



The Church in  
Warden Hill  
Annual  
General  
Meeting  
Reports

2016

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## Ministry

It was a great delight to join the South Cheltenham Team in 2016 as Team Vicar of The Church in Warden Hill and St. Peter's Leckhampton. There has been much to reflect on in these first few months as I have begun to get to know who's who and how things work. As a family we have felt very welcomed and are feeling very settled in our new home and communities, thank you.

There has clearly been a lot of work undertaken over the past seven years in establishing our Local Ecumenical Partnership, and this will give us a firm foundation from which to grow during the next seven, which is (by the way) the maximum period of time allowable under Church of England canon law for a partnership to exist before a review is due. As I write, that review is upon us and we should welcome it as an opportunity to reflect on our strengths, think about the challenges ahead (not least the loss of Revd Maz when she retires in July), and discern how we might grow as a church.

Church growth is seen through the holiness, transformation and commitment of its members; through an increase in the numbers of disciples of Jesus Christ; and through the fruits of our social engagement, i.e. how we are transforming the society around us.

Essential to all church growth is good leadership; a clear mission and purpose; a willingness to reflect, change and adapt; our intentionality to prioritise this growth and nurture disciples; the rhythm of our worship; and our governance. All of this will give us our missional identity, that is how we are reaching out and placing Christ at the centre of our community and how the community see and respond to us.

I would like us to be brave this year in how we do that outreach. Our First Sunday services are an ideal opportunity to draw in new families, but these services have to be brilliant in their content, intentional in their teaching, and leave those who come both wanting to come back and wondering more about Jesus. The church calendar gives us numerous opportunities through which to do this also. But it's no small task and we all need to be involved.

Accordingly, key to all of this is how we are 'all' ministers of The Church in Warden Hill. Lay involvement in our church is essential, as the licensed ministers cannot do it alone. As Jethro said to Moses, *"What you are doing is not good, you will surely wear yourself out and all these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you and you cannot do it alone."* (Ex 18.17-18). We must therefore work as a team, because God, as Trinity, is team!

*Revd Gary Grady*

The last twelve months have seen the church as active as ever. We have taken part in the first Cheltenham Christian Arts Festival and repeated our involvement in the Heritage Open Days. The congregation are willing and enthusiastic workers and I am grateful for all their support.

Little Shepherds, Messy Church and Film Shows continue to reach out to our neighbours, as has Senior Club. Our ministry is with and for such people, as we show God's love on our estate.

We have celebrated a number of baptisms and this is a wonderful opportunity to welcome parents and friends into our fellowship in love.

After a prolonged period of form-filling, I was delighted that we have now been granted permission by the Registration Office to hold URC weddings in St. Christopher's. This, for me, completes the circle, as it were, of our two denominations joining as one church.

Evening worship on 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday evenings at the URCC seems to have settled into a steady pattern of creative worship styles, attracting between 20-30 people, including members of CNC. We value our relationship with them.

*Contd.*

We have worked hard at looking at ourselves, our profile and our hopes for the future. The church's positive outlook does its members credit.

Of course, Gary's arrival has given cause for great celebration and thanksgiving to God. I am blessed with having such a caring colleague and I pray he will help the congregation to continue our mission in proclaiming the gospel of Christ in word and deed within our community.

*Maz Allen*

## Secretary

The highlight of another busy year was, undoubtedly, the installation of Gary as a new Team Vicar in South Cheltenham Team and subsequently, the adjustment to structure which allows him to become our Anglican Priest as well as a similar roll at St Peter's, Leckhampton. This new arrangement, although sometimes a little complex legally, is providing many new opportunities for both congregations and I am sure that joint services will just be the start for a more cohesive arrangement.

Quite a lot of URC time this year has been preparing for 2017 when most of the URC Stipendiary Ministers in Gloucestershire, including Maz, will all retire.

The role of Church Secretary in an LEP has proved difficult to define in the last 9 months when we have been looking for a replacement, as I complete 7 years, and the end of my tenure, at the AGM in April. We are still looking at possible solutions and I am sure we will find someone for this very satisfying role within our Church.

*Reg Hitchings*

## Lay Chair

I have now completed 5 years as Lay Chair and would like to thank all members of the ECM for their support over the past year and in particular Reg Hitchings for all he does for The Church in Warden Hill.

The Committee, along with the full Council (ECC), meets regularly to deal with the variety of business that is necessary for the smooth running of The Church in Warden Hill, as well as to keep up to date with what is happening in the wider URC and Anglican Church.

Sunday morning worship continues to embrace our different traditions in the St Christopher's building, with evening services held there on 3 Sundays per month. The 4th Sunday continues to be joint worship with Cheltenham Network Church at the URCC.

The URCC continues to be used for a variety of worship at different times in the week, including Tuesday prayers, Messy Church, Women's World Day of Prayer and other worship activities, giving us the flexibility afforded by having 2 worship centres.

A review of "Worshipping in One Building" was held at the start of 2016. I think it is fair to say that the majority are happy with our direction, with a few minor adjustments.

We welcomed Rev Gary Grady to the team in September and thank him and Rev Maz Allen for their support and hard work in maintaining the richness of our worship and for their pastoral care.

*Carole Pennington*

## **Treasurer**

To be added after the Annual General Meeting.

## **Church Wardens Fabric**

We are very thankful to the maintenance team for their hard work keeping the churches and halls in their good state of repair. The most significant works this year were the replacement of the polycarbonate protection over the windows of St. Christopher's Church, repairs to the URC Centre roof and gutters, external re-painting and some internal re-decoration. A seat was added to St. Christopher's garden, donated by the Civil Aviation Authority Retired Staff Association, Cotswold Branch, in memory of the late Shirley Howard, many years a member. Ground works for this were carried out by the maintenance team and the seat installed by the CAARSA. There was the usual trickle of other things that needed attention, from changing light bulbs to door closure mechanisms to clearing blockages in the drains and many more.

Maintenance is carried out regularly on Wednesday mornings in St Christopher's halls and it would be very helpful if one or two additional people were able to join the team, either on a regular or occasional basis. You may be keen on DIY or you may prefer just changing light bulbs, it all needs to be done.

