in the Fields.

We are constantly wanting to improve the depth and meaning of our worship at St Michael's and so it has been a delight to welcome James MacDowell-Scott as our organist and to thank him for the work with our reinvigorated choir. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Peter Mason who retired as organist after 12 years in September. We wish him well. Thanks go to all the stand-in organists before James arrived and for Rev'd John Page's encouragement to the choir in the interim.

Looking forward to the future I'm very excited about the flower festival in June, there has been so much hard work and planning for it. The concerts in the evening will be a good draw to a wider number of people – thanks and best wishes go to Mrs. Elisabeth Barrett and Mrs. Maggie Durkee. The reordering plans, guided for much of the time by the much-missed Mr. Mike Marsh, continue to move on. The architect is just finishing the next set of plans after we have suggested something different to him- such is the importance of getting it right. We are starting to draw up fund-raising plans now too and taking advice from others experienced in this. We have applied to have a curate jointly with Upper Stour Parish from the summer of 2018 but will need to wait to hear if we are successful. The Diocese also has a scheme for young explorers age 19-29 called the Ministry Experience Scheme. It gives them the opportunity to shadow people, learning what it is like to be a priest in a rural parish for 10 months. We have put our name down on this scheme, one of only two parishes in the Diocese to do so and are waiting to see who might be interested.

Bishop Nicholas continues to encourage us to Renew Hope by Pray, Serve, Grow. A deep and faithful prayer life is so important to aid us in seeking out God's way and His guidance in all that we do. We are blessed to have many active and servant-like members in the church from the Pastoral Assistants to many kind members. I would like to think that the service also always comes with a smile, in fact with laughter and joy too. We are a growing church – not meteoric – but we are a place people seek out and we need always to welcome them with warmth, compassion and a smile.

Churchwardens' Report

April saw the appointment of a new PCC at the APCM and so a new team of people bonded together to represent the St Michael's church family. A mixture of new members and old are working together and supporting each other to tackle the challenges that arise.

The main issue has once again been the reordering of the church. Thankfully, Mr. Mike Marsh and Revd. Vickie Goodman regularly attended PCC meetings to keep us updated and informed for which we are grateful. We have seen the architect's plans, raised questions and made some adjustments. There is a display in the Friends' Corner with the plans available to everyone to view. It is an exciting time as we discuss the proposals with each other, the church family and the wider community.

James, our new organist, was appointed and started in September. We had been looking to recruit a new organist for a little while but constant prayers and waiting for the right person takes time and God's time is not always as instant as we would like. However, we were delighted with the appointment.

Harvest supper was held in the Grove Building and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Food, a quiz and James on the keyboard ended the evening with a fun sing song led by Rev'd. Carol. It was a great opportunity to celebrate the Harvest and everyone involved in food production.

Remembrance Service was again well attended and the Christmas period saw high numbers attending the various services. The Lessons and Carols service, which was well attended, saw new people in attendance in the choir, and dressed in black they looked very smart. Verbal feedback from the congregation was very positive.

The extremely good links with Mere School have continued and Open the Book assemblies are continuing regularly. Mr. Tony Rankin is the church's representative on the Mere School Governing body.

Fabric matters have been taken into the care of Mrs. Lindy Elliott, fellow Church Warden, and she is working with a small team of kind, diligent men dealing with a leaking roof, problems with the Loop system and numerous wires on the Rood screen! Please see her report for further details.

Talking to other clergy members in the diocese we heard about Ministry Team meetings where the priest met regularly with a small number of key individuals to discuss any concerns, issues and plan for upcoming events. It seemed like God was encouraging us to take this idea and embrace it as a solution to our concerns. So Ministry Team meetings started here at St Michael's which are having huge benefits.

Knit and Natter was a new group which started at the beginning of last year and is meeting once a month. Hats, scarfs and gloves have been knitted for Trussell Trust boxes which were sent off before Christmas and the knitters are now knitting poppies for Remembrance Sunday.

Finally, our financial position was once again causing us concerns. Rev'd. Carol, Mrs. Sherry Dixon and Mrs. Pat Isom worked together and letters were sent out to the congregation and I am delighted to thank you all for responding so positively. Mr. John Berry is our new treasurer and is doing a

wonderful job reviewing what is being spent where and overviewing our spending. Please see his report.

Lindy and I really enjoy our role as Church Wardens for St. Michael's but we would not be able to do it without the kindness and support given to us by you. Thank you.

