

# St Mary's Church Buckden

## Annual Report 2017 (For APCM 2018)

### Vicar's Greeting:

#### Revd. Jes Salt

Welcome to St Mary's Annual Report for 2017. The past twelve months has been a busy and eventful year in the life of our church. We have much to thank God for in the outreach activities such as '800' and the Holiday Clubs, in his financial provision which has enabled us to undertake much needed repairs to our beautiful church and in our faithful worship and service week by week. There has been sadness as we have lost some much-loved friends both from our church and wider village communities, and others have suffered significant illness. But overall I think that 2017 is a year we can look back on with gratitude and thanks to our God who 'will never fail us or forsake us'.

The church of St Mary's comprises the people rather than the building and even if you are not mentioned by name, please accept my thanks for all you contribute to our life here. However, at the start of this report I would like to single out David Riley who steps down as warden at this APCM. We owe a David a huge thank you for the way he has, with Anne, led and steered the church over the past six years, he will be a hard act to follow.

I hope you enjoy reading this report and celebrating God's goodness to us over the past twelve months.

### Churchwardens' and PCC Report:

#### Anne Carter and David Riley

One year on marks the end of my (David's) statutory 6-year term as Churchwarden and firstly, I must thank you for your kindness and support over the years. The time has gone very quickly, and St. Mary's continues to thrive and prosper as a vibrant focal point within the village. Six years gives a great grounding into the workings and focus within the Church and is hugely rewarding, if not a little time consuming. It is also time to hand over the reins (or at least one of them) to a new warden, to work alongside Anne, for the next chapter in our history. Change generally brings greater strength and I am sure it will do so this time too. Without all of you and the work you do, St. Mary's would not be the special place it is and I thank you all for everything you do.

Together we have achieved much and specifically, in the last year, securing grant funding for and largely completing the restorative works on the the higher elevations of the church, including clock. Special thanks to Robin Gibson, who again managed all our interactions with builders and architects; working tirelessly behind the scenes, for which we are very grateful

As churchwardens, we would like to thank every one of you again for your friendship, patience, encouragement and goodwill, as well as your immeasurable support to the life of St. Mary's.

Thanks to all our volunteers; those who play a visible role at services and those who inconspicuously do so much important work behind the scenes...our flower arrangers, Saturday coffee group, bell ringers, Jamworkx,

those who clean the church, Angel Voices, those who volunteer on our regular service rota...the list goes on and on.

Thanks too to our PCC, who work tirelessly across the whole spectrum of church life. We continue to have vacancies on PCC and are always looking out for new volunteers. We're really a friendly group and the monthly meetings rarely go beyond 90 minutes, so please do think about what you can give?

Our PCC committee structure continues, and you will hear from these as part of the report that follows. I am always amazed by the sheer volume of activity that happens annually in St. Mary's and am delighted to say that this year is no exception.

And finally, please continue to let Anne (and the new Churchwarden) know how we can continue to improve things in St. Mary's. Nothing is too small, and we are merely custodians of the church on your behalf.

### Ministry and Worship Report

#### Revd. Jes Salt

**Services:** It is pleasing to be able to report that at a time when church attendance is said to be falling that the attendances at our services have at the very least held their own in the past year. Attendance at the 11.00 service continues to be around 65-75, and it has been good to see new folk joining us. We hope you feel welcome and at ease worshipping and serving with us. Our fortnightly 8am Sunday morning service, the various evening services and the 9.30am Wednesday communion have also seen stable or slightly increasing numbers. We have been blessed with very large congregations for some of our occasional services, with no fewer than 360 people at our Remembrance service and over 340 at the Churches Together Carol Service perhaps reflecting our desire that St Mary's should be seen as the heart of our community.

There were 18 Baptisms, 3 Weddings and 9 Funerals or Thanksgiving services in St Mary's during 2017. The baptisms and marriages were a great joy, but we were sorry to say good bye to some much-loved friends.

Many thanks once again to Miles, Ann and Roger for leading and preaching at our various services and for the pastoral work they do behind the scenes. We are blessed to have such able and experienced ministers each with their very different styles. Daily Prayer continues to be a central part of our weekly devotions. And many thanks to Lindley, Sheila, Ann, Catherine and Richard for leading each day. In May, we took again took part in the Archbishop's call to prayer, a nationwide appeal to all churches to pray for our nation during the week leading up to Pentecost by providing imaginative invitations to our community to leave their requests for prayer and many of them did so.

**Bible Study:** Our various groups continue the important task of studying the bible midweek. Richard's monthly group having finished John's gospel is now looking at parables in both the Old and New Testament, the Ground Floor group meets fortnightly at Lorraine's and has looked at a variety of scriptural material during the year. Our Wednesday morning Going Deeper group looks in more depth at each week's readings and has grown

significantly in numbers during the year. During the autumn they joined with some folk from St Mary's St Neots to take part in the diocesan 'Growing as a Disciple' course, which they have found both enjoyable and useful in deepening their faith.

**Junior Church:** This group is in a time of change as several of the regular members now need a different range of activities and so meet from time to time at the Vicarage during much of the main service. Whatever the size and age of the members the leaders, well led by Marilyn rise to the challenge and provide good quality and engaging input and activities for the group. Many thanks to them.

