

AGM REPORT 2018

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared primarily to offer an update on what is happening in the various areas of ministry within the church family at St Thomas' Church. Each leader has once again been asked to provide a reflection on the last year in order to inform and encourage the Church Family and make us aware of future plans and any needs in their area of ministry. The Trustees and Vestry hope that you will be able to see how we are all working together towards our aims and to fulfil our values , which will also hopefully highlight areas within the life of the Church that people can assist with.

If you would like further information then please contact the leader whose name appears at the end of each section of the report. General enquiries or comments on this report may be directed to the Trustees and Vestry.

The reports have been grouped into categories and full details may be found in the list of contents. Some groups cover more than one category so the 'best fit' has been chosen in that case.

We hope you will find this update helpful and a source of encouragement as we seek to serve God together in this place.

**Compiled by Jeremy Southam and Jane Ross on behalf
of St Thomas' Trustees and Vestry
February 2018**

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Vestry Chair's Report 2018

We have had a busy and challenging year, prayerfully led by our Rector David who continues to teach and inspire us. I wish to record my heartfelt thanks for all the support I've received from him during the year, to Trustees and Vestry for their unwavering commitment and much valued contributions, and to our wider staff team for all they do for us and our church community.

We have had nine formal Vestry meetings, and two training sessions on our responsibilities as charity trustees, how best to work together and developing vision, with further training planned. We have again deliberated on a broad range of issues including mission and outreach, staff and volunteer safeguarding and support, health & safety and building-related issues, and our continuing relationship with the Scottish Episcopal Church. The detail of our work is contained in the minutes of our meetings, which are posted on the website and can be given in print on request. We also provide summaries of the main points from time to time. I am giving a selection of some here.

In April David Fairhurst handed over the role of Vestry Secretary, with our grateful thanks for his efficient and valued service, to Jeremy Southam. We acknowledged the success of the Holiday Club, and agreed the format for our congregational meeting the following month. We discussed our outreach programme for the year in May and we reviewed the feedback from our congregational meeting. We welcomed new members Morag Bryce and David Harvey, we accepted Chris Humphreys' resignation, Keith Russell stepped down as Trustee and Miller Bogie was appointed. The Health & Safety role was also passed by Keith to David Harvey.

We discussed the Synod decision at our June meeting, agreed replies to letters and emails from members following the congregational meeting, and offered individual meetings to allow further discussion of concerns and questions. In August we noted the success of our Community Fun Day, the

breadth of the Children/Youth work and the stopping of our Wednesday Fellowship. We also agreed to use “40 Days of Discernment” with a particular focus on prayer from start of October.

We confirmed outreach events in September for later in the year, commissioned a new logo and journal and joined the East of Scotland Gospel Partnership. Sue Brown agreed to assist Agnes Murray in taking over payroll responsibilities and formal PVG training took place. We agreed to have a central meeting at the end of the “40 Days” and Mike Turner joined Vestry in October. We considered and thanked Agnes for her detailed budget proposal for the year ahead, and agreed to look again at an interns proposal in the spring. In November we agreed financial support for SU Schools work over the next three years and the way ahead in the New Year following the central meeting. In December we were shocked and saddened by the unexpected death of our much loved and respected Vestry member Brian Rat-tray.

At our January meeting we agreed involvement in the Corstorphine Fair and discussed outreach to our neighbours in Glasgow Road during Lent. We discussed our approaching AGM and agreed corporate responses to resignations from three members of our congregation.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3: 5-6)

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”. (Matthew 6:33)

Margaret Robertson

From the Rector

“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.” 2

Thessalonians 2:13-17 NIVUK

I begin with thanking you all for your continuing prayers, service, support and encouragements. I count it a joy to be a pastor to you.

This year has been very hard both personally and in relation to wider church life. A dominant factor has been the ongoing difficulties created by the decision of the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) to change its teaching on marriage which permits couples of the same sex to be married in church. We, along with some other churches, have taken the view that this is an unacceptable departure from scripture and tradition. The Church of England Evangelical

Council and the majority of the Anglican Communion concur with that assessment and as a result have declared themselves in impaired communion with the SEC.

Clearly not all agree with the leadership of St Thomas’ on how to proceed. It became clear that whatever we did, we were likely to lose people. It is not easy keeping a church together in the face of significant disagreement on a first order issue. That has been painful for all of us.

We must now, in as loving a way as possible, take steps to differentiate ourselves from the SEC, while remaining in communion with the majority of the Anglican Communion. We anticipate that this matter will become

clearer in the coming months. We are grateful for the massive and ongoing support we have received from churches around the UK and world.

Against that difficult backdrop, we have continued our worship and life together.

