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March 2016

Dear Friends,

This is the very best time of the year I think. Spring is in the air and we have Easter to look forward to. The events of Easter are given extra significance because they follow on from the terrible happenings of Good Friday when death appeared to have the last word. On Easter Sunday God has the last word and it is a resounding "NO!" to all that is harmful to human life followed by a resounding "YES!" to new life through resurrection!

It is the news that something has happened which has changed everything for everyone. Easter is about new life.

That life is represented by the Easter eggs that we share and enjoy. It is reflected in the warming days of spring, with bulbs breaking through and birds starting to sing. The exact date of Easter may vary but it is, at least in our part of the world, fixed in that time when new life is all around us. Our celebrations echo the work of God in his creation as shoots appear and lambs are born.

It seems to me that Jesus was always bringing life wherever he went. Sometimes he got into trouble for bringing life to the wrong people at the wrong time. He challenged the dead practices of the religious leaders who wanted to keep control by developing more and more rules. New life is sometimes messy and disorganised, and for some it is an affront to the order that they seek to impose.

New life is always a risk. Start anything new and there is the possibility that it will fail. We all know that the new born are fragile and vulnerable, whether we are talking about chicks or children. There will always be times when new life is crushed by the weight of expectations or the fallen brokenness that we live within. It looked to many as if the new life that Jesus sought to bring had been cut down when he was crucified on the cross. But then there was the empty tomb.

Easter is about new life.

Despite the passage of two thousand years there are still signs of the new life of Easter all around us. I see it in changed lives and changed communities: people and places where love and forgiveness are made more evident than they otherwise would be.

Let us make the most of Easter again this year; allowing the story to amaze and thrill us! We will not fully understand it this side of heaven but that must not prevent us from opening our hearts and minds to the greatest miracle wrought by God the creator who loves us so much He not only gives us new life but also new life in Christ.

All the joy and blessing of Easter to you.

Sue

Pastoral Piece

As I prepare this for the Outreach magazine, the sun is shining brightly through the window, but open the door and it is very cold outside. I suppose for the month of February we can expect this, and should not complain as we are getting through the winter months quite well. My thoughts and sympathy go out to the people who have lost everything in the terrible floods.

On a nicer theme it has been lovely seeing the snowdrops and spring flowers blooming. Nature has a way of protecting them in winter for our pleasure in the spring. Already in the shops we have hot cross buns and Easter eggs ready for the Easter season. Have you noticed the evenings drawing out slightly? Roll on the light evenings.

Our team of pastoral visitors continue to give support etc. as required or requested. My many thanks to them. I hope you and your families keep well. May God bless you all.

I leave you with these words

A Happy Heart

*A Happy heart is carefree, gay
That sings of life the livelong day
Of almond blossoms in the spring
Or a ray of hope a smile can bring*

*A happy heart is warm and true
With golden sunshine breaking through
To lighten some dark lonely hour
And open spring's first welcome flowers.*

(words by Charlotte York)

Take care

Margaret Hogan

Craft Club News .

The Club continues to flourish and now has 19 members. Our projects are various and include quite a lot of knitting but also embroidery, sewing and beading. In December we had a stall at the outdoor Kingsley Christmas market in order to raise funds for the Petty Pool Trust. Unfortunately the weather was not very kind and the result was not as good as we had hoped for. However some of the remaining items were added to the Christmas Coffee Morning stall at Church and helped to contribute to a very satisfactory total. Recently 5 members of the club spent an enjoyable morning at Petty Pool making cards and doing some beading. In March we are going out for coffee, and perhaps, toasted teacakes!

Alison Twinn

The Christmas Coffee Morning

On December 5th many people dropped in to the Open Door Room for coffee and cakes – and to buy from the stalls in the main church. Alison Twinn and her team are to be congratulated for arranging this wonderful event. The morning was planned as a fund raiser to fill the gap of the Flower festival being arranged for the following year. In the end it exceeded our wildest expectations, raising over £440.

