



The Parish of
Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog and Llanfabon

THE PARISH OF TREHARRIS TRELEWIS BEDLINOG AND LLANFABON

Saint Matthias, Treharris | Saint Mabon, Llanfabon | Saint John the Baptist, Nelson

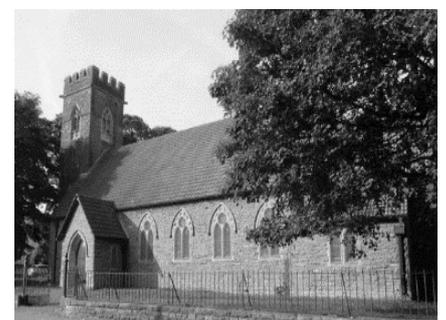
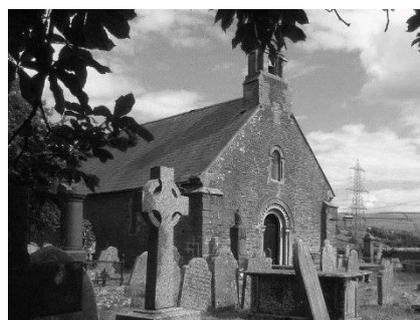
PARISH ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Priest-in-Charge:

Rev'd. Fr. Gareth J. Coombes
The Vicarage
13 The Oaks
Quakers Yard
TREHARRIS
CF46 5HQ

Independent Examiner:

Gary Meredith IPFA
Park Lane
TREHARRIS
CF46 5LT



THE PARISH OF TREHARRIS TRELEWIS BEDLINOG AND LLANFABON

Saint Matthias, Treharris | Saint Mabon, Llanfabon | Saint John the Baptist, Nelson

NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual Vestry Meeting of the parish will be held on Thursday the 12th of April 2018 at 6:00pm in Saint John the Baptist, Nelson.

All lay people whose names are on the Electoral Roll of the Parish are entitled to speak and vote and are strongly urged to attend.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. To receive and confirm the minutes of the last Vestry Meeting.
3. The Parish Report
 - [3.1] The Chairperson's Report
 - [3.2] The Parish Accounts and Treasurer's Report
 - [3.3] To receive the 2017 Parish Report
4. To receive any reports from the Deanery and Diocesan Conferences and the Governing Body of the Church in Wales.
5. Elections
 - [5.1] People's Parish Warden (1)
 - [5.2] People's Sub Warden - St. Matthias (1)
 - [5.3] People's Sub Warden - St. John's (1)
 - [5.4] People's Sub Warden - St Mabon's (1)
 - [5.5] Parochial Church Councillors (2) (2) (2)
 - [5.6] Sides-persons
 - [5.7] Triennial elections as are necessary
6. To appoint an Independent Examiner of the accounts.
7. To consider any other business of which notice has been given to the Chairperson and to which the meeting consents.
8. The Blessing



The Reverend Gareth Coombes
Priest in Charge | Chairperson of the Vestry Meeting

DRAFT COPY OF THE MINUTES

The Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog and Llanfabon

Easter Vestry Meeting

held on the 25th of April 2017

at Saint Matthias Church, Treharris at 6:00pm

Present:

Father Gareth Coombes
Patreesa Humphreys
Margret Edwards
Margaret Lloyd
Kate and Richard Thomas
Mary Williams
Mary Dare
June and Michael Lewton
Lynfa Ackerman
Fiona Parsons
Len Jones
Alan Hoskins
Alison Francis
Audrey Wiltshire
Caroline Davies
Crissie Stock
Jane Grandon
Marika and Ann Savage-Lewis

1. Apologies:

Received from Vicky Morgan Alison Knight Shirley Drane Lynn Farr and Pauline Faulkner.

2. Receive and confirm minutes of the last Vestry Meeting:

Meeting held 17th April at St. Johns Church Nelson

Minutes accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed by Alison Francis and seconded by Crissie Stock

Minutes signed by Fr. Gareth Coombes

3. The Parish Report:

3.1 The Chairperson's Report.

Father Gareth highlighted parts of the report; members either referred to copies received by Email or physical reports that were available at the meeting.

Fr Gareth commented that it was a very busy and challenging year, yet also very rewarding.

The setting up and promotion of an online donation page had brought significant financial benefit to the parish – especially with regards to maintenance of churchyards and cemeteries.

Father Gareth also stated that he was overwhelmed by the welcome he had received not only from members of the three churches, but also by the communities the parish serves as a whole.

He went on to say he was very pleased to state that St. Mabon's from September of last year had regular Sunday worship – allowing this very special and sacred place to open its doors once again every week. The church is open daily and continues to be a place of prayer reflection and contemplation for many.

A number of successful grant applications have enabled the parish to develop links with the local communities during the lead up to Christmas with the parish being able to host two Festive Family Fun Day's in both parts of the parish in Nelson and Treharris.

The parish has developed our relationship within the "Cluster" where the parishes of Gelligaer, Ystrad Mynach and Llanbradach have begun to work together more closely.

Fr Gareth has felt encouraged to move forward together through 2017 as we strive to build up the kingdom of God in this place.

Fr Gareth concluded by thanking every person who has supported him; thanking them for their support over the past year.

3.2 Parish Accounts and Treasurer's Report.

Simon Shaw, Parish Treasurer presented his report.

Simon commented that at the middle of 2016 he was very concerned with the state of our finances; especially as we were behind with our Parish Share.

Funds received from the Parish Christmas Draw and other planned fundraising had addressed this concern.

Simon highlighted it was imperative that we watch our spending, and was still very concerned at the cost incurred by printing.

Simon requested if congregations could be reminded of the benefits to the parish regarding the gift-aid scheme.

3.3 Receiving the 2016 Parish Report.

Parish reports received and accepted by members.
Proposed by Audrey Wiltshire and seconded by Lynfa Ackerman.

4. Reports from the Deanery and Diocesan Conferences.

No reports available.

5. Elections:

5.1 Parochial Church Council:

Nominations to serve on the Parochial Church Council were duly elected as follows in accordance with the decree set up 1st January 2013 that as a Parish of three churches – two members should be nominated at the Annual General Meeting for each church:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| St. Mabon's, Llanfabon | Margaret Edwards Mary Williams |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| St. Johns, Nelson | Pauline Faulkner Simon Shaw |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| St. Matthias, Treharris | Audrey Wiltshire Fiona Parsons |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|

5.2 Church Wardens:

Fr Gareth announced that Alison Francis had been invited to serve as his warden, and accepted.

One nomination to serve as Peoples Parish Warden; Lynn Farr appointed.

Sub Wardens:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| St. Matthias, Treharris | Vicky Morgan People's Dennis Sullivan Priest's |
|-------------------------|---|

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| St. Johns, Nelson | Jayne Grandon People's Crissie Stock Priest's |
|-------------------|--|

6. Independent Examiner of Accounts:

It was assumed that the current arrangement would continue; to be confirmed the first meeting of the PCC.

7. Any other business:

Any other business should have been given in writing either to the Priest, the secretary or church-wardens. The business is to be presented to members and only with permission discussed at this meeting or referred to the PCC and discussed there.

