

FINAL

Approved at AGM 15 April 2018

**TRINITY
CHURCH
ANNUAL
REPORT
2017**

REPORT ON CHURCH ACTIVITIES

2017 has been a significant year for Trinity. The church family came together and raised the funds to recruit its first full-time youth worker and Sam Ruck was warmly welcomed in December. This has been a courageous and faithful step, demonstrating a unity that I believe will lead to God blessing us in new and exciting ways.

Our on-going ministry and mission continued. The Autumn saw the start of a vision refreshment exercise to be completed at the AGM in 2018. The year has also been marked by the transition to a new Treasurer and the development of a re-structured budget and revised financial management systems.

It has been good to see lots of new faces, and it was wonderful to welcome back friends and ministers who have moved on over the years when we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the opening of our church building.

Once again, my thanks go to all the many volunteers and staff who give so much time and energy to keeping Trinity following God's lead. Thanks to everyone from the cleaners to the Leadership Team and Church Council.

I believe it has been a really good year and I'm excited by what is coming next year.

Every blessing in Christ,

Jon

1. Our Vision and Ministry

In 2017 Trinity continued to prioritise areas of ministry that came under the vision that was agreed at the end of 2012. This report reflects these priority areas. In the Autumn of 2017, it was decided to revisit and refresh the vision with the aim of approving a refreshed vision statement at the AGM in 2018.

1.1 *Youth Ministry*

Trinity responded to its commitment made at the end of 2016 to fund a **full-time youth worker** and, in the course of the year, raised the funds from pledges made by the congregation. This was a significant, exciting and faithful step. Trinity welcomed Sam Ruck at the start of December and he has made an immediate impact.

Tremendous credit and thanks go to our team of youth work volunteers (Emma, Mike, Anna, Kirsten and Bethan) who continued to faithfully serve us and the youth through this time of change and transition. It was excellent that in the Summer another trip to Soul Survivor was possible.

Trinity is now in a strong place to begin fostering a new chapter of youth work within the church and community. The youth worker role has three key parts:

- To support the development of Trinity's own youth work,
- To support the transition of Junior Church children as they move through the age groups, as well as the older youth moving to be young adults

- To build bridges in the local community with other youth workers, the town council and the schools, and develop some youth work in the community.

1.2 *Family Ministry*

Care and encouragement for Trinity's families across the generations and the wider community it links into continued much as last year.

The weekly term-time **Nursery Service** continued to cover a wide variety of key Christian themes and benefitted again from its committed team of volunteers led by Ann Baker, our Children, Family and Pastoral Worker. It continues to be popular with 20-30 mums and carers and their children. Highlights included a picnic, bear hunt & service in the park, a Christmas lunch and Nativity. Nursery Service lunches were, once again, held at Easter, Harvest and Christmas and were well attended by the regular congregation. This is a better pattern than the previous monthly lunches.

In addition to continuing its regular programme, the Nursery Service is hoping to link up with the community allotment. It's not clear yet what this might look like.

Messy Church was held at Easter and Christmas. Both were really well attended (70+) and Ann and the team delivered two excellent sessions. It wasn't possible to find a sustainable team to enable this to be run on a monthly basis so the plan, for the time being, is to run Messy Church at Easter, Harvest and Christmas and then continue to run a Messy Church Holiday Fun Club in the summer holidays.

The **Messy Church Holiday Fun Club**, run over three consecutive afternoons in early August, proved popular and successful with approximately 25 children each afternoon. The theme was messy messages - communication with and from God, including craft and science experiments, walking on water (ooblek) and exploding art activities, songs and Bible story teaching.

At Christmas, Trinity once again hosted and led a Nativity Service for the **Yellow Brick Nursery**. This has become an annual community event and is well attended by parents, grandparents and carers from the local community.

Trinity continued to host and lead **two toddler groups** (Monday and Thursday mornings). These are busy (over 30 children), regularly attended and lots of fun. Santa's visits are a highlight, even if quite a few children seem to dissolve into tears in his presence!