*Peter Sands*

## **Code of Ministerial Practice**

No issues under the terms of the Code of Ministerial Practice have been reported during the past year.

*Margaret Meads*

## **DBS (Safeguarding)**

This is a rolling programme, all that come up for checking have the required vetting carried out as per the Diocesan requirements. TCIWH formulates its Safeguarding Policy with St Philip and St James, Leckhampton and the Diocese of Gloucester.

*Debbie Cypher*

## **Roll Officer**

St. Christopher's Electoral Roll stood at 58 at the end of 2016. A copy is displayed at the rear of the building and people can join at any time during the year.

The Warden Hill URC has 13 members and 8 adherents, and there are two adherents who are also on St. Christopher's Electoral Roll.

*Margaret Meads.*

## **1<sup>st</sup> Warden Hill Rainbows**

No Report received

## 1<sup>st</sup> Warden Hill Scout Group

2016 has seen some changes with 1<sup>st</sup> Warden Hill Scout Group. We have finally released Godfrey from the Scout Troop, to focus his attention on the District Commissioner post. In his place we warmly welcome Jade who has taken on the mantle of Scout Leader.

All the Sections have offered their members a wonderful adventure throughout 2016. The Cubs were 100 years old and this has been the main theme throughout the year. They attended the centenary camp at Rhydd Covert in July, along with other Cub Groups from the South West. The year concluded with a UK wide Birthday, where Cubs renewed their promise.

The Beavers enjoyed their 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday with a District camp at Woodhouse Park in June; and all involved had a wonderful time.

The Group are all looking forward to a fun filled 2017.

*Rob Aldridge (GSL)*

### **Beaver report**

On the whole, 2016 was a good year for the Beavers. We had a full colony all year with the Beavers working hard for their badges. We congratulate Luke Allison on gaining his Chief Scout Bronze award – the first to do so after the introduction of the new system of badges.

They all had the opportunity to attend 1 camp and 2 sleepovers. Not all take these opportunities but a good number did; I feel I am beginning to get too old to be sleeping on the floor!

A few went on a trip to the Three Counties Show (they had free admission) and seemed to have a great time; they gave a short report to the Beavers after they had been, and seemed very impressed with the baby animals they had seen.

Only 1 Beaver turned up for the annual St. George's Day Parade, which was a disappointment. However, I was very pleased with the turnout for the Remembrance Day Service. As a reward for coming, they all received a special Poppy Woggle which they wore with pride.

At the Fete and Fun Day they all participated well with the various challenges and managed to come last! It was good fun.

We would like to thank TCiWH for their generous help with the use of the hall.

*Wendy Binks*

### **Cub report**

2016 was a fun packed year. We had 2 outdoor and 1 indoor camping weekends and are just about full, allowing for Beavers due to come up. Most of the pack took part in events to celebrate 100 years of the founding of Cubs with the Summer Camp at West Midland Safari Park along with 650 other cubs from the District. Some were able to renew their promise at a party open to all Cheltenham Cubs at Dean Close at 19:16 on the 15th December Party where we linked up via Video rooms with other groups around the country.

As we currently have 4 girls in the pack, we have now formed another "Six" as the girls have really enjoyed taking on the boys in the games and activities we have. These included 10 pin bowling, tubing, trails, DIY, Cooking and much more.

*Terry Hobbs*



## Scout report

The Scout Troop year at Warden Hill was an eventful one with initially 2 new Scouts joining the troop and one leaving numbers attending up to the start of the Summer terms holding steady in double figures. However, during the summer and into the Autumn four moved up to explorers and others in changing school needed more time for school work and senior school activities, so by the autumn numbers had really dropped.

The troop held its first ever Scouts only camp at Woodhouse Park in April. This was well attended, with activities ranging from tomahawk throwing, to a very muddy assault course and a decent hike around the nearby countryside. Good use of the District Camps also continued through the year, including Survival Skills and canal boating has been made by individual Scouts.

Our evening meetings in the Spring centred around team skills and mapping as well as some continuation of the Million Hands Project to raise awareness of those who face additional challenges in life. Those in the summer got axe, knife and pioneering skills up to scratch – sometimes literally! Whilst those in the autumn saw further work on collaboration and team skills.

The other change that came about during the year was my appointment as District Commissioner for Cheltenham, which has inevitably meant clashes with meeting dates at both County and District Level and my decision that I needed to step back from the overall leadership of the 1<sup>st</sup> Warden Hill Scout Troop. Thus, following a short intervention to help with numbers at Warden Hill from the Pears Foundation I was able to hand the role of Scout Leader over to Jade Pollock. This process also tested out our 'In Touch' procedures which have worked extremely well, though it has also highlighted the need for wider involvement of Parent Helpers and additional Section Leader strength going forward.

Compass (the Scouts Association Adult Volunteer Data Base) also come back on line at the start on 2016, allowing us to review training needs and plug gaps where these have been needed.

It goes without saying that the strong relationship to TCiWH and the partnership this offers for Youth Work in the Warden Hill area is extremely valued and appreciated.

*Godfrey Tarling*

## 29<sup>th</sup> Cheltenham Brownies

We have had a really fun year at 29<sup>th</sup> Cheltenham Brownies.

We started the year finishing our Magna Carta challenge badge which saw us learning to joust, bake stained glass window biscuits, sew Medieval cross stitch patterns and learning all about how an 800 year old document is still relevant and important today, especially to us in Brownies where as part of our Promise we always think of others and try to do our best.

We joined with the Rainbows and celebrated Mothers' Day with a lovely tea party, and performed songs for our mums and decorated glass bottles with glitter. We hope they were appreciated!

In May we had a fantastic pack holiday in Oxford at Jubilee House, the county headquarters for guiding in Oxfordshire. Unusually for the time of year our theme was Christmas, chosen by the girls themselves as we had not managed to do any Christmas crafts at Brownies in December. We all had a fantastic time creating Santa key rings, finger print Christmas cards, singing carols and playing Christmas games. While there, we all completed our Brownie Cooks badge, making peppermint crèmes, bacon and eggs for breakfast and all working together to cook at large Christmas dinner with all the trimmings for 25 people! We also had wonderful warm weather so we were able to relax outside and watch several different birds of prey in the trees above us.

