

St Thomas à Becket and St Matthew's Churches, Benefice of Widcombe, Bath

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the Year ended 31 December 2017

1. Administrative Information

St. Thomas à Becket Church is situated in Church Street and St Matthew's Church is on the lower slopes of Widcombe Hill, both in Widcombe. They are part of the Diocese of Bath and Wells within the Church of England.

The correspondence address is -

The Parish Office, St Matthew's Church, Widcombe Hill, Widcombe, Bath, BA2 6AA.

The website address is – www.widcombe.church

PCC members who served from 1st January 2017 until 31st December 2017 are:

Vicar	Revd Tim Buckley	
Curate:	Revd Jenny Buckler	From July 2017
Reader:	Mr Chris Tottle	Resigned April 2017
Wardens:	Dr Sïan Lewis	Churchwarden St Thomas à Becket
	Mrs Angela Frith	Churchwarden St Thomas à Becket
	Mr Andrew Udale-Smith	Chapelwarden St Matthew's Church
	Mr Bill James	Chapelwarden St Matthew's Church

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Mrs Carol Tottle	Until April 2017
Mr Chris Tottle	Until April 2017
Mrs Trudy Healey	From April 2017
Mrs Alison Furber	From April 2017

Elected Members:

Mr Mark Nish	Treasurer
Mrs Trudy Healey	Secretary
Mrs Alison Furber	Electoral Roll Officer
Mrs Annette Whateley	Member
Mr Martin Geake	Member
Mrs Beth Forrester	Member until APCM April 2017
Mr Nathan Ovens	Member until APCM April 2017
Miss Louise Sturgess	Member from April 2017
Mr Haydn Wilkins	Member from April 2017
Mrs Anne Lawson	Member from April 2017

Co-opted: Revd Judith Harries From May 2017

Independent auditor to the accounts: Art Accountants, Manvers St, Bath BA1 1JQ

Bankers: National Westminster Bank, 24-25 Stall St, Bath BA1 1TG

2. Governance and Management Structure

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules 2011. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

In 2017, gross income was over £100,000 for the first time, so Widcombe PCC is in the process of registering with the Charity Commission as per the requirements.

The major risks to which the PCC is exposed have been reviewed and systems and procedures designed to manage those risks have been established and documented. They continue to be reviewed to ensure they are current and appropriate. A new Safeguarding directive was issued by the Diocese this year, prompting us to adopt the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy locally. Key personnel have also undertaken the required Safeguarding training modules.

3. Aims, Objectives and Activities

Widcombe PCC has the responsibility of working closely with the Vicar and Curate, promoting in and beyond the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has responsibility for maintenance of both St Thomas à Becket and St Matthew's Churches.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our churches and to become part of our parish community. Its stated Vision is that *"God is calling us to be a Christian community that reaches out to the parish and beyond, to invite people to encounter God's grace"*.

We have done this mainly through the provision of weekly church services in both churches, with the sacraments of baptism and marriage also now at both churches. We put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish, not only for those within the benefice but also for those in the wider Bath community who enjoy our services. We also aim to ensure that those in the parish who cannot physically attend church, but who want spiritual nurture, receive this through a pastoral care group.

The PCC also offers accommodation to other worship groups who wish to use our facilities for their own services and worship.

Our written policy for making grants or donations is that we pledge to donate at least 10% of our yearly income to mission and evangelism. All requests for regular charitable support or one-off donations are discussed at PCC meetings, agreed with the members with approval from the treasurer, and documented in the Minutes.

The PCC is indebted to the large contribution that volunteers make in helping to maintain the churches and raise funds. There are no specific unquantifiable free facilities that the PCC relies on to do its work, just the pooled contribution from many supporters.

4. Achievements and Performance

4.1 Church Attendance in 2017

The revision of the Electoral Roll in April 2017 showed a slight decrease from last year, from 136 in 2016 to 133 in 2017 due to the deaths of three members. The next full revision of the Roll is due in 2019.

4.1.1 St Thomas à Becket Church

St Thomas offers a variety of services, both traditional BCP HC and more contemporary Family Worship on Sundays at 10.30, with communion services on alternating Sundays at 08.00 and Thursdays at midday.