Elsie and Cecilia run the Monday group and Sarah and Cecilia the Thursday group and deserve significant thanks for their hard work and commitment to these groups. Ann Baker supports both. These two groups extend our links into the local community. In the year ahead, we may well see one of the leaders move away so we need to be mindful of succession planning.

It has been good to see families we've linked to through baptisms etc. come to some of these activities. In 2017 we conducted 6 infant baptisms and sent Birthday cards to all 0-3yr olds on our **Cradle Roll**.

ChurchSuite provides a powerful set of tools to allow easy communication with the many families we have contact with.

Trinity's **Chalfont Group** continued and flourished this year thanks to Rosemary and John. New people joined the group so that around 35 people attend most Thursday afternoons from 2.00pm to 3.30pm. Popular talks during the year were about Malawi, pre-Raphaelite art, local charities and musical entertainment such as The Reading Accordion Band and our own David Paine and Friends Band. The annual day out, this year to Bath, was very popular. The group continues to benefit from and is very grateful for the support most weeks from Frank at ASDA who serves tea and coffee.

Speakers have been booked for the whole period up to July 2018 and a day out to Portsmouth is planned for 14th June 2018. A spin-off once a month will be an informal get-together in the church hall on the second Monday of each month from 2.00 to 3.30 p.m. starting from 12th February 2018.

During the year we continued to provide **pastoral care** for those in need. This involves a small number of faithful members who visit and care. Of course, we don't always know when a need arises, and regret missed opportunities to show love and care. A good deal of care, support and friendship takes place within mid-week **small groups** (see below).

In the course of the year we undertook 8 **funerals** and 1 **wedding** which was held in Derbyshire.

1.3 Men's Ministry

This is the second year we've run **Who Let the Dads Out (WLTD0)**. We have seen the group grow gradually. By the end of the year there were approximately 20 dads reasonably committed to attending when they could. In practice this meant we had about 10 dads each month and about 15 children. It has been encouraging to see the guys getting to know each other, and to help clear up and really seem to value the morning. It is also great to have a committed team, which includes a teenager. A WhatsApp group has made communication much easier and more efficient. In the next year at least one social activity is being planned.

1.4 Whole Life Christianity

This area of ministry continued to remain in the background this year. It remains recognised as very important to the life of the church and for all disciples. It'll be interesting to see how Trinity deals with this when refreshing its vision.

1.5 Tools for the Job

As a title for capturing what we do to equip and enable disciples, this will need revisiting when we refresh the vision. However, in the course of the year Trinity undertook a wide-ranging preaching plan looking at discipleship. This included looking at:

- the non-negotiables of discipleship,
- the inward journey of discipleship,
- discipleship after the empty tomb,

- lessons for hungry disciples,
- the power of discipleship,
- the life of a disciple
- the cost of discipleship.

During Lent we used Steven Furtick's Crash the Chatterbox material and had a central group running as well as some small groups following the material.

Our **library** continued to be refreshed with new material: 27 books and 10 study guides. (28 books were withdrawn to make room.) The most highly used sections were Growth/Meditations & Readings/Relationships. There is again increasing evidence of people having simply browsed the shelves or left books out that they had perhaps borrowed but not signed out. Either way, it is encouraging that the Library continues to be used more than the bare loan statistics suggest. Recorded loans were down slightly, averaging 1 every 13 days. It is believed that people are using the internet/YouTube to access Christian talks and music.

Our 24/1 prayer vigil at Easter also provided some excellent resources to support and encourage us as disciples.

1.6 Strategic Use of the Building

The building continues to be used by a variety of user-groups from the community and the church on a regular (approximately 35 hours per week) and one-off basis. There is time set aside on Monday evenings for regular church-based activities. Church Council began meeting again in the church during the year as it made more sense from a practical point of view than meeting in the ASDA training room. The room booking system is working well and thanks go to Peter and Veronica for their careful management of this.

There were no major expenses on the building during the year although toilet repairs were required. Next year an assessment of improvements to the building will probably take place, as well as basic maintenance such as painting the outside of the window frames and making sure the lightning protection is in good order.

We continue to be very grateful to our volunteer cleaners for working hard vacuuming, cleaning windows and generally looking after the sanctuary and chapel.