Elizabeth Howden & Lindy Elliott - Churchwardens

Fabric Committee

We have recruited a new Fabric Committee in the past year chaired by Mrs. Lindy Elliott, comprising Mr. Les Dixon, who has put in an enormous amount of time, ably supported by Mr. Derek Fisher, Mr. Dick Dearnaly, Mr. Ryan George, Mr. John Berry and Mr. Hamish Bell who bring a great deal of knowledge and experience of the Church.

In the past year, we have updated all the fire extinguishers and bought two new extinguishers and two sand buckets and have been visited by the Fire Brigade who offered advice on alarms.

The ivy has been removed from around the Yew Tree and Churchyard monuments. The members of Seeds4Success have been weeding around the Church and it is hoped that this will continue each year during the holidays. The ground drains and soakaways have been cleared by Mr. Brett Norris, with thanks to them all.

We have installed a new double socket behind the lectern. We are looking into the possibility of updating the Loop System with a remote control system and the CD player being controlled by the Organist.

Once we have received the Work Schedule from the Architect and his approval, we intend to replace the lead over the St Matthews Chapel and the slipped tiles. This work will be completed by Saxon Roofers of Camelot Builders, hopefully this will be achieved shortly.

Mr. Michael Durkee has now got an assistant, Mr. Kit Stallard who is now able to cover problems with the clock.

A fully comprehensive H&S policy has been completed and Risk Assessments done for each Service and I am grateful to Mr. Robin Hood for all his hard work and these will shortly be displayed in the porch, tower and in the fire satchet which, with the first aid kit, is on the table by the North Door. The Accident book is in the Vestry and all trips that occur should be written in the Accident Book. White lines have been applied by Les to highlight the trip hazards.

The Fabric Committee have prioritised further work from the Quinquennial Report and plan to address the pointing, replacing of the weathervane and the gates in the near future.

Lindy Elliott – Chair, Fabric Committee

The Grove Building Management Committee

The Grove Building has had another busy and successful year. We have more regular bookings and 'casual' bookings continue to increase. We hope and believe that those who use the GB are fully satisfied with its facilities.

As you see from the accounts, the finances are excellent. However, we are facing a large expenditure on the repair of damaged pipework under the small hall causing leaks and blockages from debris. Also, during 2017, the outside of the front windows will need to be painted.

Thanks to Mrs. Sue Phelps and Mrs. Lindy Elliott's hard work the 100 Club continued to bring in a good income. However, both Sue and Lindy wish to retire and we hope we have found a new volunteer to take over the running of the 100 Club.

We are very pleased to welcome Mrs. Christine Culmer as a new member of the committee and she has very kindly agreed to be secretary and to be a key holder for 'casual' hirers.

I would like to thank the other committee members for their support – Mr. Peter Platt Higgins as structural and buildings adviser, Mr. Mike Grout for doing smaller repairs, Mrs. Lindy Elliott for unlocking when necessary, Mr. Ian Treece for doing the bookings, and Mr. Giulio Bianconi for the accounts.

I feel that it is not always recognised by users and other Mere residents that the GB is the Church Hall. To help remedy this we are updating the Home Page of the website to read 'The Grove Building – Church Hall of St. Michael the Archangel'

On a personal note, we are so very sad that Mr. Mike Marsh has died. He was a great support to the Committee and helped me so much to find my feet and reassure me. Thank you Mike.

Isabel Howell – Chair, Grove Management Committee

Worship Committee

This is now a smaller group of people meeting 3-4 times a year. Ross, Christine, James, Elizabeth and Rev'd. Carol. The main task is to talk about longer term plans for worship at St Michael's and review different services. The committee is not involved in the most time-consuming work which is in preparing for family communion and other special services.

Revd. Carol Wilson-Barker

Children and Young People

Alongside our input in the Open the Book initiative with Churches Together we continue to build up a good relationship with Mere School. As well as regular assemblies we had a whole day of Christmas and a half day Easter workshops. The Open the Book initiative continues to be well received at Mere School. There is now a team of 10 Churches Together members who have been

going fortnightly into school to read a set programme of Bible stories developed under the auspices of the Bible Society. 75 children from reception to year 2 gather in the small hall and enjoy interacting with the stories, occasional songs and accompanying prayers.

This positive contact with the school led to further whole day workshops involving the whole school.

In March an Easter Workshop day was held, ending once more with a full school assembly to which parents were invited. As well as bringing the Easter Story to the children an Easter Garden was created for church display.