Ann Savage Lewis requested to speak and would like the meeting to record that both her and Marika were very impressed and grateful by the very generous way they had been welcomed into the Parish family, and also for the enthusiasm and commitment of the parish in supporting the mission and ministry of Compassion UK.

Michael Lewton also requested to speak and stated how fortunate the parish is to have Father Gareth Coombes as Parish Priest – this was agreed unanimously.

8. The Blessing

The Meeting ended with the Grace

INTRODUCTION

The three churches that make up the Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog and Llanfabon are Saint Matthias, Treharris; St. Mabon, Llanfabon; and Saint John the Baptist, Nelson which are in the Archdeaconry of Morganwng, in the Deanery of Caerphilly and Merthyr Tydfil, in the Diocese of Llandaff in the Church in Wales.

Priest in Charge: Father Gareth Coombes

Independent Examiner: Gary Meredith, IPFA

Bank: Barclays Bank

Architect: Hook Mason Ltd.

The Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog and Llanfabon is part of the Diocese of Llandaff within the Church in Wales. The Church in Wales is a province within the Anglican Communion and, as such, exists to advance the Christian religion through world-wide mission. The object of the Parochial Church Council, hereafter the PCC is to ensure that the life and work of the Church within the parish helps to fulfil that mission, both locally and more widely.

The PCC is not a body corporate. Its composition, procedures and powers are regulated by the Constitution of the Church in Wales, as amended from time to time by its Governing Body, set up in section 13(1) of the Welsh Church Act 1914. Elections are held at the Annual Vestry Meeting which must take place on or before the 30th of April. All persons whose names are entered on the Electoral Roll are entitled to vote and to stand for election, age restrictions apply. Before assuming office, every member of the Council must sign a declaration that he or she will be bound by the Constitution.

The Representative Body of the Church in Wales holds the land and property of the Church in Wales, including the churches of St. Matthias, St. John the Baptist and St. Mabon's their contents and churchyards. The Representative Body is an Exempt Charity and was set up under sections 13(2) of the Welsh Church Act 1914. It acts on behalf of the Province in paying the Stipends of full-time clergy; and administers the Church in Wales' Gift Aid scheme and recovers tax on behalf of parishes.

The PCC is responsible, inter alia, for promoting the mission of the Church, the parochial budget and all expenditure thereunder, the care and maintenance of the church fabric and of the churchyards, and for action on any other matter referred to it in accordance with the Constitution. The Council is also the normal channel of communication between the parishioners and the Bishop of the Diocese.

MEMBERSHIP

During the year the following served as members of the Parochial Church Council:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Parish Priest and Chairperson: | Rev'd. Fr. Gareth Coombes |
| Parish Reader: | Dr. Fiona Parsons (from 3 rd December 2017) |
| Priest's Warden: | Mrs. Alison Francis |
| People's Warden: | Mrs. Lynne Farr |
| Sub Wardens: | Mrs. Vicky Morgan Mr. Dennis Sullivan Mrs. Crissie Stock Mrs. Jane Grandon |
| Treasurer: | Mr. Simon Shaw |
| Secretary to the PCC: | Mrs. Audrey Wiltshire |
| Vicar's Secretary: | Mrs. Patreesa Humphreys |
| PCC Members: | Dr. Fiona Parsons Mrs. Audrey Wiltshire Mr. Simon Shaw Mrs. Pauline Faulkner Mrs. Margaret Edwards Mrs. Mary Williams |

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

There were **113** parishioners on the Electoral Roll at the end of 2017.

The number of communicants at Easter 2017 was **107**.

The number of communicants at Christmas 2017 was **108**.

The average Sunday attendance figures for 2017:

41 at St. Matthias, Treharris

23 at St. John the Baptist, Nelson

10 at St. Mabon, Llanfabon

During 2017 the following liturgies have been offered by the parish:

Holy Baptism **8**

Confirmations **NA**

Holy Matrimony **5**

Marriage Blessing **1**

Christian Funeral **63**

THE PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT

I'm sure you'll agree that 2017 has been another busy year for the Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog & Llanfabon.

As we take this opportunity to look back over the last year, we can recognise again many opportunities and events that have continued to shape and build the parish as we reach out into the communities of which we are a part. All of this is only achieved by working together as we continue in that mission of building the kingdom of God amongst us.

Sharing with you the everyday challenges, opportunities and privileges of being in parish ministry, there are yet again various occasions and events that should be highlighted.

2017 has seen the 'Restore, Repair & Refurb Project' at St. John's which has been in the planning stage for a number of years move to the next stage. This significant achievement was to receive the 'Faculty of Works', which is a huge step forward. Although, further effort remains to secure the necessary grant-funding to enable works to begin hopefully sometime early in 2019.

Another highlight has been to secure a number of smaller grants to make some long-overdue improvements to the kitchen and toilet facilities at St John's Church Hall. Although the future of the Church Hall remains uncertain, these improvements will make a huge difference to those who continue to use the hall; reflecting our commitment to serve the communities of Nelson and Llanfabon in a very real and practical way, and building upon what had already been done in 2016.

Each of the churches serves a distinct community, yet benefits from being a parish as we share with one another our gifts and our talents. It becomes a challenge when new and exciting opportunities to be the Church are met with negativity, a lack of enthusiasm or even disapproval.

That said, we must continue to be enthused and energised by many from each church family and the wider communities of which we are a part. It is certain that the Church is seen to have a place in today's often broken, divided and hurting world.

Each entry in the 'visitor book' at St Mabon's reflects just a few of these very special occasions and moments that the Church has had the privilege of sharing. During 2017 a significant number have visited, experiencing for themselves the sacredness, beauty and peace that is St Mabon's. This very precious gem that has been entrusted to us as a parish silently touches the hearts of those who push the door that continues to be open, accessible and available on a daily basis.

2017 saw a significant number of pastoral enquiries; liturgies for holy baptism and welcoming, requests for Christian funerals in church, private chapels and crematoria, as well as providing care and support to the bereaved at such a difficult time. The ministry to the sick at home, in hospital, care and nursing homes is shared with those who are called to this particular ministry; supporting the parish priest and licensed by the Bishop for this distinct ministry.

A further highlight was to welcome Bishop June's agreement to renew Dr. Fiona Parson's license as Reader in the parish. I thank Fiona for her willingness in offering to serve the parish again in this very distinct ministry of the Church, and for this we should be grateful of her continuing ministry amongst us.

There have been a number of liturgies offered for marriage, the renewal of marriage vows and marriage blessing. Sharing in times of both joy and sorrow, the Church has had the privilege of walking alongside individuals and families in the darkest and happiest of times, which has come to mean so much.

2017 has again seen various opportunities to develop and strengthen our links in the various communities in the parish; nursery, infant, junior and primary schools, clubs and associations, other churches and chapels within the parish and further afield in the deanery cluster.

Another full programme of social events, fundraisers and special services has continued to be a means by which the life of the Church can be lived out; requiring so much time, preparation and effort by various individuals of which we must be thankful.

The ministry that we share together is a calling that requires commitment, strength and determination. May our willingness, positivity and support continue to build one another up in this ministry to which each of us has been called, as we strive to build the Kingdom of God in our time.

Friends, as we look back to 2017, yet look ahead and move forward through 2018 we must be prepared to adapt and change, not only to the world around us, but to the communities of which we are to be a part. May our hopes and prayers unite as we listen, discern and respond to everything that God calls us to do with a real sense of joy, excitement and privilege in our hearts.