*Contd.*

In the summer term we enjoyed a visit from a local theatre company, walked to the chip shop and bought chips, had a lovely picnic and played games at Brizen fields and held our very own Brownies and Rainbows Olympics on Warden Hill school playing field, complete with medals and chocolate prizes.

As last year, in September we also had a fantastic time at PGL near Swindon where we had enormous fun on giant swings, jumping from high platforms, abseiling, climbing towers and crates and swinging through the tree tops. Again, we had so much fun we are already booked to return next autumn.

We like to have fun at Brownies, so we had an extremely entertaining Autumn term based on several different reality TV shows. We baked cakes and decorated biscuits in the style of The Great British Bake Off (no soggy bottoms anywhere), we designed and made our own cocktails and tried to market them to each other like The Apprentice, learnt how to be gymnasts and how to walk on our hands like Tumble and best of all, ate bugs and all sorts of “disgusting” foods and took on several different Bush tucker trials as part of our I’m a survivor, guide me out of here challenge badge. We all enjoyed a brilliant visit from some very exotic creatures and most of us were happy to cuddle snakes and hold tarantulas and laugh at the very cute bullfrogs.

A great year has been had by all, and we are looking forward to the next, and the challenges and fun it will bring!

*Brown Owl, Snowy Owl, Fluffy Owl and Squirrel*

### **31<sup>st</sup> Cheltenham (St. Christopher’s) Brownies**

The Brownie unit has been quite static this year as we had a large influx of girls last year so few were old enough to move on to guides.

We began our activities for the year with a trip to the pantomime at The Bacon Theatre. The girls were enthused to produce a play of their own, so “Peggy the Pint-sized Pirate” became the subject of most meetings for the spring term. We also completed other activities so that the Brownies could gain their entertainer badge.

For Thinking Day we joined the other Hatherley units at Bournside School for an afternoon of trampolining, craft, games and singing. In April we entered a team in the Round Table Swimathon. As usual, the girls enjoyed themselves and raised money for local causes. We also spent an evening at Cowley for the Queen’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday beacon. There were activities based on the monarchy and a trail to follow.

In May we went to Jumptastic in Gloucester for some bouncy fun. Then we concentrated on the “Teatime” badge. This involved a Japanese tea ceremony, cupcakes, silly sandwiches, making aprons and of course a birthday tea for Her Majesty to which the parents were invited.

At the end of the summer term we went to Pittville Park for a picnic and a play in the new playground. It rained – but the girls carried on saying that at least the park was not busy!

September meant that it was time for pack holiday in Macaroni Woods. The theme this year was “I’m a survivor – guide me out of here”. Then we started the “Money Challenge” badge. This was followed by Christmas crafts and a film night (complete with popcorn).

*Brown Owl*

## Altar Servers

As in previous years the three Readers together with Ann Johns have acted as servers together with Fiona Sands. This year however we have added two new members to our team, Charlotte and Richard Smith.

Acting as Altar Servers is an important part of the worship in our church and ensures that the elements are taken to the Altar at the appropriate time and that the presiding minister is assisted with the arrangement of the Chalices, Patens and Ciborium on the Altar also that the offertory is received and blessed.

*Roy McBane*

## Bell Ringing

Ringling at 'The Lightest Ring of Bells in the World' continues with practices most Wednesdays and we ring for the Sunday Morning service every week, with quarter peal attempts on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday evening, and for special occasions.

We rang 17 quarters in the year and there has been one peal.

Recruitment continues to be our biggest problem. We continue to try and develop a relationship with the local Primary School and have, by using 'The Bicycle Ring on Tour', made an appearance at a Family Fun day in July and later the same month attended the School Fayre.

During August we planned and advertised a week-long ringing school, which unfortunately only attracted two potential ringers, neither of which actually attended the event.

We took part in the Heritage Open Day event in September in conjunction with the Central Council.

On the fifth Wednesday we try to go to another tower to give our ringers some experience on larger bells and we held joint events (2 outings and a quarter peal day) with Leckhampton.

Our current aim is to develop Warden Hill as part of a wider Cheltenham Ringing 'School'. Using some of the ideas formulated by the Birmingham Ringing School. This requires some additional equipment: Training bell, simulator, teaching facility and 'teachers'. The latter is probably the most difficult to achieve, but with this in mind the church has provided funds to allow both Isabel and myself training by ART and we are both trainee teachers and mentors across bell handling and basic method ringing. All we need now are some pupils!

*Reg Hitchings (Tower Captain)*

## Cheltenham Christian Arts Festival 2016

It was a great honour to be invited to take part in the Christian Arts Festival this year. The organisers had correctly identified St Christopher's as a true Art Gallery and asked that we run and organise an event to portray the Windows and display another skill.

On the weekend of 16<sup>th</sup>- 17<sup>th</sup> April we produced a Flower Festival 'Spiritual Gifts'. Flowers arrangements were provided by members of the South Cheltenham Churches, Cheltenham URC and our own talented Flower Guild. Entry to the Festival was free with donations to support the Work of GARAS.

In 2017 we are hosting a Musicathon event on 29<sup>th</sup> April, so please put the date in your dairy and come and support the South Cheltenham Team Support a Syrian Refugee appeal.

*Reg Hitchings*

## Cheltenham United Reformed Church, Church Council

Once again the council of the CURC is the management team that deals on behalf of the elders with the majority of church business. It is authorised by the united elders meeting to plan, discuss and take action on behalf of the CURC and oversees the Ministry and finance. It usually meets twice a year.

*Brian Miles*

## Cheltenham United Reformed Church, Minister's Support Group

This small group meet about once a month to discuss with and support Maz in any way that she wishes. It is a sub-committee of the council and is a hands-on group that deal with day-to-day events and problems. It is a relaxed meeting where we try to understand each other's churches problems and share both good and difficult news. Events are discussed with the aim of ensuring that there are no conflicting dates, especially at Christmas time. It regularly reports back to council and elders meetings.

*Brian Miles*

## Choir

The number of members in the choir reduced by one during 2016 due to personal circumstances and a concern is the lack of new members in all age groups. The full strength is now 8 singers. Any further reduction would make it very difficult undertake any meaningful musical activity.

