

MULBARTON CHURCH



ANNUAL REPORT

for 2015-16

**The following reports are presented in the same order as that given
in the Agenda for the Mulbarton APCM:-**

ELECTORAL ROLL for 2016-7 – Teresa Burrell

During the 2015 there have 5 additions and 5 removals from the Electoral Roll. The current list is displayed in the church porch for perusal.

ADMINISTRATION

General Synod, Deanery of Humbleyard & Diocese of Norwich – Vivienne Clifford-Jackson

The Reverend Christopher tendered his resignation as Rural Dean in the summer. The Reverend Paul Burr of Swardeston was installed as the new Rural Dean in November.

During the year we had Diocesan and General Synod Elections which unusually coincided with each other and caused some difficulty. Fortunately Humbleyard Deanery was well represented and our Benefice had a complete compliment of representatives. (One Deanery has no lay reps).

I am now Diocesan Lay Chair (Vice-President), Lay Chair of the Bishop's Council and Lay Chair of Humbleyard Deanery. It promises to be an interesting three years. This means I am ex-officio member of the Diocesan Board of Finance. I will therefore see in detail what happens to the Parish Share. I am also involved in the selection of the next Archdeacon of Norwich - The Rev Jan MacFarlane has been elevated to be Bishop of Repton.

Copies are available of two very interesting reports:-

(1) *Presentation by Angela George, Convenor of the Diocesan Children's Task Force - "The Children's Task Force Roadshow"*

(2) *Presentation by The Dean of Norwich Cathedral, The Very Revd Jane Hedges - Norwich Cathedral "Vision for the Next Five Years"*

Please ask Adrian for a copy of either presentation if you are interested.

We submitted a question from our Deanery to Diocesan Synod about the role of Deaneries. It was answered by Bishop Graham and he gave his support. However, we are expected to work out our own practical solutions at local level. The Diocese has had over 100 replies to its consultation on mission which are now being analysed and the laity and deaneries are going to feature more highly this year. I will be having a meeting, attended by Bishop Graham, in November of all Deanery Lay Chairs to hear the needs across the county at Deanery/Benefice/Parish levels.

FINANCE REPORT FOR 2015 – Tony Lovick (Treasurer)

Hitting the Buffers

In 2015 we said goodbye to Danny our long serving and much loved youth worker. To adapt to our lower income, we decided that it would no longer be possible to fund a position for a new replacement.

Instead a special restricted gift was received to fund a year's work from Holly as a pastoral assistant and to increase admin assistance provided by Caroline. In the event Holly decide to stay with us until October, and the remainder of the gift will fund Caroline's additional hours through the majority of 2016.

The downward trend in income continued.

The PCC have put in place a minimum fund of £24,000, designed to prevent overdrafts in the bank account.

Around November 2015 funds decreased to this level, and we activated our emergency action defaulting on the Diocese parish share request.

That said we still managed to pay nearly all the £38000 request, a huge increase on the 2013 figure of £30000.

This year the Parish Share increased considerably under the new Trio regime to adjust to the new Diocese demands for a 45% levy on top of underlying clergy costs.

Unfortunately, having hit the buffers, there is little we can do to lift above them again in the near future. With funding for youth work and the annexe removed, the only significant expenditure that remains, apart from parish share, is that needed to keep the roof on the church.

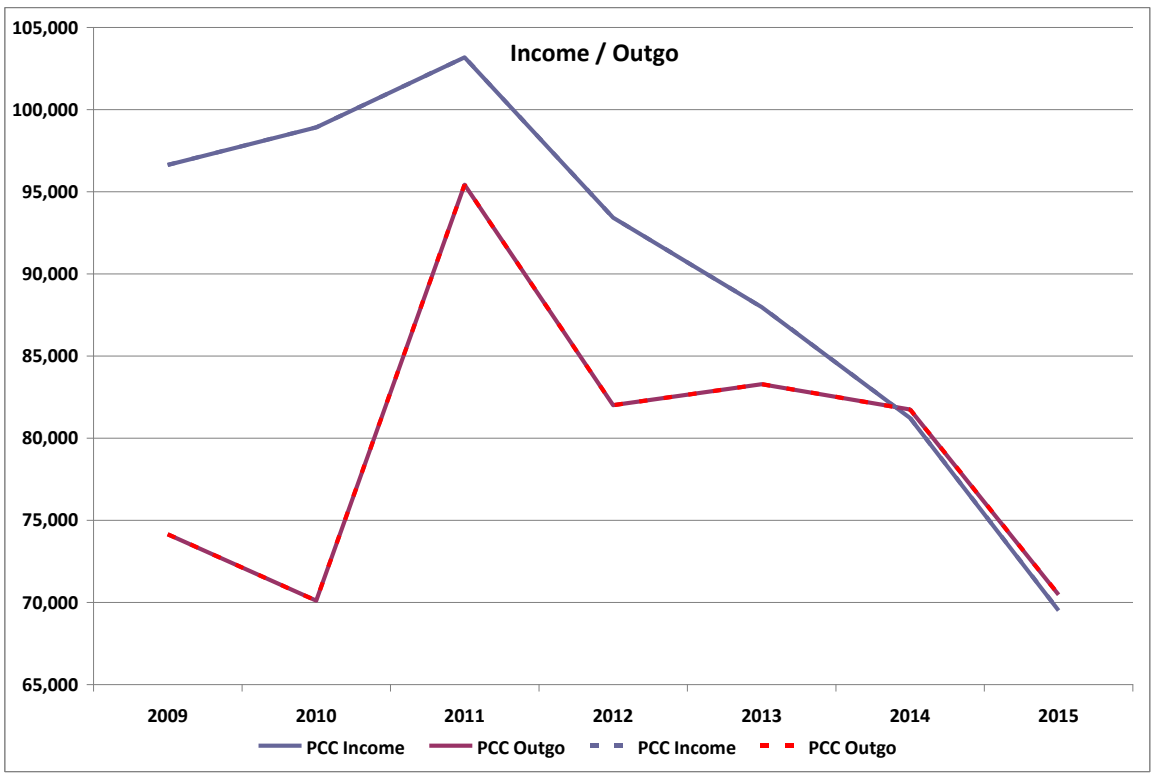
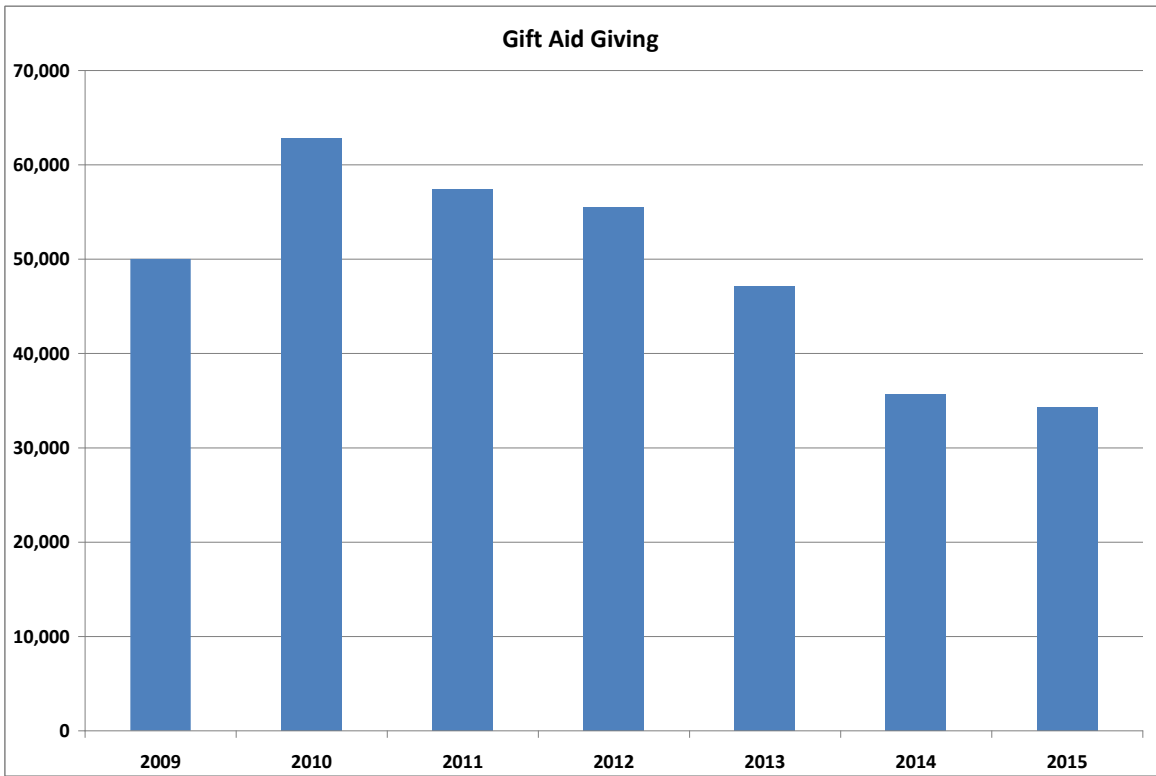
Thanks to Graham Cormack for agreeing to take over as our independent examiner. Special thanks to all the faithful and generous members who have continued to support us this year.

