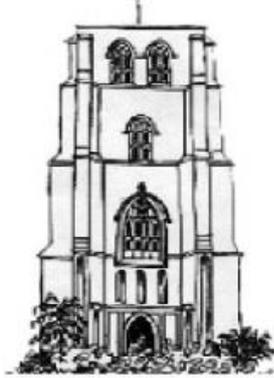


BECCLES PARISH

ST MICHAEL'S & ST LUKE'S



ANNUAL REPORTS

FOR 2017

Growing in God

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2.42-47 42

Core Text 2017

RECTOR'S REPORT 2017

We began 2017 marking the end of ministry in the parish as staff members for Carrie Darnell, Lindsay Blankley and Philip Miller. As I said at that time, each gave so much of themselves to the parish and God blessed their time here, we continue to hold them in our prayers as they each have new roles.

We moved into a new season that looked daunting at the time for many of us but with prayer, focus and determination we collectively got on with things and opened ourselves up to what God wanted with his church afresh. So much has happened during the year that it is hard to capture it in a report and do justice to all of you who have rolled up your sleeves and got on with things. It has truly been an amazing transformation and I thank God for your support and commitment. This report booklet highlights some of the blessings we have seen over the year and there is a real sense that God has so much more for us all to experience as we live out being the body of Christ in this community.

I am so grateful to everyone who contributes to the life of St. Michael's and St Luke's in whatever way they are able. No matter how great or small you feel your contribution is, please be assured that it is always valued. There are, of course so many I am always grateful for, bearing in mind all that they have done for the parish over the past year. However, the other report-writers, I know, will be thanking people for their contribution, in whatever it is they have had a hand in, and I gladly endorse them. Thank you all.

I would, however, like to make special mention and thank those with whom I generally have day-to-day contact (sometimes frequently). Known rather wonderfully as: Officers of the Church: Ian Hollingsworth, Christopher Sparrow, Roger Bennett and Fran Tuck our four Churchwardens who have all been a great source of wisdom, vision and energy this year. Jayne Hollingsworth our treasurer has done an outstanding job in managing our finances and seeing us through a very difficult period when our former bank messed us around. Thank you to those who support Jayne with finance and banking; Roger Bennett, Terri Gotts, Doreen Page and Margaret Page.

The fundraising team have been creative with the events delivered during the year and every pound raised has made a difference. A huge thank you to everyone who gives so generously to not only pay our way but to expand the mission and ministry of the parish.

Thank you to all who have served on the PCC this last year, we have discussed a huge variety of subjects in relation to the mission, ministry and administration of the parish. The meetings have always been focused, prayerful and God-centred. Thank you to Kate Cracknell for taking the minutes of meetings and circulating papers as PCC secretary.

To those who maintain and clean our buildings, to all who work on and oversee the improvement, restoration and development of both churches, thank you. As we began 2017 a lot of time was given by a small team to transform the worship space at St Luke's and thanks to the generosity of church members we were able to carpet the space and purchase new chairs.

At St Michael's we have seen the Terrace re-surfaced and once again, made a very usable space, some works were carried out to stonework and roofs of the North and South porches. Thanks go to the buildings committee, especially Phil Filer who has overseen the various projects.

The Friends of St Michael's continue to raise funds for projects and are now on the last push for the money needed to conserve the South Porch. They have hosted some great events during 2017, thank you to the committee, all who help and all who have donated.

Growing in God

We remain committed to the Growing in God themes and our PCC meetings have often reflected on and reported updates on; Growing Deeper, Growing Younger, Growing in Influence and Growing Number. Later this year we will revisit our Growing in God aims and develop them further.

Growing in God
Flourishing Congregations
Making a Difference

Growing Deeper

We are really blessed with a varied and gifted ministry team of Elders, Readers and Retired Clergy. It is a personal joy for me to share ministry in this place with such a great group of people who lead, preach and offer pastoral support. A number of the team regularly lead worship in the local residential homes too. During 2017 our ministry team has been involved in a large number of services through Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals. It has been particularly good to see some of our wedding couples and baptism families get involved in other aspects of church life.

Our regular pattern of worship offers a variety in styles, it has been great to add to this variety during 2017 with Feast All-age worship now well established in both churches, Messy Church at St Luke's really connecting with children and families and the introduction of Still each month providing a space for silence, prayer and reflection.

Thank you to all who have contributed to the music of our churches particularly to Ian Hollingsworth, Graham Smith and the choir at St Michael's and to Pippa Bridges and our singers at St Luke's.

One area of church life that has grown deeper is our regular time of corporate prayer. Each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 8.30am a good number of people gather for morning prayer. On the first Saturday of each month we have been led by different people at First Saturday Prayers. There is always room for others to join these times that underpin everything we do with prayer.

