

# St Bartholomew's, Thurstaston with St Chad's Irby



## MISSION AND ACTIVITIES IN 2014





## **A Word from the Rector**

2014 has been a year of lots of activity and lots of people taking on new roles big and small. We had four people join the PCC for the first time and two others were co-opted. A group of parents organised and ran a very successful pumpkin party. There was a parish outing – the first in a long time. Thank you to those who took the helm in envisaging this and making it a reality. There was a team of people who ran with the idea of commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of WW1 and a very successful display resulted. Many people have joined the various rotas that enable Sunday worship to function smoothly. Thank you to anyone who plays a role in the life of our church, big or small, new to the job or been doing it for years – all of you are essential to the continued mission and growth of our parish.

The year has largely been focused around a growth survey. The idea for this began at a PCC Away Day in February. There were further PCC discussions which led to the survey going out in September and the results being published in October. Towards the end of the year, the PCC began to implement some of the suggestions and are committed to working on and developing other ideas in the New Year.

As I reflect on another year passed, I am greatly encouraged by the new faces within our congregations. In the past two years we have seen the age profile at St Bartholomew's significantly drop as four wedding couples (some now married) have become regular members of our congregation, alongside a few others who first came for a variety of reasons, but have chosen to stay. It really is good to see that there is hope for the future. For two or three years, I have been praying for more families to become an active part of our congregation and, in 2014, we saw three families move into the parish who are now a part of our congregation and three others who initially came with a baptism enquiry and have stayed. Thank God for answered prayers! We have also seen older people join our congregations, having moved into the area to live with children or following bereavement.

So, all in all, 2014 was a good year in which we have seen God at work in our church. Let us give thanks! Let us also continue to pray, so that at the end of 2015 we will once again be able to see what God has done amongst us.

[2 Corinthians 2:14-17](#)

[<sup>14</sup>But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. <sup>15</sup>For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; <sup>16</sup>to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? <sup>17</sup>For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.](#)

May we be the fragrance of Jesus within our community, and may we know that we are called by God to "speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence."

**Revd Jane Turner**

## **THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL DURING THE YEAR**

This report summarises the discussions and decisions of the PCC, which met eight times during 2014, while the Standing Committee met twice. Other reports will have more details than this summary about decisions on finances, the churchyard and repairs or maintenance of the churches, though they were all discussed fully by the PCC.

### **PCC AWAY DAY AND PROPOSED PARISH WEEKEND**

The PCC had recognised that it was spending too much time on issues such as our ongoing annual deficit, payment of parish share, and cash flow, and insufficient time on our real purposes such as promoting mission and discipleship. We had decided to refocus our thoughts at a PCC Away Day in January 2014, and were very fortunate that Bishop Keith, the Bishop of Birkenhead, was able to lead it. One point that he made strongly was the importance of creating an upward spiral of growth within the parish, although at that point we did not know how that could be done.

Most of our February meeting was spent discussing what we had learnt during the Away Day. We had planned to review service arrangements, and after discussion about the 6.30 service and taking into account the views of members of the congregation, we agreed to end that service with effect from 30<sup>th</sup> March 2014 (there were no 6.30 services in April anyway). As for other services, we were already planning a survey of people's views on all aspects of our church services and other activities, and we agreed that we ought to know the outcome of that before making decisions about other service arrangements. We realised that change was necessary; Bishop Keith had pointed out that, "If you are not willing to change, you will not grow".

Mr Smale offered to arrange another Parish Weekend, always extremely enjoyable social events, but which could also include the congregations in thinking about development and growth. By April, he had identified five possible venues and after discussion, Cloverley Hall was favoured. Later in the year, Mr Smale told us that Cloverley Hall was available for the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

### **SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRES**

In April, Mr Harford outlined two survey questionnaires that he had designed after discussions with Mr Dennison. People on "the fringe" – who did not normally attend church – would be given a simple questionnaire, while the existing congregations would have more detailed questions. An electronic survey would also be set up by Dr M James. In September, the PCC was informed that questionnaires were being distributed in both churches and returns were due by 5<sup>th</sup> October. The two primary schools were passing details of the electronic survey to parents.

We received the results in November. Views expressed were reasonably consistent for all groups of people. There were no strong links between people's ages and their preferences, for example for styles of worship. There was more dissatisfaction in the core members than in the fringe, which included some who attended church occasionally and some who did not attend at all.

37% of core church members had responded and the three key issues were the facilities at St Bartholomew's, a desire for less formality in the 9:30 am services at St Chad's and communications within the church community. Many of the core members wanted to know more about the PCC – what it discussed and who its members were.

With too much to discuss in one meeting, we divided into groups to discuss three particular issues:

- how to attract and keep younger people, families, children and youth at both churches;
- worship (some evening services, joint services, more vibrant services, ecumenical services);
- improving communications.

When we reconvened, it was clear that more discussion was needed, but so that the congregations could be informed of our discussions as soon as possible, each group arranged a supplementary meeting before Christmas, open to anyone who wished to attend, to develop the ideas into more specific proposals.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

In April, after the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), we appointed Mr R Cook to fill a casual vacancy (Church Representation Rule 48 (1)) and co-opted Mr C Perry and Mrs K Preston as members of the PCC until the next Annual Meeting.

### **COMMEMORATION OF THE CENTENARY OF THE START OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

In January, the Rector attended a meeting at Dawpool School to discuss the commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War. It was to take place on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July at St Chad's, a date that would fit with school holidays and the Open Golf event at Hoylake. Dawpool Year 6 children would investigate the men recorded on the War Memorial and would put details into a ring binder to be kept in St Bartholomew's for years to come. They would create audio-visual displays and artwork, with as much as possible on portable boards for display in St Bartholomew's for some time after the event. There would be several other displays, refreshments would be provided and Col Amlôt would arrange a family history enquiry table. The PCC made a few additional suggestions and approved all the arrangements.

### **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Finance has been a critical issue for several years and is discussed at almost every meeting. The Treasurer's report contains the details that have been reported to and discussed by the PCC. This summary of our discussions does not reflect how much time the PCC spent discussing financial matters and making vital decisions.

