

Annual Church Meeting Reports: March 2020

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St. James' Ministers Report

2019 was another busy year in the life of St James' Church.

We began to explore Holy Habits, the means of grace which have been at the heart of Christian living since the early days of the Church. As Acts chapter 2 verses 42 – 47 reminds us “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer....all the believers were together and had everything in common....they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts”. During 2019 we focused on three of the habits: Biblical Teaching, Fellowship, Gladness and Generosity. In each we discovered new things about familiar activities and were able to encourage each other in our faith.

In June we held a service to rededicate our Church halls following the restoration work which had started in 2018. We now have a set of hall buildings which are user-friendly, accessible and outward-looking. These facilities serve the needs of our existing hall users and will enable us to reach out and welcome new people into our buildings. The challenge is for us to encourage people to become part of the spiritual life of our Church as well as being welcome guests in our buildings. I would like to thank all those who worked hard to see the restoration scheme through and who continue enable them to be used as we wish them to be.

During the year four Church members died: Meryl Jones, Olive Hunter, Richard Thwaite and Edna Lowe. We continue to thank God for them and to pray for comfort for their families and friends. During the year we had two visits from Woolton Primary School children. The children had the opportunity to learn about the Easter and Christmas stories through fun activities. It is a privilege to have the chance to share our faith with the children in this way.

Another highlight of the year was our successful Church Weekend in Llandudno, where we followed the Holy Habit theme of “Fellowship”.

During the Autumn we had a successful Trio stewardship campaign which resulted in many people generously increasing their regular giving to St James'. Thank you.

I have become aware that many of the things we do as a Church are under pressure because of the difficulty in getting people to commit to jobs and rotas. I appreciate that we all have busy lives but would encourage everyone to prayerfully consider their involvement in the Church and whether we can offer more. It would be shame if the excellent things we do had to be curtailed due to lack of people. At the same time I would like to thank everyone for the amazing amount of hard work that is reflected in the reports which follow.

God Bless-

Peter



Safeguarding Annual Report 2020

Introduction

St James's reaffirmed its commitment to its safeguarding responsibilities after a complete review of its policy and practices in 2017/18. The Church is concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone and enabling all God's people to reach their full potential, and this provides the context for the Church Council's consideration of this report and safeguarding matters generally.

How we are organised

The Church Safeguarding Officers are Pam Alexander (Children) and Margaret Dee (Vulnerable Adults). Stuart Williams is Complaints Officer. The Safeguarding Support Group comprises these officers, together with Wendy Doig (Property and Lettings Manager and former CSO), and Peter Bounds, Matthew Dyer, Liz Hudson and Jayne McLaren.

Safeguarding matters in respect of the Minister are handled by the Minister's denomination, in Peter's case, the Methodist Circuit. His registration is in place, and he is up-to-date with training requirements. Any safeguarding issues coming to his attention at St James's are handled in accordance with our policy.

Implementation of policy

We have continued to put in place the various requirements of the policy during this year:

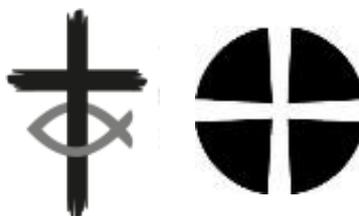
- The revision of leaflets and making them available as required,;
- The display of the requisite notices on notice boards;
- Review of the security of records; and
- Completing security measures in the church hall following the refurbishment of that building.

Risk assessments

We have revised the template for making risk assessments, and required completion of the assessment form for all Church-sponsored events and activities (both regular and 'one-off'). The form is completed for each event or activity, and passed to the Property and Lettings Manager and the appropriate CSO. We still need to consider the possible need for risk-assessing events held on our premises but organised by others.

Embedding safeguarding practice

We have written to all committees and groups to request that Safeguarding is a standing item on all agendas, and furthermore that, where appropriate and practicable, safeguarding training should be undertaken as a regular part of the business of the committee. We also asked that information about any contacts with children or vulnerable adults is recorded.



We have received reports from the Finance and Property Committee, Pastoral Committee and Mission Action Group outlining their practice in these matters and confirming their compliance with these requirements. It is clear that a number of groups operate at lower levels of formality (e.g. do not necessarily work to an agenda or produce minutes). We shall consider in the forthcoming period how we can achieve the same assurance regarding safeguarding practice in such cases. We are also mindful of other engagements in informal settings (eg house groups, flower delivery) where safeguarding issues might arise, and the need to be alert to this possibility.