The average weekly attendance on a normal Sunday increased from last year's figure to an average of 31 adults and 1 child under 16 per week, from a regular worshipping community of 71 adults and 4 children.

Christmas services were very well attended as usual. As Christmas Day was a Monday, we held an 8.00 communion, Nine Lessons & Carols and Midnight Mass on 24th, with Communion on Christmas Day, so holding four services within 26 hours. The total attendance for all four was 319 people.

During the year there were four baptisms and three marriages. There were no funerals during the year.

The Bristol branch of the German Lutheran Church continues to use St Thomas à Becket church for its monthly services as it has done for over forty years. This year we held a joint Harvest Festival service.

4.1.2 St Matthew's Church

Weekly contemporary services and midweek Life hub groups and pastorates, have continued all year. Weekly attendance for the Sunday services varied considerably depending on student numbers, but with an average attendance of 75 adults and 15 children. The worshipping community totals 140, of which 110 are adults, 10 are children under 10 and 20 young people aged 11 to 17.

For the first time since 2000, we were delighted to hold a wedding at St Matthew's. Four baptisms and two Thanksgiving services for infants were held in 2017. Funerals are not held at St Matthew's.

As well as these regular services, again this year St Matthew's Church was the venue for the Easter service, Leavers service, Harvest Festival and Christmas service for all for the staff, pupils and parents of Widcombe C of E VA Junior School. A 'Live Nativity' service starting at St Matthew's and progressing to St Thomas was great fun for children and adults alike, as was 'Carols by Laserlight', with approximately 380 participants between the two services.

A very successful Alpha Course was held at the beginning of the year and will be repeated next year.

The Orthodox Church will continue to use St Matthew's for their regular weekly worship and for Great Lent until May 2018 when the five-year rental agreement comes to an end.

4.2 Review of the Year

The benefice was very fortunate in having our Living reinstated last year, meaning that after many years we were appointed an Incumbent again, so having a full time paid Vicar rather than a part-time unpaid House for Duty Priest-in-charge. This year, the PCC was delighted to learn that Widcombe would gain a Curate under the tutelage of our Vicar and gave a warm welcome to Revd Jenny Buckler in July. In the same month, Revd Tim was honoured to be confirmed as the Chaplain to the new Mayor of Bath, who also happens to be the local councillor for Widcombe.

The full PCC met eight times during the year, with an average level of attendance of 75%. A Standing Committee meeting was held prior to each PCC meeting to set the agenda and transact business not requiring a full PCC meeting.

There were regular weekly church services and celebrations of all Christian festivals with weddings and baptisms held at both churches. Funerals are held at St Thomas à Becket, but there was none in 2017. Lent courses were again run in the community, which were all well attended and much appreciated.

The St Thomas Lay Team takes a service once a month and will continue to do so to help share the workload, but also this provides a valuable opportunity for those who have the skills to use them.

Regarding the upkeep and maintenance of our buildings and contents, we were fortunate to have been given a legacy and gifts which enabled us to fund the replacement of the electronic organ with a new modern instrument and additional speakers. The Public-Address system was also replaced so the sound offering during services is very much improved. St Thomas à Becket church continues to be in good order without any significant renovations or repairs required this year.

One issue that has affected attendance at St Thomas has been the introduction of significant parking restrictions around the church. A plan to restrict all-day free parking was originally discussed between the church members, residents and the local councillor as Church Street had become known as a good place to park all day or week for free. The plan was for a reduction in spaces but which would be designated as '2-hour only', which would deter commuters but allow parking for church attendance. Following a small fire and separate accident in Church Street, a fire officer requested almost complete coverage of double yellow lines down both sides which was carried out by the council. Representatives of the PCC met the fire officer afterwards, who agreed that there was room for more 2-hour parking spaces which would not impede an emergency vehicle. However, the council have chosen not to revisit this. The restrictions are having a significant impact on the elderly or frail who are not registered disabled but who cannot walk far, so we are still looking at ways to overcome this.

