

## CHURCH SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 2016

Last year I placed you all, with Kay as the ringleader, on a charge that within the one holy, universal, apostolic church here at London Street, you sought to bear witness to the Lordship of Christ in all areas of living and to make its own life of worship, fellowship and service a total act of offering to God. In doing so you upheld the honour, discipline, work and worship of Christ's church by the consecration of individual gifts of time, talent and means.

I finished my report by stating that it is through the Holy Spirit that God gives us freedom of choice. That includes freedom of choice when it comes to sentencing. An aggravating feature when it comes to sentencing in the criminal court is a persistent offender – a person brought back to court for the same or similar offences and has failed to respond to court orders in the past. So is the charge for the year ending 2016 more serious than the one brought in 2015? Let's take a look.

When deciding how to present my report for 2016 I was led to the fellowship tours we conducted during the year. I am therefore going to take you on a tour of the building.

Before I do so it seems only appropriate that I ask Jean Holton to come and address you on the background to the fellowship tours.

*The fellowship tours were started last year as an opportunity for the congregation to venture into parts of the premises they might not be so familiar with, to get to know each other better in small groups and for Kay to give an overview of the Lord's work undertaken at and from London Street.*

*To ensure a manageable number, members of 3 pastoral groups were each invited on a quarterly basis with the aim of inviting everyone by the end of 2016. That didn't quite happen and we had one more tour just yesterday on 1 April.*

*In my capacity as church archivist I was asked to lead the tours through the building and explain the history of each room. I was accompanied by Peter Bentall, our lettings secretary, who was able to provide details of the day to day activities that go on in each room.*

*Following a welcome from Kay, the tour started in the concourse, making it's way to the first floor, through the Wessex Hall and into the gallery. Returning from the gallery and through the Memorial Room we made our way up to the second floor before descending to the lower ground floor. Returning to the ground floor, and having taken in the Hook and Worting Room's, we finished in the sanctuary via the Elders' Vestry.*

*Once in the sanctuary, Kay gave an illustrative talk on the 20/20 vision for London Street. Finishing with prayers we made our way then to the concourse for tea and cake. It is worth mentioning that whilst the tour was going on, Kay gave a virtual tour in the sanctuary for those less mobile.*

*The time in the concourse was a time of real fellowship. People had been given different coloured name tags and they then had to sit on the appropriate table containing that colour, the idea being that they engage in conversation with*

*people they wouldn't normally sit with on a Sunday. I always call the tours 'Tea Tours' because I feel having afternoon tea and chat is a lovely way to finish. There was also an opportunity for people to look through a small exhibition of photographs from the archives, which usually provokes interest.*

Thank you Jean for the report and your contribution to the tours. Thank you also to Peter and Kay and of course the elders who helped on the day. I had a number of folk comment to me on how much they enjoyed the afternoon, but one person stated that she thought the pieces of cake were a little on the large side. How can a piece of cake be too large I ask myself!! I haven't quite worked out that particular conundrum!!

So we start our tour of the building in the concourse with the majority of folk entering the concourse from London Street through a set of double doors. Our thanks go to Isobel Martin who in January got together a group of helpers to clean the entrance lobby, to Joy Williams who arranged to replace one of the double glazed units, and to Bram Corn who replaced the poster holders.

As you enter the concourse, immediately to the right is our shop window which is always wonderfully presented with my personal favourite being the display for the Queens 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Thank you to Alison Jamieson for all the work you do in maintaining our shop window.

The concourse is used daily and Mondays to Thursday we have of course the community cafés – Oasis and the Youth Café. Penny Dilley has provided a report on behalf of the community cafés.

