

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE PARISH

An Update on Church Activity for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
23rd April 2006

2005/2006

St Thomas' Brampton
St Peter's Holymoorside

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**FOREWORD
FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS.**



Karen Riley



Bernard Blanksby

It has been a busy and rewarding year. All three of our Sunday Services have welcomed new members, as have our children's and youth groups. Attendances have also been steady over the past year. Both of these facts are against the national trend of falling church membership and attendance. Thank God for the hard work of many people in church which has encouraged new people into St Thomas' and St Peter's.

The Year of Mission has produced some exciting extra activities on which we can build. A hundred and fifty children enjoyed the Holiday Club event, fifty people attended the September Rendezvous for over 60's and asked for more. Artists of all ages made a splash with the Big Draw and Geoff Shattock led an interesting and thought provoking day's workshop.

House Groups and others have been enlisted to keep the good work moving and more events will take place this year.

Joint Services have been tried on Mission Sundays but it was felt that as less people attended than the normal total for 9.00 am and 11.00 am services, we will only have joint services on notable Anniversary Sundays in future.

Building to grow: In the year we obtained planning permission to go ahead with the Building Project. A Project Co-ordination Committee was set up and held meetings to move the Project forward, starting with the Pledge Day on Palm Sunday (9th April).

M & M Leadership change: David Holden has resigned as leader of the Caring & Sharing Mission & Ministry Team. Janet Hayward has taken over. We thank David for his time and commitment to the task.

Five Year Plan: The PCC and Mission & Ministry Team Leaders had a joint away day at Eyam on which ideas were sought on what the Church should be doing in 5 years. The ideas were further discussed and resulting key points were referred to the congregation in March. These bones of a plan were issued to M & M leaders to consider and put flesh on. Your thoughts were also requested and some positive reflections should be reported at the APCM.

Unusual occurrence: Sadly the font, which had stood opposite the West Door since the 1920's was stolen one night.

Statistics including St Peter's reported to the Diocese for 2005. 19 baptisms, 15 marriages and 14 funerals were held in the Churches.

Attendance at services of worship on Sunday and midweek:

	Adult (16+)	Children
Week commencing 6 th November	303	64
Week commencing 13 th November	274	67
Week commencing 20 th November	302	54
Week commencing 27 th November	221	39

Average attendance at normal Sunday services:

Adults (16+) = 230 Children = 48

Number of communicants on Easter Day	-	233
Number attending worship on Easter Day	-	389
Number attending on Christmas Eve & Christmas Day	-	293
Number attending worship on Christmas Eve & Christmas Day	-	564

Finance: We were dismayed to receive an increased charge in the Parish Share of 7.5% when the anticipated average was 2%. Particular thanks go to David Mouncer, Retired Clergy, Readers, Leaders and key people in our structure. Whatever you did was done in the name of Jesus.

May God bless those who have reached out to others, you are the ambassadors of Christ.

Karen Riley
Church Warden

Bernard Blanksby
Church Warden

**IN FIVE YEARS' TIME, WE WISH TO SEE AS PART OF
ST THOMAS'**

A growing and developing children's and youth ministry

- The growth of a youth based church, including worship and evangelism
- The development of a mentoring system for the youth within the whole congregation
- The cultivation of a detached youth work within the parish
Resourced through a full-time youth worker
- Continue to resource and develop our existing children's work
- An integrated follow up programme to all children and families after major events

A vibrant centre of prayer and worship:

- Alternative worship opportunities within the week
- A diversity of worship openings e.g. healing services

A church energised in outreach:

- To cultivate a seeker style service
- A welcoming infrastructure for St Thomas'
- A "year of mission" every five years
- Within every year, at least two fresh outreach events in the church's year

A new parish centre fully used in the life of St Thomas':

- The new building professionally managed
- A building used by the community of Brampton

A congregation mightily alive as the body of Christ:

- To develop the active volunteer base within the congregation
- To encourage the congregation to give both time and money

Missionary activities

- To regularly present to the congregation opportunities to engage in missionary activities

Community interaction:

- To provide a community focus within the area
- To make St Thomas' a resource for the local community

**Update report from
St. Peter's, Holymoorside**

**A year in the life of St. Peter's
Holymoorside**



Church attendance at 9.30am has risen to about 50 per week. This is out of a membership of 80. Evening prayer is about 10. Tuesday HC is about 8. The attendance of children is very varied and unpredictable, from 1 to 13

Giving is rising slightly and with an increase in income from Rose Cottage, together with fees from weddings funerals and tombstones, we are coping with a larger Common Fund contribution to the Diocese and we have made some improvements to our building.

One person was confirmed last year. No one is seeking confirmation at this time.

We are an ageing church:

- The oldest member is over 80 and the youngest on the Electoral roll is over 35.
- The average age is probably about 65.
- There are many more women than men.

Five people receive home communion each month.