Training and certification

Apart from training through committees as mentioned above, the CSOs monitor the undertaking of training courses where these are prescribed. We will be carrying out a more detailed audit over the next year. A database is being compiled of all volunteers, and others in roles described in the Connexional policy, to confirm that all necessary certifications are in place.

Individual cases

We have been made aware (including through complaints received) of particular safeguarding concerns. We have taken advice from denominational officers in one case, and in all cases have reviewed the circumstances with the Minister to ensure necessary and appropriate responses are made.

Recommendation

To approve this report and confirm continuance of the current policy for a further year.

Peter Bounds

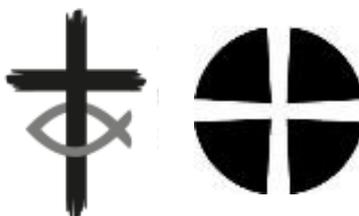
Ladies Guild

After having our winter break, the Women's Guild met again at 1pm on Wednesday, March 4th, with our popular Soup and Sandwiches (price £2), open to everyone. The men enjoy this meeting more than the women (probably being waited on has a lot to do with it). Normal Guild meetings start at 2pm.

We look forward to hearing our friends Peter and Steve Skyner, who regularly keep us entertained. On March 18th we visit Strawberry Field and I know we will receive a warm welcome.

As our numbers are 12-15 we are always please to see new faces and we are open to suggestions for speakers.

Doreen Parker.



Steward Elders' Report

This year as Senior Steward Elder has been another busy but truly blessed time. It has been uplifting working with and supporting our Minister, Rev. Peter Hughes.

I am grateful that I have such a wonderful team of dedicated people to work alongside in such a privileged role. We are just about to elect 3 new Steward Elders as Margaret Peterson and Stuart Williams finish their term.

The Steward Elders team consists of Our Minister and 11 elected church members, Myself, Amy Bates, Liz Hudson, Dave Dickson, Tony Laverty, Graham Martin, Irene Elliott and Pam Alexander. Our function in this role is to work alongside the Minister to provide a Leadership Team to represent the Church.

We have a meeting once a month and share a meal together at the beginning of the year. We are there to support our Minister with his workload and discuss any matters which may arise in the day to day running of St. James'. We make recommendations to Church Council and other committees when needed. We are responsible for overseeing the Steward nominations and elections, for collating a list of charities we support through our monthly Benevolent collections, and organising rotas so that each duty needed is fulfilled, to ensure all services and all events including weddings, christenings and funerals, take place efficiently and as planned, and much more.

Last year's plans to upgrade our church hall are now completed and this has enabled us to provide a better space to enable a wider variety of use for ourselves and our rentals. We also have many varied and wonderful things planned through our mission for the coming year.

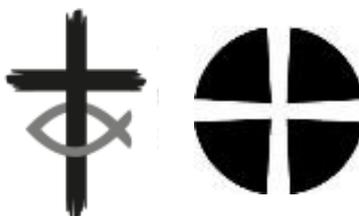
Jayne McLaren- (Senior Steward)

Treasurer's Report - Comments for the Accounts {September 2018 – August 2019}

Unfortunately for the first time in a few years our accounts for the year show a deficit of £3895. Our income from collections and direct giving by standing order fell by nearly £3500 over the year, which is a worrying trend, when added to the previous year's fall of nearly £2500. This can to some extent be explained by members moving away and called to glory.

With this drop in giving, the Property and Finance committee and Church Council agreed that we should revisit the TRIO presentation which we did last autumn, and this seems to have produced a successful response. Our other income such as the rental received from outside organisations for the use of our premises was again similar to the previous year, although the amount claimed via Gift Aid is lower as a reflection on reduced income from giving.

Our expenses increased by nearly £7000, mainly due to repairs to the building and heating systems; we also purchased a defibrillator to have on the premises. Our costs for cleaning our premises also increased slightly. As time passes since the refurbishment our repair bills are likely to increase further, a fact that we will have to consider when budgeting for future years and as such we will need to continue to increase our income in order to cover these increases.



With this in mind it would be good to consider increasing our giving at least in line with inflation each year. If we are fortunate enough to receive a rise in salary or in our pensions it would be really appreciated if you could increase your giving at the same time.

Thanks need to be expressed to Wendy who works very hard and is extremely efficient in managing the lettings of our rooms, without these revenues we would struggle to meet our commitments.

Standing Orders

Some people don't put money into the collection plate because they have already given their regular collection through the bank either monthly or weekly. If you wish, we have cards that can be collected as you enter church to put in the offertory during the service to indicate that your offering has been given directly.

Giving through Standing Order enables the church to set a budget and reduces the risks associated with carrying cash to the bank. It also reduces the amount of work required counting the cash. This is the church's preferred way for members to make regular contributions. If anyone is interested could they please see the treasurer.