*The year 2016 has seen many changes within the café teams and we thank God that we have always had sufficient staff to open the doors and continue the ministry the café provides. We currently are blessed with a full team of staff in both the Oasis and Youth café.*

*Two long term sick members of staff have both made a recovery in the past year for which we thank God for answered prayers over several years. Two of our staff became engaged and the first wedding was in September. In addition two members of the team are now regular worshippers at London Street and have done discipleship courses with Kay.*

*Following the sudden departure of Heather our lead cook in October, Penny returned to cook and manage the kitchen and remained at the post taking full responsibility for the cooking for the remainder of the year.*

*Following a discussion with Ruth Moody, a mum from Little Angels, Kay felt led to inform her of the vacant post in the community café and suggested she apply for it. Ruth duly did and she was appointed to the lead cook role on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016.*

*December saw the opening of the Night Shelter in Basingstoke. From 1<sup>st</sup> December we have prepared a two course meal for up to 15 homeless people for Thursday and Friday evenings, together of course with the volunteers. The funding for this is from the Community Church funds and although the take up was slow initially, numbers increased each week.*

*During December we served 135 Christmas lunches in Oasis and these were enjoyed by various different groups. At the start of 2016 we once again ran a jacket potato special offer and in September a soup festival, both of which have helped maintain the business through the slower months.*

*Led by Kay, we have continued to have the commissioning services at the beginning of each school term, which are open to all. These services give us the opportunity to reflect on the work of both cafés and give thanks to God for all He has done and to pray for the coming terms work of the cafés and the staff.*

*During the summer term, we were approached by Marks and Spencer to help with unsold food distribution back into the community. This has proved a challenging task. However with some thought over the summer break we now have a more organised system. We collect 3 days a week from the food store in Chineham. On a Monday the food is distributed through the café itself and families known to us. On a Tuesday it goes through the Little Angels toddler group at London Street and on a Thursday it goes through 1<sup>st</sup> Steps toddler group at the Baptist Church in Gershwin Road.*

*Bread and cakes from Marks and Spencer are used to supply the Youth café which continues to buzz each day with a growing number of young people attending. Our older teenagers continue to pop in for a chat and we were overjoyed when one young man from our previous cohort came to say he was off to university the following week. He is the first in his family to do so and an answer to many of our prayers as he was a very disruptive member of the group who attended the Youth café for many years. His statement to a member of staff was that the Youth café provided the stability he need for that time in his life.*

*We currently have over 100 young people coming in during the week with around 30 to 50 on any given day. Some conversations are had regarding faith and occasionally several will go into the church to explore and ask questions. At Christmas we held our first advent service for the young people. They were very enthusiastic and enjoyed the service led by Kay and supported by Rob Sallis.*

*The Youth café has also provided work placements for two Sixth Form lads doing their work experience.*

*Within the community café is a Christian bookstall. Business continues to increase with around £1,320 worth of stock sold in 2016. We continue to look for a manger who is able to increase the work of the bookstall. There are many groups who would benefit from having greater access to the books, however a person with vision is needed for this.*

Thank you Penny for your report and thanks to all those who help in the cafés and support them in a number of ways. Two church groups meet in the concourse; 3C's and the Craft Group. Joan Musselwhite in her report for the 3C's states that they meet for Coffee, Company and Chat on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 10.15am; and

for the Craft Group, Isobel Martin has provided a report which Carol Scott has kindly agreed to give:

*The Craft Club is now well into its second year. It continues to meet every Monday morning and provides a meeting place for people of varied backgrounds and abilities. There is a wide age range and people from the local community as well as from the congregation. We aim to supply a welcoming venue for all interested in any craft. There is no charge for attending but a small donation is requested and last year we donated £100 to church activities as well as providing some materials for use by attendees. We hope to stage a small exhibition of our work sometime during 2017.*

Thank you Carol and to both Joan and Isobel for your reports.

In June we hosted in the concourse and out into London Street a wonderful tea party to celebrate the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Thank you to everyone involved in the preparation of that day. So many folk enjoyed the occasion.