Every member and their children are prayed for regularly.

We have started a Creche and have had good response from members in manning it.

I am centring my own activity in services, prayer and visiting.

Thanks to everyone for their support and particularly David Mouncer.

We have begun an exercise with the other churches to survey the church and the Village, part of Pilgrims Way. There is however no great enthusiasm in the URC or St Peters to become a Local Ecumenical Project.

FAITH MAKES ALL THINGS POSSIBLE
AND LOVE MAKES THEM EASY

St Thomas' Mission & Ministry Teams

**Update report for Worship & Teaching Team,
by Reverend David Mouncer**



I came across a very interesting survey the other day. Done by the Ecumenical Research Committee, it was entitled, “Help your church grow”. It was in fact a survey into why people no longer went to church. There were five common themes with most of the responses to the survey. Interestingly, all but one related to the subjects of worship and teaching. The vast majority of respondents wanted churches to give priority to the ministry of the word and worship. Letters complained about, ‘shoddy services’, “ministers going through the motions, lacking real conviction or sincerity”, and as one middle age couple said, “We used to go to church expecting very little and came away with nothing.” Repeatedly, people wrote to say, “We want sermons on Biblical topics which help us to live as faithful Christians in the 21st century.”

I begin my report with these comments simply to remind you of how blessed we are. I have not once heard a sermon in the last year composed of just religious platitudes. We are well fed from the Word by our preachers. How fortunate we are with the quality of worship and teaching that we, week in and week out, receive in our services. I suspect that many of us take this for granted. I wish therefore to express my thanks to all those who contribute so much to the life of our church. My thanks to our Readers and retired Clergy. Where would we be without them? Also to those who lead our worship, Myra, Keith, Philip and Peter, thank you. It is a great strength that within St.Thomas' we can accommodate worship styles that are both traditional and modern. But also at the same time, highly commendable that throughout the year we are able to come together and worship as one congregation.

House groups, under the care of Robin Balch, have continued to play an important role within the life of the church. A review of the Open House groups is on going as I write, the outcome of which will be presented to the wider church by the autumn. I am also grateful to Robin for putting together the inspiring and challenging Lent course looking at the grace of God, which was based on a book by Philip Yancey.

Within all these positive comments, there is one negative. One strategic fact that weakens our church. Some might even call it ‘a hole below the waterline’. Our commitment to corporate prayer remains weak.

The People@prayer evenings seem to have slipped off the diaries of most people. Maybe I should rename them “**A few people@prayer**”. As we enter an exciting and challenging phase in the life of St. Thomas we need to meet to pray. Please make it a priority in the year to come.

David Mouncer

St Thomas' Mission & Ministry Teams

Update report for Children & Young People Team,
by Mike Barnsley



Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll

... was one of the varied and challenging topics handled by Gemma and **CYFA** during the past year. The series provoked much discussion relating to contemporary youth values and culture. The group have also covered Ethical issues, various perspectives on prayer and are currently working through the Youth Alpha course. CYFA currently attracts around 20 young people to its regular Sunday evening meetings in the Church. Members are a mix of Church young people and those with no previous connections to the church, many of whom have been brought along by existing members. Social activities have included movies, games and jam sessions!

Pathfinders' numbers on Sunday nights are normally around a dozen to fifteen. Discussion topics during the last year having included Bible reading and prayer sessions with many of the groups making serious attempts to develop practices of regular reading and prayer. Pathfinders have also covered a Tearfund series on Fair Trade issues. Sunday evenings are normally a mix of games, discussion and interactive learning. Sunday social activities have included movies, board games and fancy dress. Saturday activities this year have included a boys' paint-balling trip and a girls Health Spa visit.

Pathfinders and CYFA both had **weekends away** in Wales in April last year and the two groups had a joint weekend in Dovedale last month. Several CYFA members also attended the Pure weekend away organised by churches working together across Chesterfield. These weekends are wonderful opportunities for developing old and new friendships, having a great time together, playing some great music, sharing in a variety of services (including Compline at 2am during the March weekend!!) and learning some cool stuff along with being challenged about major life decisions. Unfortunately there is no time left for any sleep (or so it seems), but everyone gets back to normal after a few days.

Other **Pure** (inter-church) youth events during the past year have included gigs, socials, ski-ing, a trip to the beach, and a Christmas Ball organised by Gemma and held here in St. Thomas'. Seventy young people attended the ball and enjoyed a three course meal, live music during the meal, an Aardvarks performance afterwards and finishing with a disco. A night to be remembered for all who attended. Major thanks to all who helped with food and clearing up afterwards!!

Our mid-week bible study group, **Rapture**, has changed considerably over the past few months and now comprises three sessions. Separate Bible study sessions are held for Pathfinders and CYFA members and the evening also comprises a joint meal and discussion. The CYFA studies are led by Kat Witham and Gareth Simmonds who have done a great job.