Well done Alison

Candlelit Carol Service

The church was full to overflowing for the candlelit carol service with its magical atmosphere in December. Both choirs performed – see below – and helped to create a memorable service to celebrate the coming of Jesus.

Carol Singing

Our thanks go to Joan Bell for leading the Carol singing, and to all those who came out on the two nights – the second being Christmas Eve. On the first night we tried to get round all those in the village associated with the Church (including Peter and Pauline Gates in their new home), and followed our traditional route on Christmas Eve. Thanks to the generous donations from those we sang to, £655 was collected for Church funds and our charitable giving.

Christmas Day

As usual the Christmas day morning service was well attended as we celebrated Jesus' birth with the church illuminated by candles. The collection (which amounted to £248) was sent to Action for Children to help them with their work.

Choirs at the Norley Carol service

Harmony Choir

The Harmony choir started the carol service with an introit with the words

" In Bethlehem a babe was born
A stable was the chosen place
He came to teach us all to learn
That peace and love we can embrace."

The words were written by Jean Dunning and it was my privilege to set it to music. Apart from being the organist, soloist, floral designer and with expertise in creative beading, she adds another string to her bow as song writer. Jean is an example to us all in the way she uses all her talents in the service of our Lord. The choir sang an anthem entitled " Christmas Sanctus" by Lee Dengler. They sang both items with an understanding of the music which greatly enhanced the service.

Band of Hope and Joy.

Amidst all the tragic news of Syria, the movement of the refugees with young children and the walls going up, it was positive and healing to hear the choir sing " Love came down at Christmas time" to the words of Christina Rossetti. Verse one was sung in a melodious voice by the women while the men hummed in the background. Verse two was a reversal of that. The choir members are growing in confidence and are very quickly learning new anthems offered to them.

As Edward Elgar said "There is music in the air. All you have to do is to take as much as you require".

Saro Jesudason

The New Year Party

Many thanks to John and Joan Bell and their helpers for the absolutely splendid evening at Church on Saturday January 30th. After a number of most enjoyable games, a magnificent repast was served followed by further games. I particularly enjoyed the game where pictures had to be drawn for the team to guess what a hidden word or place was.

Thanks again John and Joan for a great evening.

Bruce Lane

The Church Council

Highlights from the Church Council held on February 4th were-

John Bell's offer to take over the chair of the Spiritual Committee was gratefully accepted by Ruth. John is immediately preparing a Lent Liturgy.

Bruce Lane presented the Property Report (see separate article), and the Church Council authorised the Church Leadership Team to spend up to £1300 for replacement of the church lights if acceptable costed proposals are put before them.

Sue reminded everyone that a person's name should only be entered in the Prayer Book if they have previously agreed that they would like to be mentioned in our prayers. If someone is known to be ill, please inform Margaret Hogan, who will send them a card on behalf of the church.

John Bell presented a financial report for the current connexional year and a Budget for 2016-7, which was unanimously agreed. The meeting also voted to give £300 to Methodist causes. Sue thanked Anthony Davies for suggesting that we had a Flood Appeal collection (which had raised £320).

Andrea reported on youth work and that she has worked about 10 hours over her contract since 1st September but will update us again in June. Sue expressed our thanks for all Andrea's work.

Solar Panels Update

At the end of February we completed 4 years of trouble free operation of our solar panels.

So far we have generated 14,400 Kwh and have received cheques for over £6900, in return for our £7500 investment.

It looks likely that the next 2 quarters will see the initial investment paid off, and we look forward to another 21 years of income.

Bruce Lane

Cradle Roll

We were delighted to share in the baptism of Wilfred Howard Turnbull in November.

It was a very happy occasion for everyone, and a big thank you must go to his Mum and Dad, Dorothy and Craig, for inviting us all to the village hall to share in the celebration

Joan Bell

Church Weekend Away 2016

Invitations were issued in January for our weekend away from October 7 to October 9 at the Abbot Hall Hotel in Grange-over-Sands for return of deposits before the end of February. At the time of going to press we have 16 adults and 2 children attending.