We now move out of the concourse and up to the first floor where we enter the Wessex Hall. The primary church group to meet in the hall is the Little Angels toddler group. Anne Davey has provided a report which Kay has kindly agreed to give:

*Little Angels meet every Tuesday morning during school term time. At the start of each session, Kay will sort out the crafts for the children, each one having a Christian theme, which the children then take home to show their families. At the end, Kay delights the children with her songs and rhymes session held during the last half an hour. They particularly enjoy the Parachute! It is great because it rounds off the time nicely before they all leave.*

*A number of our regular attendees left Little Angels in July as they were starting school in September, consequently there was a slight dip in numbers. However, numbers were soon replenished with many new families visiting us in the new academic year. We regularly have around twenty five children at a group and around thirty five on our register. Contact with many of those who have left is still maintained as they now attend our messy church.*

*The children are accompanied by mums, dads, grandparents or childminders and all are made welcome. They come from an ethnically diverse group with families from India, China and Eastern Europe, as well as the UK.*

*At the end of each term we have celebrated with a family friendly Gospel story in the church sanctuary. This is followed by some form of celebration party which is in the Wessex Hall in the winter months and at the War Memorial Park for a teddy bears picnic in the summer. Families of all faiths and those with none attend these events with the children and are enjoyed whatever their beliefs.*

*During the last year some of the parents joined a 'Care for the family' positive parenting course facilitated by Jaquie Marsh. The Little Angels team assisted by running a lunchtime crèche for the children so that the parents could concentrate on their discussions. All appeared to gain from this course and our*

*link with 'Care for the family' and Jaquie Marsh. This is one area that we hope to develop further in 2017.*

*All the families are also benefiting from the food donated by Marks and Spencer thereby adding variety to a diet which many otherwise could not afford.*

*As well as me, the Little Angels team currently comprises Kay, Chris and Leng Ayland, and Louise Holmes. We could really do with more helpers so if you have free time on a Tuesday morning from 10.00am until lunch time and enjoy working with children, please have a word with Kay. The team over the years have given advice, support and consolation to many families who have confided in us, and they do so knowing we will not abuse their confidence. With God's help may it continue to be so.*

Thank you Kay and to Anne for the report and to all the Little Angels team. Moving out of the Wessex Hall and onto the landing we find ourselves by the Memorial Window and the church library. Thanks go to Chris Ayland for maintaining the library. The fellowship tour would now ascend to the second floor but I'm going to take you down the stairs to the lower ground. It is in the Den that the 8<sup>th</sup> Basingstoke Scouts Group meet. As leader, Gill Craft will now give her report.

*The Group continues to grow in all sections with more Beavers, Cubs and Scouts from around the Basingstoke area.*

*We have had a busy year with plenty of activities. The Beavers were 30 years old this year. They had a birthday party with all the other Colonies in the District at the Vyne School and the weather was great. Bouncy activities were the order of the day, for children and leaders!*

*The usual trip to Paultons Park in November, and a sleep over at JJ's was also laid on, along with plenty of fun activities during our Tuesday meetings as well.*

*Cubs were 100!!!! This was a fantastic year to be a Cub! There were special events, including a trip to Gillwell, the Headquarters of Scouting in Essex. Activities included a day of quad bike racing, holding a bird of prey, water activities (bit cold for leaders to join in this time!) and much more. Great fun was had by all.*

*Scouts have grown, and had plenty of camps and outdoor activities on a Tuesday evening. The Sea Scouts are struggling with numbers at the moment so they are coming along to join in with us, they did this for us when we were low on numbers some years back. It gives the opportunity to still offer a varied programme to the children and keep them engaged.*

*The whole group enjoyed an over night camp at Tadley URC. They all went swimming in the afternoon and arrived at Tadley to finish putting up tents, have dinner and a movie and then off to bed. We took the "old" green scout tents, some of you may have even used them and they thoroughly enjoyed it, even if the Beavers kept the Scouts awake until midnight!*

*The morning after our sleep over we had Church Parade with our Tadley friends and Kay led the service. It all went well and we will be doing it again in 2017.*