In December the theme was Advent. The topic was aimed at linking the way Christians count down the days towards Christmas as compared to simply opening the windows of Advent Calendars. Using a method known as Godly Play the children were drawn into the Bible readings and study of the events emphasised each Sunday in our 4 Advent church services with Readings that point to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

Each of the school years took part in creating large pictures to illustrate some of the story 'The stages of the Nativity' which were displayed in church over the Christmas period. The whole event was extremely successful with pupils, staff and parents.

Some of the children involved also took part in the church service on the second Sunday of Advent in order to describe and explain what they had been learning about. The service was linked to the Christingle and taking the light of Christ out into the world.

Throughout the year groups of children have come into church with their teachers, sometimes for services, sometimes to explore the church and its features.

During the school holidays several children's craft activity days have been held. The Mothers Union have held and assisted in very successful days in the half term holidays. Open the Book team organised a Holiday Club (reception –year6) in the Summer Holidays which ran for two mornings in the Grove Building. This was followed by a Christmas Preparation Craft day in December. All these events were very successful leading to another exceptionally well attended Crib service on Christmas Eve.

Further activity events are being prepared for the summer holidays.

Christine Marsh

Deanery & Diocesan Synods

Shortly after his installation Bishop Nicholas of Salisbury undertook a tour of the Diocese to present and discuss his initiative 'Pray, Serve, Grow'. His address to our Deanery Synod at Christchurch, Warminster was a very well attended, open meeting which included a number of lively small group discussions. As a consequence of the Bishop's initial presentation, the Synod's main work throughout 2016 took the form of a series of open meetings on aspects of prayer.

-Brother Sam of the Franciscan Friary at Hillfield spoke with inspiring natural ease of the vital part of

prayer in the devotional daily life and work of the Franciscan Order.

-Bishop Nicholas paid a second visit to give an illustrated talk on art, both as an aid to prayer, and as an introduction to the basic elements of Biblical narrative.

-Bishop Ed led a discussion on prayer in poetry, its ability to deepen and enrich our spiritual awareness illustrated in the personal selection of poems used as the framework for his talk.

-Archdeacon Alan Jeans completed the series with his talk on the use of icons in the prayer life of countless Christians. His illustrated presentation of the multiple stages involved in making or 'writing' an icon was in itself illuminating.

In conclusion it could be said that working and learning together on aspects of our faith is, like the steady application required to 'write' an icon, an ongoing act of personal devotion. All who chose to accept the Deanery's open invitation were privileged to enjoy a depth of knowledge and personal experience freely shared.

The series continues this year with work on 'Serving'.

Rev'd. John Page

The Friends of St Michael the Archangel Church

We have had another very successful year of fundraising with wide-ranging events. First, was the 40th Anniversary of the Friends which we celebrated with a tea party - 70 Friends joined us for this historic event when we were able to remind ourselves of all the things we have provided for the Church over the years – a considerable list and one to be proud of.

A new venture was a concert by the South London Singers – a glorious summer evening of wonderful music. We shared the generous proceeds with the choir and hope that perhaps we can repeat the exercise sometime in the future.

We have held our usual Bazaars in the Spring and Autumn – a regular and well supported event. We also had a stall at the One World Week Fair at Stourhead in October.

The restoration of the King James II Coat of Arms has finally been re-hung and is looking resplendent. We await the outcome of the re-ordering of the church before deciding on some extra lighting. Our thanks to Jenny Wilding who has guided the whole project through – getting funding from various sources and finding the relevant skills to complete the work.

In February we held a Call My Bluff with Wine Tasting – a very great success and so popular we had a waiting list. Our panel of 'experts' played their part with great enthusiasm and a good time was had by all.

We are in the process of getting quotations for the new Servery which will be sited in the Friends' corner – this is the part of the re-ordering of the church for which the Friends will be responsible.

We are very grateful for the continued support of the people of Mere and for the hardworking and loyal committee members.

Pat Isom – Chair, Friends of St Michaels

Churches Together In Mere and District

Churches Together is often seen as an insignificance; something a PCC has to subscribe to for form's sake. Yet on the basis of John Chapter 15 the unity of God's people is important to God, and therefore is important for Christian Churches. The Churches Together Covenant is of great importance in formally expressing this, but in reality, though we work according to the spirit of the wording, we have to accept it as a flawed expression of an ideal.

To the non-churchgoer or the non-believer, the sight of Christians working together can have a significant impact. The Good Friday Walk of Witness, the Songs of Praise at Stourhead, Remembrance Sunday, Christian Aid week, Carols in the Square on Christmas Eve, and Mere Community Christmas Lunch are but a few examples of local Christians together having a higher profile.