Our Small Groups have been a key meeting place for prayer, study and support. I am grateful to all who host and lead these groups and hope that we can see more develop in the year ahead.

Growing Younger

In this booklet there are reports about the groups for children and young people. We continue to reach many lives with the light and love of Christ through our own groups and the strong links with all our schools and community groups. An ecumenical team regularly lead Open the Book assemblies in the primary schools, and I have the privilege of leading regular assemblies and give some input into classroom learning. Stronger links have developed with Sir John Leman High School and Beccles Free School. It was a joy to welcome each school into our churches to celebrate Christmas and other festivals and events during the year.

At the start of the summer holidays we held three Messy Mornings at St Luke's with over 120 children, parents and grandparents attending. All this work happens because of a very dedicated team, thank you all.

Growing in Influence

Our reach beyond ourselves is vast and a vital part of being the church today. Thank you to everyone who has supported Mission Focus links through prayer and generous giving. The Foodbank has gone through a turbulent time this last year and we are now established as part of Waveney Foodbank. Thanks go to Pam Bayliss and all the team who meet a huge number of people at times of crisis and need.

Moving the office into St Luke's has meant that we are around far more when user groups are in the building, this is beginning to provide opportunity for good conversations and connections. Thank you to our volunteer admin team of Pam Bontoft, Doreen Page, Margaret Spratt and Gill Ley.

Growing in Number

So much of what we do throughout the week in both churches doesn't often translate to people in church on Sunday mornings however, we have seen new people join us for worship in both churches and there are very encouraging signs of growing congregations. We are church seven days a week and I would like to thank all those involved in Monday Fellowship, Lunch Club, 'Friends' Friday Coffee and all the groups for children and young people, because at each of these we see community in action, we see friendships made, love and support given.

We have increased outreach through social media, our Facebook and Twitter pages have a good following and engagement with what we share. The website has continued to develop and has more content, thanks to Phil Perry for all his work in this area. All of these ways of communicating mean that we have a larger number of people on the fringe who are informed about the life of the parish and the worship and activities we offer.

I end on a personal note, thanking you all for the support, prayer and encouragement you have given me. It is a joy to be the Rector in this place and lead churches with great people who are passionate about seeing God's kingdom grow. I often say we are in it together and I value your partnership in the gospel. We have much to look forward to in the year ahead. **"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen"** Ephesians 3.20

Blessings

Revd Rich Henderson
Rector

CHURCH CHURCHWARDEN REPORT - ST MICHAEL'S

Besides the regular services throughout the year, on behalf of the town, St Michael's has hosted the Remembrance Service, the Civic Service and the Carols by Candlelight Service. Among other special services were Christmas celebrations for nearly every school in Beccles and the very well attended Crib Service.

The church was very much involved with events such as the Food Festival, the Charter Weekend and the evening when the town's Christmas lights were turned on. A number of lunchtime concerts were held in the summer including organ recitals, a concert by the church Choir and a talk by Roy Tricker.

Approval for the loos in the Northwest corner of the church was granted during the year and the Architect obtained tenders for the work. The successful tender - Medieval Masonry - started work on the project before Christmas and it is anticipated that the work will be completed by March 19th 2018. Funding for the project has come from a number of sources including the sale of a block of shares held by the PCC. Generous grants were obtained from the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, the Centenary Fund, the Beatrice Laing Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation. Donations from civic bodies, members of the congregations and proceeds from special functions have also contributed to the project, which is fully funded.

Consideration is being given to removing seven rows of pews at the west end of the church to create a large unified space including a well-equipped Servedy.

The architect for the Loos and Pews project has drawn up detailed plans which the Buildings Group (and others) are considering before the PCC is asked to approve Phase 2 of the re-ordering. This will also include the repositioning of the font. A Faculty will have to be applied for and once the approximate costs of the project are known fundraising can be started.

The Terrace had been out of commission for almost two years. The PCC let a contract for it to be reinstated on a safe and temporary basis. The work was completed in time for Easter and the Wedding Season. The wrought iron railings were manufactured by a local blacksmith and he has recently also made two ramps to improve access through the west door.

A number of matters arising from the Quinquennial inspection need to be addressed over the next five years. During the year Windows S6 and S7 had the glazing re-mortared into the stonework - this work was the main item identified in the report for action. The re-instatement of the Terrace was another of the works identified in the architect's report.

The Faculty for the South Porch conservation work has now been approved and the Friends continue to raise funds for this project.

There have been two working parties to clean the Chapel and tidy up the North Porch and parts of the churchyard. A new kneeler for the communion rail was purchased.

A large wooden shed has been installed near the North Porch for storage purposes. We will need a major Spring clean inside the church once the current building works have been completed and a tidy up in the churchyard will also be needed.