May I take this opportunity to thank each and every person who has supported the life, mission and ministry of this parish throughout 2017, as we continue to serve the communities of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog & Llanfabon together.

Only together can we make a real difference. +

Rev'd. Fr. Gareth J. Coombes
Parish Priest | Priest in Charge
The Parish of Treharris Trelewis Bedlinog & Llanfabon

THE TREASURERS REPORT

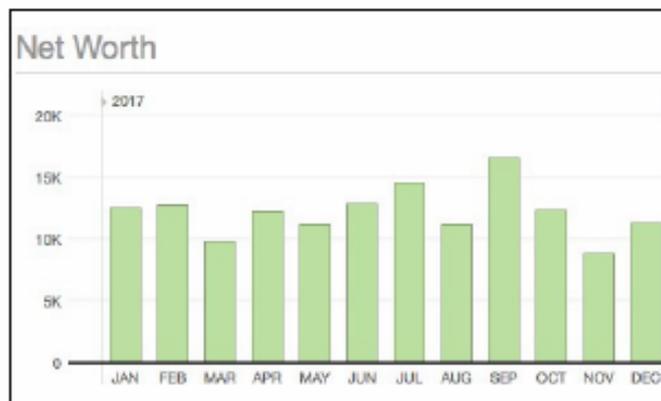
Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog & Llanfabon

Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog & Llanfabon

Treasurers Report for Year End 31/12/2017

Executive Summary

The Parish finances were largely stable in 2017 with our net worth reducing from **£11,996.11** at the beginning of the year to **£11,287.10** at the end of December - a slight decrease of **£709.33**.



Summary

| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| Cash | £11,287.10 |
| Credit Cards | £0.00 |
| Investments | £0.00 |
| AT RISK | £0.00 |
| CASH | £0.00 |
| Mortgages & Loans | £0.00 |
| Assets | £0.00 |
| Liabilities | £0.00 |

The *Standard Form of Accounts* accompanies this report.

Major Expenditure Items

Parish Share

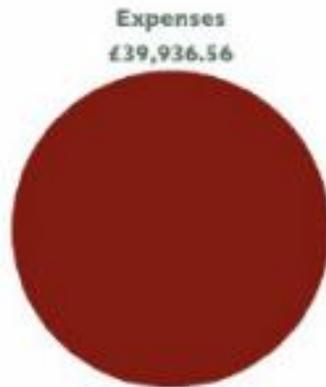
The *Parish Share (net of the rebate)* totalled **£39,936.56** - representing 60.7% of expenditure, yet the combined total of "collections" i.e. Gift-Aid envelopes, Gift-Direct (standing orders), cash in the plate and tax reclaims, only amounted to **£36,027.34**. This is a shortfall of **£3,909.22** or more than an entire month of *Parish Share*.

It is possible that this shortfall could be met through various ways which are available to each member of the congregation: These include making a one-off gift to the parish to support the ministry and mission of the Church, considering increasing giving to meet the shortfall, signing up to Gift-Direct which enables the parish to receive a regular gift each month, and of course maximising your gift if you are a UK Taxpayer through the Gift-Aid scheme at no cost to you. The challenge of meeting this burden continues to be a challenge for us all.

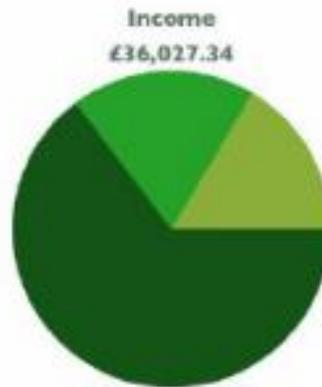
A graph showing the comparison of Voluntary Giving against Parish share is shown overleaf.

Parish Share versus Collections - Income & Expense Report

Summary Between 01/01/2017 and 31/12/2017



● Support for Ministry:Parish Share £39,936.56



● Voluntary Income:Planned Giving £23,304.54
● Voluntary Income:Loose Collections £6,776.46
● Voluntary Income:Tax Reclaims £5,946.34



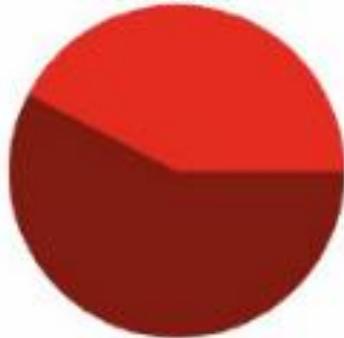
Churchyard Maintenance

Grass cutting at the two churchyards was a significant cost in 2017 but the "My Donate" scheme continued to yield benefits and we carried forward a surplus of £678.49 into the new year. With MTCBC deciding not to quote for the work we will inevitably incur higher costs whilst we seek a long term solution to this problem. A detailed breakdown of churchyard income and expenses are shown below.

Churchyard Maintenance - Income & Expense Report

Summary Between 01/01/2017 and 31/12/2017

Expenses
£2,080.00



Income
£2,758.49



- Church Property: Maintenance of Property Churchyard Llanfôn
- Church Property: Maintenance of Property Churchyard St Cynons
- Voluntary Income: Donations Churchyards £2,429.74
- Voluntary Income: Tax Reclaims: Gift Aid: St Cynons £336.25
- Voluntary Income: Tax Reclaims: Gift Aid: Llanfôn £92.50



Income & Expenses by Category

| Category | Total |
|---|-------------------|
| Income | |
| Voluntary Income: Donations Churchyards | £2,429.74 |
| Voluntary Income: Donations Churchyards Llanfôn | £1,135.49 |
| Voluntary Income: Donations Churchyards St Cynons | £1,294.25 |
| Voluntary Income: Tax Reclaims: Gift Aid Llanfôn | £92.50 |
| Voluntary Income: Tax Reclaims: Gift Aid St Cynons | £336.25 |
| Income Total | £2,758.49 |
| Expenses | |
| Church Property: Maintenance of Property Churchyard Llanfôn | -£1,200.00 |
| Church Property: Maintenance of Property Churchyard St Cynons | -£880.00 |
| Expenses Total | -£2,080.00 |
| TOTAL | £678.49 |

Income

Rental Income was down slightly to **£2,803** in revenue compared with **£3,110** in the previous year but this was mainly due to late payments which will be reflected in the 2018 accounts.

Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme

The GASDS system brought in **£3,850.52** in 2017 but this figure is distorted by the fact that we only submitted one claim during the year instead of two. The second claim was lodged in early January 2018 and resulted in a sum of **£4,983.33** being received on 5th February 2018. In effect, the actual value of GASDS in 2017 was therefore **£8,833.85** and clearly represents a vital source of income.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Shaw', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Simon Shaw - Treasurer

20 Mar 2017

Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog and Llanfabon

Financial Statement 31/12/2017

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with section 42(3) of the Charities Act 1993 using the Receipts & Payments basis

The Parish has no outstanding loans or liabilities.