**Jamworkx:** This weekly after school activity continues to thrive, with 18-22 children enjoying games, craft and activities on a biblical theme each Thursday afternoon in the school hall. Many thanks to Jane S, Karen, Marilyn, Jane and Phil who skilfully lead each week.

**Lunch Group:** This group meets monthly and comprises 6-8 diners, who enjoy a leisurely Sunday lunch generally lasting well into the afternoon with good conversation and merriment. Do get in touch with Lorraine if you would be interested.

**Buckden and District Churches Together (BDCT):** St Mary's plays a significant role in BDCT, with Carole Coram continuing as Secretary and Catherine Grigg as Treasurer and four members on the committee. In terms of its activities, Ann Brittain continues to organise the monthly study lunches, which comprise a very tasty homemade soup and bread lunch with a presentation and discussion on a theological topic. The Lent Study course used a series of studies written by Ely Diocese based on the book of Philippians and proved popular. St Mary's again organised a stall that was run by BDCT at the Buckden Christmas Market and hosted singers from the school who sang some carols inside the church. We again made two presentations to the school; the Easter gift to all the children, and the 'It's your move' book to year six pupils ahead of their move to secondary school. We continue to periodically contribute to the Churches Together article Thought for the Month in the Roundabout.

**Men's Breakfast:** This meets on the first Saturday of each month at the Lion to enjoy breakfast and debate topics with a moral, ethical or religious theme with the opportunity to input a Christian perspective on sometimes controversial issues to a sceptical audience.

**Music:** John Cartwright continues to play or coordinate cover for organists to play for the main church services, weddings and funerals throughout the year, ably supported by John Hitchin. John also coordinates the hymn choosing group which meets roughly quarterly to select hymns for the main service on the first three services of each month.

**Angel Voices:** Angel Voices is flourishing, and as well as the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday at St Mary's they continue to support the worship at Offord on an occasional basis. Rachel Noble continues to play keyboard which is wonderful. The dedication, support, and enthusiasm of all the choir members is greatly appreciated.

**Friends in Deed:** Friends in Deed provides practical support and friendship to those in the village who request it. It is well led by Andy and Jane Scott who are conscientious and friendly co-ordinators. Several of our church members act as volunteers, driving clients to hospital, doctors and other similar appointments continues to be the principal activity with 3-4 journeys undertaken each week, and visiting folk who are grateful for the company. The monthly drop-in cafes, held in the LSR, and occasional tea parties continue to be very popular.

**Charities & Pastoral Care:** We continue to support those in need both inside and outside the congregation through the provision of pastoral care and support. But consistent with the ethos of St Mary's much of the pastoral support carries on quietly behind the scenes. As well as Godmanchester Foodbank and the charities we support each Harvest, Remembrance and Christingle, we continue to support a variety of local and national charities on a bi-monthly basis. These are nominated by members of the congregation and has enabled us to engage more closely with the charities we decide to support. The PCC gives a donation to each charity, and in addition monies were raised by the supporters of the individual charities. Inclusive of both elements our charities, and charitable giving in 2017, is shown below:

St Mary's – giving to Charity 2017		
Date	Charity	Amount
All year	Godmanchester Foodbank	Donations of food
Jan - Feb	Alex Hulme Foundation	£572.00
February	*Children's Society boxes	£1,630.31
March	DEC Special Appeal for Africa (PCC + bucket collection)	£400.00
March - April	FareShare	£345.00
May	*Christian Aid (BDCT)	£951.47
May-June	Godmanchester Foodbank	£322.50
July-August	Ed Isaac	£580.00
Sept-Oct	DEC Special Appeal for hurricane & earthquake victims (PCC + bucket collection)	£206.00
Sept-Oct	Bloodwise	£1,550.00
November	*Royal British Legion (Remembrance - BDCT)	£622.23
November	Children in Need	£203.00
Nov-Dec	East Africa	£300.00
December	*Children's Society (Christingle - BDCT)	£163.00
December	* St John's Hospice / Ormiston Families at Littlehey prison / Crossroads Carers (Carol Service - BDCT)	£700.00
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£8,545.51</b>

\*the marked donations were from Buckden & District Churches Together events or whole village initiatives and a proportion of these amounts will have been from St Mary's congregation

## **Buildings & Facilities Report:**

### **Co-ordinators: Churchwardens**

**Building:** During 2017 we have completed major repairs to the stonework on and around the tower and to the clock-faces which were taken away for a period. The stonework project has benefitted from a substantial grant from Amey Community Fund but also from the hard work and generosity of the people of Buckden raising funds through the Restoration Appeal and this year's "800 and counting" challenge both of which have far exceeded expectations.

We received an Engage Award from Cambridgeshire Churches Historic Church for the stars on the tower which shine during advent and Christmas.

Minor repairs and maintenance are carried out routinely using local tradesmen (or members of the congregation) where possible.

Of the three major areas of work identified in the Quinquennial Inspection by the Church Architect, there is now just one remaining, the renovation of the exterior wall and roof of the vestry. This was the most complicated of the three as it will require planning permission as well as a faculty from the Diocese.