Gemma does a great job at pulling these events together, but they would not be possible without the support of her team of **wonderful volunteers**, currently Scott, Chris, Jake and Steve on a regular basis and previously Gareth, Tim and Janet also. Sincere thanks are offered to all these people. Many, many thanks are due to Gareth and Tim, who both stepped down during the last year after many years involvement with CYFA and Pathfinders respectively.

Kidzone 627 goes from strength to strength and is attracting more and more children. The group provides a safe and fun environment for church and non-church children to grow together and learn something of Jesus' love for them. Without the team of **equally wonderful volunteers** Steve, Robert, Catherine, Alex, Dorothy and Philip who turn up week in, week out to assist Karen, it simply would not be possible.

Julie continues to effectively organise **Discoverers** and co-ordinate the large team of group leaders who run our Sunday morning children's and young people's groups. Numbers attending continue to grow and space and numbers of volunteers continue to be concerns. Thank you to all of you who do help, for your hard work and commitment. (You know who you are and there are too many to mention by name!) Parties and outings have also been organised through the year.

Karen's excellent planning and organisation produced St. Thomas's biggest and best **Holiday Club** 'Party People' in July 2005. Around 150 children attended, played games; cut, stuck, decorated and planted; heard about Jesus; memorised Bible verses: and accumulated points! Hard-working volunteers made this all possible and the team leaders were suitably rewarded by being abused and subjected to the dreaded 'Jelly Wellies'!! For the first time, the week concluded with a family party which saw around 150 people of all ages enjoying games, fun and a wonderful barbeque.

Karen continues to be busy with special events such as **The Big Draw, Christingle, Alternative Halloween** and the **Easter celebration** as well as **All-age services**.

Karen has continued visiting Brownies, Beavers, nursery and the after school club several times in the last year, keeping open and strengthening existing communication links. Karen has spent a lot of time in Westfield and Old Hall delivering lessons and assemblies. Gemma spends some time in Brookfield Community School and continues to host year 8 visits to St. Thomas's.

Karen and Gemma are both extremely committed and gifted servants of the church. They both consistently work significantly more hours than we could reasonably expect and achieve more than we could reasonably imagine. Please take time to thank them for all they have done and continue to do on our behalf and in our name.

If you already volunteer and help in some way with our children's and youth work, then thank you so much. You are helping to change and form lives. We could not continue without you! If you're not already a volunteer, but are keen, or at least willing, to get involved, then please talk to Karen or Gemma. Join in our mission and ministry, for ...

**"...we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,
his power, and the wonders he has done." Psalm 78:4b**

Mike Barnsley

St Thomas' Mission & Ministry Teams

Update report for Evangelism & Nurture Team

by David Sanderson



Baptism Preparation

A team of nine people led Baptism preparation courses in people's homes. We bought a DVD copy of the CPAS Baptism preparation course early in the year. Eleven baptism preparation courses have taken place during 2005. There is still a need for two more people to join the team.

World Mission

The policy implemented by the PCC at its September 2004 meeting has produced some good results. It has helped to give World Mission a higher profile and produced a wider engagement with mission agencies.

At present nine of our mission agencies have representatives to look after their interests at St Thomas. These representatives make up the World Mission Group. The Group met three times during the year.

The quarterly mission prayer meetings are now well established. One of the highlights was the meeting prior to Robin Dawson's departure for two-year's service in Afghanistan. These meetings provide us with a window on the world and a further way of participating in world mission. A folder containing subjects for prayer had been produced for each of these meetings and was distributed to church members in the news sheet the following Sunday. The usual attendance at the meetings has been between 30 and 40 people.

The regular World Mission Sundays have been good, but still need further discussion as to how to get the best out of them. Attendances at the faith lunches had varied between 60 to over 100. The four World Mission Sundays gave us an insight into the work of Hope for Life's Eastern Europe work, Crosslinks, Scripture Union and Church Pastoral Aid Society. Our next mission visit will be from the General Director of Christian Solidarity Worldwide. Prayers reflecting our world mission interests are normally included on a rota basis in the intercessions at Sunday services. Also church members were encouraged to sign cards in support of Tear Fund's contribution 'Make Poverty History' and the Novi Most campaign for Justice and Joy.

Andrew and Liz Goodacre moved from Guildford to take up a new post in Marburg in Germany. Andrew is working as a student pastor in Christus-Teff, a Lutheran / Free Evangelical Church, primarily supporting a student and young adult congregation and developing student outreach in the town.

Sophie Stevens returned full of enthusiasm after spending eight months working with young people in Uruguay. Incidentally, some financial assistance is available for any of our church members who wish to take a placement with an overseas mission agency for over three months.

We rejoice that once again this year we were able to participate in the work of the wider church through our tithing of church income.