During the past year members of Churches Together have been involved in several initiatives. Prayer for Christian Unity (January) Women's World Day of Prayer (March) Lent Courses, Lent Lunches, Good Friday Walk of Witness, Christian Aid Service and Collection (May), Remembrance Sunday (November), The Monthly Julian Prayer Group, Taize Services (April at Zeals & December St Michaels) Songs of Praise at Stourhead (though rain meant it was held in St Peter's rather than in the NT grounds), Carols on Christmas Eve and not forgetting the 'Open the Book' Programme in Mere School.

This year, for the fourth year, a successful 'Mere Community Christmas Lunch' was held.

It is true that some of these events can be said to have had a higher public profile than others, but all events are important in their own way.

Mere School

The Open the Book initiative continues to be well received at Mere School. A team of 10 CTMD members have been going fortnightly into school to read a set programme of Bible stories developed under the auspices of the Bible Society. 75 children from reception to year 2 gather in the small hall and enjoy interacting with the stories, occasional songs and accompanying prayers.

This positive contact with the school has led to further whole day workshops.

In March an Easter Workshop day was held ending once more with a full school assembly to which parents were invited. As well as bringing the Easter Story to the children an Easter Garden was created for church display.

In December the theme was Advent. The topic was aimed at showing how in church Christians count down the days towards Christmas through re-reading the bible stories as compared to simply just opening the colourful or chocolate filled windows of Advent Calendars. Using a method known as Godly Play the children were drawn into bible readings and study of the events emphasised each

Sunday in the 4 Advent church services that point to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Each of the school year groups took part in creating large pictures to illustrate some of the story. ('The stages of the Nativity') These were displayed in St Michael's church over the Christmas period.

The whole event was extremely successful with pupils, staff and parents. Some of the children involved also took part in the church service on the second Sunday of Advent in order to describe and explain what they had been learning about. The service was linked to the Christingle and taking the Light of Christ out into the world.

Report submitted by Mr. T Rankin, School Governor.

Although Mere school is a County school there has been close co-operation and support between church and school. This has been demonstrated by The Open Book Programme, a number of assemblies being taken by clergy, and the school also has two regular communicant members of St. Michael's on the governing body. The school has been very receptive to the idea of visiting the church on special school occasions and for Festival Services for which they helped to produce displays.

Christmas Lunch.

In last year's report, the then organisers being unable to take on the role for a further year, Churches Together asked for prayers to find someone prepared to take over the Christmas lunch organisation for 2016 otherwise the Mere event would not take place.

Fortunately, prayers were answered and Mrs Judy Bickerstaff agreed to take over the organisation; thus the Christmas Lunch Initiative went ahead for a fourth year.

The event was a great success.

Once again we were extremely fortunate that Mr. Steve Cooke donated his time and expertise in not only helping with sourcing foodstuffs but actually arranging the cooking of the meal and transporting it to the Grove Building, then serving up.

Grateful thanks go to the managements of The Angel Cafe, The George Hotel and the Walnut Tree for their provision of cooking facilities and to The Butt of Sherry for assistance. Thanks also go to Sprout and Flower for the donation of vegetables; Mere Co-op for provision of a variety of necessary ingredients, Mr. Clive Hazzard for plants to brighten the hall and to Mr. George Jeans and Mr. John Jordan for their help and support and to the many others who volunteered help before and on the day. Their tremendous help contributed immeasurably to the success of the event.

That it was enjoyed by all there was evident in the comments we received on the day and from others in the community who were not there but who know people who were. As a result of the positive feedback Churches Together Reps felt that they would like to run the event this year. Thus the Grove Building has been officially booked for the 24 and 25 December 2017.

In January 2016 the 'Chair' moved from Rev'd. Christine Gilbert to Rev'd. Paul Arnold of the Methodist Church. At the Annual meeting thanks were given to Chris by members of Churches Together for her input throughout the past two years.

Unfortunately, Paul suffered a major motor cycling accident in November and was seriously injured. It is with great pleasure that we can now celebrate his recovery and the start of his return to health. Thanks go to Rev'd Carol Wilson Barker who took on many of Paul's duties.

From this year the Churches Together AGM will be held in April.

It is with much sadness that we report the closure of the Methodist Church in Mere. The final service of Thanksgiving was held on 23 October 2016 ending 170 years of Methodist Church presence in Mere. The Methodists have been stalwart supporters of Churches Together over the years. Unfortunately, ill-health and several deaths meant that the attendance numbers so reduced that it became impossible to maintain a church in Mere.