We have now firmed up on the booking, but if anyone else would like to go, please get in touch with me as soon as possible

Bruce Lane

Youth Work Report

3Generate

Lewis went to 3Generate with Andrea and the Frodsham youth and thoroughly enjoyed being with 600 young people for a weekend. Lewis was very recognisable in the Methodist Recorder photo of 3Generate!!!

Christmas Holiday Club

The Christmas Holiday Club held in the Church was very successful. It was fully booked with 20 children attending the day.

Engage 2016.

Between February 14-17th this year, two of the young people from Norley Methodist were involved in an event for young people from year 7 and above in Chester called Engage. 50 young people came together from seven different churches and got involved in community projects such as painting parts of a community centre, reseeding part of a football pitch and litter picking, helping in a coffee bar. Using material from "Open Door" which looks at what it is like to be a refugee, they built cardboard shelters together. We ate together, had fun together through team games, and electronic games and spent time in worship and hearing God's message through people like Sam and Andy. It was a very busy few days in which God blessed us greatly. If you haven't been before, it's well worth getting involved in this event.

Prayer Day 1st March

Love your neighbour as you love yourself was the theme for this year's school prayer day. There were seven stations to help explore this theme and each class from Norley Primary School came and spent an hour in the prayer space in Church. Many thoughtful hopes and messages were written and explored as well as the children supporting water aid by donating money to help provide clean water in countries where this doesn't happen.

Cookery club

Sometime in the Summer term we will be running a four week cookery club after school for the KS2 children. Details to follow or text Andrea on 07749877823

Andrea Ellams

First Wednesday Walks

The December First Wednesday walk, has become a very pleasant tradition. A gentle 4/5 mile ramble along familiar local lanes, giving all time to catch up on the latest news, who's doing what, where and when, then a pub lunch followed by scrumptious mince pies and coffee at Sylvia's and John's home.

The turnout this year was a magnificent 16 regulars and friends and we set out down Mill Lane, Cuddington, bearing left past the fishing lake only pausing to make sure John was still with us (he has been known in the past to take the wrong turn and wander off by himself, presumably not deliberately!). From here we went onto the Whitegate Way via Waste Lane then returned to Cuddington along Kennel Lane.

Lunch was taken at the White Barn with all leaving space for what was to follow! After the meal we were welcomed at the Lynch's where a magnificent selection of pastries awaited. On behalf of all I would express our thanks to Sylvia and John for going to so much trouble and for getting the Festive Season off to a good start.

Garry Wynne

We were joined by 14 other walkers for our January 2016 walk. It was lovely to have Tony Knight back with us again.

We walked down Breechmoss, thro' Nursery Wood & into Delamere Forest past the Green Man, coming out at Delamere Golf Club. We then continued past the fishing lakes (where we heard a Green Woodpecker but alas no sighting) coming out onto Farm Road & then onto our lunch stop at the Abbey Arms.

The walkers were very impressed by the mild & sunny weather which we had laid on specially. It was pleasing to be arrive at the Abbey Arms where our table had been set out in the festive spirit, a nice touch from the manager, Allister.

Heather & Anthony Davies

Fifteen hearty souls slipped, slithered and battled through towpath mud, risking 'an early bath' in the Bridgewater Canal as we neared the end of February's 4 mile Wednesday Walk. Having parked in Thelwall we took the footpath between a housing estate to join the Trans Pennine Trail. This was once the Warrington and Stockport Railway carrying not just passengers but coal for Fiddlers Ferry power station. Now abandoned the track makes a good all weather path for walkers which is much more than can be said for the return journey alongside the canal.

The Bridgewater Canal was the very first artery to supply the beating heart of England's industrial revolution. Two centuries ago the boats on this pretty waterway did much the same job as the lorries which thunder over the Thelwall Viaduct every second.

Having survived the return journey we indulged ourselves with an excellent repast at the Pickering Arms.