An Internet connection has been set up in the Undercroft for all our user groups.

Towards the end of the year David Elliott took on the role of Health and Safety Officer. He is working through the relevant policies and files and will report to the PCC on matters requiring updating.

The required safety checks on the gas boiler in the Undercroft and the fire extinguishers have been carried out. The whole electrical system for the church has been inspected and a number of improvements and remedial actions have been made following the recommendations in the report. These involved work in the Chapel, boiler room, kitchen and choir stalls.

The church suffered a burglary in September when an intruder broke in through a Nave window. The Vestry was ransacked and money was stolen from the donations box. The intruder was caught on the church CCTV cameras and his image was passed to the police. All damage was quickly repaired and the church's insurers covered the bulk of the costs.

First Aid boxes have been checked and brought up to date. They will be checked every six months.

There has been one reported accident in the church this last year - a member of the choir tripped in the Chapel after the Carol Service and fractured one arm.

There have been three historic Beccles Churchwardens' Charities in existence since 1676, 1885 and 1963. They had been dormant since at least 2003 and there was no evidence that the accounts had been used for many years. The accounts, and the three charities, have now been closed and the money in the accounts - £538.63 - has been transferred to the Parish. It will be ring fenced to establish a Rector's Discretionary Fund that can be used to help those in need.

The Parish had held a number of Government Consolidated Stocks from as early as 1944 shown in the Annual Accounts. It has been identified that these have been repaid by the Government and the money - about £470 - will be paid to the Parish

Very many individuals and groups have ensured once again that St Michael's continues as a focus for God's work in Beccles. Sincere thanks are extended to all involved including the Assistant Wardens, the Welcomers, Tea and Coffee providers, the Monday Cleaning Team, the Flower Guild, the church Welcoming group and all those individuals who have assisted with the varied events held over the past year.. The Friends continue to support many aspects of the church which is much appreciated.

Ian Hollingsworth and Christopher Sparrow.

CHURCH WARDENS ANNUAL REPORT-ST LUKE'S

We got the year off to a flying start with the redecoration and reordering of the worship area. A small team of very hard-working preparers, scrapers, painters, cleaners, and tea makers achieved the miraculous result in less than a week. The new look was completed with carpet, new blinds and comfortable seating. A new keyboard and sound system were installed, and the whole effect has been very pleasing to the eye, and has enhanced our worship. More recently a cracked window in the worship area has been replaced, along with another in the craft cupboard. It is wonderful to see the amount of use our building gets by both church and community groups, and although the summer months bring its problems with the congregation of youngsters outside the church, we are pleased to be a focal point for the community.

Having the office in the building has proved a great success, and after some teething problems with BT, the transition has been very smooth. It is manned regularly on Monday and Wednesday mornings, and at various other times throughout the week.

St Luke's is being used more often for Diocesan events, which enables local wardens, elders and readers to attend meetings they may otherwise be unable to get to.

We have also seen the growth of the Food Bank Centre at St Luke's, which often involves serving people at times other than the official Food Bank opening times.

We look forward to another busy year, serving the church and local community, and thank all those who help in any way to clean and maintain the building and make it such a pleasant place to spend time.

Fran Tuck and Roger Bennett

TREASURERS REPORT 2017

The year started very well with an increase in regular giving. However early March saw HSBC suddenly close our Parish account without any warning. Establishing a new account with a different bank took 6 weeks to complete and although it had a significant impact on us at the time, we recovered very well. We now bank with Lloyds Business Banking.

Income - Regular giving has decreased slightly this year to £79,567.25 in comparison with just over £80,278 during 2016. This was due to the problems with the bank account, and I am pleased to say that the trend of giving increased again during the later part of the year.

Thank you all for the tremendous support. Your generosity is appreciated by us all.

We have also been very lucky in receiving some substantial grants and donations towards the accessible toilets project. The work for this project has commenced and is progressing well.

My grateful thanks goes to those who have given in anyway big or small to the parish over 2017 to support both St Michael's and St Luke's Churches.

A tremendous response to the Annual Gift Day appeal saw a further £2,747 being donated, a wonderful achievement.

Rental income has increased slightly on 2016 to £14,828. It shows that by utilising the facilities we have, we can generate a good income.

Our expenditure was down compared with 2016. We have worked hard to cut expenditure in

many areas, and this has definitely benefited the Parish during 2017.

Despite pressures faced by so many, funds continue to be raised to help maintain both St Michael's and St Luke's Churches. We must all be very grateful to those who have helped raise funds for the parish.

The Parish Share requested for 2017 by the Diocese was £64,179 and I am delighted to report that we paid this in full. Our figure for this coming year (2018) is £66,552.96.