On a positive note a substantial amount of new music, including anthems and response settings, was learned during the year and the three year project to ensure that the psalms are sung imaginatively is progressing well. The monthly evensong has provided an opportunity for the choir to expand their repertoire.

Special services were sung at Advent and Christmas, jointly with the choir of St. Peter's Leckhampton, as well as at Candlemas and on Good Friday.

Two members of the choir continued their studies as part of the Voice for Life scheme run by the Royal School of Church Music, to which the choir is affiliated, and the end of the year saw them close to gaining their Dark Blue medallion.

*Duncan Westerman*

## Christian Aid

The Carol Singing at Morrisons is our only support for Christian Aid as there is no representative, for Christian Aid, at The Church in Warden Hill.

We sang a week earlier on the 10th December at our usual time 11am to 12noon. The support was excellent and everyone enjoyed singing. Special thanks to Pauline, Val and Terry for the music.

£235.92 was collected, less than last year but still a good effort.

Some of the staff at Morrisons said how much they enjoyed the Carols!

*Dorothy Austin*

## Christobells

The Christobells had another successful year. We played for 12 groups including Cherry's Birthday Party and the Carol Supper. Donations were made to Kenya Projects (UK) and the Minster Bell Fund. We also bought some new handles for some of the bells as the old ones were breaking. June finally decided to give up in the summer but we invited her back for our Christmas Dinner.

*Isabel Hitchings*

## Community & Classic Film Show

During the year we have again continued to show a range of films almost every month. Now that we show both 'Classic' and 'Community' films there are usually two films a month. Some have been specifically for the children and others for older folk. "Classic Film" shows films of different kinds made before about 1965 - e.g. adventure, comedy, thriller, musical and romance. The attendance numbers have ranged from eighteen up to about eighty for the more popular films and we have continued to provide refreshments that have been appreciated.

We continue to need help in staging the shows, both on the day of the show in setting up and in advance for choosing the film and arranging the necessary publicity both at the churches, in the magazines and with flyers. If you are interested in helping please see Tony Jeans or myself.

Tony is ceasing to organise the Classical shows from this coming summer so would like someone else to take over. If you are interested please speak to Tony as soon as possible.

*Brian Miles*

## Deanery Synod

As representatives to Cheltenham Deanery Synod for The Church in Warden Hill, Wendy Binks and/or I have attended and reported back to the church council on these meetings. The report is also printed in the "Lantern" and it was nice to hear that at least one person actually reads it!

Reps. are elected at each new Synod. Is this something you would like to be involved in next time?

*Maureen McBane*

## Flower Guild

We are still looking for people to join the Flower Guild. Anyone interested please speak to Roy or me, help and guidance would be provided. Alison Neale and my sister, Mary Tonks helped decorate the Church for Harvest Festival and Christmas. Alison will be joining the guild during 2017.

Thank you for all the donations we have received and the appreciation of the flower arrangements.

A very busy year, we hosted a Flower Festival, part of the Cheltenham Christian Arts Festival. Our theme was Spiritual Gifts and all the South Cheltenham Churches and St Andrews were involved. It was good to meet other "flower ladies" and watch different methods of working. The flowers and musical entertainment were amazing, an unforgettable weekend! Many thanks to Reg for his help and encouragement

Thank you to all our Flower Guild for their hard work and the flowers they donate and to Roy for managing the finances.

*Dorothy Austin*

## Gift Aid

Again we are pleased to report that Gift Aiding our collections and other donations have continued this year. We thank everyone who Gift Aids to the church. It allows us to be able to reclaim tax paid on the giving and is additional funds for the church without too much effort on our part. If you don't Gift Aid at the moment and would like to, please speak to either Peter Sands or Brian Miles for more information. All you have to do is complete and sign a form and we do the rest.

Thank you for giving by Gift Aid – it really does make a difference. In 2016 we were able to reclaim £3,605 of tax paid by our membership.

*Brian Miles and Peter Sands*

## Gloucester Area – URC

A representative and the minister from each URC church in the county meet together about three times a year and are joined by the church secretaries once a year to discuss items of interest applicable to all the local URC and LEP churches. We continue to discuss deployment of URC ministers in the area and it would appear that we in the Gloucestershire area may in future have to manage with less full time Ministers; it could be as low as four ministers to cover Gloucestershire. The venue for the meetings is moved around the district and the times vary to enable attendance from all churches most of the time.

*Brian Miles*

## Grapevine

I continue to type up the Grapevine each week from information provided by Pam Dainton, Revd Gary and anyone else with relevant information provided by e-mail or telephone, as long as they let me have it by midnight on the Wednesday prior to the Sunday morning service

I send my copy to those on the "grapevine" e-mail list for them to proof-read. Either Isabel or Brian arrange the printing of copies for distribution on the Sunday. (I think Diana, John Hutton and Eileen Attwood are still involved in printing them every other week).

Roy McBane is still our "stand in" to type, proof read or print if any of us are ill or on holiday.

Through the Grapevine we provide as much information as possible to the congregation and visitors to the Church in Warden Hill.

Please contact Isabel on 01242 243099 if you would like to help in the production of the Grapevine in any way.

Yours Aye

*Edna Willox*

## Hall Lettings

The halls remain in constant use by the regular hirers, and there have been several occasions when the Diocese of Gloucester, has held different events at both Church premises.

There were less Children's Birthday parties during the year, this is partly due to the nature of the entertainment being planned, some of which were not suitable to be held in the halls.

The main hirers this year were the Dance classes. It appears this is popular with all age groups.

In early December saw the lighting of the Christmas tree, this remains to be a popular community event.

My thanks to everyone for their help and assistance during the year, it is greatly appreciated.

*Tom Shepley*

## Hall Users Group

The Hall Users' Group met twice in the year. This is an open meeting to which all regular Hall Users are invited and gives the opportunity to raise concerns and suggestions for the Halls Management Group to consider. The Halls in both buildings, St Christopher's and The URC Centre, are very well used, despite which there are very few incidents of concern. Nevertheless, vigilance needs to be maintained over security, particular when Playgroup are in the Halls who, for child protection reasons, need to log in and out and escort any visitors. Hall users are advised they are responsible for their own security and the security of the Halls, to avoid passers-by potentially abusing the premises, while maintaining free access to all the fire escape routes. Hall users are advised to check the premises thoroughly before closing up and log any issues in the book provided. Car parking at the halls is limited and car park users are kindly requested to park responsibly and to keep access clear to the hall main doors for loading and unloading and for emergency services.