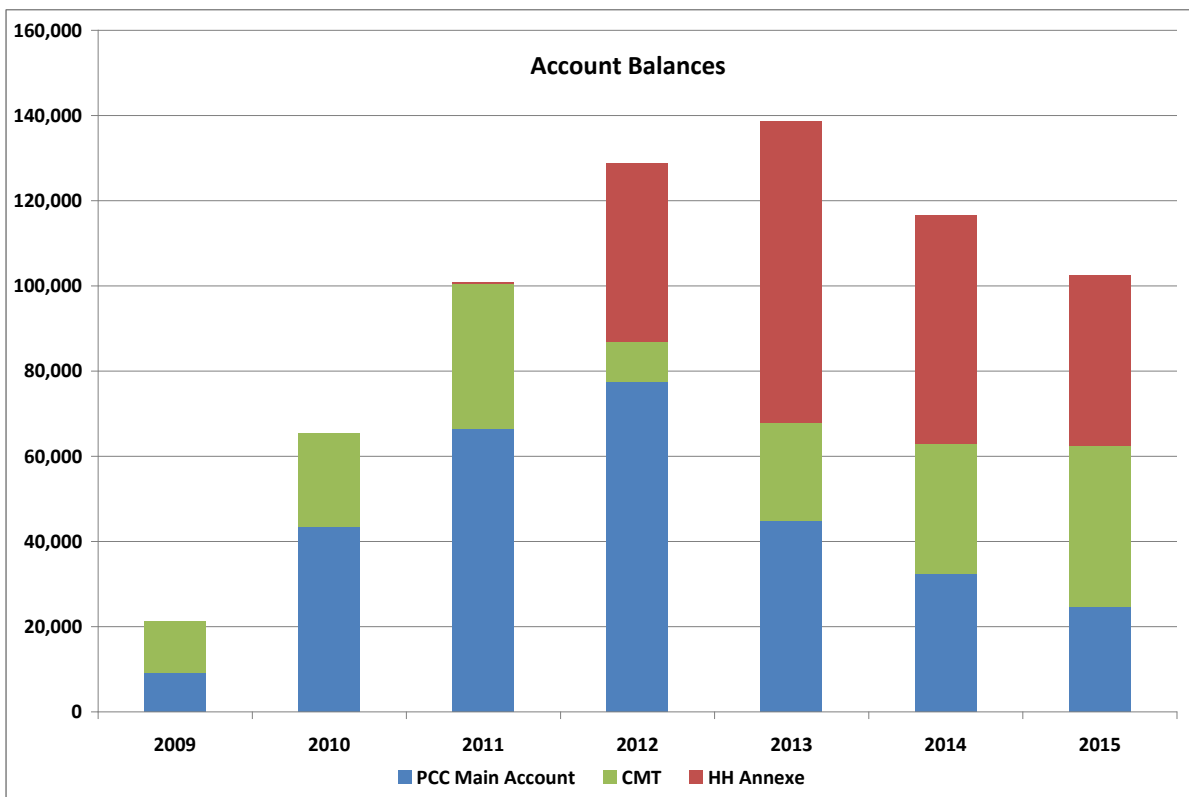
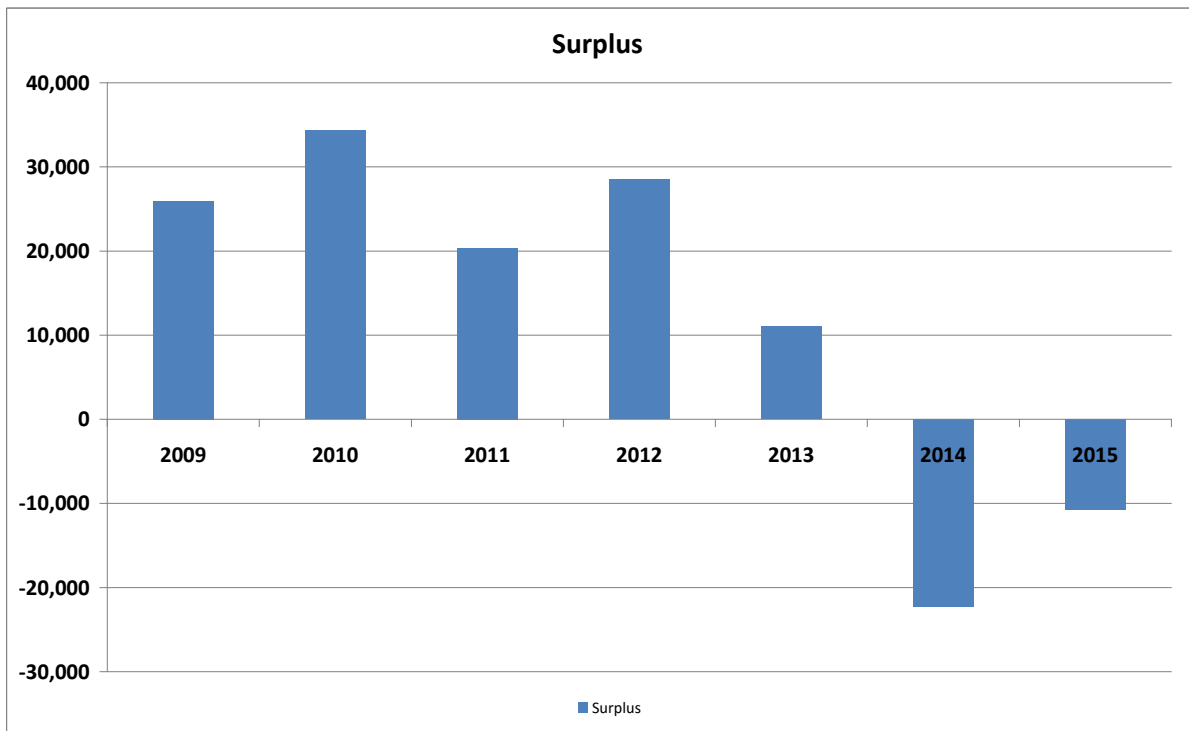
Funding North Aisle Roof

The PCC have continued to designate funding for the North Aisle roof at the rate of £550 per month. We were unsuccessful in our initial application for some of the government funding for roof repairs. We have submitted another for the second round. If successful our contribution plus a grant may allow us to undertake the repair in 2016.