My thanks are due to all of the team who help me administer our Parish finances,

In particular -

Roger Bennett who accounts for, and banks monies received, at St Luke's.

Doreen and Margaret Page who account for and bank monies received at St Michael's.

I would also like to say a big thank you to Doreen for assisting me in my role as Parish Treasurer. Her support has helped me enormously.

Rich Henderson for his guidance and support.

We all knew we would face some challenges in 2017, but the results we have achieved with your generous financial support is amazing.

I thank each and everyone of you. *Jayne Hollingsworth (PCC Treasurer)*

MUSIC AT ST MICHAEL'S

Throughout the past year music has been very much alive at St Michael's.

Nearly all our schools came to St Michael's for their Christmas Carol celebration. A large Audience/Congregation filled the Nave for the SJLHS Christmas Concert; another large group gathered to enjoy the Beccles Free School Concert. Several of the Primary Schools also came to St Michael's for their Christmas Celebration filling the church with family members and friends.

Almost 500 people were in church for the annual Carols by Candlelight service. Seemingly undeterred by the cold weather, they were able to both enjoy and join in a wide selection of Carols and Christmas music. The Crib Service on Christmas Eve was very well attended - our youngest Chorister Emily sang a solo Carol, enjoyed by children and adults alike.

The Organ

As I reported to the PCC some time ago, the Organ is in urgent need of some restoration. Although the organ is maintained on a regular basis, with Tuning and minor works happening twice each year; the last major work was completed in 1937 when much of the internal mechanics of the organ was rebuilt or replaced. At present the action of the organ is unreliable at best. Leaking air from worn out leather work and seals reduces the pressure of the air within the whole organ, making the Action very unreliable. We are currently awaiting the removal and restoration of one section of the organ at a cost of around £1,000. We are very fortunate to have received a generous donation of that amount through Waveney District Council. I have also donated any fees that I have been offered to help fund the repair.

The next stage of restoration is the repair of leather work purses in the '*Pedal Organ*'. Although the problem is not uniform across the whole Pedal department, it is not economic to disassemble the Pedal Organ and replace just the split purses - more will certainly fail in a short time, and we would have to repeat the exercise. It would be best to overhaul the whole mechanism at one time. This will cost in the region of £2,500.

To put the cost of this work into perspective- I *estimate* that to have a similar instrument built for us today would cost between a half and three quarters of a million pounds!

I feel that we would also benefit by having a new Console from which to play the organ. I propose that we have the new console detached from the rest of the organ, so that the Organist can play whilst sitting in the Nave of the church. This would enhance the music, in that the organist would be with the congregation and able to hear them singing. In the present situation, it is difficult to hear any voices from the Nave.

Many churches now have such a system, which works to their advantage. The whole Instrument can be controlled from the detached console. Such have been the advances in Electronics, the cable linking the two can be a simple Co-axial cable, similar to one that is used for a Television aerial. The work would involve having electrical contacts added to the keyboards of the existing console to connect the new console to. This alteration to the organ would have to be approved by the Diocesan Organ Consultant, but I am sure that would not be a problem.

As well as our own choir, who have sung at St Michael's and other venues throughout 2017 on a regular basis, we have enjoyed a number of other musical events. During the Summer I promoted a 6 week programme of Lunch-Time 'Concerts'. Supported by the Friends of St Michael's, these 6 events proved popular and encouraged many visitors to come to visit the church - many managed to attend all 6 events. I am very grateful to those who made these concerts possible - our own Choir, Organists David Price and Jonathan Palman, Bass Matthew Smith and Author and Historian Roy Tricker B.E.M. All provided very individual, professional and entertaining events. I must add that Roy Tricker and I have been friends for over 50 years and it gave me great pleasure that Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II conferred the British Empire Medal on Roy in the New Year Honours list this year.

Just after Easter I was delighted to welcome a large group of children from the local Primary and Infant schools to sing for a concert in the church. Nearly all Beccles schools were represented and together with members of our choir they entertained a large, appreciative audience of Mums, Dads, Aunties, Uncles, Grandparents and Friends to an evening of some of their favourite songs.

Our Choir at St Michael's work extremely hard and give much of their time to both learn their music as well as singing it and I say a big **Thank You** to every member.

I would also say thank you to Graham Smith for his help during the year. I have been playing the organ at St Michael's since Easter 1982. It is difficult to believe that Christmas 2017 was the 35th year that I had played for the Candlelight Carols and for the Christmas Day services. *Ian Hollingsworth*

BELLRINGERS 2017

The ringers have again rung for every Sunday morning service during the year, bar one - when the scaffolding first went up – and for every Wednesday practice, again bar one, when the padlock on the scaffolding was changed without our knowledge.

