

**St Mary's Church,
Prestwich**

**Annual Report
for the year ended
31 December 2017**

Review of the Year from the Priest in Charge

I'm delighted to be able to begin this report with good news: St. Mary's continues to be a growing church alive with new initiatives, new members and all sorts of positive things to report.

Growth

God is blessing us with growth. Attendance at worship continues to rise and we are blessed with a really diverse group of people who make up the St. Mary's community. We are now one of the larger churches in the Diocese of Manchester and we are often looked to as an example of growth and new life. We have an amazing number of children in our congregation and a growing number of teenagers, this is very unusual and we should thank God for it. Almost every week new people join us and we have prioritised our ministry of welcome and hospitality. Over 1,000 people worshipped with us over the Christmas period and on Easter day almost 250 people were in church. Relationships continue to be strengthened by a programme of social events running through the year which bring people together in a variety of ways. Gary and the choir lead high quality choral music which is increasingly rare in a parish church and we should treasure it. Many churches in our Diocese are very small with congregations of fewer than 30 people. Church attendance nationally is in rapid decline but God is doing something wonderful here.

Evangelism

During the past year we have decided to become more intentional about outreach and evangelism. At Christmas a group of us were in the shopping centre giving out free mince pies and free drinks and inviting people to come and join us. It was a wonderful experience for those who took part and has given us confidence in taking to the streets of our community and inviting others to share in the Good News of Jesus Christ. This was followed up on Ash Wednesday when we went to the Metrolink station at rush hour and ashed commuters with the ash of the cross to mark the beginning of Lent. Our wonderful parish school is one of our most significant mission fields. This year we have embedded much of the good practice which takes place and our partnership will move in a new direction with even more shared ministry in the year to come.

Children and Young People

The Diocese of Manchester gave us the accolade of winning a 'Church for a Different World' award. This was in recognition of our Pre School Praise service which regularly attracts over 80

small children and their carers. This is an informal weekly service with songs, Bible stories and craft activities followed by cake and drinks. PSP is meeting a real spiritual and social need in our community and has led to many Baptisms and new members of our Sunday congregations. Our Youth Group is now four years old and meets each week in the community centre. Our young people are deeply inspiring, great fun to be around and are visibly growing in faith month by month. This year we added a Food and Faith project to our offering for older Youth Group members. This involves meeting once a month (usually at the Rectory) for Sunday lunch and having the chance to talk informally about the things that really matter to young people. The 22nd Prestwich Scouts remain a valued part of our life and often share in our worship. Junior Church is flourishing with new members of the leadership team as well as lots of new children. The teaching, as in all of our groups, is high quality and inspirational.

Discipleship

The number of those being confirmed continues to rise and a notable feature is the number of adults deciding to be confirmed. The service last year was held at St. Margaret's and we had over 20 candidates and it was a day of real celebration. Our Baptism ministry is thriving, families are booking services months in advance and we are offering extra dates to keep up with the many requests that we are getting. People often comment on the joy and the quality of welcome they encounter when they come to St. Mary's to be baptised. People notice when there is genuine hospitality and an authentic welcome. Also during the past year we have admitted an increasing number of children to the Eucharist. They follow a course for a number of weeks as they prayerfully prepare to receive Holy Communion for the first time. It is vital that people of all ages and backgrounds feel welcome in this church. This year as part of our Year of Holiness we introduced Holy Hour once a month. This is a silent hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament followed by a Eucharist of Our Lady. Our Lent courses were over-subscribed this year so we introduced an additional offering of a mid-week Bible study group immediately after the Wednesday morning Eucharist as well as continuing our adult and junior Lent Groups. Attendance at the Wednesday service is now very low and seldom rises to double figures and we need to review its future.