By March 2014, we were experiencing cash flow problems, exacerbated by the loss of income from the Cadets. The other problems were unpaid Parish Share and the annual deficit. Both these could be resolved eventually if we could grow the congregations. In discussions, members said that selling assets would lead to continual shrinkage; we should look outwards, not just inwards; aim for growth, not just cut costs; and try harder to find other users of St Chad's to replace the Cadets and others. Use of the premises by other community groups would increase our public profile, although use of the New Building is currently restricted to church-related activities.

Members were pleased when Mr R Preston, a member of the congregation, offered us a free business consultancy. The Treasurer wished to set up a reserve fund to cover possible emergencies such as storm damage, and we agreed that this should be done by reducing Parish Share payments once. We were also pleased to hear that a

Mrs Tudor had left us a substantial legacy, restricted to use in the churchyard. We agreed to invest it in the same way as the Morrell and Shaw Trusts: together the three investments should cover most routine expenditure on St Bartholomew's.

We also reviewed fee payments and salaries, and ensured that adult employees were paid at least the national living wage.

### **WORK AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S AND ST CHAD'S**

In St Bartholomew's, a suspected infestation by woodworm was found to be an invasion by weevils. The churchwardens found two serious problems that appeared to be the result of work following previous quinquennial inspections that had not been done properly – water damage in the vestry and damage to stonework where Portland cement mortar had been used instead of lime mortar. A proposal to replace the carpet in the chancel was discussed with the Diocese, and we were advised to try to find surviving members of the family who had originally donated the carpet. A parishioner offered to contribute to the cost of upgrading the sound system, and we approved the evaluation of new lighting that should be much more reliable and would use much less power.

In St Chad's, a leak under the sink at St Chad's was repaired and toilet facilities for disabled people were installed. We received a grant to renovate the kitchen, considerably less than what we had requested, and are still discussing how to proceed. During the year, the fire extinguishers in both churches were inspected and re-certificated.

### **OPEN DOOR**

In November, Mr Roberts reopened discussions on essential improvements to St Bartholomew's, which we had previously sought through the Open Door Project. He felt there was little prospect of securing the additional funding needed to complete the project, yet there was still strong support for improvements. Open Door would have created a new main entrance to the church providing unassisted access for everyone, toilet facilities, a small kitchen area, and a meeting area. However, the authorities' requirements meant that the building would have cost much more than a modern structure.

Mr Roberts had divided the improvements into three groups, which could be resolved separately. Unassisted access to the church could be created by landscaping the front pathway to raise the height gradually from the lichgate to the top step of the north porch and adding wooden ramps to each side of the main door threshold. Toilet facilities, a small kitchen area and a modest meeting space could be created in a suitable high-quality wooden building beside the west wall but structurally independent of the main church building. This site has previously been investigated and approved as a suitable site by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), the local authority, and the other parties we are required to consult, and is near sewage facilities and a piped water supply. We could achieve greater heating and comfort control within the church by the addition of outer glass doors across and just inside the current open entrance to the porch.

Discussions with the local authority building inspector, the church architect, and earlier discussions with the previous Archdeacon and the secretary of the DAC suggested that the diocese would support these proposals. Preliminary investigations into costs and discussions with a retired architect suggested that, with service

connections, the proposals were achievable at a cost somewhere near the currently held restricted funds. At this point, no decisions have been made and no planning applications have been submitted.

### **CHURCHYARD**

In January 2014, Mr Roberts reported that he had approached the DAC and the Council's Preservation Officer about the possibility of removing two yew trees either side of the lichgate and two holly trees, replacing them with saplings. No responses had been received. It was reported that there were burials beneath the yew trees by the gate, which would have to be treated respectfully if the trees were removed.

### **PRE-SCHOOL**

In July, we received more details of plans by Dawpool School to extend their age range by adding a pre-school (foundation) year. The consultation process was to begin in the autumn term 2014, once a mobile classroom had been arranged. This would affect the Pre-School, and the Pre-School Committee was considering various options, which would require a change in the planning permission for the New Building. The PCC also had to be aware of other options which might become available as a result of the Business Consultation being undertaken by Mr Rob Preston. There was a lengthy and detailed discussion of these and other points.

### **WELCOME PACK**

In April, Mr Turnbull showed us two versions of a "Welcome" document along with suggestions for improving the current arrangements. Several welcomers, identifiable by badges, were required at St Chad's. In September, the Rector informed members that the Welcome packs were ready for use. A Perspex box had been purchased to hold them at St Bartholomew's, where the sidespersons would be responsible for identifying and welcoming newcomers. A similar box was ready for St Chad's. The Rector had recruited three welcomers for St Chad's, but two or three more were needed.

### **EVENTS**

At the beginning of the year, PCC members thanked Mrs J DeBoorder and the rest of the team for the most successful Christmas Fair for at least 10 years. In the autumn, there was a very successful Harvest Supper and Family Fun event, and members discussed a family event on 31<sup>st</sup> October. A small ad-hoc committee met to discuss the possibilities. We heard in November that the Pumpkin Party had been attended by 15 families and was very successful. The PCC accepted with grateful thanks an offer by Mrs DeBoorder to coordinate the Christmas Fair again, and unanimously accepted an offer by a member of the congregation at St Chad's to run an athletics event for young people.

In November, Irby Methodists asked us to join them in their Covenant Service at 10 am on January 4<sup>th</sup>. Having noted that some members of the congregations wanted more ecumenical activity, proposals to change our arrangements and attend the Covenant Service were agreed in a vote.

### **REVIEW OF SERVICES**

In January 2014, the PCC reviewed the arrangements for the 2013 Christmas services and the arrangements for Easter, including the possibility of a morning service at St Chad's on Good Friday alongside the Easter Journey Experience. The Rector said she

would ascertain if this was possible, but if not, Pop-in and Pray on Good Friday would take place at the far end of the New Building to minimise interference from noise in the main room. The PCC was pleased that Mr Sam Jackson had offered to lead another Taizé service on Palm Sunday in the evening at St Chad's.