World Mission review

The November PCC agreed to set up a group comprising of three PCC members and three World Mission Committee members to review St Thomas' world mission policy. The group is 'To review the present PCC mission giving policy, its aim and objectives and impact upon the life of St Thomas. To bring to the PCC any suggested changes and alterations for their consideration.' The review commenced January 2006 and is due to report to the May 2006 PCC. The Rector will chair the group

Year of Mission

During the period July 2005 to July 2006 we set out to engage people a stage or two beyond the fringe of the church with the good news of Jesus. This will take place in a variety of ways with initiatives taken by various members of the congregation.

The planning group met three times prior to the launch of the year of mission in July 15th-17th. The launch weekend involved time set aside for prayer and a call to commitment for the coming year. The new church motto, 'You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house' (1 Peter 2:5) was available for people to take over the weekend. A number of activities took place from August onwards which arose directly from this initiative.

September Rendezvous (7th to 11th September) proved to be an effective event. We had a significant number of people present who were not church members. Over 50 people signed up for the event and we averaged over 30 people present each day. The main ingredients were participation, learning new things, a good meal, Christian thought for the day, creativity, fun and a bit of nostalgia. There was an excellent spirit and a real sense of the Lord being with us. 57 people were present at the Sunday afternoon service. 48 people attended a follow up meeting in November. People were asked to fill in a questionnaire relating to the future development of the work. The overwhelming response was for more of the same and on a monthly basis. The main response to this is that *First Thursday Rendezvous* will begin in March with a Summer Rendezvous planned for 30 August to 3 September 2006.

Geoff Shattock (17th September) led a day's seminar on being a Christian in relation to work and life: Issues dealt with included being good news to others and work-life balance. 35 people attended the very stimulating sessions.

A trip to Blackpool (8th October) to see the illuminations was organised by one of the open house groups. The plan to tie in with the national Big Draw campaign gave opportunity to develop a non-threatening 'arty' programme in church that would

draw in others. The Saturday morning effort (15th October) was well supported. There was also a well attended pea and pie supper and Quiz night (19th November).

The members of the Year of Mission planning committee visited open house groups to encourage them in their participation in the Year of Mission programme in 2006. A number of avenues are currently being planned including coffee moorings, barbecue, concerts and visiting as well as the mini children's outreach with Captain Graham Nunn and Flower Festival and exhibition. Events will be announced as they arise.

START

We have run two start courses this year. One in January- February and another followed the September Rendezvous for seniors. Numbers have been small, but the START material is suited to small groups.

Town Mission

There was good support from St. Thomas' for the Christian Education Council's Whit walk on May 30th with its theme: 'Make Poverty History'.

Mark Hoare

From February until May 2006 Mark Hoare will be covering for me as coordinator for Evangelism and Nurture.

David Sanderson

MISSION ACCOUNTS 2005

2004	Income	2005
458.21	Balance from previous year	1,575.79
17300.00	PCC Allocation	14,500.00
392.98	PCC Development Fund	588.83
-	PCC Youth Fund	3,000.00
1960.00	PCC Organ Fund	-
7165.73	Donations including Gift Aid	4,710.18
27276.92	Total	24,374.80

2004	Expenditure				2004
Total	Agency		PCC Allocation	Other Donations	Total
-	Chesterfield Tsumeb Trust	O	200.00		200.00
731.00	Christian Aid week	O		1133.00	1133.00
4800.00	Christian Solidarity Worldwide	O	1360.00	604.62	1964.62
1520.00	Church Pastoral Aid Society	H	1360.00		1360.00
1520.00	Crosslinks	O	1360.00		1360.00
2850.00	Andrew Goodacre	H	2550.00		2550.00
2850.00	Hope for Life Ministries	O	2550.00		2550.00
1580.50	NOVI MOST International	O	1360.00		1360.00
1520.00	Overseas Missionary Fellowship	O	1360.00		1360.00
2850.00	Scripture Union	H	2550.00		2550.00
2850.00	South American Missionary Society	O	2550.00		2550.00
1374.50	TEAR Fund	O		1635.00	1635.00
550.00	Sophie Stevens	O	300.00	70.51	370.51
-	Robin Dawson	O	900.00		900.00
-	Holy Trinity – Mission Bus	H		1282.05	1282.05
705.13	Projects not supported in 2005				
1575.	Balance carried forward		1249.62		1249.62
27,276.92	Total		19,649.62	4,725.18	24,374.80

Robert Batten

St Thomas' Mission & Ministry Teams

Update Report for Caring and Sharing Team

By Janet Hayward



This time last year David Holden was writing this report. However in September David stepped down I was asked to take on the role of Caring and Sharing mission and ministry leader. In the last year many of the usual activities of the Caring and Sharing in St Thomas' have continued and some new ones started.

I have asked some of the leaders to give their own account of the last year.

Communion and Cuppa

Communion and cuppa continues to meet on the last Thursday afternoon of every month.

It provides a service of Holy Communion, followed by fellowship for a number of our more senior church members who find this most helpful.