Receipt & Payments of Accounts

| Account | Balance at 01/Jan/2017 | Receipts | Payments | Adjustment | Balance at 31/Dec/2017 |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|------------------------|
| Barclays 70582956 <i>Current Account</i> | £8,307.07 | £65,067.56 | £68,109.97 | | £5,264.66 |
| Barclays 60582883 <i>Llanfabon Churchyard</i> | £1,392.38 | £1,160.00 | £1,200.00 | | £1,352.38 |
| Barclays 73623203 <i>St Mabon's Restricted</i> | £2.67 | £0.01 | £0.00 | | £2.68 |
| Barclays 83726673 <i>Mission</i> | £0.32 | £741.06 | £0.00 | | £741.38 |
| Barclays 73473104 <i>St Mabon's Buildings</i> | £0.30 | £0.00 | £0.00 | | £0.30 |
| Barclays 33931803 <i>Grant Monies</i> | £1,800.92 | £1,503.98 | £629.41 | | £2,675.49 |
| Barclays 93498875 <i>To Be Repaid</i> | £0.18 | £0.00 | £0.00 | | £0.18 |
| Barclays 23971074 <i>St Cynon's Churchyard</i> | £492.59 | £1,457.44 | £700.00 | | £1,250.03 |
| Total | £11,996.43 | £69,930.05 | £70,639.38 | | £11,287.10 |

The amount paid to the Clergy to cover costs & expenses was **£3,026.53**

There were no other payments to employees during the year.

Approved by the **PCC** of the **Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog & Llanfabon** on

Saturday 7th April 2018 | Circulated and approved electronically

and signed on their behalf by Rev'd. Gareth J. Coombes Position Priest-in-Charge

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog & Llanfabon

Parish of Treharris, Trelewis, Bedlinog and Llanfabon

Independent Examiners Report to the Members of the Parochial Church Council

I report on the Financial Statement of the Parish for the year ended 31/Dec/2016 which are set out herein.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The PCC considers that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act);
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act); and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent Examiner:

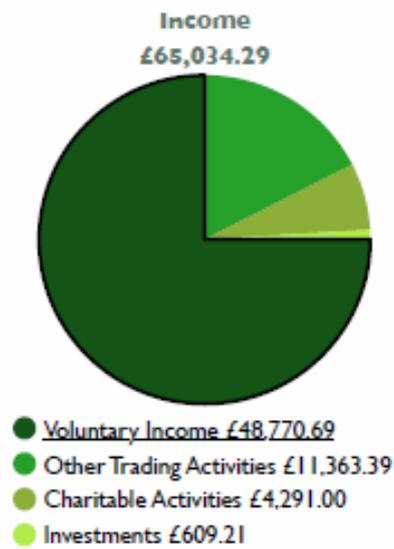
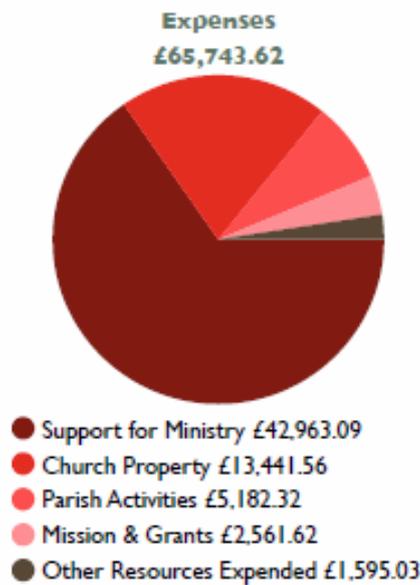
Signature Date:

Name:

Address:

Standard Form of Accounts 2017 - Income & Expense Report

Summary Between 01/01/2017 and 31/12/2017



Income & Expenses by Category

| Category | Total |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Income | |
| Charitable Activities | £4,291.00 |
| Charitable Activities:Fees:Choir | £80.00 |
| Charitable Activities:Fees:Churchyard | £172.00 |
| Charitable Activities:Fees:Funerals | £2,752.00 |
| Charitable Activities:Fees:Internment | £152.00 |
| Charitable Activities:Fees:Weddings | £1,135.00 |
| Investments | £609.21 |
| Investments:Interest Earned | £6.73 |
| Investments:Investment Income | £602.48 |

Income & Expenses by Category (Continued)

| Category | Total |
|--|------------|
| Other Trading Activities | £11,363.39 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...isers:Christmas Fayre:St Johns | £1,245.33 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...rs:Christmas Fayre:St Matthias | £1,059.00 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...ristmas Prize Draw:St Matthias | £1,053.00 |
| Other Trading Activities:Money Raising:Fund Raisers:Concerts | £347.43 |
| Other Trading Activities:Money Raising:Fund Raisers:Marmalade | £180.37 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...rs:Parish Dance & Prize Draw | £1,564.20 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...Raisers:Refreshments:St John's | £35.17 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...isers:Refreshments:St Matthias | £373.39 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...isers:Sponsored Hymn Singing | £9.05 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...d Raisers:St Mathias:Bonus Ball | £1,299.00 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...aisers:Traidcraft:Orders Taken | £216.30 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...:Trips:Bath Christmas Markets | £75.20 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...:Fund Raisers:Trips:Panto 2017 | £698.00 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...:Whisky Bottle Coin Donation | £145.67 |
| Other Trading Activities:Money Raising:Magazine Sales - Other | £259.28 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...ived:St John's:Flower Arranging | £148.00 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...eceived:St John's:Maggies Voice | £40.00 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...eived:St John's:Slimming World | £1,720.00 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...t Matthias:Local Health Board | £495.00 |
| Other Trading Activities:Mon...Matthias:MTBC Polling Station | £400.00 |
| Voluntary Income | £48,770.69 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Churchyards:Llanfabon | £1,135.49 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Churchyards:St Cynons | £1,294.25 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Flowers:Gift Aid:St John's - Other | £100.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Flowers:St John's - Other | £177.10 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Flowers:St Mabon's | £7.55 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Flowers:St Matthias - Other | £135.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Flowers - Other | £5.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Gift-Aid:St John's | £373.77 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Gift-Aid:St Matthias | £1,025.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Parish | £54.25 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Sanctuary Lamp | £74.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:St John's | £120.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:St Matthias | £452.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Votive Candles:St John's | £170.61 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Votive Candles:St Mabon's | £15.30 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations:Votive Candles:St Matthias | £401.73 |
| Voluntary Income:Donations - Other | £315.00 |
| Voluntary Income:For Mission:Home:Food Bank | £60.00 |
| Voluntary Income:For Mission:World:Compassion | £2,977.30 |
| Voluntary Income:Grants Received:LLandaff DBF | £1,350.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Grants Received:Lottery Funding | £1,500.00 |