The Council agreed in January to request renewals of the licences for some chalice assistants. In April, the Council agreed to approve an application for a licence for Mr Turnbull to enable him to take communion to parishioners in their homes.

### **DAWPOOL GOVERNORS**

In June, we agreed to appoint Mr M Rostock and Mr A Harford as governors and to recommend that Mrs R Carter and Mr R Cook be appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education.

### **G J Barley (Honorary Secretary of the PCC)**

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

### **SUMMARY**

I have been both Parish Treasurer and Churchwarden for two years now and, to say the least, the combination of roles has been challenging. In reality, of course, my role as Treasurer has been as leader of a financial team and I must express my gratitude to Chris Rostock, our Accounts Secretary, and Chris Turnbull, our Planned Giving Officer, for their considerable help. I must also acknowledge the contribution by Chris Eden who tragically and unexpectedly passed away in October. Chris was the expert eyes and experience that helped us to function effectively, and he is sorely missed. A special thanks also to Jean Heath for the practical and effective role she has provided as Hall Bookings Secretary for many years.

I suppose the biggest challenge for any Treasurer at Thurstaston is to try and put a budget before the PCC which balances income against expenditure. For many years, in fact since the method of calculating parish share was changed by the diocese in 2005, this has proved impossible. Compared with most other urban parishes in the diocese we have a very small parish population of 4,266 (3,472 adults aged 18 years and over and 794 children at the 2011 census), yet we are expected to pay the same level of parish share as our much larger neighbours.

For a small parish we punch well above our weight with the level of our worship attendance, the size of our electoral roll, the number of our planned givers, and the overall size of our church community. In fact, we stand up well alongside many of our larger fellow urban parishes elsewhere. However, irrespective of our size in 2014, we had to achieve an income of at least £63,000, equivalent to more than £18 for every adult in the parish, merely to pay our parish share and the incidental costs of our Rector and rectory. If we add in other necessary costs, such as the material expenses incurred in holding our services, maintaining our buildings, and covering the costs of practical administration, this figure increases to £96,000, or almost £28 for every adult.

Of course we do raise income from church fees, from hall hire, from interest on the restricted legacies we have received and invested in the past and from fund-raising activities such as our annual Christmas Fair. In 2014 this additional income came to

approximately £20,000, but this sum only reduced the overall amount we needed to raise from our parish population through voluntary giving to £76,000, equivalent to £22 for every adult in the parish. In fact, as a result of the generosity of our planned givers and other donations from members of our community, and with the addition of Gift Aid, we achieved a significant £62,000, which is the equivalent of almost £18 from every adult in the parish.

This still left a shortfall of approximately £14,000 between our regular income and expenditure. However, we also received the sum of £12,000 from the diocese following the sale of part of the rectory land, which reduced our overall deficit for 2014 to approximately £2000.

### **EXPLANATION OF THE CHANGES BETWEEN 2013 and 2014**

Each year our expenses increase as the result of inflation and the inevitable rise in parish share, but our income is subject to a number of factors which operate by different dynamics. The following were the principal changes in 2014 compared with 2013.

#### **INCOME**

##### *Planned Giving*

Planned Giving has fallen at both churches, largely as a consequence of the death, or movement into nursing homes, of longstanding and very generous givers. New givers have joined our schemes and I am delighted to say their numbers exceed those who have left, but there was still a drop in the sums that were given in 2014 of about 7%.

##### *Plate and other Collections*

In 2014 there was a substantial fall in plate collections at St Bartholomew's because there were fewer occasional services, but a significant rise in plate and other collections at St Chad's because of increased income from Tots 'n' Tinies and an increase in plate cash, principally I suspect from new families that have joined the church. Overall there was a reduction at our two churches of nearly £500.

##### *Donations*

Voluntary donations other than through planned giving increased significantly. Some of these donations were restricted for various purposes, but overall they have gone a long way towards offsetting the reduction in planned giving. In addition we also received the £12,000 I mentioned earlier from the Diocesan Board of Finance following the sale of part of the rectory land. That significantly increased our bank balance and provided a welcome relief in our longstanding cash flow drama. Apart from the diocesan payment to us of £12,000, the overall increase in donations during 2014 was more than £3,000.

##### *Gift Aid and GASDS*

For 2014 we can recover almost £10,000 in Gift Aid, and more than £2000 in GASDS (Gift Aid Small Denominations Scheme) payments, which are extra payments we can claim from HMRC on cash not gift aided but given at events or activities, including services of worship, that take place at either of our churches. For 2014 this increased the tax we can recover by almost £500.

##### *Fund Raising Activities*

During 2014 we received income from a range of fund raising events and activities. However, there was a decline compared with 2013 of almost £1,000, principally because calendar sales were slower to materialise before the end of the year



(although they picked up again in January 2015), and there was a drop in profits from the Christmas Fair.

#### *Investment Income*

Our Trust investments performed less well in 2014 and bank interest was lower, resulting in a fall of £500 compared with 2013 in the income we receive from our investments.

#### *Church Fees*

Income from occasional services (statutory fees and contributions towards heating costs) was down in 2014 by £3,500 when compared with 2013, principally because there were only half as many weddings.

#### *Hire of St Chad's Hall and Usage of the New Building*

The hire of the church hall by groups and individuals raised £5,015 in hire fees in 2014, compared with £7,112.50 in 2013, and £7,901 in 2012. The loss of the rental from the Army Cadets who moved in September 2013 is the principal reason, but not the only one. At least £500 of the reduction between 2012 and 2014 is the result of a slight fall in usage by our existing regular group hirers and a significant fall in usage by individuals who hire the hall - even though our fees have remained unchanged for many years.

Since 2013 Dawpool Pre-school have been using the New Building at St Chad's and contributing towards the maintenance and utility costs of the hall and extension according to their hours of usage. In 2013 they contributed £2,210 (part year) and in 2014 they contributed £3,673 towards our overall costs.

I must also mention the donations made in 2014 for use of the hall by 1<sup>st</sup> Thurstaston Guides of £600 (although part of this was probably for 2013) and 2nd Irby Rainbows of £300, and a donation of £100 from Mother's Union.