Funding Harvest House Annexe

With the termination of the original Annexe plan in early 2014, the PCC decided to spend some of the reserve on a much needed refurbishment of the existing building. At present a fund of £40,000 (of which £33,000 is restricted) remains. This will complete the ongoing work. If we want to construct a new annexe vision after this, then considerable additional funds will be required to make that a reality.





A Copy of the accounts will be made available after approval by the Independent Examiner or at the Annual General meeting

CHURCH WARDENS, FABRIC and CHURCHYARD - Becky Taylor, Tom Taylor & Patrick Theobald

As ever, not a busy year for the Wardens. We have not been asked to do the accounts or even preach, maybe that's a good thing, and we do have a very capable team on both those agendas.

It is with a grateful heart that as wardens we do have such a great team to take care of all the various ministries that go on within an active church community. We fully appreciate the efforts that each and every person carries out to keep the church running smoothly.

We would particularly like to thank one person who is as quiet as the church mouse and yet probably one of the noisiest people in the village, I of course am referring to George Moore who does a myriad of small but important jobs as a verger - preparing communion for the Eight-O'clockers, but attends funerals and weddings as Verger and Bell Ringer. He and Tim Jackson oversee the bells between them and are encouraging new ringers (Wednesday evening in Church, where else! Listen out or even have a go). George also puts his ministry to good use twiddling the dials of the heaters and floodlights at regular intervals, keep it up George.

We do keep a regular watch on the church as wardens responsible for its upkeep and have several items from the five-yearly inspections to contend with over the next five years with some significant costs involved so do pray for increase.

You may have already noticed a bit of a move round regarding PA desk and associated gizmos, this work is ongoing thanks to Steve Kittle and team, and there are some more changes to come to make it all a bit softer and in step with the surroundings. Also please do comment to the team about the sound and any improvements you notice, or not as the case may be. However work was required to upgrade the system as damp and wildly fluctuating temperatures take their toll on electronics, hence the increased frequency of the whoops and pops from the old gear.

It is hoped that this will be the year that we can open the church for the daytime so that access to all is not denied. Let's encourage this process by either getting involved or encouraging those who are.

The churchyard is as always a bone of contention (never heard the residents complaining) and my guess is that it will remain so. The diocese has produced regulations and guidelines that are to ensure that the graves are kept in a way which does not intrude upon the landscape or offend others who use the area. However, of late, there has been a marked increase in the paraphernalia that is accumulating on some of the graves.

Adrian has gained permission to use simple etched designs of an approved nature to be used on the graves. However the use of boards, shingle, stones, rocks, slate shale and in one case concrete is not in keeping with the rural nature of the churchyard. The matter is to be brought before the Arch Deacon at Diocesan level for a formal yet sensitive approach to be made to individuals and families.

If you haven't been down to the churchyard recently, do so in the next few days before the spring flowers are past their best. It is a treat that only God can prepare for us, sit awhile and think of the lilies of the field.....

Sadly Patrick Theobald is standing down from his position as church warden, so we thank him for his support and encouragement over the last few years.

HARVEST HOUSE – Ian Dunlop

In April and May 2015, the roof was completely stripped, and insulation installed before the tiles were replaced. So we had a much warmer house for the winter. If only the church was that simple to do! The inside has also been redecorated and recently we have had quotations to replace the flooring in all the main use rooms, stairs and lobbies. We hope that this work will be achieved before the summer. We are also looking at replacing the stacking chairs with a mix of stacking and folding, and that will be latter this year (2016).

With regard to the possible annex to HH; a small team produced several options for a consultative discussion with South Norfolk Planners, and we had a site meeting in November, where we had some very useful discussion. Since then we have presented some further options for comment, and we now have an informal agreement as to the possible location, size and shape. The next stages have yet to be decided, and the team (Adrian; Tom Taylor; Brian McIlwrath, John Moore and myself) will meet in April or May to go through the process. As previously, we will keep the church community appraised of progress but please keep praying for God's clear guidance in all the decisions and discussions to be made.

Sound Systems – report by Adrian Miller

In November 2015, Flordon Church had a £7000 sound system installed, paid for largely by a SNC grant, and used mostly by Flordon film club. We'd hoped to have a professional consultation on Mulbarton church sound system at the same time, but this had to be cancelled. Instead we made progress on Mulbarton's system in 2016. Through 2015, David and Sam gave sterling service operating the system, for which we're very grateful.

Projection – Sue Mellows

Many thanks to the small team who have manned the projection keyboard this year. Plus grateful thanks to all those who help with the set-up at Café Church on the first Sunday of the month. We do need more volunteers to join us and take a turn at operating the song words projection during the services - you don't have to be a computer wizard. If you have any questions or observations about the display each Sunday – do tell whoever is on duty - we do value your feedback and ideas.

MINISTRY & OUTREACH OF MULBARTON CHURCH

RECTOR'S REPORT – Adrian Miller

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” - John 13:35

Starting the Year

Having got to know a lot of people in 2014, and having experienced our first of all the seasonal events, we began 2015 with a good sense of where we were and seeking to chart some fresh direction to where we're going. We'd identified some priorities around developing staff and leadership team; clarifying our vision and values; growing outreach – especially with young families and the elderly – and exploring how we could improve our welcome. So we set off, with hope, enthusiasm and trust in God.

There were some hugely positive developments as we pursued these things in 2015, as well as a number of unforeseen trials and hardships. Looking back, it seems like a year of two halves: the first half with lots of positivity and movement and fresh buds showing; the second half beset with difficulties and trials.

The staff team changed around a lot, with Danny's departure, Caroline increasing her hours, and re-locating to be based in the Rectory, and Holly taking on a new full-time role as pastoral assistant, also based in the Rectory. This new staff team and new office helped enormously to clear a backlog of work and to begin to gain some momentum for a new chapter. Holly's role had funding for a full 12 months, but in the event, she decided to work only 8 months of that. We had a farewell shared lunch in October.

Comings and Goings

We had lost a few people in 2014 and this trend continued into 2015. I undertook an exercise of mapping comings and goings and where people who worship with us live and go to worship, to try to get an overview of these changes, and to help with future planning.

This is what I found...

