**CHAIR’S REPORT**

**The 2015 Story**

**Looking Back.**

Another year done. As the saying goes, ‘Time flies when you’re having fun’. As I reflect on the year just gone there is much to celebrate. It might feel that nothing much changes but let me take you through a journey through the year and give you a brief summary.

**January** the first woman Bishop, Libby Lane, was consecrated at York Minster. (By the end of 2015 Libby was joined by 6 more with 3 more women to be consecrated bishop in 2016.)

**February** our Team Lent course was based on the 10 Commandments, part of the Pilgrims Bible Study series produced by the Church of England. The District Guiding Thinking Day service was held at St John’s.

**March** interviews were held for the post of Team Vicar and Kim Lafferty was appointed. Another successful schools event ‘Easter Experience’ was held in church for year 5 school children. All Saints School celebrated its 50th anniversary.

**April** our architect Mark Pearce makes his first visit to St John’s to begin to gather ideas for the reordering of our church building. A new Church Warden is appointed Keith Entwistle to work alongside Graham Martin who was elected as Church Warden for the 4th time. New people were elected as PCC members. Steve Mann became the new website editor.

**May** a VE Day Celebration Afternoon Tea was held. The Indian Orthodox Church used our church building to hold a service. Our architect Mark presented a feasibility study to the PCC relating to the reordering our church building.

**June**, our Team Confirmation service was held at Stoneclough and Bishop Jack, a very jolly Bishop, confirmed 16 young people and 1 adult. (1 of the young people was from St John’s.) We also took another 2 candidates from the Team to be confirmed by Bishop Frank to St James’ Breightmet, who were unable to attend the service at Stoneclough due to holidays. Malcolm Wearing was ordained priest and Vinny Whitworth was appointed as our new Area Dean replacing Rodger Petch. At the end of the month we tried out a new idea for the Year 6 schools experience day. We called it ‘Footprints all over the world’ and explored themes of moving on and journey through bible characters.

**July** we enjoyed a successful Summer Fair.

**August** Kim Lafferty was licensed as Team Vicar.

**September** 2 more ALMs, this time from Stoneclough parish, were commissioned at a service at Manchester Cathedral. An Afternoon Tea was held in church for Macmillan Cancer Care. A group from The Diocesan Advisory Committee came to review the suggested plans for reordering the church building and informally approved the work so far. The Quinquennial Inspection report on the church building was published.

**October**, as part of the Waterloo Commemorations, an Open weekend was held. We enjoyed fish and chips at the Harvest Supper and were entertained by a group of singers from Farnworth Amateur Dramatics Society. We said farewell to Karsten Wedgewood.

**November** the Winter Fair was held and 1 of our children was admitted to receive Holy Communion. The parish was successful in securing some funding for our School Project Worker for the next 3 years.

**December** we held a Christmas Tree Festival, a lovely celebration to round up the year and to kick start our Christmas Services. Our first Team Calendar was produced featuring stained glass windows from our team church buildings.

It might feel like nothing changes, but given all I have written in this report, you decide! There are probably other things I have forgotten too. All this reminds me how much people give of their time and talents to achieve all this. **Thank you.**

**Some Statistics.**

Some people like numbers so I thought I would include some statistics in this year’s report. Our average weekly attendance rose in 2015 to around 70 adults and 32 children. Our second Sunday service remains the most popular service in terms of attendance when we regularly see congregations of over 100 people. The number of baptisms in 2015 was 41 children and young people and 1 adult, again an increase from 2014. 9 couples were married in church in 2015 (6 in 2014) and we held 15 church funerals (13 in 2014). In 2015 just 1 child was admitted to receive Holy Communion, compared with 13 in 2014. (2014 was just an extra-ordinary year, usually we only admit a few children to Holy Communion each year.) Also 1 young person was confirmed in 2015.

In terms of major Christian festivals the number of people attending on Easter Sunday dropped from 126 in 2014 to 98 in 2015. In contrast the number of people attending worship on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day rose in 2015 to 242 people from 178 people in 2014. Our church building in December 2015 was used much more. We welcomed schools for their Carol Services and Zacs Youth Bar for a celebration event. In December in total we saw 1575 people from the community come through our doors for events other than our normal and Christmas services.

**Comings and Goings and New Ministries.**

Our Staff Team underwent some changes in the year. We were delighted to welcome Kim as Team Vicar. We said a fond farewell to Karsten our Curate and wished him well as he moved to his new parishes in Truro Diocese in Cornwall. It was also a great day of celebration when Malcolm was ordained priest in June. We were also pleased to see 2 new ALMs authorised in our Team. Deborah Bithell began her work in Stoneclough parish in ‘pastoral work’ and Peter Collier was authorised in ‘worship’ again in Stoneclough parish. At St John’s a new Church Warden was elected. New people became members of the PCC and a new website editor was appointed.

We also welcomed new people and families into our church family. We thank them for wanting to be a part of us and hope that they feel welcome and want to stick around with us. New families came to St Peter’s Family Church, a service held each month on a Sunday afternoon at St Peter’s School. Messy Church (which first met in November 2014) held once every 2 months at St John’s School also continued to grow and flourish throughout 2015. Some people and family also left our fellowship. We wish them well and thank them for all they have contributed to our shared life together.

Sadly too, much loved members of church family died. We miss them but rejoice that they are now with God in heaven.

**Concerns.**

Firstly, our major headache is to do with money. We have been running at a deficit of around £5000 for a number of years. The good news is that our deficit seems to be holding at the same level. The bad news is that the balance has to be taken from reserves each year and this cannot continue for ever. We need to constantly challenge ourselves regarding our financial contribution to God’s work through the church and look to find new ways of raising income and reducing our costs. Do we give to God what he deserves in terms of our money?

Secondly, our lack of commitment to attending church services held across the Team, Deanery and with our friends at Trinity Methodist Church. We belong to a much bigger family than is contained within the four walls of our church building. We have much to give and much to receive from our friends and neighbours. We also set a good example to our children and young people and give them a broader experience of what the church is all about by attending joint and team events. Do try and make this a priority for 2016.

**Moving On.**

So onto 2016. The PCC have much work to do in deciding the next step with our building plans and finding some solution to our financial concerns. At the beginning of 2016 we conducted a Time & Talents survey and the Church Wardens and I were heartened by the response. Hopefully we will have even more good news to share in next year’s report.

A final big thank you to you all. Thanks to all the Church Wardens who served in 2015 including Alan Sharrocks and Shaun Croston who finished their terms of office in April. Thanks to PCC Secretaries and Treasurers and PCC members and sidespeople. Thanks to all who contribute to our worship, those who help keep our buildings in good order and those who raise funds. It is a continued honour and privilege to be Team Rector here and I couldn’t do what I do without you. A special thank you to my colleagues Kim, Dorothy, Paul, Malcolm and Phillip who inspire me with their brilliance, who bring me humour and understanding, make me soup and buy my flowers when I’m struggling and are just the loveliest people to work with. Cheers guys!

A final thought. God is faithful and blesses us abundantly. May every breath we take be for His glory. May every footstep show Him as our way.

‘I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.’ Philippians 1:3-6

**Carol Pharaoh, Team Rector**