### **EXPENDITURE**

#### *Parish Share*

Our parish share rose from £55,244 in 2013 to £58,029 in 2014, an increase of £2,785. We currently have an arrears for 2014 of £15,000 because of cash flow difficulties during the year and our need to achieve and maintain an adequate bank balance. However, payment of parish share is a responsibility, not a legal liability, so this shortfall is not shown in our annual accounts. The arrears of £10,422 for 2011 and £12,600 for 2013 remain.

#### *Service Costs*

The expenses that arise directly from holding our worship services fell from £6,778 in 2013 to £5,036 in 2014. This was the result of an overall reduction in the fees we pay to our retired clergy who conduct services, a reduction in payments for our organist, principally because of the stopping of the 6.30pm service at St Bartholomew's, and a reduction in the cost of the materials we use for worship services.

#### *Tots 'n' Tinies*

The expenses of £511 incurred by Tots 'n' Tinies feature for the first time in 2014 as a result of the need to separate income from expenditure for the purpose of our GASDS recovery from HMRC. They arise in respect of light refreshments we provide and the purchase of new equipment.

#### *St Bartholomew's Maintenance*

The costs specifically attributed to the parish church increased from £632 in 2013 to

£1,422 in 2014 due to the repairs to the heating boiler following a breakdown, the installation of a new water heater in the vestry, and other new purchases.

#### *Churchyard Upkeep*

Expenses specifically arising from the upkeep of the church grounds fell from £3,523 in 2013 to £703 in 2014, but this was because in 2013 we replaced the church notice board and repaired the church wall twice following vehicle damage – the cost of which (less excesses) was later recovered from our insurers and shown separately in the 2013 accounts.

#### *Gas*

Despite increases in the unit price, the cost of gas for the heating of the hall and extension at St Chad's fell from £2,257 in 2013 to £1,783 in 2014, which reflects the milder year we experienced in 2014.

#### *Office Stationery*

The revised rental arrangements for the new office copier were the main reason for a rise in office stationery costs from £1,325 in 2013 to £2,254 in 2014.

#### *Restricted Works*

We regularly seek and use grants and donations for specific repairs and improvements at both St Bartholomew's and St Chad's. In 2013 we restored the war memorial at St Bartholomew's at a cost of £1,098. During 2014 we rebuilt part of the washrooms at St Chad's and included a new disabled toilet at a cost of £6,630. In 2015 we are seeking to improve the hall kitchen and received a grant of £1,250 for this during 2014. The grants and donations we receive for these works are often carried over from one year to another but are reflected in our accounts for the year in which they are received. However, this money is specifically restricted and used for the purpose for which it is sought.

#### **COMMENT**

If we include our unpaid parish share of £15,000, which as I indicated earlier is a responsibility resting on us and not a legal debt, then during 2014 we experienced a slight decline in our overall financial position of around £2,000. However, our budget deficit remains significant and needs to be addressed by the PCC as a matter of priority.

One final piece of good news is that we received notification during 2014 of a significant legacy from Miss Maureen Tudor, which she left to the parish for the restricted purposes of tackling the continual problem of maintaining our hedges, bushes, and trees in the church grounds at St Bartholomew's, and removing, or at least keeping in check, other growing matter.

#### **John Roberts**

#### **Honorary Treasurer during 2014**

## **ST BARTHOLOMEW'S REPORT**

The past year has seen some practical improvements at St Bartholomew's. As a result of the time and effort put in by Jon Oliver and his family, the lighting has been significantly upgraded, with the installation of several new LED floodlights. These should prove more resilient and consume less power, and from the congregational perspective we now have more effective lighting on dark and dismal days. Also, after years of struggling to heat water in a kettle we have finally installed a new water heater in the vestry.



There is, however, a serious concern I must flag up. The parish church of St Bartholomew is a 19<sup>th</sup> century Grade II\* listed building with an even older graveyard in an ancient setting. The present church was erected using 19<sup>th</sup> century methods of construction to fulfil the perceived needs of a 19<sup>th</sup> century congregation. The responsibility to maintain it as a unique piece of Victorian heritage for the wider public creates a tension and conundrum. Finding ways to overcome its limitations for a 21<sup>st</sup> century community of worshippers while maintaining its special features and character continues to prove a challenge.

One of the characteristics of this fine building is its attractive rose-hip tiled roof. It has never been replaced and is now nearing the time when that must be done. It may surprise many people to learn that none of the original tiles, nor most of those that have been used during the numerous repairs over the last 130 years, is actually nailed into position. On the back of each tile are two ceramic lugs which simply lodge over timber battens. Lime mortar was originally used to "glue" each tile to those beneath. The stability and integrity of the roof relied on its weight and each tile remaining in position.

However, while all the roof trusses and associated timber work have been found to be sound and free from rot or infestation, many of the tile lugs have started to disintegrate due to frost and the severe weather fluctuations during recent years. Most of the mortar has fallen away. Strong and turbulent winds racing in off the estuary have started to pluck out or dislodge individual tiles, causing holes which set up a suction effect inside the roof space, causing the tiles to "chatter" and the whole roof to move.

Each year we are faced with repairs which have become increasingly costly due to the introduction of restrictions on workers working at heights, and the cost of providing them with scaffolding or mobile lifting equipment far outweighs the actual cost of repair. Our insurers now impose a heavy excess on each claim and we have an annual and increasing drain on our parish purse. We have applied for a special one-off grant to replace the roof, but we do not yet know the result of our application.

A question that has been asked, and which is probably in the minds of others, is why do we continue to heat St Bartholomew's throughout the week when the building is unused? There are three reasons:

1. To achieve a comfortable and welcoming climatic atmosphere within the church when it is in use.
2. To overcome the inadequacies of the current heating system.
3. To achieve the minimum consumption of fuel oil.

After investigations by specialists and trials conducted within the building, we were advised that the most effective way to achieve these objectives was to heat the building continuously to a minimum temperature of 10°C throughout the week (and throughout the year), and use a remote computerised wireless control box to raise the temperature to the maximum level achievable shortly before each service.