In total over the 2 years since we arrived, throughout the benefice as a whole:

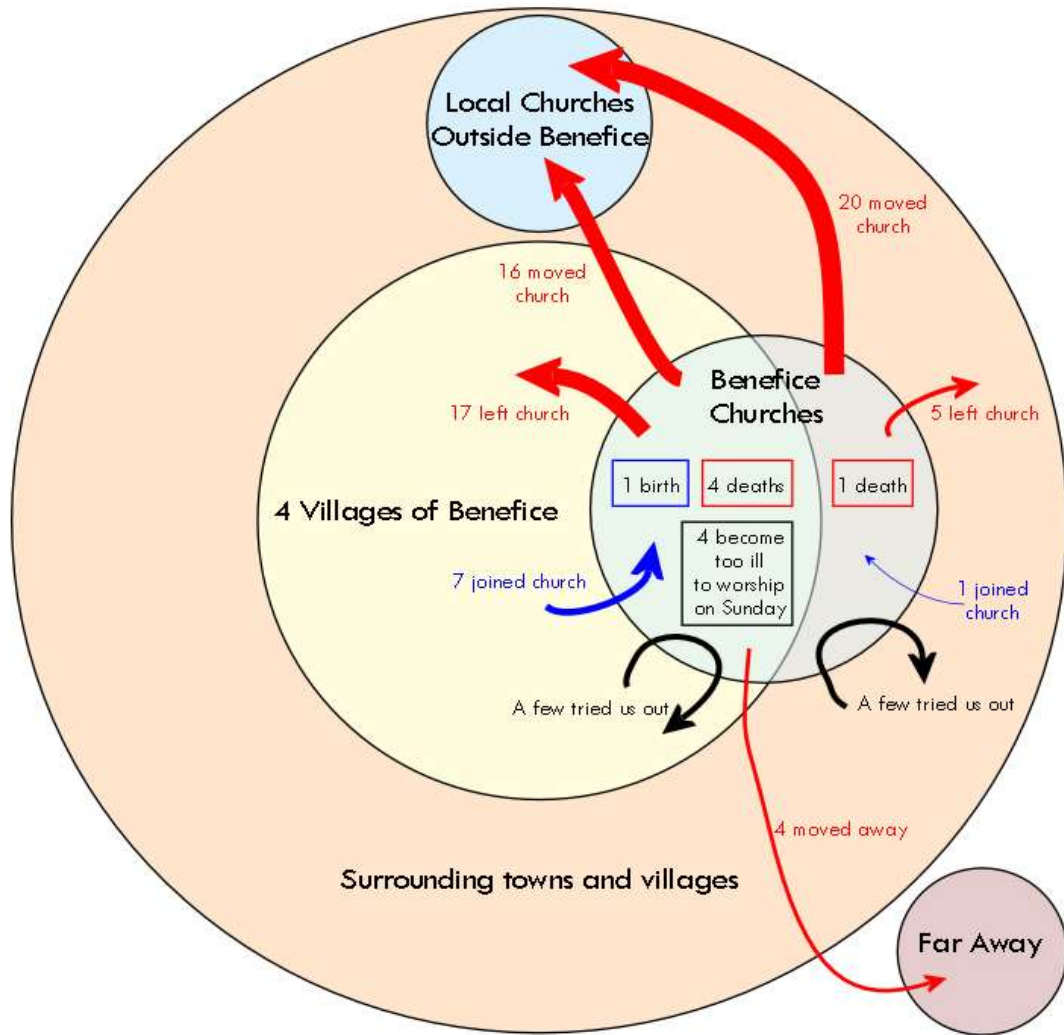
- 8 newcomers began worshipping regularly with us (*7 living in benefice, 1 outside*)
- 5 have died (*4 living in benefice, 1 outside*)
- 4 have become too ill to attend church on Sundays (*all 4 were living in benefice*)
- 4 have moved far away (*all 4 were living in benefice*)
- 22 have stopped going to church altogether (*some because they lost faith in God; but most because they no longer find church a good or convenient place to bring their faith – 17 living in benefice, 5 outside*)
- 36 have begun worshipping in other local churches (*16 living in benefice; 20 outside*)
- At least a dozen other people, living in and out of the benefice, have tried us out and decided not to keep on coming

By the end of 2015, having gained 8 and lost 67, in that 2-year period, there were 136 people worshipping regularly in our churches - a reduction of 30%. This includes the 4 who have become too ill to attend on Sundays, with whom we seek to stay in fellowship.

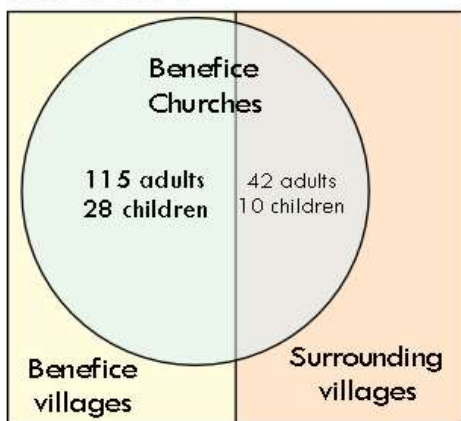
This trend has been most noticeable in Mulbarton church, where we have felt a strain on rotas and finances. The children and youth groups have also shrunk from 4 separate groups down to one group over the last 4 years (see diagrams below).

Clearly, these are significant changes. Early in my time here I could see this was a likely trajectory for us, but despite best efforts, we've been unable to stop it unfolding. In the end, it's felt quite rapid.

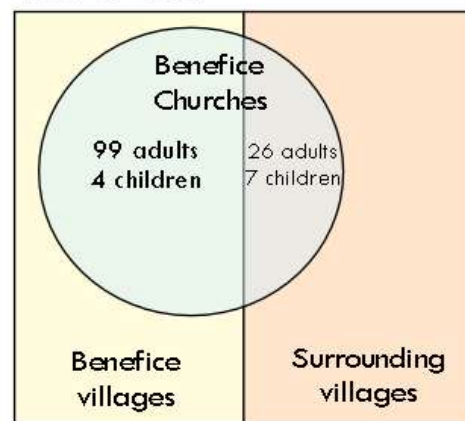
Nevertheless, though we are building things almost from scratch again with the youth work, we are seeing some encouraging signs there. We have good and expanding connections with lots of children and families in the villages. We have a Rector with 2 young children and are soon to have a Curate with 2 young children, which give natural points of contact. We have a benefice full of families, plenty of whom are interested in Christian worship, and in developing their spiritual lives. We are thinking and praying carefully through our strategy of reaching and welcoming those whom the Lord wishes to send, and remain hopeful.



Start of 2014



Close of 2015



These figures include everyone who worships in Mulbarton Church, Church at Hanover, Bracon Ash Church, Hethel Church and Flordon Church. They don't include everyone we connect with through our small groups, which add in a handful more adults and children. Neither do they include Messy Church, where we did see more steady growth through 2015. Here, "children" refers to under 18s – i.e. youth and children.

MINISTRY

Sunday Service Pattern

Our new pattern of Sunday services worked pretty well. We had tried to minimise changes so as not to confuse people too much – it tidied things up a bit and made it all manageable with the reduced clergy support.

Elders & Leadership Team

I attended a “Leadership Intensive” course, over 4 days in June 2015 – and found it a most useful time of clarifying important principles in the forming and functioning of a leadership team. Off the back of that, I took steps to reform the Mulbarton eldership, expanding it to more of a “leadership team”, and we met for several lunches to talk through how things could develop. I also drafted some vision and values statements as a starting point for further discussion. We arranged a day away at the home of our church patron, Rosemary Watkinson, for November 2015. Unfortunately, this day had to be indefinitely postponed – and the whole process has stalled ever since.

Ministry to Elderly

We gathered information on various schemes and training out there about developing a befriending ministry and offering care for the elderly and lonely in our communities. We had a visit by Louise and Suzi, from the Evergreen Trust, who operate in Stamford, Lincs., and whom I’ve supported since their foundation 10 years ago. They have developed training resources, and shared their experience with several other churches around the country already. Their story was inspiring and helpful as we continue to think through how we respond to God’s call to mobilise people for this ministry locally.