*Peter Sands*

## Health & Safety

There is nothing to report this year; our bi-annual review of the 'policy document' was completed in 2016,

*Reg Hitchings.*

## Heritage Open Days (HODs)

Once again, we 'opened' St. Christopher's Church on the Sunday afternoon of the Heritage Weekend in September. There were bellringing demonstrations (and 'try-outs') on the half hour and talks about the windows on the hour. This year two of the talks were ably given by Trish Burns.

We also had the power-point presentation on the history of the Church running on a loop; and mention must be made of the afternoon teas, with home-made cakes.

Visitors' donations (in Church and for the teas) were added to our Harvest Appeal.

Thanks must go to the bell ringers; stewards; Janet and the "kitchen crew"; and the "backroom" organisers who saw to registering us, collecting leaflets from the Council Offices, putting up the signage and bunting (for which we had gained planning permission!).

*Pam Dainton*

*HODs Co-ordinator for TCIWH*

## House Group

The House group meets in term time and occasionally at other times. There were six regular members together with two occasional members. We as a group, because we insist on confidentiality within the meetings, are able to openly share our thoughts, beliefs, concerns, experiences without being inhibited. During the year we looked at various subjects using books and DVD for our inspirations and guidance. We began with a book, *Souls Sisters*, looking at women in the Bible and their roles in the world. This evoked a lot of interest and discussion. For Lent we looked at a discussion on *Streams in the Desert*, followed by a DVD produced by J. John looking at the Ten Commandments, a brilliant and humorous look at how we see the Ten Commandments today and their relevance in our lives today. We are currently working our way through a bible study by Tom Wright on the ACTS of the Apostles.

*Roy McBane*

## In Touch

In Touch is the monthly magazine of the Cheltenham URC but it also includes information and articles for and about The Church in Warden Hill. It is published ten times a year and is available at Warden Hill if you would like to read it. URC members make a donation at the beginning of the year and receive their own copy but St. Christopher's folk can borrow copies from either of our vestibules or if you would like your own copy you can make a donation and regularly receive your own named copy. Janet Kemp is the editor. If you contribute articles for the Lantern, you may also like your article to go into In Touch, and if it is appropriate, it will go in and get a wider audience. In Touch is usually available on the last Sunday of the month.

*Brian Miles*

## Lantern

### **Distribution**

We needed 122 Lanterns at the beginning of the year and this rose to 128 by the end of 2016 despite losing a few customers along the way. This includes 15 magazines being given to the other SCT churches and CURC churches. We continue to send a copy to Revd Richard Atkins at Radio Gloucester and to the British Library.

*Isabel Hitchings*

### **Editor**

I have produced 12 magazines each of 32 pages during 2016. We have 12 advertisers who continue to support us. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed, without these reports there would be no magazine! Thank you to: Ann, Tony and Val for printing the Lantern, to all those who buy and deliver it and to Rob Brown for collecting the advertisers money.

*Isabel Hitchings*

### **Printing**

The team of 3 achieved all the due dates for the year. The photocopier has its moments and causes a problem now and then which extends the printing time, but on the whole it behaves itself. The printers also deliver the Lantern to the other 4 churches in the South Cheltenham Team.

*Valerie Codling*

## Lay Pastoral Team

Because the Pastoral team are often involved with peoples personal situations any report must be of a general nature. Members of the team, together with others of our congregation have visited both on an immediate and often on a long term basis, people at home or in hospital or sometimes nursing homes, those of our congregation or members of our community. This is a most important part of the churches outreach to the community where we seek to support and embrace people in Warden Hill and further afield.

*Roy McBane*



## Little Shepherds

'Little Shepherds' has had a good year. We continue to be a very important resource, enabling mums and carers to find spiritual support, some relaxation time and a stress-free environment for the useful exchange of child-care ideas and information. It is a major outreach in our community and is now also providing a feeder source for 'Messy Church'.

We meet on Wednesday mornings from 9.15am until approximately 11am, term-time only, catering for mums, carers, babies and toddlers, up to four years of age.

In September many of our toddlers moved on to 'big'-school, but our steady numbers remain around the thirty mark.

For toddlers their need for repetition is obvious and our simple format of songs, story, prayer and playtime works well. As a way of mastering new skills, toddlers delight in doing the same things week by week.

We are very grateful to everyone who helps us organise the sessions, but lately due to illnesses and other commitments, we have been quite short-handed and could do with more help, be it moving the Church furniture around, before and after the service, or getting toys out beforehand and putting them back afterwards.

We also have a regular 'coffee-rota' helping with refreshments and will always welcome more people. If you think you would like to help in any way, please contact Roy, Val or Tony.

*Tony Poulter*

## Maintenance

### **St Christopher's**

The poster in the large corner notice board is updated every two months, along with the Monthly and This Week posters in the car park fence board, to keep the community informed of church services and other activities.

Serious blockage of sewer drains caused by unsuitable items flushed down toilets TWICE.

A memorial seat for Shirley Howard was installed at the corner of the lawn in conjunction with Cheltenham Retired Civil Aviation Assoc.

New polycarbonate sheeting has been fitted to all the stained glass windows and is a great improvement. The original sheets were installed when each window was put in so the oldest two were early 1990s.

A new piece will be sourced for the fence notice board.

The plumber replaced a damaged radiator pipe in the baptism corner which was then boxed in.

We spend quite a lot of time over the whole complex replacing spent bulbs, tightening table & chair screws.

Electric wiring, Portable appliances, Fire extinguishers and the Gas boiler have annual maintenance checks.

*Dorothy Baker.*

## St Christopher's Halls

Most time is spent in the halls, they get a lot of use, and we often run out of time to complete all that needs doing each week.

All the hall chairs and trestle table legs were checked for loose screws, quite a few needed tightening.

Waterproofing of the LH end wall over the flat roof to stop ingress of rain water.

The new damper on the small hall left hand swing door has been replaced; it took several attempts adjusting but is satisfactory now.

New handles fitted to all windows in both halls.