By doing this we have made St Bartholomew's Church a more welcoming environment. The ambient temperature during services is now quite pleasant, but, equally important, we now avoid the air turbulence created and the unpleasant consequences this causes when the building is heated rapidly from cold. The lack of any form of heat transfer unit within the sanctuary and the rising ceilings from the nave to the sanctuary result in cooler air racing down the walls and back into the faces of worshippers if the building is rapidly heated from cold (rapidly still means turning on the heating 12 hours beforehand in the winter).

As a consequence, older church members now attend church more regularly during the winter months and this may well be a reason why new members have joined our congregations from across a wider age spectrum. We have used the natural features of the building – the stone walls and vaulted ceilings – to store heat and reflect this back into the building (similar to the principle behind a domestic storage heater) as a means of overcoming the inadequacies within the current heat transfer system (the pipework and radiators), and, equally importantly, we have reduced our heating costs. It is, of course, difficult to compare fuel consumption from one year to the next because our winters are so varied, but, assessed over the last three years, the consumption has been reduced by approximately 10%.

This report is my opportunity as warden on behalf of the church community to thank all those who give their time, effort and skills to prepare the church for our services and ensure they take place: the sacristans, servers, sidespeople, scripture readers, intercessors, the organists, vergers, bell ringers, cleaning teams, and those who provide our flower ministry, maintain our church grounds (and a particular mention for Peter Robson who spent many days tackling the accumulated growth around the graveyard), and others I regret I may have omitted to mention. The considerable work they put in, often unseen by the bulk of our community, enables the church to function effectively week by week.

Finally, as Roger Jackson reaches the end of his six year spell as churchwarden, I would like to thank him for the considerable help and support he has given me during

the five years I have been his fellow warden. He has made my role, particularly while I have borne the addition task of Parish Treasurer, that much easier.

**John Roberts**  
**Churchwarden**

**ST CHAD'S REPORT**

Church services have taken place nearly every Sunday and Wednesday at St Chad's throughout the year, and much more as well. There has been a string of events: some were special services while others were church-related or community activities. Some of these are listed as follows:-



- Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January: Saturday Praise, with also Pop in and Pray.
- Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March: Tea and Entertainment.
- Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March: Dads 'n' Kids Craft Morning.
- Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April: Attic Sale.
- Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April: Taizé Service.
- Friday 18<sup>th</sup> April: Easter Journey Experience.
- Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June: Celebration of 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since Revd Simon Beckley and Revd Joe Edwardson had been ordained.
- Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June: Commemoration of start of WW1 (see also comment of thanks in February edition of Crosstalk).
- Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September: Prize-giving for Photographic Competition.
- Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September: Confirmation service with Bishop Peter Forster the leader.
- Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October: Harvest Supper.
- Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October: first of a fortnightly Sing our Socks off.
- Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October: Children's Society Coffee Morning.
- Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October: Children's Pumpkin party.
- Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November: Christmas Fair.
- Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December: Christingle Service.
- Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas afternoon tea and entertainment.

St Chad's has been used regularly by the Mother's Union, Evening Mother's Union, Tots 'n' Tinies, Weight Watchers, Merry Widows, Irby Artists, Rainbows, Guides, and also several private functions have taken place throughout the year.

The New Building, while having been used for some of the above, is used in term time on Sundays for Junior Church during the time the main service is taking place. On weekday mornings, also in term time, Dawpool pre-school has been in residence.

The maintenance in the hall and the extension has been minimal, even with two weeks closure. It was in this time that Wirral Wetrooms installed the much needed toilet for the disabled and a baby changing facility, resulting in a layer of dust over all. However, the outcome has been favourable.

Some painting has been achieved outside and the gutters and down-spouts cleared thanks to Chris Turnbull and Mike Rostock respectively. Thanks, too, to Jon Oliver for keeping the lamps lit and to Archie Peat for seeing that the grass cutting got off to a good start, and to all the volunteers who helped for the remainder of the summer.

The church activities, including the services, have involved a large number of our parishioners, to a larger or lesser extent, so that we are all thankful for what others have done. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, we as a parish thank our Rector, Revd Jane Turner, for what she does for us on the path to salvation.

Now we pray that our Lord gives us his blessing as we go forward into 2015.

**Roger Jackson (Church Warden)**

### **DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

The Rural Deanery of North Wirral encompasses representatives (the number for each parish is proportional to its electoral roll numbers) from each of 14 parishes in Wirral, excluding Wallasey (which includes Moreton/Leasowe) and Birkenhead (which includes Woodchurch and Rock Ferry). The reduction in the electoral roll for our parish now means we have three representatives – myself, Chris Smale and Malcolm Studholme at present.

It meets four times a year under the chairmanship of Rev Gillian Rossiter of St John the Baptist Great Meols, who is the Rural Dean, while the lay chair is Lesley Young. At last the vacancy of secretary has been filled by Melvin White from St John the Baptist Meols. It has a Mission and Standing Committee which discusses and manages deanery synod finance and discusses and plans the deanery meetings.

It receives reports from General Synod which has discussed and now approved the appointment of women bishops and also human sexuality. It also receives reports from and elects representatives to Diocesan Synod, which discusses and regulates the finances of the diocese and also has discussed ordination training and the ministry to children and young people.

The meetings of the Deanery Synod are attended by about 50 people. They rotate around the various parishes in the deanery and were as follows:

6<sup>th</sup> February at St John the Baptist Meols, where there was a presentation by the Archdeacon, Rev Michael Gilbertson, on GAP4, where the bishop is encouraging parishes to improve their websites, to take measures to reduce the average age of their congregations and to deepen the faith of existing church members. There was also a presentation on the Chester Diocesan initiative working jointly with the Church Urban Fund on 'Challenge to Poverty'.

2<sup>nd</sup> June at St Mark the Evangelist, New Ferry, where we received a presentation from Revd Dr Jonathan Gibbs on the Diocesan Synod (mainly about the appointment of

women bishops) and a report on the Board of Education for the Diocese from Revd Dominic Newstead.

4<sup>th</sup> September at St Chad's Irby. There was a presentation from Pauline Butterfield about how the Diocese is tackling issues of safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.

12<sup>th</sup> October: Songs of Praise at St Hildeburgh's Church Hoylake.