New members are always welcome to our friendly group as are volunteers to act as drivers. *John and Brenda Trickett*

Social Group

As part of the Caring and Sharing Team, the Social Group has just completed their first year, and when reviewing the programme accomplished were pleasantly surprised! We must thank all those from the Church Family who have contributed so much to making this a very successful year. Particular thanks go to Kathryn Shemwell who has done such sterling work, especially in the organising of last summer's Church Picnic and the very successful Quiz Night. Unfortunately Kathryn has had to leave the Social Group due to her many other commitments, and she will be sorely missed.

Our activities have covered a wide range. Apart from those two events there has been Faith lunches, Lent Supper, Alternative Hallowe'en and Ministry at Work Seminar. Maureen Thompson and Janet Hamilton have completed the Basic Food and Hygiene Course, a requirement for places where food is handled.

Future plans look at involving the House Groups in organising events. We hope to have two to three "bigish" events a year, and continue with the activities already mentioned. We look forward to the Church Family having shared fellowship in all aspects of our busy lives.

Contacts: 9am Service ~ Janet Hamilton
11am Service ~ Maureen Thompson
6.30pm Service ~ Gaynor Roberts

Janet Hamilton

Home Communion

Alan Sheldon and I have the privilege of taking Communion to the members of the church family who can't get to church, either through illness or who just aren't as sprightly as they were. We go on a monthly basis and share a simple informal service. This act of worship renews our folks spiritually and keeps them within the love of ST Thomas'.

We have found that we form strong relationships with the people we visit and we receive a blessing from them in return for our commitment to them. *Val Durkin*

Residential Home Visiting

The residents of three Residential Homes in the Parish are visited one Wednesday afternoon every month. A small team meets in St Thomas for prayer at 1pm before setting out for the Homes. Once there a short service is held and time is taken to chat with individual residents. This year saw the beginnings of discussion with the Methodist church to try to arrange for joint visiting and we are waiting for more information on this possibility. As always we would love to have more people join us so if you could spare a couple of hours one Wednesday a month please contact me! *David Oldale*

Weekly Prayer Email

The St Thomas' weekly prayer email has been running since the beginning of February 2006 and currently has just short of 40 people signed up to receive it. It is designed to be concise whilst providing specific points on which to focus prayers. Each week, the email contains a brief word of encouragement/challenge from David based on a Bible verse, followed by prayer pointers for people in need, church life/year of mission and an opportunity to give thanks.

There has been some really positive feedback from this new venture: *"I like the fact there is a word of encouragement from David. It not only helps me but I am sure it also helps to inform us of David's vision and direction as the body of the church as he encourages us in particular areas. I also like the fact that we are still in touch with prayer needs even if we have missed a week at church."* Other people have commented that it helps them feel more part of the church and like the fact that it crosses the three congregations. Others have found being able to pray through someone's illness and discover how they are progressing a real encouragement.

Emma Atkinson

Totzone

Totzone has continued with its new format for this year first under Julie Lomas' leadership and then Kath Toplis'. Though numbers dropped in September with the move of many of the older children to school since Christmas numbers have again picked up. We now have up to 14 mums and carers who come with their children. The age group has naturally dropped with the average age being 2 ½ years. However it is lovely to see them all settling in and both mums and children make new friends.

This is an important out reach to our community, and we are now seeing Mums and their children who have become part of Totzone coming along on a Sunday to the family service. As with any area of service in the church we are always glad of extra help so if you can spare a couple of hours even once a month on a Monday afternoon Barbara, Elaine and Janet would love to see you.

Janet Hayward

St Thomas' Mission & Ministry Teams

Update report for Finance & Fabric Team,
by Graham Brown



One of the benefits of having been a Mission & Ministry team leader for more than a year is that you can look back on last year's report in order to prepare your latest offering. I have found this a useful exercise this year to such an extent that I have looked back a further year to the report I wrote for the 2004 "A Year in the Life of the Parish". Why have I found this useful you might ask? Well, in case it you have not already guessed, to track the progress we have made with our building project - of which I'll have more to say later.

Finance

The formal accounts for the year ended 31 December 2005 accompany this report. Without wishing to repeat their detail here, the accounts record that 2005 was a 'challenging' year for our church finances as our general ('unrestricted') expenditure modestly exceeded our general income. Put another way we saw a slight decrease in the balance of our general reserves brought forward at 31 December 2005.

By contrast our 'restricted' income exceeded modestly our comparative expenditure, however the increase in funds generated was not quite sufficient to generate an overall balance of income and expenditure for the year, and as such our total funds reduced by £225 during the course of 2005.

One point I would like to draw attention to is the giving (income from donors) for 2005, which was more than £8k down on the comparable figure for 2004. Besides the obvious concerns that the cost of running our church and supporting more activities is increasing and that this decrease in income is therefore 'unhelpful' in this regard, there is an important additional point not immediately obvious from the accounts. This is that any change to our giving will automatically impact our giving to mission, which we tithe at 10% of our income. In fact the decrease in giving we received last year led to a reduction in our grants to mission of more that £2.5k, which is clearly not a positive development.