Finance

We have recovered from the crisis in our finances from five years ago. Congregational giving was very low and we were over spending year on year. I'm delighted to say that giving is now healthy again and our spending is under control and we have built up healthy reserves. This year we have drawn down on our reserves to replace the church boiler and to upgrade the curate's

house. Church is now always warm and this is an important aspect of mission, you cannot invite people into a cold church and expect to grow. There is no room for complacency though and we still rely on the generosity of a small number of people who give large sums each month. Every member of St. Mary's needs to be invited to consider the generosity of God in their lives and to come to a decision about their own sacrificial giving. Too many people still give the bare minimum and rely on others to keep St. Mary's solvent as it costs almost £90,000 a year just to keep the doors open.

Challenges

1. Being a growing church means that we have many members who are new to faith. We need to teach the faith in a way which is engaging, inspiring and life changing. This will be a high priority in 2018/19.
2. Our Grade One listed building will need some major repairs in the next few years and significant sums of external funding need to be secured to make this achievable.
3. Congregational giving needs to rise year on year to keep pace with rises in the cost of running the parish and to resource new ministries to which God is calling us.
4. Dispersed leadership will need to be strengthened as we continue to grow. As Parish Priest I cannot relate to 300 or 400 members in the same way that I did when we were a community of half the size. Leadership needs to be widely shared and pastoral care must continue.
5. It is vital that we become increasingly outward facing and share our faith with more and more confidence in the wider community.

Leadership and Vocations

I remain grateful to God for the ministry of the PCC and particularly to our Church Wardens. Both Stewart and Susie undertake countless hours of work which many people never see but which is vital to the flourishing of our life together. The PCC have kept a tight focus on enabling the spiritual life of the parish to deepen. The members of the PCC drive forward the programme as set out in the Mission Action Plan and hold the vision of the parish that was agreed four years ago. In 2018 we are moving into the Year of Confidence with a new set of plans and actions. It is essential that the PCC continue to be men and women who are frequent and regular worshippers and who share a deep commitment to our inclusive growth focussed vision. God has blessed us with new vocations: we now have three ordinands (Richard, Adele and Carole) and hopefully more in the pipeline. Owen joined us this year as Assistant Curate and is already contributing to our shared life and has become a much valued colleague.

I am grateful to all those who minister at St. Mary's in any kind of way. Large numbers of people contribute to our life: cleaners, intercessors, readers, gardeners, sides people, those who offer refreshments, the communications team, leaders of our various groups and all who serve in ways that are hidden from public gaze.

I was made Rector this year for which I am grateful. These days it amounts to little more than a title but it is a significant acknowledgement by the Diocese that St. Mary's is a parish church where ministry is fruitful. I continue to offer Spiritual Direction to a quite large number of people across the Diocese who want to deepen their prayer life which I find very rewarding. I am involved in the training of Curates as a Tutor and I was appointed this year as an Examining Chaplain which involves interviewing candidates for ordination on behalf of the Bishop. The daily round prayer is foundational to my life and the first hour of each day is spent in the Oratory listening to God, reading scripture and entering more deeply into the mystery of the Eucharist. I cannot imagine a priesthood which can function without such foundations.

This is my fifth annual report and I am delighted to be able to reflect on the many good things which God is doing in our midst and I rejoice in the signs of spiritual growth that we are experiencing. During 2017 I was able to undertake a 30 day retreat which enabled me to think afresh about my vocation as a priest and to pray about where God may be calling me to next. When I first came to St. Mary's I had a clear sense of what needed to happen to bring about growth and how the life of the parish might be renewed. As I look to God's future I am open to whatever may be next both for the parish and for me personally and I sense that God is stirring me to new challenges. I remain grateful for your prayerful support, your friendship and for your willingness to share your journey with me.

Thanks be to God for all that is good in our life together.

With love, Chris.

Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council

Purpose

The purpose of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) is to set the strategic direction and vision for the spiritual life of the parish. Its main focus is on:

- Mission
- Outreach
- Discipleship

- Liturgy

Committee Structure

In order to ensure it maintains its strategic role, the PCC has established a standing committee and two sub committees with delegated responsibilities as detailed below:

Standing Committee

- day to day management
- practical parish running matters
- to ensure legal compliance
- to ensure the parish is financially sustainable
- to ensure that best value is obtained on expenditure
- to lead on stewardship

Buildings Committee

- to ensure the building is in good order
- to progress the agreed works from the quinquennial inspection
- to carry out routine maintenance

Social Committee

- to develop a programme of social events through the year to build relationships in the parish.

Meetings

The PCC met bi-monthly throughout the year, each meeting starting with members celebrating a Eucharist together. The standing committee and sub committees met between meetings with reports being received by the full PCC for discussion and ratification of any decisions made.

The primary focus of the PCC during 2017 was to update our Mission Action Plan, set objectives and priorities to take us through to 2020 and to develop a detailed plan for 2018 – the year of confidence. This updated plan reflects and builds on the many blessings the parish has seen over recent years and focuses on five key priorities:

- Holiness
- Children and Young People
- Evangelism
- Generosity
- Buildings

During 2017, the PCC also registered St Mary's as a charity, approved the Bishop's proposal to make Chris the Rector of the parish and developed and implemented a charitable giving policy under which St Mary's commits to a level of charitable giving of at least 10% of its surplus income.

Membership / Attendance

The following members served on the PCC and its sub committees during the year:

NB. The attendance figures reflect the number of meetings attended compared to the maximum number of meetings it was possible for the member to attend.

			PCC Attendance	Standing Committee	Building Committee	Social Committee
Priest in Charge	Chris Wedge	Chair	6/6	✓	✓	
Wardens	Stewart Barnet	Lay Vice Chair DeMPaCom Rep	6/6	✓	✓	
	Susie Mapledoram	Safeguarding Officer	5/6	✓		✓
Deanery Synod	Emma Chadwick		6/6			
	Julia Dutton	Electoral Roll Officer	3/6			
	Adele McKie	PCC Secretary Gift Aid Secretary	6/6	✓		
Ex-Officio	Carole Barnet	Reader	6/6			
	Owen Edwards	Curate	1/1			
Elected Lay + Co-Opted Members	Tony Carter		3/5			
	Joanne Conchie	Resigned Jan 18	1/4			
	Rachel Connolly		3/5			✓
	Barbara Dutton		6/6	✓		✓
	Sandra Fenge		5/6			✓
	Hazel Froggatt	Treasurer	3/6	✓		
	Catriona Holmes		6/6			✓
	Max McCarthy		5/5			
	Rick Milnes		1/5			
	Helen Parsons		2/5			
	Fred Plant		4/6			
	Tony Smith		6/6	✓	✓	
	Dorothy Sutcliffe		6/6			✓
Alicia Sukonik		4/6		✓		

Adele McKie, PCC Secretary.

Electoral Roll

As at 31 December 2017 there were 130 parishioners on the electoral roll, 61 of whom reside within the parish.

The number we have on roll entitles us to have 3 representatives on the Deanery Synod. *Julia Dutton, Electoral Roll Officer*

Church Wardens' Reports

Looking back on this last year there is an enormous amount to be thankful to God for in the work and ministry of St Mary's. I have encountered so many people engaged in so much in our parish that has a huge impact on the lives of people in Prestwich and glorifies God. It's become very clear to me over this year that we are really blessed to have many committed and dedicated people in our parish who take a huge amount of joy serving the church in many different ways, from doing a magnificent job of cleaning and tidying our church building on a Friday morning, to providing craft activities at Pre School Praise, to organising Heritage days, for making themed cakes for our refreshments on a Sunday morning, to giving guided tours up the tower, to organising hymn books, to sorting our rotas and newsletter ...the list goes on and on. I'm so very grateful for each and every one, for their love for God demonstrated in this service and the joy that they demonstrate in just getting on with it.