Garry Wynne

Future walks (after you receive this edition) are planned for

Wednesday Apr 6th

Wednesday May 4th

Wednesday June 1st

Meet at church at 9.45 for a 10.00 am departure each month – we hope to see you there.

Bruce Lane

DIARY

Unless otherwise stated in the weekly notices the Craft Club meets on Tuesdays at 10.00am at Norley in the Open Door Room.

March 2016

Tuesday	1 st	10.00am	Prayer Day with Norley School Children until 2.45pm
Wednesday	2 nd	9.45am	First Wednesday Walk
		7.30pm	Café Church led by Rev Sue Levitt
Thursday	3 rd	4.30pm	The Hurst Kingsley Messy Church
Friday	4 th	2.00pm	Women's World Day of Prayer service Main St Frodsham
Saturday	5 th	10.00am	Clean up Norley for the Queen – Village Hall until 2pm
Mothering	6 th	10.45am	Mrs Ruth Lane of Norley
Sunday (Lent 4)		6.30pm	Rev Denise Harding
Monday	7 th	4.00pm	Kelsall Messy Church
Tuesday	8 th	7.30pm	Band of Hope and Joy practice at Saro & Rajan's
Wednesday	9 th	12 noon	Open Door Lunch
Saturday	12 th	10.30am	Englesea Brook: Talk - 'The Bible Christians' with Revd Steve Wild, President of the Conference
Sunday (Lent 5)	13 th	10.45am	Rev Sue Levitt – Sacrament & Baptism
		10.45am	Sunday School – Bruce & Yvonne
		6.30pm	No service at Norley
		6.30pm	District Rally at Longton Methodist Central Hall ST3 2JH led by Rev'd Steve Wild & Dr Jill Barber (Light refreshments from 4.30pm)
Monday	14 th	7.00pm	Spiritual Committee at the Bell's
Tuesday	15 th	7.45pm	Hurst Guild. Revd Steve Santry "On the road to Santiago de Compostela"
Wednesday	16 th	7.30pm	Flower Festival Meeting – Open Door Room
		8.00pm	The Hurst Kingsley Café Church
Palm Sunday	20 th	9.00am	Norley@9
		10.45am	Rev Brian Chantler of Winsford
		6.30pm	United Service St Laurence's Frodsham (see advert)

Wednesday	23 rd	5.00pm	Tarvin Messy Church
Thursday	24 th	12 noon	Open Door Room Lunch
		1.15pm	Thursday Club
Good Friday	25 th	11.00am	Rev Sue Levitt
Saturday	26 th	10.00am	Decorate the Church for Easter
Easter Day	27 th		Summer Time begins - CLOCKS GO FORWARD
		10.45am	Mr John Bell & Mrs Ruth Lane
		6.30pm	Rev Sue Levitt – Sacrament

April 2016

Sunday	3 rd	10.45am	Mr Mike Ridley of Bunbury
		6.30pm	Dr Judy Ford of The Hurst
Wednesday	6 th	9.45am	First Wednesday Walk
		7.30pm	Café Church
Thursday	7 th	4.30pm	The Hurst, Kingsley Messy Church
Sunday	10 th	10.45am	Rev Sue Levitt - Sacrament
		10.45am	Sunday School – Hazel & Mary
Wednesday	13 th	12 noon	Open Door Room Lunch
Sunday	17 th	9.00am	Norley@9
		10.45am	Mrs Janet Batey of The Hurst
		6.30pm	Rev Sue Levitt – Alternative Worship
Monday	18 th	2.00pm	Church Leadership Team Meeting at Howell Croft
Tuesday	19 th	7.30pm	Local Preachers' meeting at The Hurst
Wednesday	20 th	5.00pm	Tarvin Messy Church
		8.00pm	The Hurst, Kingsley Messy Church
Friday	22 nd	7.30pm	Frodsham Methodist Church Quiz
Saturday	23 rd	9.30am	Spring Synod
Sunday	24 th	10.45am	Church Anniversary - Rev Keith Davies
		6.30pm	Church Anniversary - Rev Sue Levitt – Sacrament
Thursday	28 th	12 noon	Open Door Room lunch
		1.15pm	Thursday Club