On a more positive note the recent invitation for donors to review their giving has led to an encouraging response, which should enable us to balance our books during the course of the current financial year. This is very pleasing when we reflect that we had originally been budgeting for a large deficit. However the fact that just one new donor committed to supporting our church financially is a matter of some concern, especially in relation to Jesus' teaching on the importance of giving.

As always I owe a debt of gratitude to the willing, generous and able contributions that David Oldale and Phil Johnson (PCC Treasurer) have made throughout the year. There is much work required to process receipts and payments, budgets, reports, and formal accounts, and to ensure appropriate Christian stewardship of our resources - and yet again David and Phil have performed commendably!

Fabric

A significant amount of time and effort are required to maintain our church 'estate'. This work takes a number of forms, from general tidying and cleaning (of everything from church brasses to leaf-strewn paths), through caretaker responsibilities, to those of our estates manager – a certain Mr Johnson once more – and the willing volunteers who have congregated on the first Saturday of each month to progress the ground clearance work in our churchyard.

One point of note last year was the difficulty we experienced in arranging the statutory quinquennial inspection of the condition of our buildings, as unfortunately the diocesan-appointed architect had other priorities, despite our regular prompting. We will therefore need to complete this process during the current year.

A further notable contribution to our the 'fabric' of our church is that provided by Margaret Taylor and her flower team, who once again have provided us some beautiful displays to admire throughout the year.

Living Stones Project – Building to Grow

I promised in my introduction some reflections on our development project and the course it has taken over the last year. This time a year ago I anticipated a key next phase as we had just started the process of submitting our plans to the Local Authority's planning department. I say process, as this is what it turned out to be, as before an eventual decision was taken we had to complete and submit supporting evidence in the form of a tree, ecological and highways survey. We also had to respond to the concerns raised by a number of our neighbours who had registered an objection to our plans. The good news is of course we came through the process with a full planning consent being provided by the Borough Council. Although this now seems but a faint memory I feel it is appropriate to reflect that this was a key 'hurdle' to our project and one we ultimately cleared comfortably.

And now of course we move on to our next challenge, the 'minor' issue of raising the necessary funding to start our building works. Could this be a challenge too far? Not for our Lord who has taught us we have no reason to doubt...

“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.”

Mark 9:23

I would like to thank you all for your interest, support, and prayers in helping to progress our project thus far. We have a little way to go yet, but God willing we will reach our destination and grow His kingdom through our new centre!

Graham Brown

St Thomas' Mission & Ministry Teams

Update report for Communication & Co-ordination Team,

by Barbara Goodacre



In my role as Team Leader I have received a wide variety of comments relating to communication and co-ordination over the last year – some more encouraging than others! Here are just a few:

“We were never told about that.”

“I never got round to putting it in the notice sheet.”

“Was it in the notice sheet? I didn't see it!”

“I looked on the internet and your website impressed me the most. – so here I am!”

“We will deliver a Spotlight bundle. We don't know where the road is but we will find it on a map.”

“You gave me an invitation at Summer Club. I couldn't come then, but here I am now!”

“I am already on a rota once a month, so sorry I can't help.”

“She was really struggling and asked me if I could help out so I said, “Yes.” I am not on any other duty that day. It was one of my few free Sundays!”

Communication has had its ups and downs over the last year but as you read this report I trust that you will appreciate more fully the work that does go on behind the scenes at St. Thomas'. Much of what has been achieved during the year would not have happened without the help of willing volunteers who quietly and reliably serve, often un-noticed, in St Thomas'.

It is impossible to mention everyone by name, but to all you hard-working and willing people,

A Very Big Thank You.

Church Office

The Church Office continues to be a hub of activity and it is open Monday to Friday, 9.00am -12 30pm and 2pm – 4pm. It is staffed by Heather Hollington and Anne Hewitt along with two or three volunteers who help out when they can.

Continuing problems with the office computer in the first half of 2005 led to a major upgrade and replacement of parts last July and the purchase of a new printer.

Unfortunately on several occasions, the photocopier has been roughly used and damaged out of office hours and this has caused concern. A new system is in the process of being set up, whereby the users of the photocopier will be recorded and

the cost will be charged to their group budgets. Private users of the photocopier are still required to sign in the book on the window ledge by the photocopier and pay for each copy they make.

Notice Boards

During 2005 the new outside notice board finally arrived and two new oval "Welcome Signs" have replaced the previous faded ones.

The two notice boards at the back of church continue to be updated with news relevant to the Life of the Church and World Mission. Please take time to read these notices and pick up the relevant paperwork from the ledges below!

The notice board in the West Porch displays information of other activities taking place in the community.