The competence of the band is gradually improving and some more demanding methods are being attempted on practice nights. Two quarter-peals have been rung during the year: one was Plain Bob Royal to commemorate the life of Chris Slummer, and the other was Plain Bob Major, rung on the minor eight, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the death during WW1 of Edwin Pipe, a Beccles ringer. We rang for 9 weddings, as well as some special services and the New Year.

The banner on the scaffolding has brought several enquiries about learning to ring and we recently ran a 4-hour session for learners. 2 have been learning for a few weeks on Wednesdays, and we have 3 completely new ringers, who have all made a promising start. The clappers of 3 bells were tied so that those living near the tower heard nothing!

I stepped down as Tower Captain in December. The role is now shared between Kate Gill, who has taken on being Tower Captain, and Chrissie Pickup who is ringing master. I shall act as deputy for them as and when needed. *Faith Darch*

THE FRIENDS OF ST MICHAEL'S

The Friends of St Michael's have had another successful year and we are approaching the target for the South Porch appeal. The Friday coffee mornings attract regular customers and have become a very sociable occasion. The past year has seen another series of lunchtime concerts and we owe Ian Hollingsworth a debt of gratitude. Robert Tilney kindly agreed to be a speaker for a lunch, which was much enjoyed. Local artist Melanie Dodd painted a picture for us to reproduce as a Christmas card, which sold out completely - many thanks to Melanie. Our new committee member, David Gregson, has been very successful in obtaining donations from local business people and our treasurer, Rachel Card, has been very efficient in claiming gift aid. Peter Langford has chosen FOSM as one of the charities to support in his marathon cycle ride from Land's End to John O'Groats and we hope that this year will see us reach our target and start the work on conserving the South Porch. We are grateful to all members and other supporters. *Faith Darch (Hon Sec)*

Growing Younger

THIRST YOUTH CAFÉ REPORT 2017

2017 was a year of change at Thirst. We were supported by the church community and an amazing staff team of Jo, Lauren, Carl, Deano, Courtney and Nick

We received various funding and thank all our funders. In particular we acknowledge the support from the RAOB club and Paul Elmy for £500 towards supporting the young people at Thirst.

Our weekly attendance has increased from between 40 to 70 young people on a Friday evening. The majority of the young people arrive from the local area however there are several who travel significant distances from surrounding villages and towns like Lowestoft, Norwich, Wrentham and Loddon. Our age range remains the same with members who attend secondary school.

2017 saw a focus on training young people in various topics which included interviewing for a new Senior Worker. Consultation has begun with young people which will lead to a showcase/conference in 2018. This is well underway and links have been strengthened with the Youth Champions of Beccles Town Council.

Behind the scenes the committee worked hard to bring in new funding and support the young people when difficulties occurred within the community. The Committee would like to thank our many partners including our local schools, Town Council, District Council, Suffolk Constabulary and County Council.

Cookery is always popular at Thirst with young people learning new dishes. All members of the staff team have taken turns in the kitchen to support young people to cook buns, pizza, curry, stir fry plus many more wonderful dishes.

Lauren enabled young people to learn the art of cross stitch which was enjoyed by several young people who went onto take part in more intricate designs.

Summer we were back in Darby Park for fun and games. Activities on offer were circus skills (plate spinning, yoyo, flower sticks, diablo), football, hula hoops and relay games which the staff encouraged young people to try.

Towards the end of the year an advert went out for a new Senior Worker to replace Jackie. The candidates assembled to be greeted by some well-trained young people where they were asked to run an activity. Following this the candidates attended a formal panel for interviews. We would like to thank all our candidates who applied and attend their interviews and congratulate them all for the activities they ran. Jo one of the current team was successful and is now the new Senior Worker. She will take up her new position in January 2018. Jackie the current Senior Worker will still be part of the staff team as she takes on her new position of Project Manager in January 2018.

We look forward to 2018 with new beginnings and thank all those people who have supported Thirst this year. *Jackie Ball Thirst Project Manager*

GET A LIFE GANG REPORT

Once again at Get a Life Gang we have had another busy & full year, with attendance of around 30 children & 6 leaders each week. We still provide a very varied programme for the children (5 to 12 years of age) with a slightly different structure.

New children have come into the group & it has been a really happy time.

They have continued to enjoy many activities. Baking with June & Michelle. Molly, Steph & Hayley have headed up the crafts & all things messy. Roger & Josh have been doing bingo/you sessions, various games & flannelgraphs (assisted by the children).

Bible themes have been Food, Money, Children, Advent & Christmas.

The young leaders manned stalls at St. Luke's Christmas Fair & children took part in St Luke's Carol Service. They also made calendars to give to folk at Monday Fellowship at Christmas. Once again Steph organised our entry for the Hungate Christmas Tree Festival & the group made decorations for the "Under the Sea" theme. At the end of the year we had our usual Christmas

Party which included a disco (thank you Liam), games, food & a visit from Father Christmas (they all guessed who it was).