The settlement cracks to the north window of St Matthew's continue to be monitored and are stable. A plan to upgrade the whole building is well-underway. This includes replacing the boilers, transforming the entrance, changing the layout and complete new fit-out of the kitchen and toilet areas. Architects have been appointed and are at the final planning stage. Once the design and has been finalised and agreed by the PCC, a faculty will be required, with permissions to be requested from the various interested parties. At the same time, a large fundraising initiative will be started and we will apply for suitable grants. The roof survey which was carried out last year determined the areas in most need of repair and a rolling repair scheme has started, the first phase requiring an estimated £70k + VAT. This sum has already been donated and the work completed which included the installation of a new heating system in the parish office wing of St Matthews along with a complete roof strip over the office wing and the entire side chapel and front porch. This work included new battens and leadwork, the replacement of all faulty slates, an entire refit of new roof slate clips instead of nails, improvement of all water goods and the inclusion of a new waterproof membrane plus the opportunity to introduce a layer of insulation.

St Matthew's continues to be rented out to various local groups to bring in income to help with the running costs of such a large building. A five-year lease for the Orthodox Church to use specific spaces at specified times runs until May 2018. The church membership also hosts social events at St Matthew's, including a weekly coffee morning, monthly community lunches and other fundraising activities.

The PCC still owns the land at the back of the redundant St Mark's Church and continues to discuss its maintenance and plans for this land in the future.

Links with Widcombe C of E VA Junior School continue to grow, with Revd Tim Buckley and now also Revd Jenny Buckler being actively involved with assemblies and religious educational support for the teachers,

including being on the committee to appoint a new deputy head teacher. The school is now part of the Palladian Academy Trust which encompasses seven local schools. Each school retains its governing body to which some functions are delegated but the multi-academy trust (MAT) is governed by one trust and a single board of directors. Revd Tim also has regularly been involved in taking services at the Paragon school in the parish.

During this year the PCC made a number of donations to various charities, as outlined in Section 5.2 below. The PCC has pledged to use 10% of its income to support mission and charitable work going forwards. Two large initiatives which we are supporting are:

1) The New Generation charity in Burundi - <http://newgenerationburundi.org> - which helps street children to be cared for and give them a good future and hope. Two of our congregation have relocated for a few months to help with building sustainable housing and other practical and spiritual help.

2) the Haven Project in Kandy, Sri Lanka. A couple, Jeremie and Isabel help run a new growing church and girls' home for those who have been abused and abandoned. They are also building a new church building. Revd Tim went out on a mission trip to this project and returned later in the year with his family and two other of the congregation to give support and assistance.

Church members also conducted door-to-door collections for Christian Aid Week and collected in nearly £1,600, a good result.

Both churches have signed up to Fairtrade Status and support Fairtrade Fortnight.

The PCC is indebted to so many who volunteer their expertise, support and time so willingly throughout the year, to ensure that our churches run smoothly, are well maintained and engender a super community spirit. We would not be able to achieve all that we do without such help.

5. Financial Review

5.1. Overview

In 2017, the PCC's total income and expenditure from **normal activities** was:

Income **£112,663**

Expenditure **£113,948**

As a consequence, the PCC incurred a small deficit of (£1,285) in the year.

The PCC can meet its legal liabilities when they are due; the PCC's aim is to maintain a reserve of Unrestricted Funds of approximately £30,000 to cover emergency situations, equivalent to approximately three months' normal operating costs at current levels.

5.2. Unrestricted Funds

At the end of 2017, the PCC's balance of Unrestricted Funds was £79,740.

5.2.1 Unrestricted Income

The PCC has four principal sources of income: Voluntary Giving; Gift Aid; Hall Lettings and Fundraising.

Voluntary Giving – the PCC received £80,564 in voluntary donations, of which £61,031 was Planned Giving.

Gift Aid - the PCC recovered an additional £17,243 in tax recovered on Gift Aid.

Hall Lettings – the PCC received £11,050 in rent from lettings of St Matthew’s Church and Church Hall, the principal users being: The Orthodox Church, Bath Operatic and Drama Society and the Widcombe Association.

Fundraising – A number of fundraising events were undertaken in 2017, including sale of refreshments at the Widcombe Art Trail and a collection from the Widcombe Mummers on New Year’s Day. Regular donations are also received from the Wednesday Coffee Morning. In total, fundraising raised £1,265.

