

THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST MARY - ON - THE HILL, CHESTER

ST MARY WITHOUT - THE – WALLS CHURCH, CHESTER

Registered Charity Number 1132533

PAROCHIAL ACTIVITY REPORTS

2017 - 2018

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1. ST. MARY'S PAROCHIAL CHARITIES REPORT 2017-18

The Trustees of St. Mary's Parochial Charities, who are the Rector, the two Churchwardens and two representative trustees elected by the Vestry of the Parish, continue to administer the Parochial Charities in accordance with the Charity Commission Scheme of 1889. Derek Lawson and I were elected in 2015 as the Representative Trustees for a five-year term.

Moneys were donated on various dates from about the year 1600 for the relief of the poor and for other charitable purposes.

The income for the year ended 30th April 2017 was £5,557, which was an increase of £164 compared with the figure of £5,393 for 2015/16. We were able to make charitable grants in November 2017 totalling £5,630, being an increase of £200 compared with the grants for the previous year. These were to our Senior Residents' Lunch Club, the West Cheshire Food Bank, the Chester Samaritans, St. Mary's Overleigh School Pastoral Fund and a range of smaller local discretionary grants.

The unit trust investments of the Parochial Charities have risen in value to a figure of £105,485 as at 30th April 2017. Most of this value represents capital which cannot be spent under the terms of the Scheme. However, some of this figure represents unexpended income from previous years which was invested many years ago by the Trustees and is contributing to the income now received.

Peter Collins

Chairman of St. Mary's Parochial Charities (Charity No.215406).

2. CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT APRIL 2017- MARCH 2018

The most recent Quinquennial Inspection (QI) took place on 9th December 2016. It states that the church continues to be well cared for and is in excellent condition. It also states that anything raised in the inspection is of a minor nature and there are no big issues related to the future of the church.

The **Premises Committee** has extracted from the report the items raised and included them in its rolling 5 year Action Plan. They largely relate to continuing repairs to worn stonework, repointing work and also correcting historic cementitious repointing work. The aim is to have addressed the items raised by 2021, when the next QI will be due.

The Action Plan includes a planned maintenance schedule throughout the year, which makes sure preventative maintenance is carried out before any problems become large and expensive.

CHURCH MAINTENANCE

There are regular checks of gutters, drains, stonework, electrical equipment, gardening equipment etc.

High and low level gutters were inspected and cleaned out in April 2017.

Blockages to the high level hopper and downpipe from the North Sanctuary roof were cleared, and growing vegetation in the high level gutter was removed. Meanwhile, the four gullies around the spire base, at the top of the Tower, can only be cleared by a steeplejack, and this was completed in March 2018.

In 2017, a stainless steel cable was fitted around the base of the spire by Skyline, our steeplejack. This will make future rope access for work on the tower and steeple both easier and safer. List B consent (i.e. Archdeacon's written consent) was obtained.

There was concern about the possibility of asbestos being present inside the Tower at the high level board platform, which gives access out onto the parapet around the spire base. A Management Survey for Asbestos Materials was carried out by FibreSafe, together with an environmental clean. No asbestos was detected and the Survey report states no management plan is needed.

The installation of the new heating system for the church, which had started in 2016, was finally signed off in April 2017.

There had been issues with regard to whether the vertical pipework feeding the heating pipe running along the nave at high level was visually acceptable, or should be re-routed. There had also been damage done to the mosaic floor in the Baptistry and to the pipe organ. The damage was eventually made good by April 2017, at the contractor's expense. In the Baptistry, rather than repair just the damage done by the heating contractor, the entire strip of mosaic was repaired along the junction between the mosaic floor of the Baptistry and the wooden floor of the Nave. The additional cost was covered by donations from individuals.

The Boiler House has been cleared of all storage, cleaned, vegetation has been removed from below the window grilles and wooden covers installed over the grille access.

Work has started on renovating the front boundary wall.

The inventory of items in the Vestry safe and Vestry has been checked and found to be correct.

CHURCH OPENING

With the start of construction work on the new Parish Centre in September 2017, a considerable amount of hall equipment etc is being stored in church. So, for security purposes, we have had to keep the church locked, unless there is somebody present in the building.

In order to keep the church open as much as possible, there are a number of people who come and spend an hour or so in church, so that it is occupied. There is a schedule on the noticeboard in church, near the coffee area, with time slots for people to sign to indicate when they can spend some time 'church sitting'. We aim to have the church doors open from 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

This has been well supported, but there is always room for more people to join in with it.

CHURCH GROUNDS

During 2017, we have switched from holding occasional working parties to assist with grounds maintenance, to regular weekly gardening on the 'little but often' principle. A number of people have been coming along on Wednesday mornings to help with weeding the borders and some gentle pruning, so that we keep on top of things and little jobs do not go on to become big ones.

VOLUNTEERS

We are blessed to have so many people who provide their help, support and expertise to keep the church and parish community flourishing.