The LH floor is still a problem due to a slippery surface. A quote was obtained but is rather costly so we are aiming to do an in house cleaning of a sample area and treating with liquid wax polish during a holiday period.

A new post has been fitted and the gate raised at the back access to Play Group outside play area by Reg Hitchings.

A big thank you to my 'partner in crime', Peter Sugden, whose technical know-how is much in use and when needed Tony Poulter and Terry Hobbs help us out and Churchwarden Peter is now coming most Wednesdays.

*Dorothy Baker.*

## URC Centre

Routine maintenance of the URC Centre has continued as usual during the year with bulbs and tubes being replaced as required. The lights in the church space appear to have settled down and aren't now causing problems. The area at the back of the building was cleared again this year and all the weeds and rubbish removed. A neighbour's fence was repaired. One major item was addressed, that of painting the whole of the outside of the centre including some woodwork repairs and re glazing – looks fresh and smart again.

*Brian Miles*

## Messy Church

We have been running this for over a year now and get most of ideas from the Messy Magazine. We have 'regular' activities - Lego, Playdough, Colouring, Prayer table, & large bricks, then 3 extra to do with the theme. We then go into church for the story & songs, ending with tea. Thanks to the group of people who make it run.

*Debbie Cypher*

## Ministry 60+

We held a one-day event in the middle of August with a safari animal theme. This was our 9th year of providing something for the over 60s when clubs are closed for the summer.

Some 20+ sat down to lunch and tea, with various 'table' activities to keep brains active. Entertainment was provided in the afternoon by Tony Poulter, who had managed to find songs about animals - some for us to join in, including "Daddy's taking us to the zoo tomorrow".

*Contd.*

Sponsored by TCiWH, we couldn't put these events on without "The Team" who work hard to decorate the hall and provide a delicious salad and pudding for lunch, and send guests home full of afternoon tea and cakes. Many thanks go to them.

*Pam Dainton*

## **Mothers Union**

St. Christopher's Mothers' Union is one of only three left in the Cheltenham area and flourishes with 25 members including several from St Philip & St. James and St., Peter's. Our celebration to mark 140 years of the MU included a bring and share lunch when we were delighted to welcome Alison and Richard Neale transferring from the MU branch in Birkenhead.

Another interesting year included the arrival of our new Team Vicar, Revd Gary Grady, with responsibility for both St. Peter's, Leckhampton and The Church in Warden Hill. He was our speaker in December and gave us a lively presentation of his recent visit to our two link dioceses in India.

During the year we have also 'travelled' to Ethiopia and Australia and received an up-to-date report from occupied Palestine when Ruba, our partnership member from St. Andrew's, Ramallah, visited and answered questions after her very moving talk. We learnt about the stoles the P & J curate, Natalie, uses and the interesting stories behind them, about the life experiences of one of our members and were even led into further adventures with God.

Apart from these lively speakers we held our annual coffee morning which enabled us to send a donation to the national MU 'Away from it All' organisation. Members made cakes for the celebration to mark the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, also for the Family Fun Day, the Heritage Sunday visitors and groups of visitors who come from far and wide to look at and meditate on our Tom Denny windows. Corporate Eucharists have been well attended each month, as was the annual Wave of Prayer service early on a Saturday morning in September, and now we even have our own official photographer who produces a vivid record of most of our events.

*Margaret Meads*

## **Music Group**

The music group played at all the family services in 2016 although sometimes there aren't very many of us. We've really missed Olwyn and all hope she continues to get her health back. It always surprises me that after 20 years, there are still many hymns we haven't sung and which need to be arranged to suit our abilities. This year, Val has started playing with a brass band again but was asked to switch from Horn to Euphonium, so we've now got even more "bottom" to our sound. If there are any musicians out there who fancy joining us you'll be most welcome to come and chat to me, Pauline or Jacky.

*Terry Hobbs*

## **Open the Book**

The team has continued to go into Warden Hill Infants School most term weeks, and are always given a warm welcome. A wide selection of bible stories are told and acted out with us dressing up as appropriate. Our numbers dipped part way through the year but we now have a couple of new folk join us. We meet every six or so weeks to discuss and plan the presentations and then prior to each 'performance' we read through the story and practise as necessary. Very often we involve some of the children in the story telling. It is very rewarding to see the children enjoying the stories and this could not be done without the dedicated work of the Open the Book Team.

*Diana Miles*  
*on behalf of the Open the Book Team*

## Parochial Church Council

The PCC is the main Anglican authority in our Parish; it delegates most of its responsibilities to the two Church Councils who effectively run the churches on a day to-day basis. We meet 4 times a year and formulate policy, such as Safeguarding, and to review information sent down to us from the Deanery and Diocese. This year much of the business related to the re-ordering project at St Philip & St James, Leckhampton.

*Reg Hitchings*

## Prayer Group

The prayer group for the Church in Warden Hill continues to meet twice each month, on the second and fourth Thursdays at 2 pm for one hour. There are now five of us who meet together in this pleasant, warm place and have a peaceful hour with one another and with God. We begin by reading the lessons set for the following Sunday, which inspire us where to concentrate our prayers. We pray regularly for our church, its clergy and members and any upcoming events and of course for the world-wide church, particularly those places where there is persecution and hatred.

We pray for world situations, plenty of those, and do not forget our partnership with St. Andrew's, Ramallah and the painful situation in Palestine/Israel. We include our own community, remembering the local schools, the Open the Book team and the Street Pastors, and all those listed on the prayer board and those who have particularly asked us to pray for them, and any recently bereaved, all in strict confidence.

*Margaret Meads*

## Readers

2016 was another year when all three Readers were fully involved in services week by week. Firstly with a large number of services on the first Sunday morning in the month with a service aimed at members of the congregation of all ages. This sometimes proved challenging but enables us to use a variety of materials together with being ably supported by the Music Group. Also services of word conducted on the third Sunday morning of the month.

Readers also lead and preached at most of the Evensong Services through the year.

Roy and Pam conducted services at Faithfull House as part of the P&J rota to Care Homes. Roy also assisted St Peter's rota for care home services when necessary.

All three Readers have acted as Liturgical Deacons at Eucharistic Services, together with Ann Johns who has also acted as Liturgical Deacon both on a Sunday and more importantly at our Tuesday Eucharist services at the URCC.