Outreach

We've had some events old and new this year including:

The Choice (Musical)

Quiz Night

Carols by Candlelight

Women's Evening

Hog, Beer and Carols

Weekly Events – Carers and Toddlers, Coffee Plus

Claire Burns has organised several excellent events like the Elf film showing and Community Day, as well as being committed to the Holiday Club.

Many thanks to all those who have organised and planned these and other events.

I have an ongoing concern about how “outreach” is done. Events are all very well, but we each need to take responsibility for living out the Gospel and offering Jesus to our families, neighbours and friends. We also need to consider carefully how what we do on a Sunday morning is effective as a meeting to which we can invite people to. We have some work to do on this. Our strengths lie in a warm welcome (the responsibility of all, not just the stewards) and a generally happy environment. Our weakness perhaps lies in following up contacts.

Teaching

We've continued in our commitment to teaching the Bible at Sunday worship and through Home Group Bible studies.

Central Meetings have provided opportunities for learning, discussion and prayer. Ali and I enjoyed working together on several of these and we hope to do this again in 2018. These meetings are for everyone who is committed to our life together and not only for members of home groups. The vision is to see these gatherings grow.

We've enjoyed visiting preachers like Lynne Paterson (Tearfund), Andy Lines (Crosslinks and GAFCON) and Bishop Bob Duncan (Anglican Church in North America). We hope to have more guest preachers of such calibre in the coming year.

Pastoral

The Pastoral Team continues to offer excellent support to individuals in need, as do many members of the congregation without any official recognition. This is as it should be, for all should express care to one another in word and deed.

East of Scotland Gospel Partnership

We joined the Partnership this year as a way of reflecting our solidarity with the wider evangelical community in Edinburgh and beyond. This has proved to be a helpful encouragement to keep on focussing on discipleship and Gospel growth, as iron sharpens iron. There is a growing understanding that what the Lord seems to be doing is helping us to be the Church in Scotland, rather than focussing on denominational differences.

Worship

We've lost some excellent musicians this year, but also gained some new ones! Let's pray for the Lord to continue to provide the gifts we need.

Café Church has proved an excellent way to offer flexible, creative and fun worship. It might not be to everyone's taste but it seems to be an effective way to worship together.

A new sound system, desk, projector and screen have been installed which have enhanced our worship space. We anticipate further enhancements with increased storage and possible new main lighting being installed. We are grateful for the Lord's provision which has allowed for these investments in our future.

Vestry & Trustees

The vestry and trustees continue to work well together. I am very grateful for their commitment, service and enthusiasm. We've done some training on our responsibilities as charity

trustees and better ways of working together. We intend on doing more work on growing in vision and planning for our future together.

Staff

I am very grateful to Jane Ross for all she does in coordinating so much of what happens at St Thomas'. She is a star!

Claire Burns recently announced her intention to move on from us this summer. Her plans will become clearer soon and I know she'll want to share what's next for her. There will be more to say later in the year, but let me say how thankful I am for her ministry. When she joined us in 2015, I reckoned we might have her for three years, and so it has proved.

In that time she has grown in her gifts, as a person and in confidence. She has grown the work among young people both in church and in local schools. She will be missed and will be a hard act to follow. She has kindly given us enough notice so that we can seek her successor and hopefully appoint someone who can overlap with her before she leaves in the summer. Pray for her as she looks to the future: that all her plans and hopes come to beautiful fruition. Pray too that the Lord sends someone who can build on all that she has achieved.

I suspect that we are at the point where it might be helpful to grow our staff, perhaps by appointing someone in an assistant minister's role. Let's prayerfully consider this in the coming year.

David McCarthy

Young People's Pastoral Worker

Looking back at my first vestry update in 2015, a lot of things have changed. My job has expanded greatly, and God has really opened doors that at one time seemed impossible to open. Many relationships have been built, and I'm pleased to say that they are strong relationships that I enjoy investing my time in. The various areas that I work in are as follows:

Lighthouse Groups

This year we said goodbye to two of our long-standing serving members with our children's groups, Maggie Gilmour & Grace Donaldson. We are so grateful for the time, energy and primarily love that they have poured into the many children over the years. This year we are welcoming Ann Baxter, Christine MacDonald and Stuart Christie onto our team. Thank you for joining us!

The role of overseeing the Lighthouse groups has become part of my remit as of January 2018.

Due to my departure this year, this role won't see too much change.

We have already changed the names of our groups, and have a full programme for each group posted on the youth boards (feel free to see what we're learning!) The groups are currently using Scripture Union resources for the majority of the time, and the older teenagers (Fusion) are continuing their use of Youth for Christ resources. We also now have Smart TV's in two of our rooms.

For the second year in a row, Holiday Club is running! We are going for a circus themed club which will include face-paints, a circus workshop, baking, crafts and a bouncy castle! We already have a lot of volunteers, but we still need more to make it happen. So please consider volunteering for a few hours 9-11th April if you haven't already. Last year we reached out to over 50 kids, so let's do it again for our local community!