Lent

In Lent 2015, different small groups offered a variety of content to help in our discipleship, including “Becoming Myself”, a course for women; “Living Victoriously in Babylon” – learning lessons for today from the exile; “Mapping Lent” – a journey around the themes of Lent using the arts.

New Curate

Over the summer months, we submitted a strong application to the bishop, and were selected to have a new training post here. As a result, a stipendiary curate will be joining us in summer 2016. Andrew North will be ordained on 2nd July 2016, and move to Oakley Park, along with his wife, Helen, and their children, Poppy and Grace.

Family Trials

During our annual family retreat in August, at “Revive” camp, Sarah felt a call to do more with the children’s work, recognising how precarious things were looking. Sarah put a lot of work into developing some teaching, organising rotas, and seeking to build a children’s work team. This was a demanding undertaking, and with extra stresses coming during the term, it all took a heavy toll. Sarah experienced something of a crash in October, and 6 months on, we are still not fully back on our feet.

November and December, I reduced work hours down to 2 or 3 hrs per day (although 7 days per week), while managing children, school and home, and supporting Sarah. Bishop Alan was very supportive as were the Deanery clergy and everyone in the benefice. In the New

Year, 2016, I was able to begin increasing church hours and reinstate a clear weekly day off. Since then, I've averaged 52 hours per week.

Alpha

I started an Alpha course at Hanover on Thursday afternoons in the autumn term, but had to stop abruptly after 4 sessions, because of the family health issues.

Teaching and preaching

Through 2015, we explored several themes:

- We preached on the lectionary readings for **seasonal time**, through 7 weeks of Lent and 5 weeks of Easter, onto Pentecost and Trinity.
- We explored the theme of Christian **love**, out of our verse for the year – John 13:35.
- We began to tee up the very important theme of “**Welcome**”, ahead of our planned 2016 Lent course, acknowledging there were lessons to be learnt in this area.
- Over summer, we studied the **life of Jesus**, from pre-incarnation to ascension.
- The autumn term kicked off with a push on **stewardship** and giving, in which we reviewed and compared the finances of all 4 parishes, as well as biblical teaching on the theme.
- We made a start on teaching into the different **ministry areas** in church, coinciding with the launch of the leadership team at Mulbarton. Again, this series halted in November due to our family health issues.
- We finished the year at Flordon on 27th Dec, with a fabulous service of **rededication** for the year ahead.

Visiting Speakers

During 2015, we welcomed several visiting speakers:

- 3rd March – **Dominic Statham** delivered a presentation entitled “Creation in a Scientific Age” to an audience of mixed persuasions in Mulbarton Church.
- 22nd March – **Jess Stubenbord** told us about his trip to Nepal, where our CMS missionary link, Ram, operates.
- 13th Sep – **Ram Prasad** himself visited us for a few days, and gave a moving presentation in Hanover on Sunday evening about the relief work he had been involved with after the dreadful earthquake that hit that region.
- 13th Sep – **Ruth Valerio** was a guest speaker at the Hethel sustainability weekend, and also spoke at Mulbarton Church in the Sunday morning service about environmental issues
- Church at Hanover enjoyed some special guest speakers from the local area, including **Simon Davies, Sam Brinkley, David Moore & Patrick Foreman**.

Prayer

We re-vamped the telephone prayer chain, introducing both SMS text messages, and secure private emails into the mix, alongside phone-calls. People have the choice about how they would like to receive the message to pray. We had 33 people receiving emails, 33 receiving texts, and 7 receiving just phone-calls. After a bit of readjusting, people seem to have got used to it, and value the breadth of the new system. The prayer chain is activated by contacting the Rectory office, or by posting something directly on the secure message board.

Patrick started a prayer initiative, using resources produced by the Norwich House of Prayer, for blessing our communities.

Baptisms, weddings & funerals

During 2015:

- We had **7 baptisms**: 5 in Mulbarton, conducted by me - 1 in Hethel & 1 in Bracon Ash, both conducted by Cathy. I also conducted **1 Thanksgiving** at Mulbarton.
- We buried **2 sets of ashes** in Mulbarton: 1 by me, and 1 by Dawn, who kindly came back to do that.
- We had **6 funeral services at the crematorium**, 4 for Mulbarton residents and 2 for Bracon Ash. I conducted 2 of those. Dawn conducted 2, while Paul Burr and Jess Stubenbord conducted 1 each, kindly covering me at the end of the year.
- We had **8 funeral services in churches**: 1 in Flordon, 1 in Bracon Ash and 6 in Mulbarton. I conducted 7 of these, and Rev Tony Snaesdale kindly covered me for the other 1.
- I conducted **7 wedding** ceremonies, 2 in Flordon, 1 in Hethel and 4 in Mulbarton.

Youth and Children

Xtreme

Sunday Xtreme ceased to operate, owing to lack of demand.

Switch

Switch, our youth discipleship group on Thursday evenings, continued with Sarah and I leading. After much consultation, it moved to Tuesday after the summer break, in order to encourage a new generation and link the older youth to those coming up. In the end, we had 5 new members from the younger generation, and 3 from the previous group, which has stabilised into the new year. Some of the older members continued to meet on Thursdays, for a social gathering, along with some young adults who used to be involved in this group. Some of the older members, now adults, have come on board to help facilitate the Tuesday group.

Schools

Holly and then Sue have given an excellent lead to the Open the Book initiative, where we take Bible stories into the Infant School weekly, and roughly monthly at the Junior School.

Scouts

We welcomed 1st Mulbarton Scout group to church for St George's Day on 27 April.

Messy Church

Cathy and the team have done a wonderful job at reaching Over 100 people from families in and around the Benefice. I've taken part by telling stories and playing the guitar, as well as simply mingling and chatting. It is a great point of contact and a strong foundation for building upon.

Visiting

I met in September with 12 people, interested in forming a pastoral visiting team, and undertook some training on the topic. Whilst some people from that day have taken on some pastoral visiting, for which I've been immensely grateful, largely this is another thing that had to be shelved for the time being.

Communications: Publicity; Website; Pews News; Mardle

Our electronic and paper communication continues to be important and useful, and we're very grateful for those who work hard to bring it together, notably Caroline, Becky, Chris and Dennis.

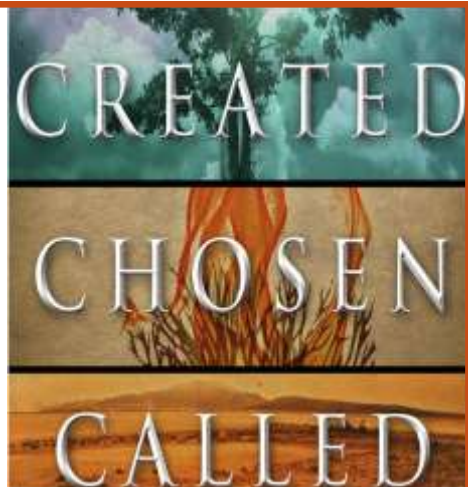
There's still a little way to go, in developing our publicity, both in physical and electronic form, but we did make some good progress in 2015, and have a clear agenda for what needs to be done, in terms of logo, welcome materials, email updates from the website, and keeping our web presence up-to-date and engaging.

Benefice Team

In 2015, we decided to split the benefice team into 2 groups, one for those who lead services and one for churchwardens. This pattern of meetings was working well and giving valuable space to think strategically about the direction of the benefice, as well as dealing with practicalities around service rotas and the like.