5.2.2 Interest on Investments

The PCC has three interest-earning investments: the Church Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) fund, Nat West Deposit Account and Current Account interest. Together these investments delivered £448.

5.2.3 Payments

The major payments from Unrestricted Funds fall into five categories: Administration and Office Costs; St Thomas à Becket’s Operating Costs; St Matthew’s Operating Costs; Charitable Donations; and Parish Share. Operating Costs fall into four sub-categories: Utilities (gas, water & electricity); Insurance; Maintenance & Repair; and Cleaning.

Administration came to £14,195 including payment to our part-time Administrators and costs associated with running the Church office.

St Thomas a Becket’s Operating Costs – in 2017 were £2,309 - all from Unrestricted Funds.

St Matthew’s Operating Costs – in 2017 were £34,301 - all from Unrestricted Funds. This amount includes £10,258 of extraordinary expenditure towards the cost of new chairs purchased for St Matthew’s.

Charitable Donations – The PCC donated £11,068 to various charitable organisations and other causes – the Bath Soup Run, the New Generation Project Burundi, our mission partners in Sri Lanka and the Haven Home, the Hope Child project in Sri Lanka, the Widcombe C of E Junior School Choir, and running an Alpha course at St Matthew’s.

Parish Share – The 2017 Parish Share of £43,239 was paid in full and has now been paid in full for six consecutive years.

5.3 Restricted Funds

Restricted Funds are those donations that are given to the PCC with a restriction imposed upon the purpose for which the funds can be used.

At the start of 2017, the PCC held five Restricted Funds:

St Thomas à Becket Restoration Fund - £18,926. This fund started the year at £21,752. It is PCC policy, agreed in 2007, to maintain a minimum reserve of £20,000 for restoration work on St Thomas’ church in a restricted fund. During the year, the PCC agreed to spend £3,081 towards replacement of the sound system at St Thomas’ and that this should be funded from the St Thomas à Becket Restoration Fund.

Organ Fund - £2,520. This fund is comprised of two elements: £1,841 for the sole purpose of the maintenance and repairs to the organ at St Matthew’s and £679 representing the surplus after the purchase of the new organ at St Thomas’. At the start of the year the total fund stood at £18,194 of which £16,353 was restricted for the purpose of the new organ at St Thomas’. During the year a further £3,500 was donated and a new organ was purchased for £19,174.

Widcombe United Charities - £2,926. The Vicar and Churchwardens of St Thomas à Becket’s and St Matthew’s churches are trustees of a separate charity, the Widcombe United Charities, which is a consolidation of a number of historic endowment charities dating back to the 19th Century for the relief

of poverty of the elderly of the parish. It is the PCC's intention to approach the Charities Commission for permission to bring this Fund into the PCC's general accounts to be spent on local mission giving.

St Matthew's Regeneration Fund - £8,716. This fund was set up following the launch of a project to raise capital towards the cost of re-roofing St Matthew's, together with its internal re-ordering. At the start of the year the Fund stood at £37,837 and received further gifts of £24,450; total expenditure in the year amounted to £53,571 which included a new heating system in the vestry and upper room, payments relating to the partial completion of Phase 1 of the St Matthew's roof project together with the associated professional fees, and the architect's fees incurred within the year in respect of the St Matthew's re-ordering project.

Grow for Life - This fund was set up to support a gardening project in the Parish designed to provide pastoral and educational support for individuals struggling with health issues. Grow for Life has now received full charitable status and so the fund was closed at the end of 2017.

6. Plans for the Future

The main focus for 2018 is the redevelopment of St Matthew's Church building to make it more accessible and welcoming. It is being used more and more now, so this work is paramount to provide modern and appropriate facilities for today's activities. Working with a great team of appointed architects and with the highly positive encouragement and support of both our Archdeacon and the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee), we will continue pressing forward, developing these exciting plans.

These developments will offer a welcoming hub to local residents, groups and businesses. They will also provide more opportunities for expansion for the existing growing congregation, promoting its desire to develop an outreach programme, which will provide Christian guidance, support and discipleship within the wider community.

We are truly excited to see how God continues to bless, encourage and resource the wider Widcombe Parish through our two remarkable buildings and the church families to which they are homes.