Young Adults

Young Adults continues to be one of our ever-changing groups that is difficult to maintain. Everyone is so busy, or away with university that it is hard to get a time or location that suits everyone. For many months we met for a young adults breakfast before Church which included prayer and fellowship; but recent months have changed and we have started to try a monthly social event. I would value your prayers for this group.

Community

Our community links seem to be sprouting, and I'm excited to see what becomes of it in many years. This year we started off with our Holiday Club, we had a community day and we had a community Christmas movie. The youth group also collaborated with the community council in their 'graffiti wall' project, which was a big hit. Hopefully these links continue to build and get stronger.

This year we look forward to the Corstorphine Fair, and are planning to run a stall.

Clermiston Holiday Club

As some of you may know, I have been involved with the Clermiston Holiday Club since my arrival. This has been a real joy, and I've loved being involved with so many different Christians from so many different Churches. This year unfortunately the dates clash with Soul Survivor; therefore I am only on the planning committee for this year's club. However, it would be super if people within the Church came along to volunteer, to get to know more members in our community and in our local Churches! For more information please feel free to contact me.

My Resignation

I hope everyone is aware by now, but I'll be leaving St Thomas' in the Summer. I'll be joining my partner, Jeremy in Canada after a year of a long distance relationship. We're both really excited for this, and would be grateful of your prayers whilst we take big risks! I have learnt a lot throughout my time in St Thomas' and I'm so grateful for the support of many. A lot has changed within the ministries in three years, and it has been a privilege to be a part of it. So I leave everyone with much love and much hope for the future. Thank you to all who have loved and supported both me and the teenagers during my time in St Thomas' (I'd name you all but I'd be scared of leaving someone out!)

Claire Burns

Church Coordinator

Now completed three years in the role of Church Coordinator, and the job has settled into my way of doing things. David and Claire have prayed for and with me throughout the year and I want to thank them for that.

We meet weekly when possible and read from the Bible and pray. They have both been very supportive and encouraging. I also need to thank all members of the Vestry and Congregation who have helped me out, rescued me at times and supported me in this role. The job here in the office has presented many challenges but people I deal directly with (there are a large number) are understanding of the pressures of the job and accept changes and suggestions. "Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41: 10. I thank God every-day that he is awesome and knows our needs.

Our hall rentals have increased over the year and we welcome individuals and groups for parties, meetings and adult and children's classes weekly, fortnightly or monthly. We have hosted charity events, and with the new hall letting system now fully in place we have had many individuals and groups who are recommending us to friends and colleagues, or returning for another booking. Our regular hall bookings with contracts are at full capacity as new classes have started, dance rehearsals meeting regularly, baby sensory sessions and organisations all meeting in various halls throughout the building. There are still some heating issues, although a new boiler was fitted. Building repairs are always needed and this year I want to thank members of the property team who have tried to oversee most of this type of work. I have taken time to get to know the workers who come into the building to do repairs and we now have a known team of them on hand to do work when needed.

I would also like to thank the finance team who organise the wages of the staff, for the efficient way this has been improved on this past year. Please feel free to come in during opening hours or email the office if you can offer any ideas for further improvement of the Church Coordinator role. Everyone is welcome and I can usually manage to arranged tea/coffee and a chat.

Jane Ross

LOCAL OUTREACH

Care Van

St Thomas' continues to support the nightly Care Van organised by Edinburgh City Mission and Bethany Christian Trust. As well as attending to the needs of vulnerable people in our city, this ministry promotes a visible Christian presence to the wider community.

A five-strong team from St Thomas' goes out on the fourth Sunday of every month from 9-11pm. They dispense soup, rolls, tea, coffee and biscuits, and also hand-out warm clothing and blankets (when available).

The roster of volunteers currently stands at 18, a slight increase on last year. However, some have moved on and some have joined. Thank you to all volunteers, past and present. And if you think Care Van could be for you then please get in touch.

The church family has done a magnificent job over the last year keeping us supplied with clothes: this has been a real blessing. I would like to say a big thank-you to everyone who contributed but also encourage you to keep it coming. We have a continuing need for donations of blankets and warm clothing, in particular small-size men's clothing (especially jeans); the sort of thing you would wear to go for a walk on a winter's day. So please keep the Care Van in mind when clearing out your wardrobe. And as ever, please remember this ministry in your prayers

Simon Murray

Nursing Home Ministry – Manor Grange Nursing Home (MGNH), Pinkhill

The seeds of this new outreach were sown during a discussion between Dorothy Martin and others who led the 'World Day of Prayer' Service in

May 2017 and the Activities Coordinator (Lorna Paterson) and Manager of MGNH about the possibility of a short Service of Christian worship being led by a team from St. Thomas's on a regular basis. The Nursing Home gladly offered us the 3rd Sunday of each month for such gatherings: what a privilege, and opportunity! Our first Service took place on Sunday 25th June 2017 with Bill McGillivray as the speaker. Other volunteers have included David and Anne Bunyan, Dorothy Robertson, Sandy Benzie, Irene Brydon, Mark and Elinor Gilmour, Phyllis Brown, Christine McDonald, Kathleen Demircan, along with our pianists Linda Aslet and David Harvey.