We have continued to keep in touch with Rachel Ullmer who is currently working with CMS in Pakistan. In July she paid us a visit.

Thank you to the members of the team (led by Rev. Rich Henderson) for their continued support, June Grieve, Steph Harvey, Hayley Henderson, Molly Martin, Michelle Prior & Roger Tuthill. Many thanks goes to those who stepped in to help out & also to our young leaders, Liam Prior, Lewis Pigney & Elena Wilson for all their enthusiasm & hard work.

Roger Tuthill

POP IN AND PLAY AT ST MICHAEL'S

The pop-in-and-play group meets in the undercroft at St Michael's church every Thursday morning during term time. The group is lead by Penny Filer and the team consists of Sue Son, Diane Molineaux, Margaret Spratt, Cecile Radford, Pam Francis and Sue Bailey.

The team has held occasional celebratory events for both past and present Pop-in-and-Play adults and children. Invitations for the "Feast" service are available and invitations are circulated through our network of adults.

Attendance varies from week to week; a lack of space will prevent us from any significant expansion. There are 14 adults on the books including mothers, grandmothers, childminders and fathers and 23 children ranging from small babies to pre-school toddlers. The feedback from adults is very positive and they say that they enjoy both the venue and the companionship; tea, coffee, biscuits, soft drinks and bread-sticks (for the children) are provided. The team believes that it is offering a very important service to the community including the opportunity to provide a listening, non-judgemental ear to people with often difficult family circumstances. *Penny Filer*

ST LUKE'S TODDLER GROUP

St. Luke's toddler group has continued to flourish over the past year thanks to the commitment of a willing team of volunteers who, each week, help set up the hall and put out toys for the session and provide a friendly face and endless drinks and snacks. Numbers vary but at least 50 adults and children attend each session, rising to 80 on a particularly busy morning. The group aims to provide an environment where children can play safely with age-appropriate toys, books, and creative activities and adults can relax and socialise. This last year the group benefitted from donations, enabling the purchase of some replacement toys, a new 'road layout' rug for the cars and garage, plus a rug and cushions creating a 'quiet corner'. *Kay March*

ST LUKE'S CHILDREN'S SUNDAY GROUP

Although we have very few children on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month, it always proves to be time well spent, not least for the adults, who derive great pleasure from their conversations with the children.

It is often very amusing to hear the children explaining what they have been doing. We get an alternative version of the Bible Story! However, the children are very well received by the rest of the church, and keen to show what they have been doing in their activity.

Thank you to all who help Fran; Sally, Hayley, Brenda and Janet. *Fran Tuck*

AWE SMALL GROUP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

During 2017 a core group of 10-15 young people aged 11-15 have met with the leaders twice a month for both spiritual and social sessions. The spiritual sessions on; poverty & justice, materialism, standing up for Jesus and living generously were all taken from the youth Emmaus course. Social sessions have included a variety of craft, games, cooking and movie evenings.

In September we took 15 young people to the 'Gather' Diocesan youth event at the Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds. The evening included worship, teaching, workshops and activities. The young people raised the money for transport and tickets themselves.

Do pray for our young people and the team as they meet in the year ahead.

I would like to thank the team, David Elliott, Serena Emberley and Felicity Tate who have all helped me ensure we provide this group for the young people. *Rich Henderson*

Growing in Depth

STUART DRIVE SMALL GROUP

A Small Group of 8-9 people met regularly at the home of Angela Morgan on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 2pm.

Our aim is to study the Bible, share our ideas, increase our knowledge and see how the scriptures can help us in our daily life and our relationship with Christ.

This year we have spent time studying the first chapters of Mark's gospel, looked at Praying the Psalms as well as following the Lent Course of Receiving Christ and we will also be following this year's Lent course – 'On the Third Day'.

We are always open to new members – do join us if the day and time are right for you.

Andrew Platt

RONDEN CLOSE SMALL GROUP

It's been a great year where a number of us have met regularly to share in a great variety of experiences as we travel along our Faith Journey. During the year we recognised that a daytime meeting would serve the needs of the group better, so we now meet fortnightly on a Tuesday afternoon at 2pm.