Notice Sheets

Because of the amount of material that the office was receiving for inclusion in the weekly notice sheet a decision was taken in September 2005 to have separate notice sheets for St. Thomas's and St. Peter's.

Following on from this, and in order to save paper, event organisers have been asked to hand brief reports in to the office, for inclusion in the following week's notice sheets and to give longer articles to Sue Ward for inclusion in Ploughshare. It is very important that dates of forthcoming events and reviews of past events are shared with all church members.

A5 inserts into the notice sheet are now restricted to specific items like the PCC digest, quarterly programmes of mid-week events and Building Project updates. People wishing to distribute other inserts have been asked to check with the office before photocopying.

Church members have been invited to notify the office if they would like to receive the notice sheet by email. So far the response to this has been very disappointing.

Bookstall

Due to dwindling support and lack of interest the decision was finally taken in January 2006 to discontinue the church bookstall. My thanks go to Julie Lomas for the effort and enthusiasm she put into re-working the bookstall in 2005. I am pleased to report that, at Julie's suggestion, a small lending library is now set up for the children at Totzone.

Please note that the ordering of Bible Reading Notes through church is not affected by this decision. Rachel Michell is the co-ordinator. She has samples of bible reading notes for all ages and is very happy to help anyone who wants to start reading the bible regularly at home.

Welcome Pack

Janet Hayward continues to update this and it is handed out to newcomers by David Mouncer and the Baptism Preparation Team. Twenty two packs have so far been handed out.

Electoral Roll

Myra Johnson continues to update the electoral roll and she will be giving her report at the APCM.

Marriage Registers

With their usual care and attention to detail, Pam Brimelow and Ray Batteson have continued to undertake the very exacting task of completing the marriage registers for both St. Thomas' and St. Peter's.

What else happens under Communication and Co-ordination?

It is now time for the volunteers who head up these "jobs" to speak for themselves!

Spotlight

Phil Michell writes:

"By the time you read this the 3rd edition of 'Spotlight' will have been planned, designed, put together, re-designed, put together again (!) printed, distributed and hopefully read by hundreds of people in the parish.

Spotlight aims to give people in the parish a glimpse of what happens at St. Thomas'. Within the publication we try to include a mixture of articles – some review past events, some advertise future events and others are designed to provoke some thought. We even had a recipe in the Christmas edition last year which, of course, I had to try out for myself - for tasting and photographic reasons!

I would like to thank all those who have contributed articles in the past and I'm especially grateful to Barbara Goodacre, Janet Hayward and David Mouncer for their 'editorial' input. Any comments you may have about Spotlight would be very welcome."

A further word of thanks also goes to John and Brenda Trickett, who prepare the bundles of Spotlight for distribution, and to all who distribute them round the parish.

Website

One of the highlights of this past year has been the number of people who have "found us" on the internet through our church website. I am indebted to Mark Hoare our Website Co-ordinator. Each week Mark updates the website and also prepares the PowerPoint notices for the Sunday services.

If you want to know what is happening in St Thomas', the website is the place to look!

Mark writes:

"The Church Website has 5 basic aims:

1. To give people looking for a church in the area information about St Thomas' and St. Peter's. Several people have "found us" in this way.
2. To give current church members an overview of all church activities.
3. To help people who can't come to church every week to keep in touch with us. This applies to people who miss odd Sundays, those who are away for longer periods and those who have moved away.
4. To help those who mislay their notice sheets and other information sheets!
5. As an archive. Back numbers of the church magazine are available. A lot of hard work goes into the magazine and it seems a shame that most are only read once and discarded."

Ploughshare

Once every two months our Parish Magazine, Ploughshare is published. Thank you so much Sue, David and Bernard for all your hard work. Sue Ward the editor of Ploughshare writes:

“I have now been editing Ploughshare for more years than I care to remember! It can be difficult to try to keep the magazine looking fresh and enticing. The recent addition of colour to the outside covers has been one such attempt. I hope it is successful.

Each year, I meet with David Mouncer to discuss the outline plan for the content of the forthcoming editions. This includes regular features and series and one off articles. My thanks go to all those who contribute, including office staff, clergy, readers, children’s and youth workers, the Mission and Ministry team leaders and members of both St. Thomas’ and St. Peter’s.

Once copy is received, I read through and edit articles as necessary, before deciding on the exact layout of the magazine. After this, I hand the magazine (via email, floppy disc and face to face meeting) to David Holden. He produces the print ready version of the magazine on CD rom, and delivers this to the printers. David and I meet a couple of times during the production of every issue, and I am very grateful for his patient unfailingly cheerful professionalism.

The biggest encouragements in producing the magazine are the rich variety of contributions and the wonderful way it always fits into the available page space in the end! A point for prayer is the pressure of time I sometimes suffer from, especially when Ploughshare and 6.30pm rota deadlines coincide!”