All three together with Ann have acted as servers when required.

We all consider it a great privilege to be serving in the worship of Gods church here in Warden Hill.

*Pam/ Rachel/Roy*

## Sacristan

In 2016 St. Christopher's preparation of the Altar for Sunday and midweek services was carried out each week by Pam Dainton, Ann Johns and Roy McBane. Preparation requires that wine and water, wafers, chalices and ciborium are all in place, and that the appropriate altar frontal is in place according to the Church of England liturgical colours for the season. Also when necessary the materials for Baptism are in place, candles, certificates, water in the font etc. On those occasions when there was a UIRC communion celebrated then Eileen Attwood and Diana Miles took responsibly for setting up the altar with elements for communion, including supplying a bread loaf. Sacristans are also responsible for stocks of wafers, Bread, wine and oil for candles which must be monitored and purchased on a regular basis, together with other candles and aumbry lights. Our thanks to Margaret Meads who had washed and ironed the fine linen for the altar covering, ensuring they were ready for the great festivals. Thanks also to Maureen McBane and Margaret Meads who have between them ensured that the altar linen, purificators, corporals and napkins had been laundered and ironed.

*Roy McBane*

## Senior Club

We all enjoyed many Informative, amusing and musical Wednesday afternoons in 2016.

The year started when most of us brought along photographs of our weddings. This was hilarious, {no one recognised me.} We viewed magical power point presentations about Elephants, Images of Vietnam, Old Gloucestershire, The Khyber Pass and Birds of the Dowdeswell Reservoir, to name just a few.

Musical items are always popular Sarah Kelly told us about ukuleles "Now and Then". She brought enough instruments for everyone to try and we were taught to play several chords. Sarah has won prizes at Cheltenham Music Festival for her playing and singing. The Westbrooke Singers as usual were a delight, the Christobells entertained us twice, the Christmas concert consisted of carols, and we all joined in. A group of talented ukulele players directed by Terry Cox entertained us in November.

We also learnt about three local charities, The Spring Centre, The James Hopkins Trust, [these two most members had not heard about,] and National Star, previously called the National Star centre.

On December 14th we travelled by bus to Brickhampton Court Golf Complex for a delicious Christmas lunch, it was the last meeting of the club as due to my health I have been advised to take things easy.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Janet for all her help, Barbara for playing the hymns and telling us the history of each one and the ladies who helped in the kitchen.

*Sheila Parry.*

## Sidesmen and Welcomers

The sidesmen and welcomers are a very important part of the life and ministry of The Church in Warden Hill, showing our welcome and inviting in all who come to our services. We are very fortunate to have so many people being the friendly face of our church and this extends to our whole congregation, not just those "on the door". The "chief" welcomer role entails ensuring all on the duty rota for that service are aware of their responsibilities and where someone does not arrive or cannot do their duty a replacement is found, the service leader is prayed for, and the initial welcome and notices are given. This welcomer generally makes sure that the administrative side of the service is well organised on the day. Thank you to everyone involved in the welcoming ministry. If you would like to be added to the welcomer rota or want to know more about what is involved, or are an existing Welcomer who wants to also take on the Chief Welcomer role then please speak to Richard, Peter or Carole.

*Richard Cypher*

## **Singles Lunches**

For many reasons, we only held one Sunday lunch in 2016 attended by those who would have "dined alone" after the morning service. This was a "bring and share" meal, which was enjoyed by all. Thanks go to all those who helped organise it.

*Pam Dainton*

## **Social Co-ordinators**

Ann Johns and I acted as the coordinator, we organised Gary's welcome tea, Harvest was jacket potatoes with fillings and puddings, the ticket money went to the Harvest appeal Water Aid. Many thanks to all who helped on the day and donated puddings.

For the Christmas Fayre we decided to do something different - making a table decoration and decorate a cup cake, as well as the usual bottle stalls and raffle and refreshments etc. Thanks again to all who helped.

Lastly the LEP lunch - soup and a roll lunch plus puddings from lots of people - thanks!

*Debbie Cypher*

## **South Cheltenham Team Ministry**

On 7 February Nick Davies was installed as Team Rector and there followed the installation in September of Gary Grady as Team Vicar with responsibility for St Peter's and The Church in Warden Hill. A new curate, Jo Pestell, has joined Cheltenham Network Church and will be working among the churches of the team as part of her training. An advertisement was issued for a priest to have responsibility for St Stephen's, but no-one was forthcoming so ministerial provision for St. Stephen's is having to be revisited. On the plus side, St. Stephen's roof appeal managed to raise all the monies required for their repairs. The St Philip and St James church re-ordering reached the stage of Faculty application in October; final approval is likely to take a number more months. The team, in all its diversity, is working well together and a number of joint initiatives, among them the Summer Holiday Club and the Family Fun Day, were most successful. The first of two workshops to further the joint working and mission of the team was held and among the initiatives being developed is the Refugee Hosting Project to support a vulnerable Syrian refugee family amongst us.

*Peter Sands*

## **St Christopher's Gardening Club**

We enjoyed a variety of speakers over the year. The members' spring show was a very pleasant evening, with many colourful spring flowers on display. An evening visit to an open garden was very popular, beautiful gardens with a fabulous supper laid on. Committee members worked hard together, to put on a very successful annual show

The shrubbery across the road, looked after by the gardening club, won a gold award, in the Cheltenham in Bloom competition.

Our year ended with the AGM followed by cheese and biscuits.

*Barbara Tarren*

## St. Christopher's Ladies' Group

Over 20 of our members met to celebrate the New Year with an excellent lunch at the Mayflower Restaurant in town; those who preferred not to eat Chinese ate a delicious lunch at Bishop's Cleeve.

During 2016 we enjoyed a wide variety of speakers, ranging across the History of Punch and Judy to a member of The Queen's Bodyguard - complete with his fantastic uniform - to hawks and owls and sampling Godsell Cheeses.

Our first outing in 2016 was to Bristol to see The Glen Miller Story organised by Anita Robinson and then in July we travelled by coach through the Forest of Dean to take tea at The Victorian Tearooms.