Income & Expenses by Category (Continued)

| Category | Total |
|---|-------------------|
| Voluntary Income:Legacy Gifts | £1,000.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Loose Collections:St John's | £2,416.12 |
| Voluntary Income:Loose Collections:St Mabon's | £1,268.87 |
| Voluntary Income:Loose Collections:St Matthias | £3,091.47 |
| Voluntary Income:Planned Giving:Envelopes:St John's | £6,210.30 |
| Voluntary Income:Planned Giving:Envelopes:St Mabon's | £385.00 |
| Voluntary Income:Planned Giving:Envelopes:St Matthias | £10,221.02 |
| Voluntary Income:Planned Giving:Gift Direct | £6,488.22 |
| Voluntary Income:Tax Reclaims:GASDS | £3,850.52 |
| Voluntary Income:Tax Reclaims:Gift Aid:Compassion UK | £146.25 |
| Voluntary Income:Tax Reclaims:Gift Aid:Gift Direct | £1,612.07 |
| Voluntary Income:Tax Reclaims:Gift Aid:Llanfabon | £92.50 |
| Voluntary Income:Tax Reclaims:Gift Aid:Parish | £8.75 |
| Voluntary Income:Tax Reclaims:Gift Aid:St Cynons | £236.25 |
| Income Total | £65,034.29 |
| Expenses | |
| Church Property | -£13,441.56 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...es:Electricity:St John's:Church | -£78.59 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...lectricity:St John's:Church Hall | -£200.97 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...:Electricity:St Mabon's:Church | -£170.84 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...:Electricity:St Matthias:Church | -£453.45 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Churches:Gas:St John's | -£725.75 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...urches:Gas:St Matthias:Church | -£1,789.73 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Churches:Heating Oil | -£356.15 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...hes:Insurance:St John's:Church | -£652.23 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...urance:St John's:Church Hall | -£731.23 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...:Insurance:St Matthias:Church | -£1,438.81 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...rance:St Matthias:Church Hall | -£1,083.50 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Churches:Repairs:St John's | -£642.00 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Churches:Repairs:St Mabons | -£85.00 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Churches:Repairs - Other | -£255.00 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...ater:St Matthias Church Hall | -£245.47 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Churches:Water:Vicarage | -£546.47 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Property:Churchyard:Llanfabon | -£1,200.00 |
| Church Property:Maintenanc...operty:Churchyard:St Cynons | -£880.00 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Property:St John's:Hall | -£109.97 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Property:St John's - Other | -£871.12 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Property:St Mabon's - Other | -£597.44 |
| Church Property:Maintenance of Property:St Matthias | -£327.84 |



Income & Expenses by Category (Continued)

| Category | Total |
|---|-----------------|
| Mission & Grants | -£2,561.62 |
| Mission & Grants:Home/World:Compassion | -£2,000.00 |
| Mission & Grants:Home/World - Other | -£125.00 |
| Mission & Grants:Parish:Food Co-Op | -£436.62 |
| Other Resources Expended | -£1,595.03 |
| Other Resources Expended:...aising Costs:Christmas Events | -£1,293.53 |
| Other Resources Expended:Money Raising Costs:Licences | -£134.00 |
| Other Resources Expended:...aising Costs:Prize Draw Tickets | -£67.20 |
| Other Resources Expended:...g Costs:Traidcraft:Invoices Paid | -£100.30 |
| Parish Activities | -£5,182.32 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish Expenses:A/V Equipment | -£753.98 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish Expenses:Printing:Hire Charge | -£894.84 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish Expenses:Printing:Paper | -£129.59 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish Expenses:Printing:Usage Charge | -£347.56 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish Expenses:Printing - Other | -£127.49 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish...ed Flowers:Mothering Sunday | -£57.30 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish...s:Purchased Flowers:St Johns | -£1,078.00 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish...Purchased Flowers:St Mabons | -£128.50 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish Expenses:Stationery | -£111.99 |
| Parish Activities:General Parish Expenses - Other | -£68.00 |
| Parish Activities:Maintenance of Services:Altar Requisites | -£975.12 |
| Parish Activities:Maintenance of Services:Cleaning | -£75.00 |
| Parish Activities:Maintenance of Services:Organist | -£400.00 |
| Parish Activities:Maintenance of Services - Other | -£34.95 |
| Support for Ministry | -£42,963.09 |
| Support for Ministry:Clergy Expenses:Fr Gareth | -£2,531.04 |
| Support for Ministry:Clergy Expenses:Locum | -£495.49 |
| Support for Ministry:Parish Share | -£39,936.56 |
| Expenses Total | -£65,743.62 |
| TOTAL | -£709.33 |

DEANERY CONFERENCE REPORT

No report available

DIOCESAN CONFERENCE REPORT

I wasn't expecting to attend The Diocesan Conference, so when the opportunity arose I was very pleased to step in to see and listen to our new Bishop, June.

In her address to the conference Bishop June explained that her first love was Sociology and one of her first tasks was to acquire a large map of the diocese which is now in her office so that she can understand the diverse socio-economic areas that make up The Diocese of Llandaff not just the physical boundaries. She referred throughout to different aspects of map making and geography relating these to where we have come from in the 19th Century to where we are now and where she hopes we will make changes in the future. There will be discussions when she visits all the deaneries so that we might draw a common map of the diocese to agree who we are and to be clear in our self-identity to identify our priorities and deliver them successfully. Each church, parish and deanery will be different but with a common purpose.

To quote her directly she said, "I'm passionate about what the local does and you could easily coax me into saying that the church's mission is always local, always contextual, at its very best when it recognises the way of Christ in the shared life of the community, responding to memory and joy, to tragedy or sorrow, being of the people."

In our groups we discussed what we thought about our deaneries; what makes them unique; words describing our deaneries; what our deanery offers to the diocese and what we are doing well at the moment and what we hope for in the future. The results of these discussions will help to give Bishop June a point of information from which to begin.

The map has and is changing and there are spheres of unfamiliarity one of the main ones at the moment is that Llandaff has a female bishop. She referred to that fact once and will not do so again as she thinks of herself as a bishop not a woman bishop. It was acknowledged that some will find this redrawing of the map creates uncertainty and these issues need to be addressed and it Bishop June's desire to 'find a pathway so that every parish feels known and valued by their bishop. It was however a little disappointing to notice some individuals leaving before the bishop celebrated the Eucharist which brought the day to a close.

Alison Francis | Observer

GOVERNING BODY REPORT

No report available

THE CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

2017 has been another very busy year for the Parish of Treharris Trelewis Bedlinog and Llanfabon. During the second year of Fr. Gareth's incumbency we have been building on the blocks that were already there, as well as putting new blocks in place. The parish is thriving under his leadership and his energy is infectious.

Ann-savage Lewis has a real passion for the ministry and mission of Compassion UK, and we have been glad to support her work for her favourite charity first with a parish breakfast followed by monthly coffee mornings held alternately in St. John's and St. Matthias. Ann herself contributed to our funds by being sponsored for dying her hair blue. A tattoo has been mentioned for this year!

Caerphilly Male Voice Choir gave us a concert and Connie Francis, a local young musician, with friends and family performing, raised money for the charity, 'Ask'. These concerts were very enjoyable and well performed, but sometimes lack the support of the local and the church community.

There has been good support for the Mothers' Union in raising funds for 'Away from it all' caravan offered by the Llandaff Mothers' Union and sited in Porthcawl. Families in need can apply through local branches to use the caravan for a week's well-earned rest, re-couperation or just a holiday.

The parish continues to give generously to the Merthyr-Cynon Food Bank, and we supported this as members of the local community came together with us to donate many harvest gifts to the food-bank and Cleide, Project Manager joined us at the parish Harvest Praise service and spoke to us as to why this work is so important in this age of austerity. Following this success the Mothers' Union, and the local community volunteers collected and packed gifts for the local Women's Refuge and for a local rough-sleepers project. Thank you to everybody from around the parish and the local community who donated, packed gifts and gave up their time to make this such a success.