**"You are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood,
a holy nation,
a people for God's own possession,
that you may proclaim
the excellencies of Him
who called you
out of darkness
into His marvellous light" ... 1 Peter 2 : 9**

Mulbarton Benefice Verse for 2016



Future plans

Priorities for the future, as we move through 2016 are:

- Leadership team, vision and values, especially looking at how we best incorporate and bless Andrew and his family
- Prayer – acknowledging the Archbishop's Pentecost call to prayer, we're planning a full week of 24-7 prayer, 10th-17th July 2016
- Children & families – strategic outreach
- Welcome – responding to the 2016 Lent Course, implementing some changes and developing welcome teams.
- Elderly & Isolated – developing in service to our communities

Worship Team Report – Becky Taylor

The differing expressions of worship in Mulbarton Church are something which enable us to meet God and discover more about his manifold presence. It is a great asset to have Charlie on the worship leaders' team now. Rachel has decided to step down from leading all but the Meditative Services and is planning to introduce an evening Taizé style service soon.

We are endeavouring to establish a bank of songs which will be drawn from for a season and then new ones added and less used songs removed. This will not exclude the use of some of the old favourites but should cut back on too many new songs being introduced at once. If you do come across songs you would like to sing at Mulbarton please let someone on the Worship Team know and we will do our best to include it.

Café Church – Beverley Theobald

Continues to run on the first Sunday of the month and offers an alternative to the church based services. This past year we have explored a number of subjects but recently we have embarked on the Wisdom House Series which is proving very helpful. The atmosphere is friendly and welcoming. Our aim continues to be seeing God's kingdom and love made known to all who visit but especially those for whom church and/or faith is a strange, unknown concept. Thank you to all those who help with this so faithfully each month. (The Café Church team is Bev, Becky, Fiona, Lynne, Sue but there are a number of others who help every month)

Church @ Hanover – Nina Davey

We are pleased to report that Church at Hanover is now in its 5th year.

God has been very faithful to us; our congregation is usually around 40. Some people are residents here at Hanover Gardens. Some are people who live locally, and some come from other villages. They have all become a very close church family.

Adrian and Jill Wright always share with us real Bible based teaching. Alice plays our organ for the enthusiastic hymn singing and members of the congregation lead prayers and do the Bible readings.

After the service there is time for fellowship, with a cuppa and biscuits (thanks to the ladies in the kitchen).

Some kind folk stay behind to help us put the room back to normal, then once we are satisfied all is done, there are a few silent prayers of thanks to our God. He started our church and we pray he will help us carry it on for many years to come.

To God be the glory.

OTHER MINISTRIES

Mums in Prayer breakfast – Helen Pennington

Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street. Lamentations 2:19

“Imagine what God could do with a generation of prayed for children!”

Moms In Prayer International is a non-denominational prayer ministry whose mission is to impact children and schools worldwide for Christ by gathering mothers to pray.

Aim: To introduce mums, grandmas, aunts and ladies who want to impact our children and schools for Christ through prayer to Moms in Prayer International (MIPI) and their prayer format, the four steps of prayer; to equip mums with the confidence to form their own group to pray for children and schools.

Growth: Local: After opening my Mums in Prayer group up to any mum who wanted to join us we had mums from outside the benefice join us. They grew in confidence, with the four steps of prayer and have now moved on from my group and two new groups have been established. One in Wymondham and the other in Norwich (Old Catton)

UK: I have been involved in the anglicising of printed resources for the UK, resulting in flyers and the Mums in Prayer booklet.

Me: I have stepped up to the role of Area Coordinator for Mums in Prayer UK for Norfolk, but am also available for most of East Anglia. The past three months I have been working behind the scenes as part of a team organising a UK event in Oxford for April 2016 with almost weekly times of prayer via skype with 'the team'.

More details about MIPI can be found on their websites www.momsinprayer.eu and www.momsinprayer.org.

Letton Hall – Sue Mellows

Our benefice weekend away in October 2015 was at Letton Hall as usual, but in a slightly different format this year. We were all back in the Main Hall together, with the youth occupying the basement as their domain. Although we had needed originally to spread and take over the whole site, it was lovely to be back together under one roof. There were 57 of us resident for the weekend, including all the young people, plus 18 day visitors on the Saturday and 5 on Sunday.

Our theme was 'Come Dine with Me'. Adrian was the speaker for the adults. The over 11's were led by Youth for Christ and the under 10's led by Steve Benton.

Thanks for all the hard work of the committee planning this event over the year plus our special thanks to Tom who masterminded our Friday and Saturday night supper and our Sunday lunch superbly. Plans for 2016 are already underway. The committee – myself, Liz Jesse, Adrian Miller, Andrea Lovick, Claire Cormack, Sally Hayward, Stewart Burchell - would welcome more members from the wider church family. We would also welcome new ideas on how to encourage more people to join in the whole weekend.

Open the Book - Sue Mellows

The team - Maurice & Alice, Adrian, Becky, Jill, Lorna, Peter, Vivienne and myself - have been running 'Open the Book' assemblies in both schools since just before Easter 2015. We present the Bible stories at assembly once a week in the Infant school and twice a term in the Junior School using the Lion Storyteller Bible combined with drama, mime, props, and costumes. We include the children in the story telling and usually have great fun while making sure that we tell the bible stories in an enjoyable and accessible way.

We have just completed the first year of a 3-year rolling programme. Year 1 gives an overview of the Bible from Creation to Ascension. Years 2 and 3 comprise themed material from both Old and New Testaments. We welcome others to join the team at any time, whether as a regular member or someone we can call on occasionally.

OUTREACH

SODA (SCHOOL'S OUT - DAD'S ABOUT) - Beverley Theobald.

SODA is a half termly Saturday morning event run jointly by the infant school and church. The aim is to offer dads and their children a safe and fun place to meet together and to hopefully forge friendships. Highlights have to be cooking with Uncle Tom!! (or Mrs Taylor if Tom is busy).

WORK WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and 'Adults at Risk' - Safeguarding:- David Pollard (report by Adrian Miller)

Throughout 2015, David Pollard again performed a conscientious job of ensuring that everyone who needed to, underwent DBS checks. As the Open the Book team expanded, some additional checks had to be carried out. Maurice, Cyndy and Janet continue to monitor safeguarding concerns elsewhere in the benefice. Several from the benefice booked into "Adults at Risk" training at Diocesan House, but the evening was postponed to 2016 due to poor weather. There were no issues or incidents to report.

MINISTRY / DISCIPLESHIP / FELLOWSHIP GROUPS FOR ADULTS

Barnabas Group (Monday evening fortnightly) – Jill Wright (Co-ordinator)

Barnabas Group continues to meet in my lounge approximately fortnightly (though weekly during Lent). As well as myself leading, we have a regular 6 or 7 Mulbarton members plus 1 or 2 from Flordon. I have tried to encourage people from Bracon Ash to come, especially during Lent, but so far to no avail.

Through Lent 2015 we studied Peter's 1st Epistle under the title 'Living in Babylon' (a course devised by the Barnabas Trust which cares for persecuted Christians). We used a couple of the Diocesan 'Maps' that we had not looked at before to study the Resurrection and Ascension. Otherwise our main focus has been on looking at Biblical people to learn from their faith: Ruth & Naomi from reading the book of Ruth; Rahab, Hannah, Elizabeth & Zechariah amongst others.

We have not linked studies closely to sermon series as people in the group attend different churches and different types of service.

We have tried to do our coffee duty at Mulbarton 10 am on alternate months, but this has proved increasingly difficult because between us we are often at other churches and services.