2. Our Relationships: in Trinity and with the Community

As a church Trinity is increasingly aware of the importance of good quality relationships and the opportunities to serve and care for each other and the wider community locally and beyond, and in doing so share Jesus' love. Last year's report stated, "In our full and fast-moving multi- and social-media oriented world it is a constant challenge as a church to keep pace with change and to maintain and develop our relationships." This remains true especially as we seek to foster relationships across all generations.

As a church, Trinity continues to use various tools, including **social media**, its **website**, a **monthly magazine**, **weekly ENews** updates and an **email prayer chain** to encourage closer

and deeper relationships and shared understanding. Informally, mid-week small groups and individual church members use a variety of means to maintain and develop relationships.

There is always room to further develop the use of these tools. We have continued to upload news, reports, sermons as well as booking forms to the website and the event information page has been used regularly. Facebook and WhatsApp have increased in usage and the use of **ChurchSuite** (formerly ChurchApp – a modular data management tool for Rotas, Address Book, Calendar, Children - purchased February 2018, Room booking etc., Communication with the membership) (see below) has developed too. Looking ahead there is the need to consider developing the website further given changing styles and this will include making online giving straightforward as well making it fully compatible with the latest smart phones.

We have also worked very hard to be compliant with **safeguarding** and mindful of forthcoming developments in **data protection** in 2018 and the need to be compliant with this legislation.

Within Trinity our **mid-week small groups**, still under the continued faithful leadership of the group leaders, have continued to provide an important source of mutual support, care and love. We continued to have 8 groups, two of which run during the day-time. The groups follow a mix of their own choice of material and the Sunday teaching. The aim in 2017 to have a review of the small groups has been factored into the vision refreshment and the plan is to have a commitment to small group development discussed during Lent 2018 and a plan proposed at the AGM.

Time for Us, Trinity's group for women, led by Laura Draper and Kate Robinson, has continued to meet during the year and provided a really encouraging and appreciated range of social, craft and spiritual activities and resources. Attendance was consistent and encouraging with approximately 20-30 coming along.

The **Trinity Walking Group** enjoyed the walking holiday in Lulworth. Thirty-one went on it, a few of whom are not Trinity members. The monthly walks have stopped but 37 are booked to go on the annual walking holiday to Selworthy in May 2018.

In November **Trinity celebrated 30 years in its building**. To help celebrate there was a barn dance with those previous ministers able to come taking part. There was a walk around the parish and a lunch for those original members of Trinity still at Trinity. And Trinity's first minister, Rev Bernard Arnold came and took part in a special all-age service.

Looking out to the community the following need reporting:

Trinity continued to host **Open Saturdays**, 11 in all during the year on the first Saturday of each month (including joining with the Church Fair in December 2017). These are an opportunity to serve the community by supporting local, national or international charities which are doing work that demonstrates Christian values (they don't have to be Christian organisations). A total of £2,805.73 was raised for charity as well as two events to raise funds for Trinity (August Messy Church and the Christmas Fair).

A large number of volunteers continued to support and make these events successful where we demonstrate our hospitality and welcome lots of new people into Trinity's midst. Looking

ahead improvements with publicity and knowing what will draw people through the door needs to be better understood. It's encouraging that by the end of 2017 dates were booked until July 2018.

Community Chaplaincy has continued in ASDA and, as planned, began in Loddon Valley Leisure Centre (LVLC), on Monday afternoons. The team hasn't grown but discussions did take place about teaming up with a similar initiative that Lower Earley Baptist Church started at Maiden Place Shops. This other project, however, stopped. There is definitely scope to increase the slots each week. The visible presence in both ASDA and LVLC continued to be appreciated and every week there are always conversations of note, either one-offs or with customers or staff we have got to know. This has included supporting a staff member by sign-posting them to specialist advice and being approached to take a funeral. Recruitment to the on-going team of 4 during 2018 will be important, especially as one key member returns to the USA in November 2018.