We have welcomed some new folk onto the sides person rota and continue to enjoy, together, the opportunity to welcome people each Sunday and at weekday services to St Mary's. There have been some wonderful conversations as people have arrived and left our services that have enabled relationships with both each other and God to begin and grow, and this should not be underestimated. Our hope is that people will know that they belong as soon as they walk through our doors and our welcome is critical to this. The commitment of the team at the back of church has been amazing and I'm very grateful for their support, wisdom and good humour when faced with a variety of different situations and noises! I'm particularly grateful for the hard work, warmth and support of our Assistant Churchwardens, Barbara and Tony.

It's been great to be part of a team that organises social events and I've certainly learnt a lot about catering thanks to my friends on the Social Committee. We enjoyed a Harvest Supper last October at St Mary's School, and a very competitive Beetle Drive in January, with some

controversy around the final winner! These events have given us a chance to get to know each other better and foster new friendships, and we are determined to continue to make these regular events. We are a church known for prayer and parties, both being important in our fellowship in Christ and with each other.

It's been great to welcome Owen this year to serve his curacy at St Mary's, and to follow the journeys of Adele, Carole and Richard as they continue their ordination training. This will be an exciting summer with Carole and Richard's ordination, and Owen's priesting, and we look forward with anticipation to next summer when Adele is ordained. I'm very grateful for all that they bring to St Mary's. We often hear in the diocese that vicars only work on Sundays but that's not true, and it's **certainly** not true of our Rector. Chris serves this parish prayerfully, generously, lovingly and with a profound commitment to the Gospel, to inclusivity and to ensuring people know that they are loved and accepted by God. I'm hugely grateful for him and all he brings to the life of St Mary's.

It's been a year of learning the ropes - being new at this church warden business, and I've learnt a huge amount from Stewart, my fellow churchwarden. I'm immensely grateful for the time, energy and countless hours he gives to both the mundane and exciting elements of the running of St Mary's. I've learnt huge amount from him and am very grateful for his support in journeying through this year.

St Mary's is a place where we stand back and make space for God to work amongst us – calling us to new areas of service, inspiring us, challenging us and comforting us. As we look back on this last year with gratitude, we look ahead for all that God will do amongst us in this next year.

Susie Mapledoram – Church Warden

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:17

Your support and commitment to the life and work of God in this ancient Holy place has been overwhelming.

Additions to the "Terrier" for this year include New Hymn Books and service booklets for BCP Eucharist services, conversion of the lighting to LED and the replacement of the heating boilers.

General Building

With any major work, the wardens and PCC are conscience of obtaining value for money and where possible obtain a number of quotes prior to signing contracts.

The building does require at some stage major investment. The side chapel interior and flooring requires decoration and renewal.

We all enjoy a warm church especially during the winter months. This comes at a cost in energy bills and boiler servicing. To help our green energy credentials and cut costs new gas boilers, pumping, filtering and GPS control system were installed before winter. We hope for smaller bills in the coming years.

Towards the end of the year we were victims of metal theft from the chancel roof with consequent water ingress in the sanctuary. The lead work has been replaced and the opportunity to carry out repairs and restoration to the East end, whilst scaffold was in place, was taken. The majority of the cost of this work has been reclaimed from Ecclesiastical Insurance and the Church Commissioners. I am grateful to Heritage Conservation & Restoration for their rapid response in dealing with the emergency work to secure the building and subsequent repair. The PCC will be considering increased security to prevent or impede further thefts.

The Organ has been regularly serviced and tuned. Some electrical related defects and pipe work repairs may require attention if not resolved during the next servicing interval. The electronic bell striking mechanism will be serviced this year.

Items that are in need of repair or restoration:

As highlighted in 2015 the Green Altar Frontal is in need of serious repair, 2 x Stained Glass panels in Lever Chapel require partial glass replacement with colour and painted to match existing artwork and beading.