*We have a good strong team of leaders. My thanks to Jack Tracy, Annemarie Smith-Brown, Richard Whitechurch, Mark Koch, David Tilley, Helen Williams, Alison Wood, Graham Jenkins, Christina Koch, Amy, and our young leaders, Matt, Anirudh and Ashley. Our Executive, Christian Digance, Katherine Dooner, Iain Hyland, Lisel Brain, Natasha Jenkins, Gill Hugill; and for the first six months, Sharon Whitechurch as Secretary.*

*Finally our thanks to London Street for supporting us and to Kay for coming along to our evenings and making Church Parade fun!*

Thank you Gill and to all those who help and support the Scouts Group. Also on the lower ground floor we have the church office. Thank you to Jean Holton who maintains our archives located in the church office and also to Karen Bell our church treasurer who will be presenting her report at a later church meeting. Located in the church office you will find copies of our song sheets we use during morning services. Carol Scott is responsible for recording and reporting the hymns we sing each week, not only from Rejoice and Sing but also from the song sheets. So what was the most recorded and consequently popular hymn for 2016? It was number 522 – *From heaven you came helpless babe*. Thank you Carol for the work you do each week.

As we exit the lower ground on our return to the ground floor, to our right is the boiler room. Our grateful thanks must go to Rob Williams who is responsible for keeping us warm and toasty throughout the colder months. Returning now to the ground floor we enter the Hook Room. Bi-monthly the Hook Room is transformed into the hub for the Top of Town Messy Church. I invite Ian McCloy, one of the regular helpers, to give his report.

*Messy Church meets bi-monthly in our church. It is an ecumenical venture, which is greatly supported by All Saints Church and is open to anybody who would like to come. It is 'church' for those families who do not normally come to worship.*

*Each session has a biblical theme, there are craft activities which are aimed at different levels and age groups. Parents, grandparents and carers are encouraged to join in the craft activities with the children. Each activity is linked to the biblical theme and aims to stimulate discussion of the theme and help children to understand the theme. After the crafts everyone goes into church for story time, singing and prayers again linked with the theme.*

*The session closes with the children, adults and leaders sharing in a meal together; the menu is again linked with the theme where possible.*

*Numbers remain high averaging 24 children and a lot of the families who come are linked with 'Little Angels', currently attending or having previously attended.*

*It is an encouraging and successful venture. We are grateful to all those who help, with the crafts and in the kitchen but it would be great to have more helpers especially with the clearing up.*

Thank you Ian and for all those at London Street and All Saints who help and support this important ecumenical project. On a Sunday morning, Junior Church meet in the Hook Room with Carol Scott and Jenny McCloy as our Junior Church leaders. Carol will now give her report:

*Junior Church has continued to grow over 2016. There are very few weeks that we do not have children, most weeks it's at least 2. We continue to follow Roots as our learning package. We have decorated windows in the church, with using the theme of talents for our Harvest window, and the Wise Men for the Christmas window. The Wise Men theme created a lot of discussion, such as where did they come from and why no ladies? The children really do like to ask questions.*

*We've made biscuit and cakes; and created jewelled jars, Christmas cards and posters. Exciting mornings!*

*Thank you to Jenny, Anne, Joyce, Tony, Margaret, Leng, Alison, Chris, David and Julie, for all the help given on a Sunday morning with the children; and also for attending training organised by the Wessex Synod.*

*We are always looking for helpers and leaders. If you feel able to volunteer please have a word or even better come and join us on a Sunday morning.*

Thank you Carol for your report and together with Jenny your leadership and to all the Junior Church team. On a Wednesday morning, the Memory Tree social group meet in the Hook Room. Claire Macro will now give her report:

*Now in our 3<sup>rd</sup> year, the Memory Tree Social Club is a weekly coffee morning and continues to offer valuable support not only for people diagnosed with Alzheimers and other types of dementia, but also to their loved ones. In August we had a very successful outing when we took 47 people to the Watercress Line Railway in Alresford. We enjoyed a lovely lunch, fabulous weather and lots of laughter. We have a great team of volunteers - Jenny and Ian McCloy, Joyce Cook, Isobel Martin, Sandra Marut, Jackie Goulding, Ann Lee, Louise Holmes, Roger Pike and myself. In addition we have a wonderful group of ladies who bake beautiful home made cakes for us - Jenny McCloy, Margaret Carrick Smith, Julia Burrows, Joan Mussellwhite and Alison Jamieson - to whom we are incredibly grateful. The numbers each week average 25 guests, and people are very committed and come week in week out. There is a real sense of camaraderie, but also it is a place where carers can off load and sometimes tears are shed and shoulders cried on. We have lost some dear friends and spouses of members in 2016 but we have also been able to support the bereaved through their times of sadness. We continue to feel the Holy Spirit very tangibly and He is doing very special things at Memory Tree each Wednesday.*

Thank you Claire and to all who help and support the Memory Tree. Once a month, the Friendship Hour social group meet in the Hook Room. Joyce Cook will now give her report.

*During the past year Friendship Hour has adjusted to the once a month meetings. Our membership is still around 20 but with some of those unable to get to many meetings, our average attendance is down to 12.*

*It has been disappointing that we have had little interest from the majority of the membership of the Church. The Club was formed as a social afternoon and it is welcoming to both men and women. The format of our meetings is that tea/coffee is served from about 2.00pm ready for the start of the actual meeting at 2.30pm. We have news of members and details of any events on in the Church, followed by an illustrated talk, or maybe a board games afternoon, quiz or beetle. We put £1 in the basket to go towards the expenses.*

*We are really appreciative of the help we get from the Oasis Team who get our drinks ready, and then during term time kindly do the washing up. Thank you all, plus Kevin who often helps with getting the chairs out.*

*Our current programme to the end of July 2017 is published in FOCUS and on the church website. We do hope that you might come and join us for one of our afternoons.*

*Besides myself as Chair, our leaders are Christine Robertson (Vice Chair) Eileen Poulter (Secretary) and Pam Ralph (Treasurer).*

Thank you Joyce. The Hook Room is the prime venue for the Elders' meetings.

At the beginning of 2016 we had 11 serving Elders: Margaret Carrick Smith, Joyce Cook, Anne Davey, Alison Jamieson, Liz Lindsay, Isobel Martin, Ian McCloy, Jenny McCloy, Ian Scott, Christine Robertson and Rob Williams. In addition we had 4 non-serving elders with a pastoral group each: Chris Ayland, Leng Ayland, Gill Craft and Maggie Morgans. During 2016 there have been 11 elders' meetings and 1 extraordinary meeting. Every member of the congregation has been remembered by the elders in prayer in our devotionals. Items for discussion have been many and have included the policies we have at London Street and ensuring they are current, the new church website, our weekend away in Devon, the fellowship tours, the new church bibles, security, the night shelter, the Who Cares? Project, training, and the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration amongst others. To help with the business element of elders' meeting, 4 sub-committees continue to meet to consider various aspects of life within the church and bring recommendations to elders' meeting. They are the buildings and fabric group, the children's advocate group, the communications group and the church world mission group.

Joy Williams will now present her report on behalf of the buildings and fabric group.

*The building and fabric group comprise of 4 members; Bram Corn, Rob Williams, Chris Ayland and myself as convenor. In January we met to review the rolling programme of maintenance work and inspect the building. The inspection highlighted the contrast between the freshness of the newly decorated sanctuary and the tired look of the paintwork in the newer part of the building, which has now suffered ten years of very hard use. Although not in danger of falling, the Wessex Hall ceiling tiles had, again, been knocked out of*



*place which caused considerable concern to those using it. This and the stairwell both needed scaffolding and were jobs too big for us to do so it seemed sensible to bring the painting forward a year and get the contractors in to do both in one go. This was agreed and completed in May.*

*Other major work included the renovation of the toilet for the disabled and the replacement of a blown double glazed unit in the porch. Blinds were purchased for the Wessex Hall windows and fitted for us by Alison Honeyball's fiancé. Thank you Lee.*