May 2016

Sunday	1 st	10.45am	Rev Graham Evans of Chester
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		10.45am	Sunday School – Bruce & Yvonne
		6.30pm	Rev David Goodwin of Hoole, Chester
Wednesday	4 th	9.45am	First Wednesday Walk
		7.30pm	Café church led by Avis Palmer
Thursday	5 th	4.00pm	Kelsall Messy Church
		4.30pm	The Hurst, Kingsley Messy Church
Sunday	8 th	10.45am	Rev Sue Levitt , Annual Church Meeting, Lunch, Sacrament
		6.30pm	Easter Offering Service Caldy Valley – led by Ruth Pickles
Tuesday	10 th	2.30pm	Sunday School planning meeting at Howell Croft
Wednesday	11 th	12 noon	Open Door Room lunch
Sunday 15 th to Saturday 21 st			Christian Aid Week
Pentecost	15 th	9.00am	Norley@9
		10.45am	Mrs Bev Carter of Helsby
		6.30pm	Rev Neil Stacey of Chester – Alternative Worship
Wednesday	18 th	5.00pm	Tarvin Messy Church
		8.00pm	The Hurst, Kingsley Café Church
Trinity & Aldersgate	22 nd	10.45am	Rev Clare Heald of Chester
		10.45am	Sunday School – Hazel & Mary
Sunday		6.30pm	Rev Sue Levitt - Sacrament
Thursday	26 th	12 noon	Open Door Room lunch
		1.15pm	Thursday Club
Sunday	29 th	10.45am	Mr John Bell of Cuddington
		10.45am	Sunday School – Bruce & Yvonne
		6.30pm	Mr Philip Garner of Norley

June 2016

Wednesday	1 st	9.45am	First Wednesday Walk
		7.30pm	Café Church
Wednesday	8 th	12 noon	Open Door Room lunch
Saturday	18 th		Safari Supper
Sunday	19 th	9.00am	Norley@9
Monday	20 th	2.00pm	Pastoral Committee meeting Howell Croft

Tuesday 21st 7.00pm Church ouncil
Thursday 23rd 12 noon Open Door Room lunch
 1.15pm Thursday Club

Lent Liturgy

During Lent this year we are following a Liturgy devised by John Bell which will culminate in there being a cross in church on Good Friday which will be decorated with flowers on Easter Day and then placed in the church drive to remind passers-by of our joy at Jesus' resurrection on Easter day.

Decorating the Church for Easter

We will decorate the church for Easter on March 26th Easter Saturday morning starting at 10am. All donations of flowers and greenery will be very gratefully received in church by that time.

Easter Sunday

Our Easter Day morning service on March 27th to celebrate Jesus' resurrection will be led by John Bell and Ruth Lane at 10.45am and our own minister, Rev Sue Levitt will continue the celebrations in the service at 6.30pm which will include communion.

Church Anniversary – April 24th

This year we are celebrating our 134th Church Anniversary on Sunday April 24th. We are delighted that Rev Keith Davies, now a retired District Chair, but well known to many of us as the former minister at Helsby Church, will lead our Church Anniversary morning celebrations and that our own minister Rev Sue Levitt will complete the day by leading a communion service in the evening.

Annual Church Meeting – May 8th

The Annual Church Meeting is for all who attend the church – everyone's ideas and opinions are very welcome.

As has become our custom on the day of the Annual Church Meeting (ACM) the morning service will be short and will be immediately followed by the ACM. After the ACM there will be lunch for everyone and at the end a service of Holy Communion. There will be **NO** evening service on May 8th.

At the ACM we decide on the £600 church's charitable donations for the next year – so do bring your suggestions to help make these important decisions.

