

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING – 2018 Warden's Report

I am continually thankful for all the help and support I receive. Firstly, I would like to thank those who regularly take our services throughout the month, John, Sister Hazel, Jeremy and Phillipa. Thank you, Marian, for arranging other visiting clergy. We were delighted that the Archdeacon, Guy Elsmore, was able to attend our Harvest Thanksgiving service in September, and to stay afterwards to meet so many of our congregation. Our Family services on the whole are well attended. Thank you, Angela and Margretta, for arranging all sorts of craft for the children to make. The attendance at Sunday morning services is small but with good congregations at Christmas and Easter. There have been a number of Baptisms, but not many weddings. We have lost dear friends over the last twelve months, they shall always be warmly remembered.

We greatly appreciate the commitment given by our regular organists, Susan and Jerry, and members of the choir who give us support at the services throughout the year, and especially at Christmas. When Jerry was unwell, Juliet Bennett and Sue Malleson stepped in, and did a great job of sorting out the Carol Service, and John Wearmouth was able to play the organ. I'd like to mention Rosemary Howell who also has played for us, sometimes at very short notice, and Andrew and Margretta Smith for the music they play mainly at the Family Services. Thank you to them all.

Thanks Phillipa for providing the weekly Pew Sheets and for keeping the website updated. I would like to thank those who decorate the church with flowers for the altars each week and the windows for the festivals, also the many helpers, whether it be the sidesmen or readers, grass mowers or coffee makers who strive to keep our church 'welcoming'. A quick look in the Visitors' Book recently revealed visitors from Italy, Ireland and Peru. Often there is a message of appreciation for this lovely church, for keeping it open, and for the comfort and peace that is found here.

Two annual events, the Snowdrop Walk and the Plant Fayre were again very successful and enjoyable. Our sincere thanks to Sally and David Duncombe, and to John and Celia Hall. The Auction of Promises held in the Parish Hall last October was a great evening. Celebrity auctioneer, Charlie Ross, as enthusiastic as ever, worked very hard to make us part with our money. Val and Gill organised a super supper and many others made delicious puddings.

One other source of revenue for the church has been the collection of newspaper and cardboard for recycling, and I must thank Henry Clark for picking up around the village. Frank and Betty Kinsey started this some years ago and it has brought in a significant revenue over the years. Unfortunately, the price of waste cardboard has declined and Cawleys decided it was no longer viable for them to pay us for the cardboard. We are very grateful to those who gave up their early Saturday mornings to load the paper.

Your support for these and other fund raising events is much appreciated, especially as we are facing challenges in the near future to meet our Parish Share and to keep the church warm and welcoming, as well as giving to those whose need is greater than ours.

Last April saw an extremely dry spell, with no recordable amount of rain for several weeks. The PCC had hoped to be progressing with the proposed toilet facilities. But dark clouds were indeed forming. The theft of lead from the north and south aisles has been very challenging. The clouds broke, the rain fell, (and goodness didn't it rain?) Although the roofing contractor had fitted a waterproof membrane after the lead had been stolen, the rain poured in. It is said that every cloud has a silver lining, and I am extremely grateful to the help given from Rosie Dawson and Andrew Smith in particular on that Monday evening. Buckets and plastic sheets were positioned all down the south aisle and the vestry, and at other points within the church. I know Andrew was very diligent in securing the flapping roof sheets on several occasions, but I was very concerned the plaster from ceilings could fall down given more rain.

As Warden, I felt I had to do something quickly. Following a meeting with the architect and contact with the DAC to no satisfactory conclusion, but with the approval of the PCC, the local roofing contractor laid a temporary roofing felt. This has given us some time to raise the money to fit a permanent covering of terne coated steel.

On a more positive note, to create a safer area for making the refreshments we have moved this area to the back of the church beyond the font. It is hoped to give more space around the font for Baptisms by reordering this corner, and to make a welcoming gathering area. To this end new architects have been appointed, and Gill Wilson has joined us as project manager to take this and the toilet facilities project forward.

It is, for me, a privilege and pleasure to be Warden of this beautiful old building. A large part of this church is the people who come, whether to worship, or just visit and enjoy the peace and history within.

I will step down from the role of Church Warden next year, but will be happy to assist in any way I can the next Wardens. We all bring something to the community of this church, and I would ask that we encourage others to join us.

If I may quote the Bishop of Oxford, Stephen Croft, 'Seek always to be a blessing to the communities we serve.'

I will keep trying.

Julia Turner

17th April 2018