The parish is engaging more and more with the local communities of which the Church is a part in many different ways, and we realise that this is an important part of the life and mission of the Church.

The parish hosted two Festive Family Fun Days; building upon last year, and they were both a great success, enjoyed by young and old alike. A new step was taken when we introduced the Parish Summer Prize Draw which took place at the Parish Summer Dance held in Nelson Ruby Club. We must thank the committee of the Nelson RFC, for allowing us to use their facilities and our guest artiste. The event was a 'sell out' and we hope to do the same at Bedlinog RFC in 2018; it was a great evening.

All the usual services have continued as they should, with some new services introduced. Last year the annual 'In Loving Memory' service was hosted by St. Matthias. There was a service at dawn at 6 am on Easter Day, which was well attended. This year will see Bishop June join us at dawn at St Mabon's.

The Parish Breakfast following this special service was good too. Some services throughout the year, for example at Harvest and Christmas have been united parish services hosted in each of the three churches around the parish. Cluster services do not seem to be so well attended and have an opportunity to be developed further.

Since November 2017 we have launched the St John's Community Food Co-operative, which is held on a Thursday in St. John's Church Hall, Nelson. The hall is most suitable for access for suppliers etc. This project supported by the diocese mission fund is proving very popular, especially in relation to the church reaching out responding to the social needs of the community; more if this later.

We would like to conclude with a very big thank you to everyone from the parish who work tirelessly to make each of the three churches as welcoming as they are; those who are always there to offer help and support no matter what the job entails, and those who donate time, effort and expertise whenever it is needed. The parish thrives with a good team, and let's keep building on this success and carry it into the future.

Alison Francis | Priest's Warden
Lynne Farr | People's Warden

TREHARRIS MOTHERS UNION

The year began with our AGM in early February and the officers were re-elected for another year – Vicky Morgan, Branch Leader, Audrey Wiltshire, Secretary and Shirley Drane, Treasurer. Our membership had decreased to 10 as our indoor member Mrs Jean Hunt was now residing in a nursing home. Sadly in May she peacefully passed away surrounded by her family. Jean had been a loyal member of our congregation for over 50 years and had served as churchwarden on several occasions as well as being a faithful member of our MU branch. She was also a dedicated committee member of the local Macmillan cancer charity. Before moving to the nursing home, her health had deteriorated and she was unable to attend our fortnightly meetings in the church hall so we took our meetings to her house on a regular basis. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

In March some of our members travelled to Llandaff Cathedral for the Diocesan Quiet day which was led by Fr Graham Francis – a day of reflection and prayer. In April we decided to dedicate one meeting for Lenten Deeds and cleaned all the church brass items before Easter Day.

In May the Deanery Festival was held at Christchurch, Pant. This was led by Rev Caroline Owen and the service this year focused on women named in the Bible. Afterwards we all enjoyed a lovely buffet prepared by their branch members. Unfortunately the festival wasn't as well attended as usual because it was held in the afternoon, something that was noted for future events. Also in May some members attended a short service of prayer at St Mabon which was hosted by Llanfabon MU. Afterwards we joined in fellowship at the Llanfabon Inn for an evening meal.

In early June we were invited to St John's Church as Llanfabon MU held a Strawberry Tea & Dutch Auction. We raised over £100 towards the AFIA caravan in Porthcawl. Also in June we invited Canon Robert Donkin to our branch meeting to give a fascinating talk/ slide show on the Anglican community in Southern Spain and his chaplaincy there where he lives for part of the year. We were joined by some members of Llanfabon MU who enjoyed it so much that they invited him to do the same talk for their members later in the year.

In July together with Llanfabon MU we organised a summer trip to Gloucester stopping at the Labels outlet on the way.

At the end of September a deanery meal was arranged for branch officers at the Llanfabon Inn – a chance to meet with other branch leaders

In October Audrey & I attended the Diocesan General Meeting at Jury's Hotel Cardiff. The first time a general meeting was open to all members. It was very well attended and Bishop June, a MU member, gave a welcome address. We were able to pick up lots of information and some useful literature.

Our Christmas appeal this year was to support the Merthyr Foodbank and the homeless people of our community. We collected toiletries. Sweets, chocolates, hats, gloves and scarves as well as baby clothes & toys. These were then put in Christmas bags, boxes or stockings and taken to the local collection centres by the end of November.

During the year, we as a branch, helped provide refreshments for parish events such as Coffee4Compassion, Walsingham Cell, Community Christmas Lights & Carols and some of us also helped with Messy Church. At baptisms and weddings there is always a MU member in attendance. We also supported the Festive Fun Day at the beginning of December with a gift bag stall and 'Name the Dragon' (kindly donated by Philip & Margaret Williams formerly of Edwardsville and Nelson but now living near Norwich)

Finally in December we went to the Tommy Box Carvery at the Navl Treharris for a well-earned Christmas meal. Fr Gareth and his son Tom joined us for an enjoyable evening.

Vicky Morgan | Branch Leader

LLANFABON MOTHERS UNION

The annual general meeting took place on Monday 5th February. Thirteen members attended. Total membership is now 28 including one indoor member. Two new members attended the meeting. At the meeting the Secretary's report was presented as was the Treasurers Report and both were accepted by the members present. The officers, Branch Leader, Treasurer and Secretary were re-elected. The programme for 2017 was presented to the meeting.

February 20th, We had a corporate communion led by Fr Gareth and this was followed by Susan Carlick speaking about the charity “Mind” It was a lively and interesting evening addressing the subject of Mental Health which is an issue that affects so many in our society today.

March 2017: Rev’d Chris and Rev’d Bev Reaney came along to talk about the work of the US in Bangladesh. Again we had an informative and enjoyable evening with slides and stories of the efforts of the Christian church in Bangladesh to provide education, water and hope to the people of the street community. Bev showed us materials used in the making of saris and craft products being produced to help women to gain economic power. It showed us we must keep the work of the church in Bangladesh in our hearts and in our prayers.

Jennifer George a retired English teacher gave us a talk on The Brontes. It was of the highest standard and all of us were totally involved in the story of this amazing family. She brought to life the village of Howarth and the surrounding moors and deftly drew the characters of the four Bronte siblings. It was riveting and thoroughly enjoyed by all our members. Hopefully we can do it all again in the future.

Also during March on the second Sunday of lent the Mothers’ Union took part in the Sunday service at St John’s. Prayers were read by Dr Fiona Parsons and mothers’ union members, they were taken from our” Power of Prayer” booklet produced in a prayer workshop led by Fiona. Mothers’ union members also read the lessons, were servers and carried out other duties during the service. Maybe we can make this an annual event?

April 2017: Mothers’ Union initiated a programme to highlight the issues of Gender violence. We were unable to use the programme in Nov/Dec due to our Christmas programme. However we decided to use the MU materials to use prayer, information and discussion to highlight the issues of Gender Violence. As part of the programme we made contact with our nearby Women’s Refuge and donated toiletries for the ladies. Fr Gareth knew of our intentions and asked parishioners to help. There was a generous response and two baskets of toiletries were collected that evening by a member of staff from the Women’s Refuge. Alison our Church Warden and Jane our Sub Warden intend to organise a coffee morning, pamper session and children craft table in the future. We hope to continue our contact with Women’s Aid our discussion highlighted the worldwide issues of women who face violence solely based on their gender. We tried to fulfil our current aim “Faith in Action” and our donations and compassion bore witness to this.