Towards the end of 2015 we began a series of topics based on the Book of Proverbs enabling interesting discussion on issues such as Work, Wealth, Relationships with family and neighbours, Wisdom & Folly (using a study guide written by Ruth Valerio who visited Hethel and Mulbarton for the Environment weekend).

CAMEO (Tuesday morning fortnightly) (Come And Meet Each Other)

– Felicity McIlwrath (report written by Diane Robinson)

CAMEO offers Christian-based friendship and encouragement for ladies who are lonely or bereaved. We meet fortnightly on a Tuesday during school term, beginning with a friendly chat over refreshments. Then we may consider a passage from The Bible, listen to poetry or music on a particular theme, or engage in a seasonal craft activity. Interesting speakers are invited, bringing us experiences from their field of Christian work – widening our horizons and deepening our understanding of the needs, and characteristics of other societies.

In March, Elizabeth Gill, a previous visitor 3 years before, told us about her time in Tanzania, updated us with a talk and video from the 'Grassroots' organisation which is concerned with health, nutrition and education. CAMEO continues to sponsor young Elisabeth Mwantango in Tanzania – she is now 18 years old. It was heart-warming to receive her recent letter, in English, with the latest photograph of herself.

In May Katrina Taylor told us about the 6 months that she had spent in Katmandu, Nepal – she returned just before the devastating earthquake.

In June Vivienne Clifford-Jackson gave us an informative, and very moving, talk about her trip to Zimbabwe. We gave a gift towards the country's 'Chicken Project'.

In September Ian & Caroline Dunlop invited the ladies for afternoon tea and cakes – much enjoyed!

In October Rosie Sexton, who had visited us 3 years ago, having set up a class for non-English-speaking immigrant women, brought us an encouraging report on her growing number of classes. She spoke of the loneliness that they initially feel, often confined to home by the language barrier. The classes not only facilitate integration, but forge friendships between them, banishing loneliness and inspiring confidence.

Also in October Janet Howard brought a selection of fabric strips and demonstrated making attractive rings to decorate doors and tables. We all then made our own.

In December a morning using evergreens and red crêpe-paper flowers to make Christmas table decorations.

During the first half of 2015, Naomi Burchell, doing her Duke of Edinburgh Award, baked cakes and cookies for us – another treat!

Also during the year CAMEO supported a 'Toybox' appeal in Guatemala dealing with children whose birth is not registered. Without a birth certificate, they can have no official identity and are therefore not entitled to education. However birth certificates can be legally bought, thus ending the problem.

Each year CAMEO sends filled shoe boxes to 'Link to Hope' for despatch to Eastern European countries. A record 38 shoe boxes were sent for Christmas 2015 – 10 of which came from 'Messy Church'. Throughout the year many of the ladies knit colourful squares to be stitched into blankets or knee-rugs.

Our meetings always end with prayer for those that we know are in need.

CAMEO continues to flourish, meeting fortnightly on Tuesdays at the home of Brian & Felicity McIlwrath.

Wednesday evening – Tom Taylor

We have a regular cohort of six to eight with various others coming in from time to time not always on a Wednesday but Sunday evenings as well, although less structured. Big thanks to Elsie for all the teas and coffees she diligently makes week by week, be there by eight or you miss out.

Studies

Once we had completed the Bill Johnson course – *Hosting The Presence*, during lent 2015. We followed the Sunday preaching pattern for some months, looking at the person and nature of Jesus in order to go deeper into Him. We have looked at admin. and the team, as well as our own gifting, so we plan to do some re-discerning over the next few months.

We have also spent a couple or so weeks going out into the community to share the love of God and to pray for healing for those who would like it. Sadly there were very few people to meet as Mulbarton seems to shut at about seven thirty most Wednesdays.

We are currently following the David Jeremiah dramatised course based on Revelation and it is proving to be just that - very revealing - recommend it, once you have overcome the American style.

Social

Fellowship is what we consider ourselves to be doing week by week. So our social times may seem a little sparse compared to some. However we tend not break for holidays so we are able to spend more time in one another's company.

We have been to Sheringham for a fish and chip supper followed by an evening on West Runton cliffs waiting to view the aurora borealis, which sadly wasn't showing. We also had a Christmas party with balloons!!

Gill Jefferies has also warmly welcomed us for the odd cold winter evening, sausage rolls and cake.

We are always glad to have new people come and join us or just come for a visit. Come and give us your testimony.

Tree Climbers (Wednesday evening) – Rachel Burchell

Owing to changing commitments, Tree climbers now meets on Wednesday evenings. We have been using a great resource by Penelope Wilcox (author of the amazing – my opinion – Hawk and Dove series) *100 Stand-Alone Bible Studies: To Grow Healthy Home groups*. We have been working through the 'Walking in the Light' section looking at the qualities of Christ and therefore a Christian. These have been valuable starting points for discussion and sharing our lives, faith and doubts.

Unfortunately we have had a few members move on to different trees in other counties, but also have received a couple more fellow tree climbers. We are looking forward to seeing the Dennis Potter TV play for BBC 'The Son of Man' to further grapple with who Jesus was and His transforming message for us. As always, anyone is welcome to join us.

Friday Afternoon – Lynne Lambert

The Friday Afternoon Ministry Group has met regularly over the last year with a steady attendance of six ladies.

During the spring we followed a Lent Bible study by John Birch, called "Amazing Love",

based on the hymn "When I survey". We then went on to a study entitled "Angels" by Douglas Connelly.

Christmas saw us having a celebratory lunch at "Goodies" near Diss with the usual "Secret Santa". Interspersed between these studies have been a one off study on "Contentment" and some of Joyce Meyer's teaching programmes. We joined in the "Welcome Course" in our group which provoked a lot of discussion.

We meet from 1:30pm for coffee and chat, then have prayer, study and worship from 2:30pm-3:30pm.

Tuesday evening – Beverley Theobald

Beverley Theobald - We continue to be a small, but supportive group. During the year we have used a number of studies including the recent transformed life study. Highlights of the year include carolling around southern reach. It would be lovely to welcome more people along. We meet either at Rita's or at Bev and Patrick's home on Tuesday evening between 7.45 and 9.30pm.

CHURCH SUPPORT FOR HOME & OVERSEAS MISSION

Support for Work in Democratic Republic of CONGO – Jill Wright The total given specifically for Congo in 2015 exceeded that guaranteed by the PCC to support the 2 Dioceses The additional came from regular giving to the church.

We continue to get e-mails from individuals about work going on in the Dioceses of **BUKAVU** and **KINDU** which we support. They have ambitious programmes of training, evangelism and social projects which they run with meagre resources and are always grateful for our help. Desire Mukanirwa Kadorho, who lives in Goma, is now Provincial Co-ordinator for Mission & Evangelism and has been working in different parts of DR Congo as well as initiating projects across the river in Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo (ex-French territory and a different country!).

No Congolese partners were able to visit us in 2015, so it was difficult to have a service focussing on the area. But I continue to pass on news I receive either directly or via the Congo Churches Association – a support group based in the UK.

Awake Mother – Rachel Burchell

Awake Mother is a small project in the city of Bukavu, Congo run by Ntakwinja (wife of Bernard who visited us a few years ago now!) It continues to provide assistance for vulnerable widows, visits sick people in hospital and at home as well their main aim of training and encouraging women in small businesses. They continue to value our support hugely and with much appreciation. It is lovely now to communicate on Facebook with their two youngest sons and see their faith. Money was raised from various projects in 2015, some of which was sent to Congo as promised and the rest carried forward to 2016.