One recent highlight was the inter-church Carol Service on 19.12.17 led by Clergy and members of St. Anne's C. of S., The Church of the Good Shepherd (SEC) and ourselves. Some 25 residents attended along with 6 relatives/friends and about 5 NH Staff.

These Services are appreciated not only by the residents (some of whom previously lived in the TOR Baptist Nursing Home) but also by their relatives, and by Staff of different nationalities. Even the most frail are thereby (re-) connected to God (who has promised never to abandon them!) and to the local Christian Community. We are especially grateful to the Manager and three Activities Coordinators for the warm welcome and support they afford to our ministry teams (and the tea is pretty good too!).

If you would like to be a part of this rewarding work, even by coming along to chat with residents and relatives after the Services, please speak to either Dorothy Martin or Mark Gilmour.

Mark Gilmour

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Adults and Children)

The PVG group continues to include Maggie Gilmour, Linda Henderson and Margaret Robertson. Maggie undertakes all the admin and does the necessary checks for the PVG paperwork, Linda takes responsibility for the LIGHTHOUSE and crèche monitoring role to ensure adequate child/volunteer ratios and Margaret keeps a watching brief on issues relating to older vulnerable people.

All volunteers working with vulnerable adults, children and young people at St Thomas' are checked under the PVG system. We remain committed to maintaining policies and procedures to help protect vulnerable members of our church community and leaflets are available in the foyer. We have been updating all the applications forms and information given to new applicants who wish to work with any vulnerable group within St Thomas'.

The group organised a training evening in September 2017 which was well attended by around 30 members of the congregation who have a PVG. This was a formal session run by the Provincial Officer for the SEC, Donald Urquhart. A more informal session was held in January 2018 where Claire Burns gave a PowerPoint on the use of Social Media by young people. There was also a discussion around being involved in supporting elderly members of the congregation. It is hoped that a small group will be formed to draw up some guidelines for this.

The group meets three or four times a year and we are always available to offer support and guidance to members of the congregation working with vulnerable groups within the church. We are again pleased to report that there have been no incidents or areas of concern requiring to be investigated over the past year

Linda Henderson

Mums and Toddlers

Mums and Toddlers' meets in the Gyle Hall on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:30. Each week between 10 and 20 adults attend. The group is for babies and toddlers who bring with them mums, dads, grannies, foster carers, child minders, nannies and the occasional grandad. Everyone is friendly and supportive of one another. The group was established about 40 years ago and we at St Thomas' still provide a place for mums or other carers to meet, chat and have a cuppa while the children play. We sometimes do a structured activity and we always sing together at the end. 'Mums' hear of us through health visitors, by word of mouth or the internet and through other St T's groups. As the St Thomas' link I can give information about activities and events at St T's such as Holiday Club, uniformed organisations, Sunday services and groups, Christmas services etc. Only about a third of the children attend with a parent, so the friendships that evolve and the contacts made are very different to the 1970s! Please remember the group in your prayers.

Hilary Robinson

Uniformed Organisations

This has been a year of change, especially for Rainbows and Brownies, as long term leaders have moved on.

Rainbows were very sorry to say good bye to Liz Lawson as she stepped down in the summer after 20 years as Rainbow leader. Huge thanks were extended to her for her commitment to the unit and her care for the girls. Liz's meticulous planning and organisation ensured that the girls always enjoyed a varied diet of activities, games and crafts linked to the Rainbow programme. Carol Gray, who has many years of experience with other units, transferred to take over leadership of our Rainbows in the autumn.

She is helped by Helen Berry who continues as assistant leader. The unit caters for a maximum of ten girls aged 5 and 6.

Working with the Rainbow themes of Look, Learn, Laugh and Love the girls continue to enjoy playing games, singing and taking part in crafts, the crafts being particularly popular.

At Christmas time the Brownies bade farewell to Gladys Bennett and to Fiona Campbell, both of whom have been assistant leaders at Brownies for many years, and have contributed considerable time and energy to the vibrant programme enjoyed by the girls each week. Grace Donald continues as Brownie leader at present, with Catherine McGuire assisting. However, with a unit size of 24 girls aged 7-10, more leaders are urgently required. In particular, it would be good to identify someone who in due course would be able to take over the running of the unit from Grace. Meanwhile, Brownies are benefiting from the variety of volunteer helpers operating on a rota basis, and enjoying the mixture of new and familiar faces. We are tremendously grateful to those who are helping and those who have helped.