At St Michael's we have been very fortunate with the active participation of several members of the congregation to help ensure that Churches Together events are successful. We look forward to a continuation of our active participation throughout 2017 and hope for continued strong and maybe even stronger support from St Michael's as a statement of our commitment to Christian Unity.

Christine Marsh - St Michael's Rep for CTMD

Mothers' Union

As usual, we began the year on a light and festive note, celebrating New Year with a lunch party at the Walnut Tree attended by 30 members, spouses and friends. Our Membership in 2016 stood at 30 at the beginning of the year, but sadly two members died during the year, both of whom belonged to Mere Methodist Church. Mary Siderfin, who joined MU two years ago, died in March, and May Fricker, who had been a member for very many years, died in November. Two new members were enrolled in December.

The theme for the year 'Celebrating Faith' was easily incorporated into several of our meetings and provided the main focus for our October meeting when Mary Fisher, an MU official speaker, gave a lively and insightful presentation on this subject. Other meetings included a look at the 'Tree of Life' with Wendy Pugh; a visit to China with Jenny Wilding, and a virtual visit to Salisbury Cathedral and its copy of Magna Carta with John Collier, a long-serving Cathedral Guide and ex-Mayor of Salisbury. Our Members' Afternoon, sharing favourite poems and readings, provided a fascinating variety of interest and approach. One of our members, Lindy Elliott, gave us an entertaining afternoon's reminiscences on her time in the Navy, entitled 'Life on the Ocean Wave' and The Rev'd. Vickie Goodman treated us to an absorbing account of her student-day travels in India. We also had visits from two Bishops' wives: Helen Holtham gave us a happy and creative origami workshop showing us how to make small, pretty containers; and Sarah Condry, newly-appointed MU Trustee helped us reflect on 'MU at 140', celebrating all that MU has been and achieved in that time, and looking forward to all that lies ahead.

To celebrate MU's 140 years, ten members attended the Festival Service in Salisbury Cathedral on 16th April, followed by a very enjoyable lunch together at Sarum College.

It was also the year to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday. One of our members, Jean Thomson, who also turned 90 in 2016 was privileged to add her personal wishes and a photograph of herself,

to the National MU birthday card sent to Her Majesty. To celebrate the Queen's birthday in a more tangible way locally, we purchased 190 copies of the Bible Society 'Servant Queen' illustrated booklet, which we gave to members and friends of St Michael's Church and all the other Mere Churches. We also gave 300 copies of the smaller children's version for distribution to all the children currently attending Mere School.

We continued our custom of giving Bibles and a child's Bible to all children baptised at St Michael's during the year, but managed only one 'fun afternoon' for children and families, this time in the Summer half-term break. This took the form of a Mainly Music session, which, wonderfully, the Mothers' Union from Bradford on Avon came over and ran for us. We had hoped to adapt a Mainly Music programme for use with young families on other occasions but it is only available as a regular weekly programme during school term time, which is rather beyond our capacity at present.

MU members have helped with other children's activities during the year and are involved in 'Open the Book' and most other events in and around St Michael's Church

We helped to support MU's work at home and overseas through a successful 'Wheels Appeal' cake stall held on a Saturday in Mere square, through our annual overseas bring & buy, and through the collection and raffle at our MU Carol Service, given (respectively) to MU's Away From It All holiday fund and Sarah Condry and Maisie's sponsored walk for MU projects.

Our very well attended Carol Service on 13th December, followed by sandwiches, mince pies, tea and coffee in the Grove Building, provided a joyful ending to our Mothers' Union year.

Judith Thompson - MU Branch Leader

Financial Review

Total receipts on ordinary unrestricted funds were £85,642 and are detailed in the Financial Statements, see Appendix 1.

£86,688 was spent to provide the Christian ministry from St Michael the Archangel Church including the contribution to the Salisbury Diocesan Board Share, which largely provides the stipends and housing for the clergy. The sum that the Churches in the deanery have to find is shared between the Churches according to a formula that is based mainly on a head count of the congregation.

The net result for the year was an excess of payments over receipts of £992. After adding bank and deposit balances brought forward at the beginning of the year, the balances carried forward at 31st December on unrestricted funds totalled £35,918

Reserves Policy.

It is PCC policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds (if possible). There are credit balances in the Church Organ Fund and Bell Fund (both restricted) and the balances are retained towards meeting future costs relating to the organ and the bells.

It is our policy to invest our funds balances with the CBF Church of England Deposit Fund.

Financial Statements