Church Life

The growing life of St. Mary's, which we thank God for, brings with it organizational and practical challenges.

The number of children and young adults coming to church has increased over the past year. This was one of the priorities of the PCC – to be seen to be a family and child friendly church whilst maintaining dignity and reverence within our liturgy. The establishment and success of PreSchool Praise and the Church Youth Group and the continuing Christian teaching and nurturing should be applauded and we thank the Lord that through him, we continue this work with the young of our parish.

This year of 2018 – Year of Confidence – will see additions to our ministry team with Owen, who joined us in January as curate, being priested in June, and Carole's ordination as deacon in July. We pray and thank God for bringing them to us to both learn about and teach the good news you offer to all.

To sustain the growth of the kingdom we will have to invest in better facilities than we currently can provide. The PCC are looking at ways to achieve this in the near and longer term and will need substantial investment in time and money.

It has been hard work but also is a privilege to serve the community of St Mary's. It is also an inspiration to work with our Rector, Rev Chris. His leadership and vision have motivated all those around him. Finally I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to my fellow warden, Susie, who with her knowledge and experience supporting the younger ones of the parish is a great asset. Her work to maintain and reinforce our inclusive and welcoming ethos is appreciated by new and not so new visitors to our worship each week. I would wish to thank the PCC and church officers and all the wonderful volunteers who have, by the grace of God, given so much of themselves in the past year to grow the kingdom here and now.

Stewart Barnet – Church Warden

Around the Parish

CHILD PROTECTION / SAFEGUARDING

All leaders and helpers working with children and young people within our parish have been DBS checked.

Our Child Protection Statement was reviewed and agreed by the PCC at its May meeting.

Susie Mapledoram, Safeguarding Officer

COMMUNICATIONS

St Mary's Monthly News has been published throughout the year, with a mix of stories from the parish and from the wider church to support our faith journey and the mission of the parish. There are occasional themed issues, such as a recent edition of the newsletter focusing on all our work with children and young people. Thanks go to Stewart Barnet for the monthly printing. Contributions are always welcome (I suggest about 300 words maximum) to andrewwest@gmx.co.uk - thank you. St Mary's Website has been updated with new pictures and additional content during the year. Latest news and a weekly calendar of events is kept up to date on an ongoing basis to keep the site fresh. During 2017 the site generated nearly 17,000 views. The parish Twitter feed goes from strength to strength. Followers have increased by around 25% over the last year and at the time of writing are approaching 1300. According to Twitter analytics our followers are 50/50 male/female; 90% are from England and around 70% are based here in the North West - this seems an encouraging set of statistics. We aim to tweet at least once daily - for the most part with original content featuring the mission and ministry of St Mary's, and

also including selected re-tweets from time to time. Over a whole month we generate around 38,000 twitter 'impressions' which is a measure used by twitter to indicate how many times our messages are seen on the network. We ran two social media campaigns during 2017: the first during Lent involved members of the congregation sharing 'what God means to me' (thanks to Susie Mapledoram for coordinating this). During the Autumn we ran a twitter prayer campaign linked to features in our beautiful churchyard. This was timed to coincide with national cemeteries week and resulted in coverage by the diocesan newsletter and the national "Cemetery Friends" organisation. In 2018 we are planning a third campaign (#50daysofprayer) during the fifty days of the Easter season - this will be the most ambitious yet. When there is so much negative news about social media we are deliberately using twitter positively to promote the good news of Jesus. You can follow us @stmaryprestwich and you can also view all our tweets via the parish website www.stmarysprestwich.org (click on 'what's on', then 'St Mary's on Twitter').

Andrew West, Communications

CHOIR

The choir has performed well in its duty to help in the leading of worship, and has we hope, enhanced the services by the performance of an ever increasing repertoire of high quality anthems and special "seasonal" music.