When once the Ploughshare has gone to the printers Bernard Blanksby takes over and organises the distribution.

Bernard writes:

“I collect 500 Ploughshares from the printers and make up the packs for each distributor who is responsible for collecting the money as well as delivering the magazine. This includes 80 copies to St Peter’s. The packs are set up in the back of church for the distributors to collect on the Sunday. Any packs not collected I deliver to the distributors. Some individuals collect their own copies from the back of church.

In the last “Ploughshare Year” St. John’s stopped receiving their quota and the St Peter’s numbers dropped from 100 to 80. The remaining Ploughshares, which have varied increasingly from 76 to 123 are put in the church porch. Approximately 60 magazines are taken from the porch but there is no way of checking if people pay or not.”

As you read this could you help Bernard with the distribution of Ploughshare in our community?

Do you have a regular order? If your answer is “No,” see Bernard and get your name on his list! One way to find out what happens at St. Thomas’ and St. Peter’s is to read Ploughshare.

Spare copies are always available in the West Porch.

Service Rotas

The rotas for people who help at our three Sunday services continue to be masterminded by Allan Kitchen and Pam Brimelow.

Allan writes:

“I am happy to report that we have had another successful year in preparation of the service rotas. Each year the time between rotas appears to get shorter and shorter! I am very appreciative of the support provided to me by Pam Brimelow and also the assistance provided by Gill and Martin Bailey (11 o'clock) and Sue Ward (6.30).

In addition, the input from David Mouncer and the office staff is appreciated. And then of course we must not forget the volunteers who notify us of their availability and then turn up each Sunday. As you know the rotas are provided each three months and in order to have them ready on time, a start is made four weeks after the start of the previous rota. Miraculously they always appear in Church ready for the next quarter. We are all very grateful for the assistance of church members without whose help it would be a non-event.

The one area that causes the most hassle is the late completion of the Rota slips and secondly the changes of availability. I understand that people's commitments change and it is pleasing to see that volunteers arrange their own exchanges.

As regarding rota slips, it is a tremendous help to get them on time. It is clear that any errors in compilation can USUALLY be put down to late completion.”

Tape Library

Martin Bailey faithfully co-ordinates the recording of our Sunday services.

Martin writes:

“I have been running the tape library now for some two years or more.

The task is purely administrative. I time, date and number each tape to the corresponding services each Sunday. The tapes are kept in the grey cupboard behind the lectern at the front of church.

Usually, people either take the tape from the service they have just attended or occasionally I am phoned at home if they have missed a pertinent service.

In terms of the loan facility, it is not commonly used and the uptake is poor. Currently to my knowledge only one person is using the library as she recovers from her operation.

Since the start of recording our services, there is still one problem that has not been resolved in the recording of each service. The recording only picks up the microphones so during the time they are not being used (during hymns) there are huge tracts of silence. For the recording to come to life there needs to be a “congregational microphone” so that the recording sounds like a real service!

The current uptake on loans is about one service per month – one might ask if the tape library really needs to exist?”

Please pray for those now considering the way forward for the tape library.

From reading these reports I hope you are encouraged. Yes, I know there are areas that could be improved – but remember nearly all the people involved are volunteers who are very busy people. In fact some undertake several areas of service within the church and a few find themselves “on duty” most weeks. Could you volunteer to help in order to lessen the load of others?

Communication and co-ordination is a two way operation.

Therefore please can I urge everyone to:

- **READ** the notice sheets, the information leaflets that are handed out on Sundays or left at the back of church, Ploughshare, the church website, Spotlight, the notice boards at the back of church
- **RESPOND** to what you read
- **CONTRIBUTE** by writing articles for Ploughshare or brief reports for the Notice Sheet in order to share what has been happening in your area of church life with the rest of the church family
- **COMPLETE** your rota slips by the appropriate date
- **ENCOURAGE** the people who so willingly serve in our church so their work does not become a chore, but rather they are reassured that their work is appreciated
- **PRAY** for all these loyal and reliable volunteers and for the jobs they do

and finally ---

To me here at St. Thomas', the word communication suggests more than just having the right structures and sufficient volunteers in place so that the "jobs" get done and the church family knows what is happening. Yes, these are important, but I believe there is something more - that something is **prayer** - the church family coming together in prayer. The response to our monthly People@Prayer was initially encouraging but it is disappointing that more recently the numbers of those attending have decreased.

Communication with God is a two way operation – as well as talking to God we need to spend time together listening to Him, hearing His specific instructions for us and then trusting Him for the outcome.

How willing are we to come together to open wide the channels of communication between ourselves and our heavenly Father?

At a recent Derby diocesan conference on church growth, Bob Jackson, the archdeacon of Walsall said, **“Remember, God has a unique way forward for your church. I trust that you are all praying together to seek God’s guidance as to what is right for you.”**

**“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 Ch 3 v 5&6**

Barbara Goodacre