*Ongoing jobs done by members of the group include keeping the various policy documents up to date, replacing socket covers all over the church, changing fluorescent tubes and starters, drain clearance, checking radiators and thermostats, dealing with quotes and small repairs and purchases.*

*Please help us by keeping walkways clear, storerooms tidy, socket covers replaced and faults reported in the book on the shelf by the kitchen door. Sadly, Bram is no longer able to continue as Property Manager although he is staying as a member of the Group and his knowledge will be invaluable. But we can no longer say "O, Bram will do this or that" and we shall miss his practical service so much! If you have a "hands on" skill that could be useful around the building please let us know - if it is only keeping the front of the church free of weeds or the shrubs watered it would help!*

Thank you Joy and to all members of the buildings and fabric focus group. Many thanks in particular to Bram and we are grateful Bram that you feel able to continue in an advisory capacity. Jenny McCloy will now present her report on behalf of the children's advocate group.

*This focus group is made up of 5 representatives each with a link to one of the children's or young people's groups within our church family - Carol Scott (Junior Church and Messy Church); Jenny McCloy (Junior Church and Messy Church); Anne Davey (Junior Church and Little Angels); Joyce Cook (Junior Church and Scout Group elder); and Bram Corn (Safeguarding Officer).*

*The groups main function is to ensure that our children's groups are happy and meeting the needs of the children and the aims of the groups. The group meets to ensure that the Safeguarding Policy of London Street is current and relevant to our needs. The policy is reviewed annually in January and compared with the current National and Wessex Synod policies.*

Thank you Jenny and to all members of the children's advocate focus group. On behalf of the communication group I'd like to call Margaret Carrick Smith.

*The Communication Group, whose membership is Isobel Martin (chair), Owen Collins, Alison Jamieson, Christine Robertson and Margaret Carrick Smith, continued to work on improving the signage within the building, adding more clear directions to the toilets and a new board inside the concourse indicating what is on during each week and the location of the rooms. Ways of further enhancing signs are being explored. New noticeboards have been installed on*

*the windows at the entrance to the concourse, and better controls have been put in place for the other notice boards on the ground floor to ensure that only those notices which are appropriate are posted, and also that they are kept up to date. New menu holders have been provided on the tables in the concourse which contain information about coming events in addition to the café menus. These help to prevent clutter on the tables and provide an attractive way to present information. Finally, the Group has been pleased to have some involvement in the provision of the new church website ([www.basingstokeurc.org.uk](http://www.basingstokeurc.org.uk)). The major part of the work on this was done by the Church Secretary, and we are all indebted to him for producing such an attractive and well-ordered site. Work continues as there is more information to be added. In order to help us to extend the London Street welcome to everyone the Group has arranged for the production of foreign language versions of some of our leaflets. It is hoped that these will be ready for use early in 2017.*

Thank you Margaret and to all members of the communication group. Staying with communication, we are grateful to Christine Robertson for her editorial role in producing *Focus*; and also to John and Elaine Coakes in the ordering and distribution of *Reform*. On behalf of the world mission group, I'd like to call Alison Jamieson.

*Climate change has continued to be of importance in the fight to help the poorer countries of the world. Prior to the Paris Climate Change Conference in late 2015, there was a protest march to Westminster to meet MPs and to publicise the urgency for agreement on worldwide measures to curb the emissions. Peter and Ruth Bentall went on the march and Peter wrote an interesting article for the March Focus about the experience.*

*Fairtrade Fortnight and Christian Aid Week were both celebrated as usual; Fairtrade with the promotion of the current years information at the Prayer Breakfast and in junior church and the Sunday service. The Christian Aid Week collection from the usual Door to Door and church envelopes raised £1,000, up on the previous year, which was encouraging. The 'Short Straw lunch' was enjoyable but rather missed the point as there was too much soup.*