The Hillside Community Allotment project, which Jon chairs, continued into its second season. Funding for a large poly tunnel was secured and this came into use towards the end of the year. The team of volunteers is committed but needs to grow to be able to make the most of the site. A very well attended community BBQ was held at the allotment in the Summer which did generate more interest. By the end of the season most of the beds produced crops which were shared out locally, with the school and the Churches Drop in Centre in Reading. It is planned to put together a Lottery Funding bid for the fence and external gate that is needed. The Deputy Head Teacher, a key member of the team, moved on from the school in the early part of the year but has remained as Secretary, and the Head Teacher has joined the team in his place.

Trinity has continued to support **Traidcraft** with thanks once again to Richard and Margaret for their faithful hard work, selling nearly £4,000 of goods. Customers seem more interested in the treats than the rice and quinoa. Adding tuna in the near future might end up boosting rice sales!

We have also continued to support **Readifood** and **Street Pastors** as well as **RE-inspired** – the latter financially and with volunteers, and Jon continues as a trustee. Our relationship with Loddon Valley Leisure Centre has been maintained but the Community Forum that Jon has been a member of hasn't met for a long time.

Our **mission giving** in the year to 31st August 2017 involved giving £10,199 from mission funds. This was in addition to the £5,920 raised directly for and paid over directly to charities e.g. through Open Saturdays and Special Collections. The following charities benefitted from this:

Berkshire Phab
Brass for Africa
British Lung Foundation
Christian Aid
Churches Together for REInspired

Creating Better Futures
Gideons International
Home for Good
Just Around the Corner
Kagando, Friends of
MS Society
NGCF (Next Generation Christian Foundation)
Oxfam
REInspired
Retrak
Samaritans Purse
The Mustard Tree Foundation

We continue to maintain our **relationships with our three parent denominations**. This includes our denominational representatives attending, as often as possible, relevant denominational meetings (URC Wessex Synod, Basingstoke and Reading Methodist Circuit and the Anglican Reading Deanery Synod and Chapter) and fulfilling the various annual reporting requirements. It hasn't been possible to fill all the denominational representative posts that have become vacant in the last year.

Trinity is also represented by the Minister on the Churches Together in Earley and East Reading (**CTEER**) Steering Group. By the end of the year the Steering Group was looking at making some changes to the way CTEER operates because fewer ministers were attending the meetings. Jon is also now on the **Churches Together in Berkshire** Standing Committee.

There are also plans with Sam, the youth worker, to reinvigorate Trinity's relationship with **Just Around the Corner** (JAC) and to explore possible opportunities with Earley Town Council for using the **Centre Point Community Centre** for community-facing youth activities.

Trinity also continued to support two local care homes with monthly Holy Communion services.

3. Our Worship

Sunday worship continues much as last year focusing on two morning services (**the quieter and much smaller 8am and the 10am family service**) with the same pattern of Holy Communion. As planned the 9.30am all age service on fifth Sundays followed by a quieter service akin to the 8am at 11.15am were stopped. Instead an **All Age service**, led by an All Age Team on the first Sunday of the month, was introduced. This has worked really well and over the year different people have been involved with some taking the lead in shaping the service. This has definitely become increasingly intergenerational. They have proved popular and a great fun time but with a real sense of worship.

The monthly **FEST** youth-led services were paused in the second half of the year to await a youth worker. The intention is to reinitiate something in 2018.

The regular weekly services benefit from a great group of participants, increasingly intergenerational, sharing the various roles. It has become increasingly difficult to recruit new stewards, so the aim is to try and find volunteers who are interested in helping with the services and to stress they need not become a member of Church Council.

Musically, a variety of musical styles continued to be used with a mix of new worship and traditional hymns. The aim remains to reflect the traditions of the three denominations as well as Trinity's individual character that continues to change as Trinity seeks to follow God's lead in worship. In the coming year the aim is to make use of songs in groups to create opportunity for longer periods of collective and personal worship.

Attendance week by week remains similar to last year with 8am services varying between 5 and 15 people and at 10am it is approximately 100 adults. Additionally, attendance varies from week to week as per recent years, which, as noted in last year's report is similar to many churches, having implications for teaching, sharing news and building the worshipping community.

It is encouraging that week by week new faces are welcomed to our services. How we welcome them and encourage them to feel they belong is an on-going opportunity and challenge.