20<sup>th</sup> November at St John the Baptist Meols, where the speaker was the Revd Liz Shercliff, Director of Studies for Readers in the Chester Diocese.

Meetings for 2015 are planned on the following dates:

- 5 February
- 2 June
- 2 September
- 17 November (Lay Forum)

### **Chris Turnbull (Deanery Synod Representative)**

#### **ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT 2014**

In April 2014 the roll contained 222 members from 147 households.

During the year and in the revision in preparation for the Annual Meeting, six people came off the roll (members who had died or had asked to be removed) and seven people were added.

Therefore the roll as of March 2015, consists of 223 members from 148 households.

### **John Roberts (Electoral Roll Officer)**

#### **CHARITIES SUPPORTED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR**



#### **LEPROSY MISSION**

Thank you to all who have contributed to the Leprosy Mission, either through having a Leprosy savings box or giving by way of a one-off donation. Overall this year I have sent cheques to the value of £227.98 which, although greatly welcomed by the mission, is down from last year by some margin.

Making leprosy a thing of the past takes more than simply delivering a cure. Financial support is vital to enable the Leprosy Mission to carry out the work. They give reconstructive surgery and physiotherapy to patients disabled by leprosy. They educate children from poor backgrounds and train those who have been refused employment. They build safe, secure homes for families living in poverty. They help those with leprosy find acceptance, dignity and independence.

Thank you for supporting the mission, thereby helping those marginalised by leprosy. I am all too happy to receive donations at any time of the year, or to supply a savings box.

**Pat Hulme**

## **THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY**



**Jean Heath, Elaine Kavanagh** (648 1721) and **Barbara Kozer** (648 3512) co-ordinate collections and fund-raising for the Society in the Parish.

In the spring, as part of the Society's national house-to-house collection for children, our Parish of Irby and Thurstaston raised £1,142.96. This was an increase of £150 on the previous year. However, as a Committee, we felt that the burden on ourselves as organisers and on our diminishing band of collectors had become too great and we decided that it was the last year we would do the envelope collection. We are most grateful for the help we have received from our collectors – parishioners and friends who, over the past twelve years, have helped to collect over £13,800! Thank you!

In place of the envelope collection, it is our intention to hold a coffee morning on 21 March 2015 at 'Barnstables', 233 Irby Road, and sell tickets. We hope to have several tables for bring and buy, cakes, cards, etc. and if anyone has a craft they would like to display, please contact me. Although we can't hope to match the amount raised through the envelope collection, we do think the event will enable people to come together and enjoy socialising whilst raising money for a worthwhile cause.

During 2014 the house boxes, which people keep in their own homes and are emptied annually in the autumn, produced £750.58. To boost the total amount we will be giving to the Society in the future, we would very much welcome further requests for house boxes. Even the collection of small change over the year can result in a £10 total, supporting the work of the Society with vulnerable children who desperately need help.

The annual 'Thank You' Coffee morning in St Chad's in October, which is open to all but also aids box collection, raised £75.50 from donations and bring-and-buy items. The Christingle Service in early December at St Chad's raised a further £93.60 for the Society.

**Jean Heath (648 6015)**



## **CHURCH ACTIVITIES**

### **JUNIOR CHURCH (Jan-Dec 2014)**

Junior Church meets at St Chad's during the service in term time, excluding family service days. At present there are two groups: Sparklers, age 2½ to reception class, and Starblazers, school years 1 – 6. The wide age range in Starblazers has come about because at present there are not enough numbers to subdivide them, but year 6 children have the option to, and usually do, join Seniors a year early. I have found, however, that the key is to be flexible to the wishes of the individual.

Our new home-grown rolling three year programme (which we created using some material from Click resource books, other resources borrowed from Revd Jane or books from our own stock) came to an end this July. In September we began again with the first year of the three year programme, but this time around we had the beauty of all the work waiting in a folder for us to pick up and use.

There were several activities run for our children and families over the year, organised by Revd Jane and myself and parents. In March we had a Dads 'n' Kids morning, when dads brought the kids to make Mothering Sunday cards and gifts and everyone enjoyed drinks and doughnuts, especially the dads, who deserve a treat too!

In April we had an afternoon entitled "The Easter Journey", an experience for families to together be taken through the Easter events, involving feet and trays of paint in the making of a foot poster and washing of feet; stories involving sharing bread and juice; and Easter crafts which included the making of an Easter garland, which some of the adults particularly enjoyed! This was attended by families from both local schools and church families who had a lively fun time together, greatly enjoyed by children and parents alike.

In July we finished our summer term again with a picnic in Royden Park with impromptu games. We alternated between sharing brollies to sharing lolly ices, depending on the mood of the sky(!), and enjoyed good company.

During the summer holidays, St Beartholomew's Day was as popular as ever.

Junior Church leaders, helpers and their friends and families all helped to set up/clear away and provide stalls and refreshments. Children's Raffle prizes and delicious cakes were donated by church members. Mike Rostock kept us all safe from floating / plunging teddies and Richard Turner judged the skill of our brave bears who launched off the tower to parachute down towards a marker. The three nearest to the marker received prizes. A truly blessed day, as it had been torrential rain solidly up until just before I arrived to set up!

At the beginning of October, the Harvest Supper was done with a difference. Daft games (such as kids making parents dress up as scarecrows) and a harvest crafts session were laid on for the children and parents to enjoy either as an event on its own or as a prelude to the supper.

At the end of October, several of the parents from the PCC (assisted by Revd Jane and myself) did a brilliant job of planning and putting on a Pumpkin Party as an alternative to Halloween Night. It was a fabulous fun social event and very well attended by church and non-church members. There was pumpkin carving, various pumpkin-

related crafts, delicious melted marshmallow/chocolate biscuit snacks outside from the barbecue (kindly lent by scouts and manned by John Oliver), complete with glow sticks, and we finished back in the hall with a lights-out, pumpkin-lit circle with a message of God's Light.

Also in October/November, St Chad's hosted a course called 'Skills and more 2' run by David Bell, adviser for ministry among children in the diocese of Chester. David presented new ideas and gave us all an opportunity to share our own ideas and tips with each other. Those of our leaders who were able to attend enjoyed meeting other leaders and came away with new ideas.