Numbers in the choir have recently increased! We have been joined by two more men – Andrew West, a Tenor, and James Williams, a Bass – this has made a great difference to the overall balance of the choir, and is especially pleasing that both were members of our own congregation – the best choristers are church people first. This now produces the following statistics (when all are present), 7 Sopranos; 3 Altos; 2.5 Tenors, and 3 Basses. For the Eagle-eyed amongst you, you will have noticed that Eleanor Maxwell has been missing since Christmas. She has been studying in Kingston, Ontario, but will be rejoining us in May. We do however, still have room for more singers, particularly sopranos and altos at this time, so please take this as an invitation and remember that the prerequisites are simply a reasonable singing voice, a good ear, a willingness to be 'moulded', and most importantly, a sense of humour! If you feel that you can commit to Thursdays at 7.30 – 9pm, and Sunday morning services, then please speak to the Organist.

Of special note, I must mention the Festival Service of Nine Lessons and Carols held in December, when we were joined by Ben Hulme, A.R.C.O. at the organ. The choir were on top form and produced a wonderful tapestry of Christmas music built around the traditional readings which tell of the redemption of mankind.

These special occasions however, do not detract from the beauty and individuality of the weekly Choral Eucharist, when it is the choir's duty to support and enhance the liturgy.

It is worth noting that St.Mary's is the only church in the area (and one of an ever decreasing number in the Diocese), to have a regular, loyal and competent four-part choir – we have much to be thankful for, and to build on as we go forward with God's help.

I should like to place on record my very great thanks to the choir for its loyalty both to St. Mary's and to me personally; I regard my work with it as something very special. My thanks also to the Rector for the support and encouragement he continues to extend to the choir and to me. Also, to the many members of the congregation of St. Mary's who each week express their appreciation for the music, both choral and organ.

Gary Hulme, A.R.C.O., L.T.C.L. , Organist & Choirmaster.

CHURCHYARD ACTION

At the start of the year the Churchyard Action Group volunteers were busy repairing the fence between the churchyard and Carmona Drive, following on from earlier work on one of the metal fences. Just before this the volunteers were up on the roof of the Hearst House removing moss, leaves and tree saplings from the roof and gutters.

Before Christmas we planted a thousand snowdrops and it is great to see that many of those planted earlier in the year are now showing. The area around the memorial to Prestwich Hospital patients will look very different in the years to come (see above). In total we have planted 15,000 bulbs and wild flowers over the last three years.

Last Autumn we had overhanging trees removed along Clough Drive and we planted bulbs provided by *Ambition for AgingBury* and *Groundwork*. We also removed graffiti from the churchyard walls and replaced one of the bins which had been set alight by vandals. We were also interviewed about the churchyard for a series of 'living memories' podcasts relating to Prestwich – you can listen to this interview on St Mary's website by clicking on 'church groups', then 'churchyard action group'. Also in the Autumn, time was spent clearing leaves from paths around the church and removing some rotten tree stumps which had originally formed part of a seat. Earlier in the year the church paths had been treated for weeds, overgrown graves near Clough Drive were cleared, and holly bushes pruned. Every Sunday the team from Community Payback have kept the "1923" section of the churchyard neat and tidy meaning that many more people are able to tend family graves – some years ago they would not have been able to do this as the area was completely overgrown. The Community Payback team's work also makes it easier for us to place remembrance crosses on the war graves at the appropriate time of year. Thanks go to all our volunteers who work every Tuesday morning and on the second Saturday morning of the month keeping the border along the path to the North Porch looking so neat,

tidying around the graves and ashes plots, providing refreshments, litter picking, smiling and laughing. We also want to thank all those who contribute financially to help keep our churchyard tidy. If you can join us to help, you will be very welcome.

Bill Cottam – Churchyard Action Group

PRE SCHOOL PRAISE

Pre School Praise continues to flourish and regularly sees over 80 under four's and their carers joining our worship on a Thursday morning. During the hour we spend together we sing, listen to a bible story, complete craft activities, eat cake and drink tea. We are grateful to God for the continued growth of Pre School Praise which has more than doubled its numbers since it first began in March 2016. Many families also regularly join our Sunday morning services and we continue to see the impact of Pre School Praise on the number of baptism enquires.