The Envelope Scheme

People use this so that they can budget their giving each week and so can the church. It also helps people to remember to give on a weekly basis even when they cannot make it to church as the church costs continue each week even when people are not here. If anyone would like to use this method of giving please see Margaret Dee.

The Special Projects / Redevelopment account

During the year significant refurbishment work was done in our hall, with a cost of nearly £170,000. The costs of this refurbishment were met by the generosity of our fellowship and continuing fund raising, by grants from the Methodist and United Reformed Church, together with the use of a significant bequest received by the Church.

We have continued to pay back the loan to the Methodist Circuit as agreed, and we still have outstanding loans from some members. With the income from concerts we also raised money for The Walton Centre, Christian Aid and Alder Hey.

Finally, thank you all for all the gifts of time and money that you have given to God through St James' during the course of the last year. As mentioned earlier we have lost a few of our members and we remember the financial and spiritual gifts that they gave to the church over many years. Without everyone's dedication, support and sacrificial giving, none of the good work that St James' does in the name of Christ would be possible.

Thank you all.
Steve Elliott, Treasurer



Worship Consultation

This is a meeting which is open to all who are interested in how we worship Sunday by Sunday. We normally meet 3 times during the year and, apart from arranging the details of actual services, adding new elements or new ways of doing things, we are a happy and committed fellowship group. Come and join us!

Pam Draper, Convenor.

Pastoral Visitors Report

We meet three times a year, with our minister, Rev Peter Hughes to consider and pray for the concerns and needs of the fellowship, and to share and celebrate good news.

The number of visitors decreased during the year from 15 to 13. Sadly our dear friend Richard Thwaite passed to glory in April, and we give thanks for his life and faithful service. Doreen Banks resigned in May, and we thank her for her faithful commitment over many years.

Over the year, we have undertaken training from the Methodist pastoral training programme, "Encircled in care". We have completed the foundation sessions, led by Peter, and plan to continue the training in 2020.

During the year we celebrated one baptism and a wedding, and supported the families of four of our church members who have gone to glory. Our Pastoral greeting cards were reviewed, revised and reprinted. Each one now contains a greeting from the fellowship, and a verse from scripture. In October we reviewed our membership roll, and made adjustments to this. Our membership remains similar to last year.

Pastoral care is a vital ministry, and the pastoral visitors work hard to help deliver this ministry to our fellowship. We would welcome anyone who feels that they are being called to be a pastoral visitor. Please, if you feel able to help, see Peter, Irene or any of the Steward/Elders

Irene Elliott

Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts

The group is in good shape. We have a strong team of leaders and helpers and are financially sound. We pay £42 capitation per head each year, which is a large bill to pay but we have managed our finances so that we will still be able to make our annual donation towards hall running costs.

Just over sixty years ago the 33rd Allerton Scout Group was founded by Mr McKenzie, hence the tartan on our neckerchiefs. He was a Commando in the second world war and he established the group's scouting culture of development of personal responsibility and self-reliance. Scouting has changed dramatically since those early years, but we still work to achieve those basic principles.

We are very fortunate to have a history of long serving leaders, two of which, Richard Rigby and Peter Delaney, we congratulate on gaining their 25 year service award and also the Scout Medal of Merit. Also Ben Elman who has been awarded The Chief Scout Commendation.



The group feels it is well supported by St James' Church. The use of our well-maintained halls leaves our leaders free to concentrate on running the sections. As you will see from the reports, the sections are very lively and provide a wide range of activities.

There has never been a time when there has been such a need for Scouting. If you would like to help us expand our activities, are looking for members on our executive committee and occasional helpers.

Thank you to everyone who supports us. Scouting is a team-based activity. The leaders would not be able to do it without the help of our wider team of parents, friends and the support from St James' Church.

Skip

Beaver Scouts

It has been a funny year for the 33rd Allerton Beavers. Due to the arrival of Ella I was forced to take a short break from leading, but this worked in my favour as Lucy re-joined the fold, then I gained Jane and Rachael. Lucy led fantastic sessions from January to Easter and has since decided to continue as a leader and we have all become a great team. We have two young leaders, Jay and Ceira. Both are a fantastic help and are well on their way to taking the lead. Ceira will turn 18 shortly and become a fully-fledged leader.

Our finances are good and we will cover capitation in February in full. We will be left with enough funds to use if we need new resources or equipment to facilitate all our Beavers having the opportunity to sleep out this year. We have a strong waiting list with requests coming in regularly to join; we are full in the weekly meetings well into 2021.