The two services the children take part in, joined by the Seniors, are the 'Book Giving Service' and the 'Christmas Production'. A small children's book explaining making the sign of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit gave me the inspiration for the book giving service about the Trinity.

Each group presented a different part of the trinity. Sparklers reminded us of God and His creation and accompanied us on instruments to "All things bright and beautiful". Seniors reminded us of Jesus and dramatized the parable of The Wise Man, complete with hi-vis jackets and hard hats! Starblazers reminded us of the Holy Spirit and engaged the congregation by providing sound effects to help them tell the Bible story of Pentecost.

The Christmas Production was produced with the collaboration of all the leaders (I had no part in it for the first time) and they did a fantastic job. We saw and heard the story of the nativity through the eyes of the grumpy innkeeper.

Much preparation was undertaken by all. Many thanks to all the leaders and helpers who made it such an engaging service.

**Many thanks** to the Junior Church leaders and helpers (and their friends and families) and the parents from the PCC, without whom nothing would get done and who have given their time so generously. Thanks to Reverend Jane for her enthusiasm, organising skills, advice and support, and thanks to everyone who meets together with me whenever I have to plan anything, and who has supported me and shared the load.

God Bless,

**Julie DeBoorder**

## **SENIORS AND 14+**

Our group of Seniors continues to meet once a month, although we hope that, when this report comes to be written in twelve months' time, we may be able to mention an interesting development. There are usually between eight and twelve young people present at the meetings and, after the now obligatory juice and toast with either jam or chocolate spread (not usually both together!), we discuss a range of topics, under the broad theme of 'how to live a Christian life in today's world'. During the October half-term, we took several Seniors to Youth Next Door, a Salvation Army youth group in New Ferry. The age range of the two groups is very similar and, having seen how

well the young people related to each other, we hope that it may be possible to establish monthly joint meetings.

Janet Trigg, Julie DeBoorder and Chris Smale share the leadership of the group and have continued to be very impressed with the thoughtfulness and spiritual awareness of the young people. The year ended with them making a very significant contribution to the success of both the Christingle service and the Nativity play.

### **Chris Smale**



### **WELLSPRING**

Wellspring is a monthly Prayer Group (open to anyone in the parish) which was launched in May 2011. We meet in the Rectory on the third Monday of each month from 8-9pm. It is good to have people from across the congregations coming together to pray, with each month approximately five or six people attending – more would always be welcome! We pray for individual members of our congregations and for events and issues within the life of the parish.

### **Revd Jane Turner and the other members of the group**

### **BELLRINGERS' REPORT**

2014 was a year with sad memories at Thurstaston. In October our great friend Chris Eden died suddenly. Ringing in his memory took place over the following weeks at Thurstaston and many other churches from the Wirral to Lundy Island. He will be hugely missed.

Our annual 'Christmas meal' was held in the village at Zeera on the 15<sup>th</sup> January. This was attended by 14 ringers and we enjoyed an excellent meal with good company. We currently have 18 ringers; however, two of these are away at university most of the year. We would always welcome new people who wish to learn to ring.

During the year there was a peal of Cambridge Minor (2 hours 33 minutes) rung on St Chad's Day, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March, by a Chester Guild band. A second peal of 42 Doubles methods and variations (2 hours 36 minutes) was rung in memory of Chris Eden on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November by a Wirral band including two Thurstaston ringers. This was Jenny McIntyre's first peal and she rang wonderfully throughout. Both peals were conducted by Peter Robson.

There were five quarter peals rung during the year, with the most important two being rung in memory of Chris Eden. The first was on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October, when 14 Doubles methods and variations were rung by a Wirral band, and the second on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October, when a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles was rung by a band of ringers from our tower.

We continue to have an enthusiastic group who practise and develop their ringing every Wednesday evening from 7 to 8 pm and ring for Sunday service. A number of us meet socially after the ringing on Wednesdays in the local pub, and others meet up

on the Sunday at Church Farm for coffee. Several of us also join other ringers in Wirral and throughout the Diocese at ringing events.

If you are interested in seeing what we do or want to learn more about ringing, then please come along on a Wednesday or talk to me in Church.

**Peter Robson (Tower Captain)**

### **MEN'S BREAKFAST GROUP**

The Men's Breakfast meets on Saturday mornings, at 8.45am, on alternate months. We meet at Aroma Cafe in Irby, thereby supporting a much valued local business and attendance varies between eight and 13 gentlemen.



The Men's Breakfast provides an informal setting for members of the Church to chat and share in fellowship, while enjoying a hearty breakfast and good company.

I would personally like to thank everyone who has attended the Men's Breakfast in the past twelve months for their support and valued company.

**Matthew James**

### **GARDENING GROUP**

We were all extremely sad to lose Sally Lang (our leader) this year. Her enthusiasm, drive and vision made an enormous difference to the look of the church approach.

We had an *in memoriam* donation this year, which was used to buy some more azaleas for the front bed, but most of the work is now centred on keeping the paths weed free and is being done on an individual basis. At present this work is suspended until the warmer weather arrives. We would be delighted if anyone would like to join us and, if we get enough volunteers, it is our intention to once again arrange a regular gardening morning. If you are interested, please contact Brian Jones on 678 6717.

**Brian Jones**

### **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

2014 saw a great variety of social activities in the parish – some old favourites and some new ones:-

March – Afternoon Tea

March – Dads 'n' Kids Morning

April – Attic Sale

May – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination Party (which followed a service in St. Bartholomew's)

May – Walk to Hilbre

June – Parish Outing to Lichfield Cathedral and National Arboretum

July – 100 years since WW1 Commemoration

August – St Beartholomew’s Day

September – Photographic Competition Prize-giving Afternoon

October – Harvest Supper and Quiz

October – Pumpkin Party

November – Christmas Fair

December – Christmas Afternoon Tea

Thank You to everyone who organised and supported these events. The opportunity for people to come together and share in fun and fellowship is so important.