The Bedwas Writers Circle was represented by their chairperson Dinella Shelton and Susan Meyrick who is also a member of the writers group. We had a little background on the writers circle and readings from their work. Susan had been brought up in Nelson and she met her old friends. Some of her readings evoked memories from her childhood in the village. They brought along a book they had just published and £1 for each book was donated to Ty Hafan. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and great to see the homegrown talent in the village.

April also saw Donna successfully run the London Marathon raising a large amount of sponsorship, our prayers went with her that Sunday morning and she received many congratulations on her return!!!

May 2017: Three members attended the Deanery Festival at Dowlais and Pant. It was a lovely afternoon service followed by a tea in the church hall. That evening we were joined by St Matthias MU for prayers at St Mabon's followed by a fellowship meal at the Llanfabon Inn. The prayers were led by Lynne and we remembered our recently departed member Audrey Carlick who we miss so much, there was a delay with our meal but I think we all made the best of it and as usual it was an opportunity to celebrate our strong bonds and friendship.

Members enjoyed an evening of fellowship with a Quiz provided by Sadie. It was a lot of fun but challenging-no one had full marks but Gilda had the highest score and Alison was the runner up. Always a popular evening it went really well.

June 2017: In June we held our Dutch Auction/strawberry tea and were joined by St Matthias MU. Judy our Deanery President also attended. It was the usual fun evening and everyone had a thoroughly good time. We raised £160 for the new caravan which was a great effort.

We changed our programme in order to join Fr Gareth and the Caerphilly Male Voice choir in the St John's church. It was a lovely summer concert with Pimms on the lawn and MU members were in full attendance.

The following evening seven Llanfabon MU members attended a skittles evening at Gilfach. It was great fun as usual, we did not win the skittles this year but Jane won the first prize in the raffle!!

July 2017: At the beginning of July we held a flower arranging evening that was arranged by Marjorie Davies. We had a very good turnout for this popular evening and the Victorian posy arrangements were a delight – many appearing on Face Book over the next few days. I think we are making this an annual event!!

We finished this section of our programme with a corporate communion and the enrolment of four new members and the return of a valued member. This was followed by a buffet and this provided an enjoyable end to the evening.

There were no meetings in August.

September 2017: Our speaker for the evening was Fr Robert Donkin giving a talk and slide show about his Chaplaincy in Spain. This was a great evening and Val, Fr Robert's wife accompanied him. His talk and slide show took us to the festivals and traditions of Christian worship in Spain.

One evening saw the return of Ann Butler, one of our mothers' union speakers. This time her workshop was based on Gay and Lesbian issues within a parish. There was a wide ranging discussion based on her work shop scenarios of parish life and our Christian responses. It went extremely well and we were sad to learn that after many years Ann will retire as a MU speaker. We wish her well.

Ann brought two friends with her, one of which, Dorcas Munkley was a Nelson girl and it was good to reconnect with her.

October 2017: Alison hosted the evening with Keep Fit and Wellbeing. This was good fun with a great atmosphere as we all joined in the exercises. We also had a very interesting talk on diet and healthy eating. Everyone agreed we must do this again in 2018!!!

The Cheese and wine evening went really well. All the food was donated by our very valued member Marretta. We all showed Marretta our appreciation and Sadie provided a table quiz to add to an evening full of friendship and camaraderie.

November 2017: Avon Party Plan: an enjoyable evening supplied by Elaine from Avon. Her daughter Caroline gave a great makeover to Christine with a beautiful result!! Everyone enjoyed the coffee and cakes.

An informal meeting where we looked at, and agreed next year's programme. Alison updated us on the restoration programme at St John's. We collected our Christmas donations for the Women's Aid centre in church for Fr Gareth to bless and reminded everyone about Christmas gifts for the Food-bank. We had an amazing and generous response.

December 2017: We held our mince pies evening and the Hundred Club Draw. We did manage to meet, despite the snow, and the staff from the Women's Aid centre were able to join us for coffee and mince pies and took your generous gifts away with them. We hoped it helped them have a happy Christmas day. We were not able to hold the Hundred Club draw because of the weather but Wynne completed it on the following Sunday

We ended our year with our Christmas meal at the Llanfabon Inn. The evening was full of friendship and hospitality. Lynne ran the raffle as usual and we all showed our appreciation to Lynne as our Branch Leader with a bouquet of flowers Lynne has led us through a successful year once again. We have gained new members, had quite a few articles published both on line and in "In Touch" magazine, and Donna completed the London Marathon to our great delight.

We have given generously to MU charities and other organisations who support family life, and many members have supported Fr Gareth and the Parish by helping with the Compassion coffee mornings, Fun Days, Fruit and Veg co-operatives and by attending concerts, Harvest Praise, Carole Concerts etc. All this is all a reflection of a strong membership, good attendance, friendship and support that are the characteristics of Llanfabon MU.

We look forward to 2018 and our new programme. Well done everyone!

Mildred Hughes | Branch Secretary

SAINT MATTHIAS CHURCH CHOIR

The choir continues to be a valued part of the Church that meets at Saint Matthias.

We are very privileged to have a choir, unlike many churches. The dedicated group of 16 ladies regularly assist with the liturgical aspects of worship and other services.

Occasional anthems have been enjoyed at various times throughout the year, and the choir continues to be part of both wedding and funeral services upon request.

We are extremely privileged to have the professional services of Martin Davies, our organist who plays every Sunday and for weddings, travelling from Penarth.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Martin and all the members of the choir for their support and dedication to the life of the Church.

Patreesa Humphreys | Choir Mistress

GIFT-AID

There has been a significant increase in the number of parishioners who have decided to make their contribution using the 'gift-aid' donations scheme and paying by Direct Debit. The number of us using Direct Debit has risen from 12 to 25 at this time and I would take this opportunity of commending the scheme to all. Please remember that you do not have to pay income tax to gift-aid by Direct Debit but the scheme has the very great advantage of giving the parish a guaranteed monthly income and is entirely confidential.

We have also seen some changes to the ways that you can make your donations this year and I am very grateful for Father Gareth's excellent explanations and your patience in making these changes; thank you all very much because it has made my task much more efficient and indeed has increased our regular revenue for the parish.

Richard Thomas | Gift Aid Secretary

MERTHYR-CYNON FOOD BANK

The Parish continued with our links to the Merthyr-Cynon Food Bank throughout 2017.

Each week our box at St Matthias and our basket at St John's have been filled with the parishioners generous gifts. Certainly, those families that need our support have been held in our hearts and our prayers.

Members of the PCC deliver our items to the Trussell Trust Food Bank at Gurnos Merthyr, and as a parish, Fr Gareth and all of us have nurtured good working links with Cleide Correia (Merthyr-Cynon Foodbank, Project Manager)

A very special event in our Parish year for 2017 was our Harvest Praise celebration evening. It was held on Monday Oct 2nd 2017 the day after our Harvest Sunday where all our donations were to be given to the Merthyr and Cynon Food Bank.

The evening began with a Parish service in St John's where Cleide gave a talk on the contribution of the food bank in supporting our local communities. She gave a visual presentation showing how much we had given as a Parish and how many families and individuals it had helped. It was an inspiring evening and readings from Isaiah and St Matthews Gospel helped focus our attention on the christian message of giving and prayer.