Our Brownies are very enthusiastic and love their weekly themed programmes and activities. They like to learn new skills, have proved themselves keen stargazers, enjoy making things, trying new craft activities, and working for and achieving badges. As a unit they completed last year's Keep Scotland Beautiful challenge. They also explored Corstorphine Hill and visited the Scottish Owl Centre and Polkemmet Park.

The annual weekend camp continues to be a highlight of the year for many of our Guides. This past year we returned to Girlguiding Edinburgh's Carsewell site, near Penicuik. Cooking on an open fire, sleeping in tents which they have first pitched themselves, washing dishes by hand and communicating without technology are all integral to camp life. Inspired by the Jo Cox memorial events our camp programme took the theme of Get Together. It included a visit to the lost garden, a nature walk through the

Penicuik House estate, making friendship bracelets and tie dying, putting on an afternoon tea and performing entertainments for each other.

Guides spend part of each unit meeting engaged on activities which they have planned and organised in their patrols as they work together towards 'Go for It' badges. This year our themed evenings have included those on Christmas crafts, Scottish culture, International activities, Easter, campcraft and the outdoors - with food being an important ingredient of each! A visit to the King's Theatre in November for the Edinburgh Scout and Guide Gang Show once again allowed them to watch one of their unit in the cast.

With several older Guides having moved on in the summer, we currently have eighteen girls aged 10-15.

Rainbows, Brownies and Guides continue to be encouraged by the numbers of girls who belong. The majority of members come from the local area, many with no other church connection. A particular challenge is how to encourage the girls and their families to link with other activities in church.

We are very grateful for the interest and support, practically and in prayer, from many at St Thomas's – and would love to speak with any who might be interested in future involvement and leadership, even on a part time basis!

Carol Gray, Helen Bery, Grace Donald and Sheila Nicol

HOSPITALITY AND WELCOME

Sunday Teas and Coffee

Responsibilities for organising serving teas and coffee after the service was

taken over at the start of 2017 by Jeremy Southam and Cathy Morrison after many years of fine organisation from Phil Busby. Cathy looks after the weekly requirements of keeping supplies up to date and Jeremy organises the rota utilising the benefits of the website which means it is easily amended, available to view on line and very useful reminders are sent out. Both also take the opportunity whenever they can to find new helpers (as Phil does too which we are very grateful for) and helper numbers have remained constant despite some people stepping down.

Jeremy Southam

Welcome Team

From the feedback we receive, it does appear that St Thomas' has a good reputation for friendliness and welcome. Two opportunities exist – there is the “meet and greet” time at the start of our services, which everyone can join in with, and there is the more formal Welcome Team who work on a rota basis to say “hello” to everyone as they arrive for the service, and to seek out guests and visitors afterwards. We remain grateful to those in our congregation who aren't in the team but who watch out for newcomers, speak to them and introduce them to others. We hope that this welcome will develop into solid friendships and relationships over time – again this is a ministry that all of us can be involved with. There are currently 16 members of the team, but there is room for you if you feel this is one of your gifts. We could do with some materials to introduce St Thomas' to newcomers – if you have ideas or graphic design skills we would be very pleased to hear from you!

Sandy and Angela Benzies

Wardens and Stewards

Our Wardens and Stewards provide a most important ministry within the church's life.

There are 8 teams of Wardens and Stewards who fulfil a vital role to ensure the reputation continues of St Thomas's as a friendly and welcoming church – if done well, as it almost always is, they may not be noticed but if very occasionally its done badly, it can be obvious. In all 40 different people are required and are involved on an 8 week rota basis to provide this service. More volunteers would be greatly appreciated to ensure continuity and support for the clergy and groups taking part in church services. There does inevitably come a time when people who have been involved in this ministry have to move away or need to retire. Please contact **Rob Hyder 337 3847** if you would be willing to consider helping in this way, and assisting in the teams is an excellent way to get to know other church members.

Rob Hyder

CREATIVE

Coffee Plus

Coffee Plus has been running now for over 10 years and we are very thankful to God for providing a team to organise, bake and set up week by week. We have on average 30 - 40 people each week many of whom have no church connections. Some weeks we organise craft activities such as silk painting, paper craft, patchwork and sewing but many who come bring their own knitting or crocheting. Coffee Plus aims to be a welcoming, friendly and safe place where people can make new friends. Last October we once again organised the Blythwood Shoebox appeal for St Thomas and sent 96 filled shoeboxes. With the donations given for coffee and cake each week we have given away over £400, split between the Salvation

Army and Bethany Christian Trust. Everybody is welcome at Coffee Plus and we are always delighted to see some men coming along.