The next Quinquennial Inspection is due in 2019.

**Organ:** Many thanks to John Cartwright, John Hitchin and others who have helped play for services over past year. If anyone with piano skills is willing to learn to play the organ, John would be very willing to teach them.

The organ is tuned twice a year by Cousins of Leicester. We continue to have problems some of which can no longer be rectified without a complete overhaul of the action and cleaning of the pipes. The organ is over 134 years old and the cost of the renovation will be in the region of £75,000. Now that major works on the building are complete we plan to move forward with grant applications for the organ.

**Bells:** Bellringing is in a good position. We are usually able to field a full team on a Sunday and regularly have over 10 on a practice night, bolstered by five young ringers that are learning. The bells have not required any work on them over the last year and none is anticipated over the next year as they remain in a good state of repair.

**The Church Property Register** (inventory and terrier), which lists everything owned by St Mary's, is currently undergoing a major revision.

**The Living Stones Room** continues to have regular bookings for yoga and occasional bookings for other events.

**The churchyard** has benefited from several sessions of churchyard tidying. Thanks to Ken Gray for organising this and to everyone who took part.

## **Finance & Giving Report:**

### **Treasurer: John Wells**

Whilst as is our normal approach, we monitor closely our "Monthly Finance Overview", which provides key figures for each of our funds, this year our concentration has been on our Restoration Fund. This was vital as there was considerable inflow of funds initially, but then as the year progressed our outgoings were significant which meant we had to ensure our cash flow was sufficient to meet all payments.

Although a grant was successfully obtained, this was subject to expenses and payment is not forthcoming until the work has been successfully completed.

Our Management team met regularly, to ensure invoices were correct, which task was helped considerably by the construction knowledge of Robin Gibson who had been seconded to this group.

In overall figure terms we came into 2017 with a cash balance of £87k, peaked at £118k in September and finished the year at £70k. However, that is not the end of our project costs as so far in 2018 expenditure leaves us with a fund balance of £41k. The grant and VAT refunds will help to reinstate some of these reductions.

The help and support given by Management Colleagues is acknowledged and similarly all those who contributed in many ways towards our financial wellbeing are duly thanked.

## **Events & Fundraising Report:**

### **Co-ordinator: Carole Coram**

The two teams of volunteers who organise events for St Mary's work incredibly hard in their joint aim of encouraging people to use St Mary's socially while raising funds to keep the building in good repair as a fitting place in which to worship God.

The past year saw all the now familiar events, ranging from the Winter Warmer curry lunches through all the seasons to the Christmas Coffee morning, plus a few extras which included the Christmas Wreath Festival – this was a great outreach event and not only did the church look beautiful for Christmas, but it also brought a lot of new people into the church. All were very popular and greatly enjoyed by both parishioners and the wider community.

The decision to reduce the number of concerts proved to be the right one and both the concerts that did take place were well supported, the plan is to run the same again this year.

Thank you to all those people who do so much to organise and support the events, but special mention must be given to Patsy Gray who chairs the Fundraisers, and Chris Bylett who chairs the events committee.

## **Buckden School Report:**

### **Anne Carter (as Foundation Governor)**

Both David and I sit as Foundation Governors at Buckden School, supported by Jes on the governing body and have an excellent relationship with the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher and the teaching staff.

After all the hard work last year on strengthening the links between the church and school, we had the SIAMS Inspection (statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools) in June 2017 and were rated as "outstanding". This is on top of the Ofsted "outstanding" rated achieved in July 2015.

As always, there have been school visits to church for services at Christmas, Easter and Harvest Festival. On Mondays, Collective Worship assembly in school is led and coordinated by Jes. Jamworkx after-school club continues to be popular and is ably supported by a team of volunteers from St. Mary's.

The next phase for Buckden School is to become a Teaching School, moving on to train new teachers as well as to teach children.

If you're interested in becoming a Foundation Governor, please come and speak to us. It is a very worthwhile and interesting role. I will be standing down at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year after 12 years as a governor at Buckden School and 7 years after my own children left the school.

## **Deanery Synod Report:**

### **Jes Salt and John Wells**

St Mary's continues to play played an important and active role within the St. Neots Deanery, which meets around 4 times each year. John Wells is now our only elected representative and he invariably attends with the Revd. Jes and provided helpful input into the discussions about Deanery and Diocesan finance, which as usual have been a significant part of the Deanery discussions this year. Janet Perrott, who is the lay Chair, is also a member of General Synod so has been able to keep us updated with developments in the national church.

## **Conclusion**

### **Revd. Jes Salt**

Once again, many thanks for all your support through 2017. However, life never stays still, and as I indicated last year, the Diocese require us to identify our mission goals for 2018 and beyond as part of their Diocesan strategy. There will be more detail on this at the Annual Meeting, but after prayer and preparation we feel that our immediate goals are to continue to build on our relationships with the community focussing particularly on the 11+ group, the folk we would hope to reach through Holidays at Home and those we meet through baptisms, weddings and funerals, and all backed up through deepening our prayer.