Pre School Praise has had several visits from other parishes to see our service and how it differs from other similar groups.

God is calling us to pray to encourage further growth both with children, babies and leaders and help them on their spiritual journey.

Barbara Dutton, Pre School Praise leader

JUNIOR CHURCH

We have had a very successful year and we should give thanks to God that our Junior Church is welcoming new children. We currently have many new younger members in our group. We are grateful for all the leaders who dedicate their time planning, preparing and leading the sessions.

Going forward we have a call from God to continue working with our children and teaching them how important and loved they are. We continue to spread God's message and encourage more people to join as leaders.

Emma Chadwick, Junior Church Leader

SCOUTS

At our last census the group's numbers were still around the 130 mark which is basically full capacity. We currently have no vacancies in 3 of our 5 sections. This past year sadly saw the close of our Bramble Beaver Unit – the section has been operating without its own dedicated beaver leader for a number of years and has been run by a scout leader and cub leader, both of whom have large very active sections of their own. When a large number of beavers moved up to cubs leaving just 10 in this section it was deemed the right moment to merge the 2 beaver sections and so the 10 Bramble beavers moved to Acorns on a Tuesday night. We are still desperate for leaders and would have capacity to reopen this section if leaders could be found.

The two cub sections are going strong and have camps planned over summer. A beaver sleepover is also planned.

Our two scout sections are also very healthy numbers wise, however both sections would benefit from more adult leaders. Friday Wildcats are at capacity and have actually increased their numbers by a full patrol in order to accommodate cubs moving up, however they are also currently 2 leaders down, due to illness and work conflicts. The adult cover for camp is currently being worked out!

The Den is in a poor state of repair with several small DIY tasks required and a more imminent roofing issue. Thanks to a superb grant from the Kimlaw trust we have been able to refit our boiler and entire central heating system this year. This winter the den was warm and our utilities bill amazingly slightly smaller.

Events wise – last year's camps were all a complete success. The British Legion called upon our assistance to marshal and lead last year's ceremony at the Cenotaph and we were happy to oblige. The group turned out over 60 children on parade and coupled with other scout groups (19th, 8th and 20th) over 100 scouts, cubs and beavers paid their respects. Over 600 members of the public also attended the service. Warrior cubs held their bi-annual Christmas panto and a good time was had by all.

At the time of writing we are preparing for our St George's Service at St Marys Church. At this service we shall be installing our new Scout Chaplain Adele McKie. We shall also be retiring our group Union Flag which has hung in the den for over 30 years. It shall have a dignified retirement hanging within the war memorial at St Marys. At the St George's service we shall also have our new Union flag blessed. After our renewal of promises 4 Wildcat Scouts will be receiving their Gold Awards (the highest award a scout can achieve) and 2 leaders will receive service awards.

The District ran a competition to design a new district badge following the merger of the Prestwich and Whitefield district with the Radcliffe district and I am pleased to announce the competition was won by a Warrior Cub and his design will be converted into our District badge in due course.

Finally I shall end with the usual appeal for more help – can you spare a few hours – we need leaders, helpers, occasional helpers, trades people, fund raisers, activity leaders.

Yours in scouting,

Philip Dutton (Merlin), Group Scout Leader 22nd Prestwich

YOUTH GROUP

This has been another magnificent year in the life of the Prestwich Mission Partnership Youth Group. The opportunity to spend an hour and a half with a brilliant group of young people and leaders on a Sunday evening has been a real joy this year.