Alison Bogie

Flower Ministry

The Flower Ministry Team continues serving into its 30th year in the present format, arranging and delivering flowers week by week. The whole Church is also decorated at Christmas, Easter and Harvest by the team and friends. Each year female members of the congregation are given a posy of daffodils on Mothering Sunday.

Weekly flowers are donated by individual members of the congregation or Church groups and can be arranged by a member of the team if required. Thank you to all who have donated as it allows this Ministry to function independently. We hope for smaller number of gaps in the Rota during the rest of the year..... Thank you everyone!

The Team is always ready to welcome anyone who is interested to arrange or deliver in this rewarding Ministry.

Thank you as ever to every Team Member, arranger, deliverer or refreshment provider for your continued support and commitment

Rosemary Kemp

Gardening Group

Caring for our church's gardens is often called 'The Ministry of First Impressions'.

Coming into St Thomas' from either the Glasgow Road or the Gyle Park entrances people pass through our church gardens so it is very important they look attractive and colourful. This is the first impression – and

welcome – to all, even before entering our buildings!

A wonderful team of volunteers carry out necessary gardening tasks and it has been encouraging to welcome new hands. It is still hoped in time we can plant more to ensure that entering by the back gate is as welcoming as arriving at the front of the church. As always there is a need for more people to help – no gardening experience necessary – and this need is now an urgent appeal as, naturally, the time comes when volunteers have to hang up their ploughshares.

We meet on the first Saturday morning of the month from 9.30 am and in true St Thomas' tradition this includes a break for refreshments and sharing ideas.

The spacious garden areas around our church buildings are a special privilege and blessing but this in return requires of us all a shared stewardship of their care

Margaret Mitchell and Delia Hyder

Worship

As ever, there's been a movement in and out of the worship team over the last year. We've been delighted to welcome Dee Turner on keyboard, whose contribution has been very warmly received. Sadly, we said goodbye to Melissa and Steph Humphries last summer, as their family moved on from St Thomas', and also to Iain Cameron who had played guitar for several years with us. We give thanks for their involvement and wish God's blessing on them as they explore new areas of service. There's always room for more people on the worship team – in fact, it's been difficult to cover some Sundays, or when people need to pull out at short notice, so if anyone feels they may make a contribution to this area of ministry, I'd be delighted to hear from you.

We enjoyed a vocal skills workshop with Melissa early last summer, working on mic skills, breathing and communication. The leaders' group

continue to meet quarterly with the Rector to discuss any issues, pray together, and reflect on any feedback from services. Thank you to the congregation for your ongoing support and encouragement as we seek to serve you with often limited resources. The advert for an intern to assist this area of ministry was unfortunately unfruitful.

We've not spent much of the church's budget over last year, but have equipped the leaders with music copies of Mission Praise, and also subscribed to Mission Praise online, which will be shared with the Projection Team. This should hopefully eliminate the glitches which can arise from different versions of songs, and ensure we are literally singing from the same hymn sheet!

We are also indebted to Richard and Triona for their tireless support and energy as they balance the sound week by week. Thank you to all the musicians and singers who serve in this area of church life, and to you all in the congregation for your hearty singing and joyful and tuneful noise as we worship God Sunday by Sunday.

Gillian Brown Worship Coordinator

TECHNICAL

St Thomas' Website

Our website is hosted by Church Insight and has been operating on this basis now for four years. Church Insight describe their websites as '...all-in-one church website and church management system that helps churches save time, money and makes them more efficient so they can focus more on their mission. It's hosted in the cloud so you can access it from anywhere on a desktop, laptop or tablet.'

Whilst we at St Thomas' use this website tool to share our sermons and

talks, provide information on the Christian faith, on-line bible, weekly news-sheet, staff information, information on hall hire and general calendar of events etc and then, via member log-in, an address book, rotas, financial reports and vestry minutes there are many additional advantages that we are not using it for.

The St Thomas website could be utilised more and a volunteer experienced in web design to take on responsibility would be very welcome .

Jeremy Southam

Podcasts

The podcasting team is small, just four members - Cameron Gilmour, Richard Mitchell, Alex Vere and Angela Benzies - working in conjunction with Triona Busby. Together we ensure that Sunday sermons and central meeting talks are available to the congregation and indeed those beyond it. This makes it easy to catch up on missed talks or to listen again and also supports Homegroup bible study preparations. It is a service that is valued and heavily used. We'd love to expand the team and also need to replace those who move on from this work so please get in touch if you'd like to join us. Some technical ability with PC file management is needed but full instructions are provided on audio editing with Audacity and in working with the church's website. We look forward to hearing from you.