During Lent we shared with the rest of the Parish in using the York materials- 'Receiving Christ', we have had studies and discussions on a wide range of issues, we have done crafts, written verses, sung hymns and tried to help one another along in the difficult times, while also sharing our joys. *Molly Martin*

WAVENEY ROAD SMALL GROUP

Our small group continues to meet weekly in term time on Monday evenings. This year we have used two useful diocesan courses: 'Living Isaiah' and 'Living our Gifts'; 'Rich Inheritance' (a very good York course) as well as the York course used by all the groups in Lent. We are currently using Church Army's 'Faith Pictures', which is very different and fun. Lots of discussion, mutual support and laughter and plenty of room for anyone who'd like to join us. *Faith and Barry Darch*

PUDDINGMOOR SMALL GROUP

We are a large 'small' group of 15 people meeting every Wednesday (term time). Caroline Baylis is our wonderful hostess providing tea, coffee, delicious cakes and, most importantly, a very warm and welcoming atmosphere in her home. During the year we have used the York Course materials for Lent, Advent and also 'The Lord's Prayer' as well as other DVDs and CDs. We are currently using a 10 session course called 'Towards Belief'. We are a group of very different personalities and often very different points of view. However, we are bound together in friendship and by the Spirit of love, grace, openness and mutual respect.

Keith Wragg

HIGHLAND DRIVE SMALL GROUP

Mark 13, v 11 "It is not you that speaks, but the Holy Spirit.

If we only understand this text in its majestic fullness how determined and yet how thankful we should be when called to give forth any message for our Lord.

It is a wonderful privilege; and yet how some of us shrink from it, almost of saying the words of Moses, yet Gods reply to Moses is still the same for us today. "I will teach thee what thou shalt say."

But whilst we should sin if we do not do God's bidding of God to speak, whether it's taking meetings or speaking.

For some of us it may be, but for others certainly not.

Very many of us may be called to be home missionaries instead.

We in our "Small group" each seek, to be in some small way, to be to each other the Holy Spirit's communication - channel of blessings and love.

Oh give me a word blest Master,
If I may repeat for Thee,
A message to one who needs it,
Entrust it dear Lord to me,
and teach me that I may say
what thou shalt desire today. *Mr and Mrs R Paul*

STILL

Still is a monthly, hour-long service of readings and music, which includes a 20 minute period of silent meditation. The emphasis is on silence and stillness, with each session having a particular theme e.g. 'Light', 'Union with God', 'New Beginnings'. The aim of 'Still' is to offer space to those who find worshipping in silence helpful, and to those on the margins or outside the church who wish to deepen their contemplative life. Whilst many of the themes of 'Still' reflect the seasons of the Christian calendar, the aim is to be hospitable to all who come to attend to the God within.

In the colder months, 'Still' gathers at St Lukes', and in the summer we meet at St Michaels'. The first meeting of 'Still' took place in September 2017 and attracted 46 people; since then numbers have settled to around 20 or so. People who attend are drawn from a wide geographical area as well as from the locality, and include those of other denominations in Beccles.

We feel we could do more to publicise the service in and around Beccles and hope to gather a team who could help us with this in the near future.

A 'spin-off' from 'Still' was a programme of weekly lunch-time half-hour reflections which took place in St Michaels' church during Advent, and there will be a half-day Quiet Space at St Michaels' during Lent; both of these offer space to encounter God in silence and reflect on seasonal themes. *Revd Canon Susannah Izzard, Paul Lawrence*

LECTIO DIVINA GROUP

The LECTIO DIVINA group has met on the first Wednesday every month, at 2.30 in St Michael's Undercroft. Lectio Divina is a time-honoured way of reflecting on a passage of scripture, meditating upon it and entering into conversation with it. About a dozen people usually come to our meetings, and anyone is most welcome. For further information contact *Paul Nelson*, 01502 713392, hedgeparson@btinternet.com

Growing in Influence

MISSION FOCUS

The Mission Focus group continued to meet on alternate months for prayer and information sharing. As always, our main concern has been to encourage people to open their hearts to the wider mission of the Church and especially to the charities and groups that we support as a church community. However, through discussion with Rich and members of the Mission Focus team we finally came to the conclusion that these aims were best met by closing down the group and involving the whole church community through specific inputs in some of the 10.30am services.

During the course of the year we have been much blessed by the generous financial support that has been given to our Mission Focus activities: the Children's Society - £1751, Kagera - £1005, CMS - £479, Rukungiri - £1908, Bible Society - £471, giving a grand total of £5613. In addition to this we have actively supported and given directly to Christian Aid through envelopes and the door-to-door collections during Christian Aid Week. Special thanks are due to Jayne Hollingsworth for keeping track of all these monies. *Keith Wragg*

LINK LUNCH CLUB REPORT

It has been a difficult year at Lunch Club with the loss of several key members, but we have also been very pleased to welcome newcomers. This has meant that our numbers have stayed roughly the same, with between 45 and 55 each week.

Our versatile team of around 25 volunteer kitchen staff, drivers and escorts have worked really hard again, often stepping in at short notice to cover for each other.