It's hard to pick out some of the stand out moments from this year as we genuinely have such a great time each week, however there have been some very memorable times for very different reasons. We enjoyed a brilliant weekend away in October 2017 when we took 24 young people and 7 leaders to Hothersall Lodge where we had a great weekend looking at the theme of Making a Difference. Some of the highlights from that week consisted of leaders and young people jumping into the lake in very chilly weather, a powerful reflection on the Friday evening, a magnificent good and evil fashion show, and creating a Facebook profile for an Old Testament character. As well as being huge amounts of fun, opportunity for some nocturnal shenanigans and a chance to try out some new mocktails, these weekends are really significant for both the young people and the leaders – we have space to explore more of who God is for us and his purpose for our lives, and grows deeper relationships between us all.

Since January we have been looking at World Issues as a result of some conversation which continues to surface around the Manchester bombing and our response as Christians to the 'tough stuff' that is going on in the world today. We created space one evening to talk about the bombing and as a group of leaders we were moved and inspired by our young people's openness, courage, hope and confidence in God's love and compassion for all. It's always important to remember that young people teach us so much about ourselves, our world and God.

I'm enormously grateful for our team of leaders whose energy, creativity, hospitality and commitment to this youth group is second to none. They are a real team and it's been humbling to see friendships flourish and faith deepen as a result of being part of this ministry with our young people.

Susie Mapledoram, Youth Group Leader

FOOD and FAITH GROUP

This year has seen a very exciting and welcome development in our youth ministry with the introduction of a new group aimed at our secondary school aged young people. Our Food and Faith group was introduced following a consultation evening with our young people. We meet on the last Sunday of the month (usually at the Rectory) to share a meal together, discuss faith issues and to spend time in each other's company.

Feedback from the young people in the group highlights that what they enjoy the most is the food – especially the puddings! (Oliver), the activities (Maria) which give us an opportunity to learn about ourselves, each other and about God, and just being together (Samuel).

Thanks must go to Chris and Andrew for their hospitality, to the leaders who join us each month but most of all to our young people whose commitment and hunger to grow in faith and discipleship is an example and an inspiration to us all.

Adele McKie, Youth Ministry

Treasurer's Report

At the 31st December 2017 total receipts received in the year were £103,345. Of this, the amount that was unrestricted and available to spend was £102,741.

A large proportion of our income (61%) continues to come from voluntary donations which totalled £43,158 (an increase of 2% from 2016). Gift aid, (claimed quarterly on donations) made up 17% of our income. This totalled £17,194 and was much higher than in 2016 as this includes the final quarter claim from 2016.

The house at 25 Rectory Lane continued to be let in 2017 until September, when the current tenants vacated to allow essential repairs and refurbishment to take place in preparation for our new curate to take residence (January 2018). Consequently rental income was less than in previous years, but still provided gross income for the year of £7,764.

Total expenditure in 2017 was £115,022 . Major items of expenditure included £39,405 to pay our Parish Share in full, £14,245 spent on major repairs to the heating system and new boilers (financed from our cash reserves and deposit accounts), and a further £9,491 was spent on refurbishing our property at 25 Rectory Lane.

The net result for the year was a deficit of £11,677. Adding bank and deposit balances brought forward at the beginning of the year, the bank balances carried forward at 31st December 2017 on unrestricted funds totalled £116,288, compared with £125,933 in 2016

Reserves Policy

It is PCC policy to maintain a cash balance in the current account of £6,000 to meet monthly expenditure. Our aim with any balances is to maximise investments and as such we have deposited lump sums in two separate accounts (12 month access, £50,000 and three year access, £40,000)

Conclusion

2017 saw a steady growth in the numbers of our congregation, and their giving finances the day-to-day running costs of St Mary's. It can be seen from the deficit balance incurred in 2017, that any major expenditure over and above day-to-day costs must be financed from our cash reserves, hence the total funds carried forward is almost £10,000 less than in 2016. Looking forward, I hope that the growth of our numbers continues, and their ability to commit to giving more will enable us to replenish our cash reserves to plan for the continued growth of St Marys.

Hazel Froggatt, Treasurer