If anyone would like to organise an event in the future, please speak to Revd Jane. How about a Board Games Evening, or a Knit and Natter afternoon, or a BBQ, or a Quiz Night, or .....? If you have the idea and would like to get a team of people together to work with you and bring the idea to reality, then Go For It!

For 2015 we already have planned another parish outing, this time to Morecambe in June.

**Revd Jane (in the absence of a social activities co-ordinator!)**

## **CHURCH RELATED ORGANISATIONS**

### **MOTHERS’ UNION**

Our meetings on the first Thursday of the month were enjoyed by members with a number of varied speakers:

- ❖ We had a fascinating talk about bee keeping.
- ❖ Jane, our Rector, at a very busy time for her, took our Easter meditation.
- ❖ Our June meeting was as usual our strawberry tea and in July the outing was a great success with a visit to Lichfield, followed by a tour of the War Memorial Arboretum, commemorating the centenary of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War in 1914.
- ❖ A welcome visit by Margaret Fletcher, who gave a wonderful display of flower arranging and told us of her and Tony’s time in their parish at Elton.
- ❖ Alan Jones recalled his days of teaching and brought some of our own school day memories back.
- ❖ Colin Ratcliffe brightened a late autumn afternoon with his beautiful slides.
- ❖ December was with children from Dawpool School, who sang with such enthusiasm - a credit to their teachers. Their parents came and swelled our numbers, which we appreciated.

Unfortunately our afternoon meetings have finished and our branch sadly has closed. However, some members have joined EMU and also attend Pensby MU, so Mothers’ Union continues.

**Leslie Worrall**

## **EMU January – December 2014**

Our branch of EMU (Evening Mothers' Union) meets monthly during the school term at St Chad's, usually on the last Wednesday of the month at 8.00pm. We would love to welcome new members. Please come along and give it a try. We have a varied programme to suit all tastes.

We have had a successful year with £204.00 being raised at the Attic Sale, proceeds of which were sent to the Literacy Fund.

Other meetings included a meal at The Fox & Hounds in Barnston, a Zumba evening, 'Imagination' with Revd Jane, Flower Arranging and Decoupage with Elaine Jones, a meal at The Shippons, bowling at Irby Park, and Jewellery Making.

We also had a 'Singing Our Socks Off' night which changed from an EMU event to a community event, and which continues from 8.00-9.30pm on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at St Chad's.

## **Chris Rostock – Branch Secretary**

### **1st THURSTASTON GUIDES**

We have enjoyed our first full year as joint leaders of 1st Thurstaston Guides and have enjoyed many and varied activities through the year.

- **Challenge badges:** We have undertaken many challenges and our Guides have achieved great things!
  - One of our Guides has completed her Baden Powell Challenge Award – well done to Alex! The Baden Powell Challenge award is the highest award a Guide can achieve.
  - Several other Guides are also well on their way to completing their Baden Powell Challenge Award in the coming year.
  - First Aid Badge – with thanks to St John's Ambulance for their leadership.
- **Special Interest Nights:** We have had some fun special interest nights over the last year including:
  - Boot camp with Gaz
  - Zumba night with Sarah Jane and Lauren
  - Trampolining with Birkenhead Trampolining Team
  - Cardio tennis with Sue Davies from Heswall Tennis Club
  - Rock 'n' roll panto at the Liverpool Empire
  - Gang Show at the Gladstone Theatre
  - Water sports and Adventure day at Manley Mere
- **Community Events and Fundraising:** We have had some fun organising community and fund-raising events:
  - Red nose fitness event – organised by one of our Guides as part of their Baden Powell Challenge award
  - Accessories Sale – arranged by our Guides to raise money for a new roof at Hadlow Fields, our local Guiding camping resource.

- Helping out at St Chad's Christmas fair
- Taking part in a District Thinking Day event

We also attended Church Parades during the year, including the Remembrance Day service at St Bartholomew's Church.

**Sarah Barr, Ellie Randall, Gaynor Vaughan and the Guides!**

## **2<sup>nd</sup> IRBY RAINBOWS**

Rainbows have enjoyed lots of different activities during the course of 2014. We've been out to Hadlow Fields for the lovely Christmas Cracker event. We had a visit to Irby library, enjoyed French food and fun language session (thanks to Kate Preston). Clare Sharp has also helped us decorate cakes which Rainbows shared with the Church community at Christingle.

We've also completed several Guiding interest badges.

We have at the moment a full unit of 18 girls. We have one qualified Leader, three Leaders in Training and one Young Leader. The Unit also has a very long waiting list of 21 girls!!

Rainbows have also had a number of joint activities with the other Rainbows pack in Irby; we've also met for World Thinking Day with the rest of the Irby Guiding family.

We'd like to thank St Chad's for the use of the hall, and all our parents for their support, not forgetting the adults and young people who give their time to Guiding.

Our aims for 2015 are to continue to have fun and friendship!

**Karen Fearn (Unit Leader)**

## **TOTS 'N' TINIES**

Tots 'n' Tinies playgroup welcomes parents and carers with babies and children up to the age of five. The group meets every Thursday morning during term time, from 9.30 to 11.30, at St. Chad's Hall, Irby. There is a charge of £1.50 per child and accompanying adult, with a supplement of 50p for each extra child.

Each week parents and carers are invited to supervise their own children in a friendly group environment, while engaging with like-minded adults. The children can interact with each other whilst using the group's facilities, which include a reading corner, art and craft activities and a wide variety of toys.

A snack of fresh fruit, toast and a drink is provided for children. Adults can help themselves to tea or coffee and biscuits. This provision is funded from the cover charge.

The group is co-ordinated by volunteers led by Allison Youlds and assisted by Kate Preston. Allison leads a sing-a-long and a story session each week. Kate helps Allison to prepare snacks, tidy up and clear away after each session. Some of the attending parents also help with the weekly operation.

Tots 'n' Tinies welcomes, on average, 20 children each week. The group is increasing in popularity and receives positive feedback. It should be noted that the safety and supervision of each child are entirely the responsibility of the child's attending parent or carer at all times.

We are currently short of personnel and are looking to recruit extra volunteers. If you can give some time, please contact Revd Jane Turner who will forward your details.

**Kate Preston and Allison Youds**