*In 2016 we decided to change our Christian Aid partner from Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories to encompassing all the partners, Central America, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh as well as Israel and POT, this giving greater scope for interest.*

*Trevor Roff, from Open Doors visited again and spoke inspiringly at a service to both the children and adults about the life of Christians in Iraq. We continue to pray every week in the daily prayers for our brothers and sisters of the persecuted church.*

*In October 'One World Week' was celebrated in a small way by the congregation by marking on various maps where in the world they had been born. There were some surprises and two complete strangers found that they had lived in the same house, only a couple of years apart!*

*Other issues are raising their heads, including Eco Church, The Big Church Switch and Tax Avoidance, all issues that affect the developing world, as well as ourselves.*

Thank you Alison and to all members of the world mission group.

As mentioned earlier in my report, the Finance Committee will provide church meeting with the accounts for 2016 and a report at a future church meeting but thanks go the chair, Alex Macro, and the committee members, Karen Bell as Church Treasurer, myself as Church Secretary, Kay Blackwell as Minister, Joy Williams, Julie Bath, Julia Burrows and Ian Scott for overseeing and applying the rules in relation to charity accounting.

The Hook Room is also the venue for our Church meetings. So let's take a look at events and topics that we haven't mentioned or I wish to highlight in greater detail.

In February we hosted Doug Horley's exciting crazy science family praise party to which over 250 adults and children attended. Lent study groups led by Kay was based on the film "Kings Speech" and Peter led a course on the Psalms and prayers of the church. In March we hosted a healing conference, culminating in a joint service with the Basingstoke Community Church with Mark Marx as the speaker. We replaced the bibles in the sanctuary, the cost of which was partly offset by the sale of redundant chairs, with the new bibles being dedicated by Kay in April. Members attended a number of training events and they included Safeguarding; the legal obligations of local churches; training for the eldership; Eco church; and core skills training. In May we were delighted and blessed to see, Amos Grant baptised who was born on 25 December 2015. We also baptised Theodore Alderman. In July, Evelyn Blackwell shaved her head and raised over £2,000 for the Teenage Cancer Trust. In the Autumn, Kay led a Christianity explored course and a paracletic course which explored our journey together as disciples of Christ. September was also a time when the church family from London Street and Tadley spent a weekend together at Lee Abbey in Devon. Thanks go to Joyce for organising that. In the Summer we had our garden party and thanks once again to our hosts, Maggie and Jeffrey Morgans. In October Ron and Rosemary celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary with a service of thanksgiving led by Kay followed by a tea prepared by Penny and her team.

Back to the beginning of 2016 when we were delighted to hear that consent had been given for London Street to proceed in making a post profile application for a Church Related Community Worker, with the Reverend Mary Thomas appointed by the Synod as our link person. We have yet to consider how best to take this forward. A year on our ecumenical links remain as strong as ever. God has used London Street in amazing ways. We have laid the foundations for the Who Cares? Project and taken a lead in establishing the Night Shelter in Basingstoke. You may recall that at the beginning of 2016 we were extremely concerned with the numbers sleeping rough, in particular those sheltering in the front of our church. As an answer to prayer, church meeting gave their blessing to support the Night Shelter project and we opened our doors in December for two nights a week. The project continued until the end of February 2017.

Moving out of the Hook Room we now find ourselves in the sanctuary. As part of our commitment to grow spiritually and prayerfully; the prayer group has met every Wednesday lunchtime throughout the year and on the first Sunday of each month we have a prayer breakfast. Our daily prayers remain focused on the rhythm of daily prayer using the prayers and cycle of psalm readings from Ffald-y-Brenin as our framework. Those not able to engage in prayer here at London Street being encouraged to use the Ffald-y-Brenin prayer leaflets at home.