Church Mission Society - Rupert Wilkins

This year we continued to support the work of Ram Prasad in Nepal. He is director of the National Mission Commission of Nepal. NMCN's role is to support and link together the work of the several Christian denominations, and to train pastors and evangelists.

On Saturday, April 25, 2015 a massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, just northwest of the capital of Kathmandu. It was the worst to strike the region in more than 80 years.

Ram wrote to us on 20th May:

*Greetings in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ!
I trust this finds you all in good health and spirit! I would like to sincerely thank all of you for praying for the people who suffered through the catastrophic earthquake which claimed 8600 peoples lives and millions being homeless. I would also like to thank you for sending funds to NMCN to help with relief supplies who are in desperate needs of food, warm clothes and shelter. By God's grace and through your generous support we have been able to distribute foods for 500 families and warm clothes in Dhading and Dolkha.*

We have bought a third phase of relief material which are foods and tents, We have sent a truck of foods and Tents to Gorkha district. We have missionaries out here who will be coordinating the relief supplies through the help of local officials.

I just spoke to our missionary Ram Chandra Subedi who coordinated the relief distribution along with brother Yakub. I asked him how the response of the public out there is. This is what he said; 'people who received the relief materials are very much thankful because we were the first group to bring relief materials to them. He added; people were thinking the Christians only preach about Jesus and try to convert but Christian also feels responsible to care the people. Their negative concept toward Christians has been changed and they appreciate the work very positively.

In September Ram and his wife visited us and spoke at Hanover Gardens, as well as visiting us in Church and speaking on the Sunday.

There are very severe challenges in Nepal, both the slow recovery from the earthquake and political troubles making life very difficult. Basic material needs are not being satisfied as roads are blocked and normal life is continually disrupted. The extreme pro-Hindu actions in India are having effects in Nepal as well. The winter brought severe cold and heavy snow, additional hardships for the many people living in temporary shelters.

In March NMCN announced a project to build a new extended training centre, with steel structure and corrugated metal roofing, to create a more earthquake-resistant and larger facility for training and accommodation of the trainees. The first phase of this is to buy the adjacent land.

The financial giving we have sent to CMS is reported in the Church Accounts. Please continue to support CMS financially and in prayer.

Operation Orphan - creating a brighter future for orphans and the vulnerable – Becky Taylor

We continue to support the valuable work of Operation Orphan and gave £261 in 2015. In November last year Jess Meyers, Operation Orphan's Operations Manager, visited the Pencott Valley School project in Nabigyo with her husband Grant where they helped with building and painting work. There is now a verandah outside the classrooms where the children can sit out of the sun and the rain to eat their lunch.

In addition to this the project is now able to afford a second storey to the school in place of the old classrooms which had to be pulled down. Pencott continues to do an excellent job of

educating children from the slum who would have otherwise not have had the opportunity of an education. We are so thankful to donors who have faithfully given to this project since it started. It continues to make a difference for many orphans and vulnerable children and we are proud of the impact this project has on its community.”

Earlier this year Cyrilyn Moore, one of the directors, and a team visited the two homes they have set up in Sierra Leone for the e-bola survivors. “We saw how happy the children were in their homes, with their house mums. We also spent time at the school and saw that a great standard of education is being provided, even with such limited resources. The school offers places to 140 children at present, though it’s in need of investment for further expansion. More information is available on their website <http://www.operation-orphan.org>.

Fairtrade – Rachel Burchell

A slightly belated Fairtrade fortnight event took place for Palm Sunday – a tasty Fairtrade breakfast was enjoyed and a quiz to see how the journey of Fairtrade continues to expand and grow. £105 was raised which we are sending to Goma and Rev Desiree’s work there, as well as £22 for Awake Mother from buying the goods from Traidcraft.

Despite only having the Traidcraft catalogue this year for Christmas orders, nearly £600 of goods were bought and £110 went to Awake Mother. As always, my thanks to those that continue to support these events and spread the word for a fairer world.

“The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you into eternity.” — Marcus Garvey. Amen!

Tearfund – Tim Hayward

In 2015, we continued to support the good work of Tearfund through our Harvest collections. We had hoped for a Tearfund speaker to join us, but none were available - instead we have one booked in for 2016. Altogether the church donated £438 to Tearfund in 2015.

Foodbank – Charles Strafford

Our continued support, with donations added to the box at the back of church each week, is much appreciated.

Bell Ringing - George Moore

Our Wednesday evening practice continues at the present time from 7pm to 8.30pm.

During the year 6 New Beginners have commenced training; 3 at sixteen years old rang and 3 ten years old and below. All attend our practices regularly and are progressing weekly. Due to the help needed for these beginners to advance more quickly, we have already requested extra assistance from our Northern Branch Association members!

Our membership with the Norwich Diocesan Association of Ringers remains at 9, with 4 ringers as Full Members and 5 ringers elected to Associate Membership. One of our advanced lady ringers had to leave our ringing team due to a family move from Mulbarton during the year.

We were only able to ring for 3 Sunday 10am services during the year, which has not achieved our aim to ring once a month for this service; this is due to some members not living in Mulbarton and others not available.

All six bells were rung by Mulbarton Ringers on 14th February, before and after the service, to celebrate Renewal of Marriage Vows on Valentine's Day.

Our bells were rung before and after 4 weddings during the past year - two of these with all Mulbarton ringers. Two had to include ringers from Ketteringham and Hethersett.

Permission was given for our bells to be rung at 4pm on Tuesday 15th September 2015 4pm by ringers on an outing from Cheshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Shropshire. During the year one of the bell's ash stays was broken and had to be replaced with seasoned ash, shaped and fitted in the exact position as the original, by members of the Mulbarton team.

At present time two high level rope pulley wheels are having to be replaced due to wear and age defect. To date, no maintenance work has been carried out on the bell frame and ladder to roof trap door!

Flowers in Church - Felicity McIlwrath

We are glad to have Rachel Burchell who joined the team during 2015 – her presence lightens the load all round. Together with Diane Robinson, Sally Hayward and myself, the four of us take care of the presentation and renewal of flowers every week in church. We trust that our efforts are pleasing to everyone and glorifying to our Lord. My two daughters Ann Hamilton-Lowe & Sally Reynolds occasionally help with the flowers – particularly for weddings and special occasions.

We do enjoy creating flower arrangements and are very thankful to those who allow us to take from their gardens or leave flowers after weddings. In order not to burden church funds too much, we make use of hedgerows and material from our own gardens wherever possible to minimise costs. With this in mind we also keep a stock of imitation flowers.

The Carol Service flowers were a challenge and we were grateful for the finished effect. Many thanks to Caroline Dunlop for Christmas preparation and to Tom Taylor for clearing the entire church afterwards. Tom Taylor and Charles & Vivien Strafford provided wonderful lighting to compliment the floral decoration. Our thanks too to Rosemary Watkinson, our Patron, for so generously allowing us to pick Daffodils for Easter every year.

It is a pleasure, a privilege and a joy to see our church tastefully adorned with the Lord's creation. Beauty lifts the spirit and reminds us of Him. Flowers spread God's peace among us and delight the soul.

(Contact Felicity on 01508-571254 if you would like to help in any way with this ministry – BJMcI.)

Compiled by Brian J. McIlwrath using contributions from those involved in leading groups, teams and projects. Many thanks to you all, and grateful thanks also to Caroline Dunlop for producing printed copies for those who need them - April 2016