ALTERNATIVE EVENING WORSHIP

6.30pm on

17th APRIL led by the Rev Sue Levitt

15th MAY led by the Rev Neil Stacey

NORLEY METHODIST CHURCH

CAFE CHURCH

Come and enjoy fellowship, worship and refreshments in a cafe atmosphere in the church at 7:30pm on the following wednesdays:

2nd March let by Sue Levitt

6th April TBA

4th May led by Avis Palmer

OPEN DOOR LUNCHES

Once again we look forward to welcoming you to our twice monthly lunches. It is always a time to enjoy being with friends old and new and to catch up with news.

Our dates for this quarter are as follows:

Wednesday March 9th.

Thursday March 24th.

Wednesday April 13th.

Thursday April 28th.

Wednesday May 11th.

Thursday May 26th.

Looking forward to seeing you all there

Joan Bell

An invitation to you to come to the

THURSDAY CLUB

March 24th

April 28th

May 26th

June 23rd

1.15pm - 2.30pm in the Open Door Room, Norley Methodist Church

EASTER SERVICES

Good Friday 11am

Easter Sunday

10:45am All Age Worship

6:30pm Holy Communion

Everyone Welcome

CHURCH ANNIVERSARY

APRIL 24th

Celebration led at

10:45am by the Rev Keith Davies

6:30pm by the Rev Sue Levitt

Come and celebrate our 134th birthday with us

NORLEY METHODIST CHURCH

FLOWER FESTIVAL 2016

September 23rd - 25th

Planning meeting for everyone interested on Wednesday 16th March at 7:30pm in the Open Door Room

NORLEY METHODIST CHURCH

SAFARI SUPPER

Saturday 18th June 2016

Start times between 6:30pm and 7:30pm

Donation requested of £12 - £15 per ticket for adults and £30 for a Family Ticket (for children under 11)

For more information and tickets contact Hazel Dale on 01928 787216

Human goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished"
wrote Nelson Mandela in his autobiography.

On Palm Sunday, 20th March, **Churches Together in Frodsham** are going to take that powerful statement of his belief in goodness and love and, through stories and music, are going to discover through the lives of both ordinary and extraordinary people that that flame is indeed inextinguishable.

The Inextinguishable Flame is a story of the Work of God presented in dramatic form. Over 60 people will be taking part, not just from Frodsham and Helsby but also from other churches across from Manchester to Liverpool. The youngest participant will be 8 years old and the oldest will be - a few years older!

Frodsham Methodist Church are holding Quiz

on **Friday 22nd April 2016**

in the Church Hall, Kingsley Road, at 7.30pm

Teams of six (Supper included) Raffle

Entry £5 per person, pay on the night

Muster a team and join us for what is always a good night out!

Teams must reserve a table in advance of the night as space is limited.

To book your table, please email: **margjacks35@gmail.com**

or **ring 01928 732067**

Proceeds will be split between the Boaz Trust (boaztrust.org.uk)
and Frodsham Methodist Church funds

FOODBANK

You may remember that at last year's Annual Church meeting we agreed to make a donation towards the West Cheshire foodbank's new van. By last November, the charity had raised sufficient funds to purchase the van and to cover its running costs for a full year:

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Matthew 25

Martin Dick, Trustee at West Cheshire Foodbank, said: *"The response from our local community has been massive. We keep getting overwhelmed by just how generous everyone has been. Enough money has now been donated to allow us not only to replace our van but to cover our vehicle running-costs for a whole year. The design of this van will make lifting and moving stock much easier and safer for our volunteers, and the larger size will help us to be more efficient too."* Alec Spencer, Development Officer added *"On behalf of everyone at West Cheshire Foodbank, I'd like to say a heartfelt 'Thank You!' to everyone who has worked so hard to raise the money we needed for this van. It will make a big difference to our small charity."*

Colin, Tony, Emma, Janet, Deb, Mac, Petra and Sue (left to right), members of the charity's Operational Group, with the replacement vehicle outside the West Cheshire Foodbank Warehouse on Stanney Mill Industrial Estate.