Church growth was our second of the 10 mission statements set out in Vision20/20. Church growth is not simply a matter of more bums on seats on a Sunday morning. In compiling the Synod return for 2016 our membership stands at 88. During 2016 Gerry and Eira McCaughey; and Huw and Karen Morrison transferred their memberships from London Street; and we were saddened by the death of Harry Bowers in May. We fondly remember also three dear friends who sadly passed away in 2016; Reverend David Welbrock who died in January, Barbara Dixon who died in August and Winnie Tovey who died in October. The number of young people attending service on a Sunday, taken with those who worship regularly through attendance at messy church and Little Angels, total 41. The number of young people associated with London Street either through scouting or the youth café total 143. Attendance at Sunday services averaged around 75.

We are blessed with having Kay preaching on most Sunday's in a number of guises and the teaching she brings through the Holy Spirit. But let us also thank our visiting preachers on the second Sunday of each month when Kay is in Tadley. Thank you also to our musicians throughout 2016 – Mark Best, Peter Dixon, Ian Rees, Maggie Morgans and Alex Macro, with occasional input from Joyce Cook and the digital hymnal, and of course Kay herself. Our thanks go again to Mark Best for not only organising the musicians rota but also for arranging our pulpit supply. Sunday worship though is more than just the ministry of word and sacrament. There are many who work before and after the service and I'd like to thank all of them. As previously mentioned there is Rob Williams who ensures that the heating is on if we need it, and Carol Scott as performing and copyright co-ordinator. We also have the drivers who give lifts to those who need one, the greeters at the door organised by Jean Holton, the stewards organised by Joyce Cook and Dick Davey, the sound system organised by Alex Macro, the bible readers organised by Isobel Martin, the flowers organised by Liz Lindsay and her team, the provision of teas and coffees organised by Ian and Jenny McCloy, the Traidcraft stall run by John and Margaret Carrick Smith, the ladies who wash and return the communion glasses, the counting of the offertory organised by the Finance Committee, the distribution of taped services by Alison Jamieson, our Junior Church staff and helpers, and duty elders.

Once again our premises are used constantly throughout the year. Thank you to Peter Bentall our lettings secretary and I've already mentioned those in the buildings and fabric group who oversee the maintenance of our building. A big thank you to our cleaners Graham and Roy. When it comes to our shop window and decorating the church, I've already mentioned Alison, but thanks also to Ian McCloy and Chris Ayland. Thank you also to John Carrick Smith who has provided WiFi in the building.

No church secretary's report would be complete without reference to the minister. London Street is indeed gifted with the physical presence of Reverend Kay Blackwell and spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit in preaching the word of God. A book I read recently made reference to Mother Teresa. She was quoted as describing Pope John Paul as "a sunbeam of God's love shining in the darkness of the world". We all know how hard you work Kay in undertaking the Lord's work both within and without London Street. Supported by the eldership and guided by the Holy Spirit, you are our sunbeam of God's love shining here in Basingstoke. It is a privilege Kay to work alongside you as church secretary and behalf of everyone here at London Street, 'thank you'. But may I just add a word of caution; please remember to take some 'me' time. Difficult I know, but the last thing we want is for you to suffer from ministerial burn out.

So, is the charge for the year ending 2016 more serious than the one brought for the year ending 2015. Having heard the evidence I'll leave that with you to consider further. We now look towards the next 12 months. The gathering force through advent and the years end is the promise of renewal. We look forward to a new year with the birth of our Saviour setting the mood of expectation and building excitement. With Kay as our Minister and Christ as our leader, let us pray that 2017 will bring new birth to all we contact either face to face or through prayer. Let us take the light of the Holy Spirit, so we are seen as sunbeams illuminating the path to Christ so that others too may find the way.

At the foot of page 4 of today's diary you will find a prayer. As I bring my report to a close, let us now all pray together:

*Thank you Lord for our church here at London Street, and for those who have worshipped in it over the years and for those who serve it today. May we continue to know your presence here Lord and open our hearts and minds to all that you have given us and may you in return graciously accept all that we have to offer you. Support and guide us all as we take the light of your Spirit thereby illuminating the path to Christ so that others too become your sunbeams. We ask for this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

That concludes my report for 2016. Thank you.