We helped organise and run the Queen's 90th Birthday Party Celebration at St. Christopher's: funds raised went to Young Gloucester, part of The Prince's Trust.

Our main fundraiser was a concert in May by the Cheltenham Youth Choir. This proved to be a very enjoyable evening and £600 was given to the Gloucester Young Carers and £75 to the choir.

Our Christmas meeting was a Bring and Share supper with a demonstration of Christmas floral table decorations by Heather Peacey.

We continue without a Leader and 2 committee members have stepped down due to illness or family commitments but we have planned another year of meetings with speakers, outings and fundraising and now have an increased membership and an average attendance of 38.

*Sue Furlong*

## St Christopher's Playgroup

Playgroup is running really well, we have had a lot of change with new play leader and 2 new members of staff starting but we are all doing really well, play group is very busy and full with children, which is brilliant.

We have had a supportive committee in place for the smooth running of the playgroup.

We have a fundraising event coming up which is our sponsored Easter bounce, tombola and coffee mornings which we are all looking forward to.

Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to the year ahead.

*Claire Beach - play leader*

## Sunday Car Scheme

Throughout the year 5 people were given lifts to Church on a Sunday morning. During the year 2 drivers retired from giving lifts - John Hutton who was a stalwart member of the team for seven years and Jean Bennett who had to retire due to ill health.

More Sunday morning drivers are desperately needed as that would reduce the pressure on the current 4 members of the team and share the commitment more fairly, especially during holiday times.

*Valerie Codling*

## URC – Vestry

One of the responsibilities of the elder is to look after the preacher on a Sunday before, during and after the service and to ensure the church is ready for the service. We refer to this as the 'Vestry Elder'. Elders are appointed from amongst the URC membership and serve for a period of three years but can be extended. The elders at Warden Hill have now become integrated into the council of TCIWH and share pre-service preparation with the Church Wardens.

*Brian Miles*

## Urchins

Little Urchins Mother and Toddler Group Warden Hill is organised by local Childminders on a voluntary for the benefit of Parents and Carers alike. It is held on Monday and Wednesday mornings from 9.30 to 11.30 throughout the year (including school holidays). As well as our regular play dates we hold a Summer party for the children, generally in June, with Bouncy Castle/ Soft Play and party food, a Christmas Party and Nativity session. Where possible we try to recognise other religion's special days in the calendar in our craft activities as well as our own Easter, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day etc.

Attendances can be erratic and affected by the time of year and so once we have replaced any equipment and/ or toys the bulk of our 'profit' is donated to the church in grateful thanks for allowing us the use of the premises throughout the year.

During the year we have undertaken a review of our toy library and are systematically replacing the larger items. A new trampoline and a complete new "Home Corner" have so far been sourced.

*Jan Robbins. Treasurer*

## Website and Face Book (a.k.a Social Media)

We continue to monitor the website & Facebook account, and update them (relatively) frequently with news and events, and to keep the website looking fresh.

In particular, the website has recently undergone a facelift to make it look more modern, and for improved compatibility with mobile devices. The main aim of the website is to be a source of information for those within and without the congregation, and individual pages may be updated at a frequency of between about every one to six months. If you are involved in a church group, I urge you to check the website to see whether any information on it is out of date, or whether any new information needs putting on it.

For practical reasons, shorter-term news (e.g. concerning next week's service or upcoming event) is not usually placed on the website, but is rather disseminated via the Facebook account - which is linked to from the website. Various church members have access to the Facebook account, and are free to post any updates on it that will then become publically available (for instance, details of specific services/events). If you would like access as well, please let me (Richard Smith) know.

There is also a Facebook discussion area for church members to share information/news/views that is only viewable to other members of that Facebook discussion group. Again, if you would like to join it, please ask me or one of the other members through Facebook.

*Richard Smith*



## West Midlands Synod – URC

The United Reformed Church nationally is split into twelve areas known as Synods. We are in the West Midland Synod, it meets twice a year and rotates the venue around the area covered by the synod. A whole range of topics has been discussed this last year including routine subjects and controversial ones. Currently and ahead of us subjects will include deployment and levies for the churches. Reports and minutes of past meetings are available if anyone wishes to read them.

*Brian Miles*

## Window Visitors

We had a record 7 pre-booked parties of visitors in 2016, plus 3 Church events when obviously the windows were 'on view' (Christian Arts Festival, Family Fun Day, HODs).

The pre-booked visits ranged from a firm's retirement group, 3 MU branches from the County, an embroidery group looking for inspiration, and photographers. We also had a group of former colleagues who came for the dedication of Shirley Howard's seat in the garden - they had a brief talk and refreshments before the short ceremony.

In addition, one coach party rang at the very last minute - and fortunately someone was able to meet them in Church (although no refreshments on this occasion). There were other occasions when small groups turned up - and luckily met people who happened to be in Church who welcomed them with informal talks and pointed them in the direction of the leaflets etc. They're the ones we know about!

Grateful thanks must go to those people (mostly MU members) who give up their time to bake cakes and serve refreshments to our guests. Also to Dorothy Baker who deals with the stocks of leaflets and cards, which are available all year round to all visitors, of whom there are many from all over the world - just look in the Visitors' Book!

*Pam Dainton*  
*Co-ordinator*

## Youth Work Report

I have been here two years now and it's been a really positive and supportive experience and I am looking forward to what 2017 brings, as for many 2016 was not a good year. Within the youth project, it was more productive as we started a new group in September called Rock Solid at St Peters Cottages in September. I am now in Bournside School twice a week supporting pupils at lunchtime, we saw 12 young people get confirmed last May and Natalie and I journeyed with them as we enabled them to grow in faith and confirm their faith at Pip & Jims.

A young person at Emmanuel Church is now on the PCC and helping lead Spark and many of their young people attended Soul Survivor events and The Big Church Day Out. We have had Holly on placement with us from Gloucestershire University and over the year we have had contact with over 100 young people and 30 regularly attending weekly activities.

This summer we will be launching the new three year vision for 2017-2020 and I will be visiting all the team churches to promote this and how people can get involved and continue to support the youth project for the next three years and continue to build on the success of the past 9 years. I feel we could provide a weekly club here at TCiWH and your support will be needed to enable this happen. Watch this space! Cheers for your support.

*Ian and the youth team.*