Over the last few months, as well as purchasing a new van, the Foodbank team have been busy putting together a recipe booklet and organising 'pop up cooking' sessions where people gather to cook cheap, nutritious meals together and share ideas. A new food distribution point in the Lache area of Chester has also been opened.

Remember the West Cheshire Foodbank:

- Provides three days of emergency food to people in crisis
- Works with frontline care professionals to identify those in need
- Provides emergency food that is nutritionally balanced

- Signposts visitors to organisations best able to help address the underlying causes.
- Works to raise awareness of the causes of food poverty and encourage local people and policy makers alike to take action against hunger

Our donations to the Foodbank are greatly appreciated and make a difference to the lives of local people who are in crisis. At the present time the Foodbank is particularly low on supplies of fruit juice, UHT milk and sugar and so donations of these items are particularly welcome - as well as food which can be easily be prepared with limited cooking facilities and personal toiletries.

Lesley Gough

Christian Aid Week 15th – 21st May

Morsheda's story

'I feel very scared of the river. When I look at it I keep thinking "it is coming".'

In Bangladesh, Morsheda lives in fear of the river. No matter how hard she works, every year the floods damage her home, leaving her and her children struggling to cope.

Please join us and together, we can lift our global neighbours like Morsheda to safety this Christian Aid Week.

Morsheda and her four children during seasonal flooding.

We know how much damage has been done to families in Britain this winter. Imagine how much worse the situation is every year in Bangladesh.

Please be generous in donating towards the very worthwhile work of Christian Aid.

Please give generously in Christian Aid Week

If you would consider joining the band of collectors in Norley and Delamere Park please contact Ruth Lane (788071)

Half-year Financial Report

Overall, the church finances are in a satisfactory position at the end of February, which is half-way through the Methodist year.

Income in the first half-year has been about £1600 higher than we budgeted, for various reasons, not least the monies raised from special events such as the Harvest Supper, pre-Christmas coffee morning and sale and the January church party. It is good to report that weekly collections have exceeded expectations too. However, we must remember that the special events were held mainly as a result of deferring the Flower Festival until September 2016, which falls in the financial year 2016-17.

Expenditure was about £900 less than we budgeted, again for a variety of reasons, including the deferral of garden works and gutter repairs which will be carried out in the second half of the year.

It is anticipated that income in the second half should be close to budget, with the major exception of the Flower Festival, though much depends on the surplus generated by the Safari Supper in June. We hope for a sunny and enjoyable evening too!

So long as no unexpected property emergencies occur, it is planned to put the annual budget provision for such things (£800 this year) into a reserve each year to cover the cost of external decoration of the church premises, probably in 2018.

The current outlook, as ever with the disclaimer that things can always change, is that we shall record an overall surplus of about £1200 in the whole year, including the above (hopefully unused) emergency provision, which will be channelled into the external painting reserve.

The February meeting of the Church Council approved a budget for the year September 2016 to August 2017 so that we can have a clear view of the financial challenges ahead of us. This shows income and expenditure in balance at almost exactly £25,000. The income will continue to depend heavily on the financial success of special events such as the Flower Festival in September 2016 and the Safari Supper in the summer of 2017. The main item of property expenditure will be the renewal of the lighting in the Church. We also are required to repay the loan received from the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District towards the cost of the solar panels: this is in two equal amounts of £1250 in March 2017 and March 2018.

The Church Council agreed to make donations of £150 each to the Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism (just south of Crewe and well worth a visit from Spring onwards) and the Methodist Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD). The FSPD is a connexional (i.e. across Britain) benevolent fund which provides for emergency financial needs of Methodist ministers, both presbyters and deacons, and their immediate dependants, whether still in active ministry or retired and it relies strongly on donations such as ours.