As well as our verger, parish administrator and hall cleaner, who work tirelessly and cheerfully for the church, there are numerous volunteers who do a host of tasks. Many of those tasks are unseen and unsung. Many of them are things that nobody notices when they are done, but everybody notices when they are not done.

We warmly thank all those who contribute in so many different ways: to our weekly worship; to looking after the church building and grounds; to helping with the many administrative tasks; to helping to run the groups associated with the church.

Our thanks, too, to those who voluntarily provide their professional expertise in a range of specialist areas, including finance, insurance, health and safety, technical matters, building issues.

With such help and support from everyone, a churchwarden's lot is indeed a happy one.

Helen Brophy & Ted Graham, Churchwardens

3. HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTION 2017-18

The Annual inspection of Health and Safety matters was carried out by Helen Brophy (Church Warden) and Alun Williams (Health & Safety Adviser) on Wednesday, 07 March 2018.

During the last year there have been no reportable accidents or dangerous occurrences. There were a few minor incidents, eg cuts, needing first aid treatment.

The major event during 2018 was the demolition of the old Church Hall, and its ongoing replacement by a much bigger Parish Centre. This provided a challenge to the PCC in making alternative provision for continuation of existing activities which were previously carried out in the old Church Hall. The PCC also needed to devote considerable efforts inputting into the planning of the design and future management arrangements for the new Centre.

Existing activities were transferred to the Church where-ever practical. The seating in the Church was substantially reconfigured to create secure storage space and to delineate activity areas. The PCC put temporary portakabins on the North Church Lawn to provide a Parish Office and flushing toilets. Compliance with HSW Act and DSE Regs was checked and found to be satisfactory.

The PCC has also been very active in planning the layout of the new building, including defining the fire and safety requirements to be incorporated in the new hiring arrangements for the Centre.

The building contractor has provided a very supportive service to the PCC in ensuring current church activities were not put at H&S risks by the ongoing demolition and building work. There is a high standard of external electrical installation used for the temporary portakabins and this wiring will be retained in future. The church management and staff have been pro-active in dealing with the wider range of extra activities now taking place in the church itself.

Planned maintenance/cleaning on the Bell Tower roof parapet was used as an opportunity to improve access arrangements at parapet level, simplifying future work up there. A new smart gas meter was fitted to the church boiler; a replacement vented lockable door is needed for the external boiler cupboard – in hand. A new insulated step ladder was bought – more suitable for work on the electrical lights. A new extension ladder above the bell-ringing chamber remains to be obtained and fitted.

Alun Williams (St. Mary's Health and Safety Officer)

4. ST. MARY'S HANDBRIDGE CENTRE REPORT 2017-18

Planning for the new Centre started in 2014 and building consent was granted in September 2016. The building of the Centre went out to tender in early 2017.

Read Construction Holdings, a firm based in Wrexham, was selected from the five tenders submitted. Construction work started in September 2017 with an intended completion by June 2018. Building work has progressed well during the winter months and there has been very little delay due to adverse weather conditions.

The Centre Committee is very grateful to all those who helped to reorganise the space in the Church following the demolition of the old Hall in September. We have been able to use the Church for storage and enable some groups to continue meeting in the Church during the building period. Basic catering facilities were also established in the Church and have been much appreciated.

The total cost of the whole building development is just under £1,5 million. In addition to the actual cost of construction, this includes the architectural fees for the development of the design, all the council fees, reports and surveys required. Every year the building is delayed the costs increase.

To enable the construction to start in 2017, a 20 year loan for £250,000 was taken out with the Methodist Chapel Aid. The repayment of this loan will be from the income of the Centre. £30,000 will be retained from the full contract cost to cover any unforeseen building problems. This will be paid in June 2019.

The extensive surveys that were undertaken during the year revealed that the site is on a Roman enclosure and a Medieval clamp kiln but these were of low archaeological importance and did not delay the build.

The new Centre is approximately twice the size of the old Church Hall. The Grosvenor Estate kindly gave additional adjoining land for essential car parking space. A new Lease has also been negotiated with the Grosvenor Estate to include the whole site.

Over the past four years, fundraising has been extremely challenging. Money has been raised through applications to a large number of funding foundations. The Grosvenor Estate has been very generous in donating money from the sale of a building in Handbridge. We have been very fortunate in having the support of Razia Daniels the Lord Mayor of Chester and the Chester MP Chris Matheson to help with fundraising initiatives. Fundraising will have to continue, in order to meet the full cost of the development. In March 2018 the funding shortfall was £65,000.

Work has also been undertaken to write new policies for the Centre and to develop a new booking system. A Centre manager will oversee the daily management of the Centre. A Centre Management Group will be established to monitor the use and development of the Centre. It is hoped to have the Centre in full use by July of this year.

Sincere thanks are due to the many people who have been very generous in not just donating money but also with their time in organising fundraising events and helping to plan the development of the Centre.

Ted Graham March 2018