We had a brilliant trip to Kingswood Colomendy. This is something I very much hope we can do again in the future. We all got to try out lots of adventurous activities and learn new skills. We got creative with food and ate it along the way. We put up tents, took them down and even managed to pack them away.

We do some crafts, but we have many talents and we were able to showcase them at our Beavers Got Talent evening. We look at nature and how we can help those we share it with.

The future of our section is bright. We are looking forward to a sleep over which we hope will take place at a trampoline park (licence permitting) and as soon as we are able to facilitate it, getting back under canvas and showing the Beavers outdoor skills that we physically can't do on a weekly basis in the hut.

We always welcome new leaders should anyone wish to join us. We are pleased to have some girls back in the section and look forward to the adventures of 2020 especially Wingding.

Vikki.



Cubs

Our Cubs have enjoyed a fun filled and quite special Scouty year. Along with our normal activities at St James's where we concentrate on Cubs Challenge badges, we have also travelled to France to celebrate the centenary of the end of World War I. We visited Cadbury's World in Bournville, participated in The North West Scavenger Hunt in aid of Shelter Box, Adventure Dock visit and had 3 weekend camps. Having our first "Hike" only camp in the Peak District was something I have wanted to do for years. We really enjoyed the conversations with the cubs while up on the hills.

This year has seen a boom in our numbers, with our pack size at 30 Cubs. The prediction for 2020-21 is over 38 Cubs! With this increase in mind, we are looking for additional adult support to allow us to continue our Scouting activities into 2020.

For 2020 we have more exciting plans, another International Trip to France, more away days, camps and specialist events.

Scouting is not all about ropes, knots and map reading. These "extra" activities are what defines the 33rd Cubs, we believe in "Skills For Life", a Scout Mantra, yes, but still at the core of what we do. Helping learn independence, respect, understanding and confidence to face a changing and challenging world. We believe without the extras and adventure we try to provide, we may fall into just being a once a week youth club.

Ben Elman

Scouts

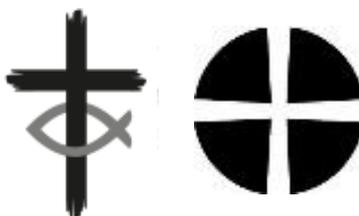
We are hoping to complete the Chief Scout Gold award for the 3 oldest Scouts by Spring 2020. So far, we have awarded the following Challenge Badges: Adventure, Creative, Outdoors and Personal. We are hoping to complete the following: Expedition, Skills, Team Leader, Teamwork and World. These have been/will be awarded based on both attendance and age.

We have fostered close ties with Aardvark Explorers (based at St Peter's Scout Hall) and undertake joint activities with them so that as Scouts get to the right age they can make a smooth transition into explorer scouts.

Our sessions are based on both external and internal activities, dependent on the time of year. Over the year the section has undertaken the following external activities: Badge Camp, Awesome Walls, Night Hike, Dragon Boating, Dry Slope skiing, Quasar, Chinese cooking, Fair trade night, drugs awareness, pancake, etc.

A group of Scouts will be joining the Cubs on their International Trip to France. We have a canal barge trip planned plus other outdoor activities.

Richard Rigby and Stu Page.



Boys Brigade Anchor Junior and Company Sections

We currently have 1 Boy in the Anchor Boy Section.(age 5-8). There are 5 junior boys (aged 8-11) and 1 company section and seniors (aged 11-18) and we continue to meet on Thursday between 6.30pm and 7.30pm.

These low numbers are worrying and seem to indicate a trend noticed within BB the Liverpool Battalion as some companies have closed down in 2019 in Liverpool and wider UK Boys Brigade.

We continue to share Thursday evening meetings with the Girls Brigade and joint activities are enjoyed by our members when arranged. We have continued to enjoy craft , music , religious , sport and environment topics under the headings of Fit for Fun , Think and Do , God and Me , Me and my World and Make and Do. All sections have made craft items for our main festivals and celebrations and on Biblical themes. They have taken part in a science evening which was great fun assisted by Matthew and Naomi, tried some cooking with assistance from Jonquil and also enjoyed regular board and team games with football and other activities in the Sports Hall and in the summer been over to Woolton Woods and Camp Hill.

With thanks to our helpers Jonquil and Dave Dickson, Naomi Dyer, Bev Bower and Peter our Chaplain and all Church members who have supported us over the past year.