Finally, may I offer the fulsome gratitude of the Church to Mrs Barbara Garner who has acted as our envelope scheme and gift-aid secretary for well over twenty years and is now stepping down. Barbara's quietly diligent and efficient work, keeping immaculate and accurate records, goes almost unnoticed, but it is a vital role that she has fulfilled mostly behind scenes without fuss or ever seeking acclaim. We place on record our huge indebtedness to Barbara for her years of splendid service – very many thanks indeed!

John Bell Church Treasurer

Property Matters

Activities since the last report have been:-

The glass doors have been adjusted for a second time by Yoxall free of charge and are functioning satisfactorily.

Diffusers for the kitchen and Sunday School fluorescent lights were purchased and installed to complete the 2014/15 planned safety recommendation from the quinquennial inspection.

James Dale has fixed the main gate so that it now opens properly.

The church lights renewal had been deferred to 2017/18 but deterioration of a second fluorescent light above the organ indicates it should be brought forward again. A suspended led fluorescent plan from Tony Preston was rejected by the Church Leadership Team in favour of a spotlight solution similar to that adopted at Kelsall. The property steward has visited Kelsall, and is currently getting proposals costed. The Church Council authorised up to £1300 expenditure to be approved by the Church Leadership Team for this work.

The main unplanned issue in this period has been the performance of the dishwasher, which failed to clean dishes (its primary function). The machine supplier sent a repair company, Crystal Tech, to repair the fault on a prepaid visit, where a grumpy and rude engineer turned up a day late and failed to repair the machine or correctly diagnose the fault and declared the water pump was open circuit and needed to be replaced without taking the machine apart. The property steward on return from his holidays organised two visits from what turned out to be an excellent engineer, and the dishwasher is now working far better than ever before. However over £500 was extracted from us by Crystal Tech for this work. A claim was lodged with the MD for the £300 cost of unnecessary parts replacements, but a whitewash reply was received from the tech service manager. Our dissatisfaction will continue to be pursued but it looks unlikely we will get any recompense.

Work on the Maddock's Hill side of the garden has not progressed – time availability and the weather have delayed progress realistically until spring. Most of the money authorised on this phase (£250) has been spent but not yet billed.

John Dimelow's schedule has not allowed him to complete installation of the gutter lining and leaf guards, purchased last year. The job turned out to be much more difficult than expected, and time availability and weather have prevented completion. Again it looks as if this will not be completed until spring.

Bruce Lane

An Advance Notice –The Church Weekend Away 2017

As agreed at the Church Council, we have booked to go to Beth Eden, Llandudno for a Church Weekend in 2017. We have booked for exclusive use of the guest house for

Friday October 6th
to
Sunday October 8th

So put the date in your diaries now to keep the weekend free. Deposits will not be due until this time next year – so this really is advanced notice. *Bruce*

Palm Sunday

It was Palm Sunday and because of a sore throat, five year old Roger stayed home from church with a sitter.

When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm branches. Roger asked what they were for. They explained “People held them over Jesus’ head as he walked by”.

“Wouldn’t you know it” Roger fumed, “The one Sunday I don’t go, He shows up!”

A little boy in Church for the first time watched as the door stewards passed round the offering plates.

When they came near his row, the boy said loudly, “Don’t pay for me Daddy, I’m under five!”

Life after Death

“Do you believe in life after death?” the boss asked one of his employees.

“Yes Sir,” the new employee replied.

“Well then, that makes everything just fine,” the boss went on. “After you left early yesterday to go to your grandmother’s funeral, she stopped in to see you!”

And just space for one more

The Sunday School teacher asked “Now Robert, tell me, do you say prayers before eating?”

“No Sir,” Robert replied, “We don’t have to, my Mum is a good cook!”

(Jokes courtesy of Garry)

Chester and Stoke-on-Trent
District Rally

led by

The President and the Vice-President
of the Methodist Conference

Rev Steve Wild and Dr Jill Barber



at Longton Methodist Central Hall

Stoke-On-Trent, ST3 2JH

on **Sunday 13th March** 2016 at 6:30pm

Light refreshments available from 4:30pm

Free Parking at rear of Church adjacent to Tesco, Longton