The service was followed by our Harvest Praise Fellowship Meal where we all enjoyed Fr Gareth's Soup and great desserts prepared by Llanfabon MU. Cleide and her colleague left with a generous donation of items for the Food Bank.

Leading up to Christmas both churches in the Parish gave a large amount of festive gifts to help families have as happy a Christmas as possible In her latest email to us Cleide tells us that 2017 we have helped donate 738.75 kg of food that will feed 3043 adults and 1851 children making a total of 4894 people in crisis last year.

We will continue in our mission led by Fr Gareth and aided by all church members to continue our support for the Food Bank.

To close this report we can do no better than take to heart these words from Cleide taken from her latest e mail as we look to continue God's work in 2018

"This year (2018) we will count on you more than ever to keep our doors open for our local people in crisis. Many thanks for your ongoing support"

CHURCHYARD & CEMETERY MAINTAINENCE

The parish has the responsibility of maintaining the old St. Cynon's Churchyard, St. Mabon's Churchyard and part of Llanfabon Cemetery; all of which continue to hold a special place in the heart of many of the communities we serve.

The challenge of the parish being able to maintain these very special places has been met with the generosity of members of the congregations, those from the wider community and further afield who continue to have a connection.

The use of social media, and an online donation process hosted by BTmydonte; a non-commissioned method of processing donations online has been vital to support the 2017 programme of maintenance.

The parish, once again acknowledges the generosity of those who have donated throughout 2017; which has allowed us to maintain these important and significant places with respect throughout the year.

The parish also acknowledges those who have carried out this work on behalf of the PCC at the graveyards at both St Cynon's and St. Mabon's; together with the cemetery at Llanfabon during 2017.

MESSY CHURCH

The parish has continued to work with parishes from around the cluster. Messy Church is held monthly on a Saturday afternoon and rotates around the cluster with each parish hosting the monthly sessions.

A small group of volunteers from around the parish supported one another to host sessions at St Matthias Church Hall providing crafts and activities on a particular theme or season.

We are looking forward to include Nelson as part of Messy Church in 2018.

COMPASSION UK

As an Advocate for Compassion UK, I have been humbled by the huge generosity of the people of this Parish in their support for children living in dire poverty, both through sponsorship of individual children and through fundraising for the New Jerusalem Child Survival Project, in Delmas, Haiti.

Haiti is one of the world's poorest countries and without the love and commitment of organisations like Compassion, few children would have an education, medical care or enough to eat.

New Jerusalem, like all Compassion Projects, is run by the local church and provides advice, care and practical support to mothers and babies through from pregnancy until the child is 3 years old. It is similar to the Welsh Government's "Flying Start" programme, but has no "official" funding or backing!

The Coffee4Compassion mornings at St Matthias and St John's every month throughout 2017, were both fun and successful and although we are not doing them regularly in 2018, there will be an occasional Parish Breakfast/ Coffee Morning through the year.

There are other events in the pipeline too – watch out for more news! Can we match 2017 this year?

Thanks to your generosity, we raised a total of £3,123.55 during 2017. This will have been a HUGE help to our partners at New Jerusalem.

Diolch yn fawr – many thanks once again for your loving support - I am proud to be part of such a caring, loving and generous Parish. God bless you all.

If anyone would like more information about Sponsorship or about our partner project, the New Jerusalem Child Survival Project – or anything else to do with Compassion I will be happy to chat to you.

Together we can change the world – one child at a time.

Ann Savage-Lewis | Parish Compassion Advocate

ST JOHN'S COMMUNITY FOOD CO-OP

In the Bishop's address at the Diocesan Conference Bishop June said, "I'm passionate about what the local church does..... the Church's mission is always local, always contextual, at its very best when it recognises the way of Christ in the shared life of the community, responding to memory and joy, to tragedy or sorrow, being of the people."

Some in the parish feel the same, especially as Fr Gareth has reminded us of the need to forge greater links between the church and the whole community. The church is not there solely for its members or weddings, funeral and baptisms. If it was it would surely die.

Many have shared their views about pews being removed, or that the church no longer looks as it did many years ago around the time they once attended Sunday School.

Assuming that the Church will always be there is unrealistic in today's modern world; people attend less regularly, find it difficult to relate or engage and therefore become out of touch with current issues, challenges and circumstances.

We are now in the 21st century, and whereas in the past people regularly attended and took part in whatever was happening; this is no longer the case for many different reasons. If we are to build upon and strengthen existing links with the community we must explore and try new and different ways to highlight what the Church in this place is called to be.

In November 2017, the parish received a grant of £600 from the Diocesan Mission Fund; supporting the concept and purpose of a new Community Food Co-operative. These welcome funds have helped provide everything necessary to establish and run what has become the St John's Community Food Co-operative.

The project has welcomed volunteers, not only from the church and parish, but also from the wider local communities. The team of volunteers work well together and enjoy meeting everyone who come in for a coffee, tea, the delicious soup and cheeses and biscuits or even just to say hello.

So many people, for all sorts of reasons stop by every week and have become regulars meeting up, having a chat and enjoying some refreshments – or just want someone to listen.

The food co-operative is just one way by which we have begun to make stronger links with the community.

As a result of the food co-op being open and accessible one of the local pubs offered to help us and raise additional funds for the church refurbishment project; we have also been able to support families who have felt able to share with us that they are experiencing a time of crisis, which has meant we have been able to offer help and support.

To go back to words from Bishop June, we are working to put a context to the work of the Church in this community; the food co-op is so much more because it welcomes everyone for whatever reason they find themselves there; no one is ever turned away.

The concept of community food co-operatives was established by the Welsh Government, helping to promote access to fresh and affordable produce for all. Community food co-operatives were encouraged to sign up and accept 'Healthy Start' vouchers, where those eligible can use their vouchers to purchase produce.

Working together with a recommended local supplier, the co-operative offers seasonal packs of fruit, vegetables, mixed fruit and veg, mediterranean and stir-fry bags; quality free-range eggs are also available to order and paid directly to the supplier.

It has been noted that some individuals do not support the concept of the food co-operative; comparing it to that of a business, out to make a profit and therefore, apparently, competing for trade.

The food co-operative does not compete with anyone; no one is coerced into placing an order for produce, and making a purchase. Refreshments are offered freely without price, however if someone wishes to make a donation this supports the planned refurbishment works that are ongoing at St. John's.

Both local Co-operative Food Stores have pledged to support the project by donating any unsold items from the store to the food co-op; as well as providing re-usable carrier bags for customers to collect their produce.

The food co-operative does not exist for profit; that is not what the Church is or should ever be about. As we continue to reach out to into the local community we are able to respond practically to a very real and welcome need as we reflect the character and person of God to those around us. Surely this is what the Church is called to be, and what we should always be about.

There are those who continue to speak out calling for the Church to be at the heart of the community; perhaps St. John's Community Food Co-op is just one of the ways that we as a parish are beginning to make this happen.

If God's Church shines into the heart of the community, who knows what can happen; however, as that light shines even brighter it may draw others to come and find out what it means to be part of the Church today, and for that opportunity we should give thanks to God.

Alison Francis | Community Food Co-op Volunteer