We have managed to keep the cost of our meals and community transport the same this year, £3.50 for the meal, 50p for a raffle ticket and £1 for the community transport for those who need it.

Our Christmas Dinner was very well attended, with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor as guests and several of the volunteers coming to share the meal. Several stayed to the short Carol Service afterwards led by Rich, and then enjoyed coffee and mince pies.

Our thanks must go to Duncan, who works tirelessly each week to prepare a nourishing, home cooked meal as well as doing all the shopping.

We look forward to another busy year serving the church and community. *Fran Tuck*

MONDAY FELLOWSHIP

Our Fellowship group for St Michael's and St Luke's continues to meet each Monday at 2pm. We still get very good numbers, despite the increasing age of all of our members. However we have been very encouraged to see new life in the group during the year, both from within our church congregations and of course very welcome newcomers. We do with sadness note the passing of Derek Gotts, Chrystal Street, Yvonne Cable, Vivienne Moore and Margaret Downes.

We have had some very good speakers during the year. We always try to arrange our programme so that we alternate between sessions of Spiritual enrichment and general topics of Local or Charitable interest. We try to include a coffee morning each term so that we can support a few of the charities further.

Each year we celebrate the birthday of the group with a special meal, when we get out the photographs and enjoy past times. During the Summer term we arranged our Garden afternoon to the new Farmhouse Kitchen at Wortwell, for afternoon tea with scones and cake. Then in the Summer, our annual Outing took us to Highways, near Norwich, where some enjoyed shopping, while others spent time chatting over a coffee and lunch.

We continue our weekly bric-a-brac stall, which is really helpful with the resulting funds helping to fund social events.

My grateful thanks goes to all my helpers. It certainly is the team effort that helps the group to run so smoothly. This means a really efficient committee in Elaine, Brenda, Rose and Roger and Jean - all with their varying roles. There's also the kitchen team, the transport providers and programme printers.

We'd love to welcome others of you into the group. Do come and join us any Monday in term-time at St Luke's- you can be sure of a warm welcome. *Molly Martin*

BECCLES FOODBANK REPORT 2018

Over the past year we have supported many more families and individuals than in previous years. We have seen some changes in the Universal Benefits system, and the result has been in more people experiencing hardship and seeking help.

During the year we have also changed our identity! We are now part of The Waveney Foodbanks, a branch of Trussell Trust. Sadly the East Suffolk Foodbank ceased to operate during October, which would have meant our foodbank closing too.

We were able to transfer to Waveney and continue to serve Beccles and the surrounding area. Matthew Scade and Graham Reardon are our new area managers.

There are new regulations which we will have to introduce gradually, but also some advantages too. Our publicity is in hand, and new voucher issuers are being sought. All our local schools now have vouchers, as does the children's centre, Allied nursing care, and the CAB.

We have sent cards expressing our thanks for all that they have done to our former East Suffolk colleagues: Phil Riley, Adie in the warehouse and our former delivery van drivers, Jimmy and Greg, all of whom have lost their jobs.

The Tesco collections in Saxmundham and Beccles, and Morrisons in Beccles during December were very well supported by the public. We received an enormous amount of food donations and the warehouse is at present overflowing! However this will disappear over the coming months and a further collection weekend is planned for the summer to boost our stores.

Fuel vouchers and bus passes for First buses are another new venture, as is our cooperation with other organisations seeking to alleviate the loneliness of some of our single clients. We have noticed this need amongst the forgotten young people living alone away from family and friends. We have given out some warm clothing during the recent cold snap and a small quantity of fresh food. I am looking at the possibility of enlarging our larder- maybe in conjunction with the Halesworth foodbank.

It has been our privilege to share in the lives of our clients. Some come only once, others need to continue to come for some time. They become our guests, real people with numerous problems. Not just clients! Our volunteers are marvellous, and go the extra mile all the time, we could not operate without them, my grateful thanks go to them all.

But thanks also to you who so faithfully donate food to us. We have given out the food boxes, and extras where needed. Some guests have special needs- diabetic, vegetarian, and medical requirements too. Then there are pets, toiletries and baby milk to provide

All purchased with donations of money to us. At Christmas time we also gave small gifts for children, teenagers and adults, plus goodies. Thanks to local organisations, 26 hampers of food and tokens were distributed in Halesworth, Beccles and the surrounding villages. All these were received with many grateful tears. (we had a few tears too!)

Last week one family returned when we were open, not to ask for food, but simply to say thank you for all we had done for them.

"We have had a terrible year" the father said, "So many problems, that without your help we just wouldn't have survived., so I came to say thank you."

One volunteer commented "Foodbank is where the church rolls up its sleeves and gets out in the real world." Thank you for your continuing support and your prayers for this vital work in our community.

Pam Bayliss

Foodbank Organiser.