We celebrated the main **festivals** during the year, notably Easter with a Maundy Thursday evening service, a 24hour prayer vigil, an open-air service in the ASDA car park on Good Friday and an Hour at The Cross service to conclude the prayer vigil in the afternoon. Sunrise on Easter Sunday was celebrated with St. Nicolas Church at Maiden Erleigh Lake before the 8am and 10am services. We didn't have an Ascension Day Service because attendance had for years been very low and so we focused on Ascension the following Sunday. Christmas included the usual menu of carols, Christingle, Crib Service (church very full again) and Midnight Communion and a family celebration on Christmas Day. However, this year we made the Christingle a Messy Church Christingle and followed it with a more family-focused Carol Service, with refreshments in between. Attendance at both was really encouraging and the experiment is definitely worth repeating next year. Our Carols and Midnight Communion once again enjoyed a specially formed singing group. The plan is to form this not just for Christmas.

Trinity's **Junior Church** has continued to be vibrant and energetic, is well lead by Lisa and a team of very committed volunteers. It was great to have Sam, the youth worker getting involved with the older children in the last month of the year. The children (approximately 30-40 in total, with an average weekly attendance of about 25) are enjoying their classes and are excited to be a part of the Trinity family. Worship services have been involving more children too and they are being actively welcomed into those roles. The children and young people have a real sense of "family" especially when the different age groups meet together for the regular praise parties or preparing a gift for Mothering Sunday. There are some challenges regarding room size and availability and it hasn't been easy to recruit new leaders and those who have been in this role for a good number of years are not able to fully recharge their own spiritual batteries. Looking ahead there are plans to offer a Paediatric First Aid course, undertake a communal litter pick and hold an Easter Praise Party.

During the week the focus for worship and fellowship continued to be through small groups.

4. Our Prayer Life

Once again prayer continues to play a significant part in the life of Trinity. Prayer in services, especially in the All-Age services, is undertaken in a variety of creative ways by different people. Our small groups continue to explore and become increasingly rooted in prayer and once again the **24-hour prayer vigil** at Easter with various, really interesting and interactive prayer stations appealed to all across the generations. It is a shame more people weren't able to come during the 24 hours. Bathing the building in creative prayer for 24 hours however is really valuable and contributes to changing the spiritual atmosphere at Trinity. Thanks go to Ann for faithfully making this happen. Our **email prayer chain**, co-ordinated very effectively by Jill continued and still involves about 30 people and provides very much appreciated prayer cover to many people.

We still need the right person to take on the co-ordination and development of our prayer ministry. The early morning mid-week leadership prayer meeting continued.

5. Our Management

Church Council continued to meet as scheduled but moved back to meeting in Trinity during the year. Whilst meeting in ASDA contributed in a small way to fostering community relations it is more practical to meet at the church. Church Council is in a positive place. The increased use of SharePoint has improved communication, with meetings becoming more paperless. We had one non-quorate meeting. The Methodist Circuit Steward changed towards the end of the year. James played a very helpful role on Church Council for which the Council is very grateful. The Council welcomed Robin as his successor.

Trinity needs to find a way to attract more people to the role of steward, so Council can get to full strength. Efforts to actively explore dividing the role between serving on Sundays and sitting on Church Council are to be made. Succession planning also needs consideration.

Church Meetings continued to be held after Sunday services and this has meant better attendance has been sustained. These meetings have been kept to approximately an hour which generally has been well received. This sometimes means agenda items cannot be covered in as much depth as we would like.

The **Leadership Team** continued meeting monthly. The **Vision to Action Team** stopped meeting in its original format towards the end of the year. Something akin to this team will be reinstated when the vision is refreshed.

In the course of the reporting period some significant management issues were worked on. Thanks go to Dave for his term as **Treasurer**. Sandy took on this role mid-year and worked hard to continue the work of recoding and restructuring the budget. This resulted in much more work than was originally envisaged (see section on Finance below) but by the end of the year significant progress had been made in the provision of an up to date and remodelled budgeting system.

Human Resource management needs to be managed well so Trinity is a fully compliant employer. Whilst Trinity can draw on denominational advice, and there is professional advice available from within the congregation, which is gratefully received, this remains a challenge, especially when recruiting, as happened this year with the youth worker. Trinity still needs to find the right person to oversee this.