Billy Lowe. Rob Swindells

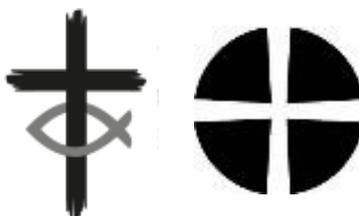
Hall and Church Lettings

Hall rentals have increased over the last twelve months and we are delighted to welcome families for birthday parties and small groups looking for meeting space. The ladies who ran the Craft Fair events last year have now found they have such a demand that they needed to look for bigger premises. They were sorry to leave us and we to say goodbye to them but we wish them success.

We welcome a new group who will meet on Thursday afternoons – Diverse Performing Arts which cover Drama/Singing/Dance and Acting for Screen. We have Egerton Theatre Drama Academy who meet twice weekly during term time. Helen O’Grady Drama Group who meet on Friday afternoons. Woolton Drama Group who meet on Monday evenings and produce and perform three differing shows/pantomime/plays during the year using our main stage hall. Woolton Village Residents Association hold their committee meetings on a monthly basis in the hall. The Pre School and Parents and Toddler Group rent the hall building five mornings a week during term time. We are very busy!

During term time our uniformed groups meet during the week which takes over Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. These are vibrant, busy groups and we must support their leaders who give an amazing amount of time and talent to our young people. The feed back from hall users following the refurbishment has been very positive.

Wendy Doig – Lettings and Property manager



Special Projects Group

This group meets four or five times a year to discuss and plan fund raising events. The meetings are open to all and we would be delighted to welcome new faces and new ideas!

These last few years we have been extra 'busy' as we have been working towards raising funds for the refurbishment to our church hall. This is now fully complete and I'm sure you have all seen the vast improvements and how much more flexible and welcoming the hall facilities are.

There is still an amount to be raised to totally complete repayment of loans and interest on a Circuit loan. Details of the account will be available at the ACM. We have, with your help and encouragement, raised an amazing amount and we are grateful for your continuing support.

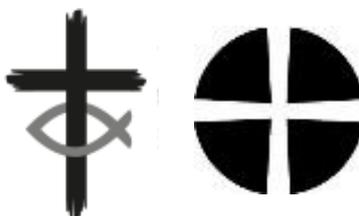
We will, of course, continue to arrange events as throughout the life of our church we will always be aware of the need to keep up with the ever-increasing costs to maintain and add to our wonderful church and hall building. They are both quite elderly and need our tender loving care to take forward into the future life of St. James' and the community within the village of Woolton and surrounds.

Over the last 12 months we have arranged Family Film Evenings. A family Quiz. An Evening of Organ Music. Liverpool Male Voice Choir have visited. Saturday morning coffee mornings are held on the second Saturday of each month and these add to our projects account as do the Soup and Sandwich lunches organised by the Women's Guild on the first Wednesday of the month when the Guild are 'in residence' in the church. We are very grateful to all those who help and support these two community events.

The next Family Film Evening is to be held on 4th April at 7.00 pm in the church. Do come and bring the family and have fun getting involved with the showman.

Our next meeting is on Monday 20th April at 7.00 pm In the hall. There is always a cuppa to enjoy and a warm welcome.

Wendy Doig, Secretary.



Girls' Brigade

Girls' Brigade meets every Thursday in the church hall 6.30-7.30pm. We currently have 20 girls on our register with an average company night attendance of 12-15 girls aged 4-14. The company is led by 3 leaders, Amy Bates (Captain), Jayne McLaren (Leader), Jan Underwood (Leader).

Our purpose is to enrich the lives of young girls through a variety of activities and to help them grow in confidence and help them on their faith journey to seek, serve and follow Christ.

In June 2019, Amy, Jan, Jayne, Eve, Faye & Hannah were lucky enough to be invited to the Trooping of the Colour in London with other GB companies from across the country, this was a huge honour and a very exciting day. Our summer term was celebrated with a festival themed party which was enjoyed by all.

Craft is a big part of what our girls enjoy about GB and we have created art including prayer posters, creating art with nature, painting the first rainbow, lavender bags (thanks to a member of our congregation for growing lavender).

17th November 2019 saw our company celebrate our 70th anniversary and we held a special service to commemorate this; some people travelled from all over the country to be there and it was a fantastic day had by all. With over 100 people at the service it was great for past members and leaders to chat over cake and share memories over cake.

We made food parcels for Harvest to be given to local charities with a visit from Food Bank, teaching our girls about how we can help those less fortunate than ourselves is very important. Each girl also created a card alongside their parcels which were much appreciated by the recipients.

Our 2020 term started with a pyjama party and we have had a yoga lesson from 'Yoga Bears' which the girls (and leaders enjoyed). We have also recently welcomed Diverse performing arts to lead a session in which the girls acted out different scenarios and built their confidence.

The company continues to grow and enrich the lives of girls!

Amy Bates, Captain