Angela Benzies

Audio Equipment

Since the last AGM a significant upgrade has been made to the worship area sound system. A contractor was used to supply and install a new

sound desk and loudspeaker system, and the chancel was cabled back to a new patch rack where the sound desk sends and returns are made accessible. The sound desk provides 40 mono channels (to mix in signals from microphones and instruments etc.), and 16 returns (providing monitoring mixes to musicians etc.), all of which appear at the patch rack. The patch rack, located on the way to the office/vestry room, also hosts the main power amplifier.

The chancel installation provides four floor recesses, each with eight sends, two returns and two loudspeaker links as well as mains power. The design allows for a further two recesses for future chancel platform extensions.

New headset radio microphones were included as part of the upgrade and following significant teething troubles the use of another transmission frequency band, more suitable to our location, has achieved stable operation.

Richard Mitchell

PC Team

The ministry of the Projection PC Team is to enhance the worship of God in St Thomas's by providing the highest quality technical support to everyone requiring its facilities - projecting the words (of songs and readings) and images (photos and video) used in our services of worship.

Late last year we started using a new projection software package, called OpenLP, which allows operators to set up the projection elements of a service at home and bring this in on a memory-stick on Sunday morning.

Right now we have a **very real need** of new faces to join us in this exciting ministry. Full training will be provided to suitable volunteers. Interested? - please speak to any of the Projection Team on a Sunday after the service.

DISCIPLESHIP, FELLOWSHIP AND PASTORAL

Family First

Keep calm and put Family First - this was the start of a shared vision for something new in the church which would provide a place where families could meet together, share together, worship together and eat together! The first *family first* met on October 1st this year and provided a forum for coffee and chat for the adults whilst the children were engaged in a craft activity linked to the theme of the evening; this was followed by an all age style talk and family payer time then a supper together with more time for sharing. So far we've had themes ranging from Jesus is the light of the world – with plenty of fireworks! And a Christmas party learning that Jesus does not require our presents –rather our presence.

We meet on the first Saturday of every month from 4.30 - 6.30 in the church hall and we currently have ten families who come along regularly. All families with school age children are welcome to come along and join us.

**David Fairhurst, Julie Fairhurst, Claire Forrester and
Keith Forrester.**

Home groups

We have six home groups/small groups which meet on varying nights of the week. The groups are identified by geographical area, but membership of each group is not defined by where people live.

Some meet weekly and others fortnightly for study, prayer, mutual support and fellowship. Leaders meet regularly with the Rector to coordinate the studies and to inform him of the needs of any group member. Bible studies are linked to the sermon series on Sunday mornings and sometimes to the monthly church central meeting.

During the past year our current studies are from I Corinthians. Group members take responsibility for mutual support particularly when individuals are unwell or infirm. Social events, especially meals together, enable people to get to know one another better and to integrate new members.

Around 50% of church members belong to a home group. Details about group locations and leadership can be found on the church notice board. If you would like to find out more or would like to join a group, please speak to Mike and Wendy Carrington (339 6991).

Mike and Wendy Carrington

Bible Reading Notes

There is a wide range of publications suitable for all ages published by Scripture union, CWR and the Good Book company. We would like to see an increasing number making use of notes to encourage regular Bible reading and personal growth in faith. Parents in particular can encourage their children early in life to help form a love of the Bible reading habit. Please contact me for more information on notes both booklet form and digital, of which some of the latter are free to download.

Elizabeth Norwood

Prayer Support

The purpose of this ministry is to offer time and space for the congregation in St T's to take an active step to bring before God their concerns and needs for themselves and others, both within and outside the church family. In this way the prayer team aim to 'carry each other's burdens' and so 'fulfil the law of Christ' Gal 6:2. We are made aware of individual prayer needs by people coming forward for prayer on Sundays after the service, during communion, through our conversations,

or through the Rector and others alerting the group to particular needs. The details of the prayer request will be kept confidential within the prayer team or, if requested, kept confidential only to those of the team who prayed with the individual initially..

We will pray continually over weeks and months if necessary, and we try to follow up by sensitively asking the person how they are doing. We also 'rejoice with those who rejoice' and enjoy thanking God together when individuals tell us of God's goodness, especially when he answers our prayers. The list of team members is on the notice board at the back of church. There are five prayer teams, each team consisting of two people who are allocated the same Sunday of the month, which aids in planning for other rotas. If anyone would like prayer, please just get in touch with one of the team.

Jennifer Vere

Prayer Base

"Each time, before you intercede, be quiet first, and worship God in His glory. Think of what He can do, and how He delights to hear the prayers of His redeemed people. Think of your place and privilege in Christ, and expect great things!" - Andrew Murray

Prayer Base has continued on the second Sunday evening of the month from 6.30pm to 7.30pm. Numbers attending have varied between twelve and twenty four.