Trinity has also worked hard to be compliant with **safeguarding**. This is another issue requiring careful and on-going management. Thanks go to Ann for her persistent work with this, including managing the transition to online DBS applications. Towards the end of the reporting period the impending legal changes to **data protection** to commence in May 2018 were becoming apparent – a further area that will require training and changes to practice as well as effective oversight.

Church Council recognised the need for Trinity to work on updating relevant **management processes**, so we can be compliant but not dominated by such matters. Trinity needs to value and use the skills it has in the congregation but needs to avoid draining people of time and energy on management issues when they could be sharing the good news of Jesus on their various ‘frontlines’. This is a balancing act but Trinity needs to pay sufficient attention to this if it wants to be fit for purpose as a church into the future.

The use of **Office 365** and **ChurchSuite** has been valuable for Trinity in streamlining its operation. The children’s module will be implemented in 2018. Thanks go to Andrew in particular for taking on much of this process type work.

Another area of management related administration is the **statistical reporting** required each year to the three denominations. Each year there are slight developments with more information seemingly sought all with different deadlines.

6. Our Membership

Membership at Trinity includes 157 adult members, 63 adherents, approximately 20 youth and 45 children. This totals 220 adults and 65 under 18s. If we look more widely at the community of people Trinity has relationships with, i.e. including those we spend time with when undertaking Trinity activities, then we have a much wider influence when considering Trinity’s immediate mission field. Between the Nursery Service, Chalfont Group, Care home folk, Who Let the Dads Out? and Toddlers groups there are readily another 115-120 children and adults. This increases our community to approximately 400.

This is not the same as saying Trinity’s worshipping community is 400. Equally it doesn’t include other people that Trinity members are praying for. If each member prays for 3 people an additional 660 people are added to the picture.

7. Our Finances (y/e 31st August 2017)

As noted above Trinity started to pursue its decision to advertise for a full-time youth worker for the church. A total of 28 pledges in support of the youth worker started in the year, almost all in August 2017, and were all maintained in a restricted fund. This enabled the church to advertise and recruit.

In the last 3 months of the accounting year Trinity moved from cheque payments posted out on receipt of invoice for most expenses, to standing order and direct debit payments for regular expenses. Online Bill Payment has been introduced for the majority of other payments. As a result, while 140 stamps were used in the first 9 months of the year, only 5 were used in the last 3 months, many of those to set up regular payments. Trinity's suppliers and church members have also appreciated the speeding up of the payment process. Additionally, this has reduced some of the peaks and troughs in payments. Trinity signed up to the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) on line in May 2017 so can now check all the CAF donations on their website, helping to better understand this source of donations. The room booking process, which was streamlined last year, is continuing to work extremely efficiently thanks to the hard work of the Room Bookings Officer, Peter Cole and the Assistant Treasurer, Veronica Elleson.

The decision was taken at the year-end to treat income raised for charities through Open Saturdays and Special or Retiring Collections as direct charity income, simply paid over to those charities, so that the results of church members' efforts to raise money for specific charities is clearly seen and not counted as part of the church's own giving. It has been agreed that Trinity's mission giving policy will be reviewed in the year to 31st August 2018, as will the policy on claiming expenses.

A new Treasurer was appointed at the April 2017 AGM and the hand over took place on 21st May 2017, introducing change after a lengthy period of stability in this area. The new Treasurer had to learn the ropes, particularly with respect to the church accounting package.

The year ended with a deficit of £4,808 and meant a transfer of £5,000 from the deposit account was made to the current account to maintain cash flow.

A new Finance Team was set up at the end of August 2017, and with input from the Finance Team, the Minister and the Chair of Trustees, a new coding structure and new budgeting process for the coming year was put in place. This should help the church better understand its receipts and payments.

The implications of the declining income and rising costs in the year to 31st August 2017 were recognised as needing urgent attention before the end of the accounting year. This gave impetus to the work done on better understanding our finances and budget processes. To increase giving, particularly for general church funds, which is the area most in need of attention, the leadership intends to launch new initiatives in the coming year.