Brian Rattray carefully planned the meeting and invited people to lead sections of the hour on mission partners, church life and the world. His passing leaves a huge gap. His commitment to our common prayer life was significant and we should honour his memory by ensuring that we continue to be a praying church. Many thanks to all those who have helped in leading over the last year.

The leadership of St Thomas' intend that Prayer Base continue. We will seek the Lord together and invest time and energy in prayer. If you have never attended a meeting, please do try it. Sometimes people are fearful because they find praying out loud difficult. It is not compulsory and there should be no embarrassment! Your presence in any meeting for prayer is treasured.

David McCarthy

World Day of Prayer 2016

The World Day of Prayer was held on Friday 1 March 2017. It was written by the Christian women of the Philippines and reflected their spiritual life and commitment to work for justice.

In the morning a team from St Thomas led the shortened service at The Manor Grange Nursing Home. This had recently opened and included residents transferred from three smaller homes including The Tor. 36 people attended the service which included residents, relatives and staff. After the service we were invited to return and now hold a monthly service (see Mark Gilmour's report.) Thank you to all who took part,

The main service attended by members of all the Corstorphine churches was hosted by the Catholic Church and a group of Filipinos attended. After the service these guests had organised tea with excellent Filipino baking

Dorothy Martin & Anne Bunyan

VESTRY SUB-COMMITTEES

Finance Group

The responsibilities of the Finance Group are as follows:

Agnes Murray – Church Treasurer, convenes the Finance Group, does all presentation AGMs, attends vestry meetings. Prepares the annual budget, prepares the annual accounts in statutory format and liaises with our auditors. The treasurer prepares monthly management accounts and pays all invoices and expense claims. Both the treasurer and assistant treasurer receive technical backup from Stephen Gibbens.

Assistant Treasurer - Alison Gibbens inputs all invoices and bank entries on the accounting system and provides the monthly figures for the treasurer.

Sue Brown has taken over from Chris Humphreys as the 'Paying Officer'. Sue runs the monthly payroll for all staff under the "RTI" (real time Information) system set up by HMRC and has to calculate and arrange payment of the Nest pension for all employees other than the Rector.

Agnes Murray has taken over lodging Gift Aid claims from Chris Humphreys using details of standing orders and copies of weekly collection sheets provided by Alison. Agnes now keeps the record of all gift aid declarations.

Miller Bogie is the Treasurer of the World Concern Group.

The Accounts are available on the member's section of the church website and copies are available on the table at the back of Church.

Agnes Murray.

Personnel Group

During the past year the personnel group have been involved in staff matters, supporting David McCarthy and Jane Ross with any ongoing staff issues and liaising with the finance team as appropriate. In particular, following the recent retirement of Shirley Winters as one of our cleaners, we have reviewed the cleaning schedule, and we implemented contingency plans during the long term absence of our cleaner. Thank you to those who have helped voluntarily especially when we were unable to secure cover for her recent holiday absence. We continue to monitor personnel policies and practices. The Personnel Group comprises Bob Kemp, Sheila Nicol, Margaret Robertson and Jim Sinclair.

Sheila Nicol

World Concern Group

"All the money needed to send and support an army of self-sacrificing, joy-spreading ambassadors is already in the church." — John Piper

The World Concern Group continues to support Mission Partners in prayer and finances. This ministry focussing as it does on supporting the Church around the world, takes us beyond our own local cares and often reminds us of our connections with believers in other countries and contexts, as well as reminding us that the Gospel must be taken to the ends of the earth.

Four aspects of our relationship with Mission Partners have exercised us this year:

How do we select partners to support?

What form does that support take?

How can we better communicate news from mission partners with St Thomas'

What level of accountability should we expect from Mission Partners?

This year we began supporting Catriona & Stephen Bennett who are serving with the Church Missionary Society in a hospital in Rwanda. We envisage some changes in our support this year as partners end their time overseas and health issues possibly affect partners continuing ministry. Let's pray especially for those partners for whom this is a time of change and challenge.

Miller Bogie, Morag Bryce, Esther Duncan, Rachel Henderson and Brian Stanley have served on the group. New members would be most welcome. If interested, please talk to me!

David McCarthy

Buildings and Maintenance Group

Following a Vestry decision a comprehensive survey of the main Church building has been carried out by a Chartered Building Surveyor and a detailed report setting out a five-year maintenance programme has been presented. The Group will be taking this forward over the coming months.

The Group undertakes or organises minor repairs and maintenance requirements on all the Church buildings and houses as required. Ken Robb, Peter Bennett, Adrian Neville and Erne Duncan provide valuable practical work and wisdom as we seek to keep our buildings in good condition.

Major works on topics such as the heating and PA systems are being led by members of the Trustees and Vestry with input from group members as required.

Sandy Benzies