

**THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST PETER & ST PAUL LAVENHAM
ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st December 2016**

Our Church Statement

We exist to honour God by worshipping together, welcoming and showing the love of God to all and encouraging open-minded people to discover for themselves the significance of Jesus Christ

Rector

The Reverend Stephen Earl

Bank

Barclays Bank plc, 35 Market Hill, Sudbury

Independent Examiner:

Anthony D H Faulkner
Lavenham Hall, Hall Road, Lavenham, Suffolk, CO10 9QX

Charity number 1131642

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Electoral Roll

As at 15th March 2017 the Lavenham Church Electoral Roll numbered 159. During the year there have been 5 removals and 25 additions

Rector's report

And he who sits on the throne said 'Behold, I make all things new!' (Revelation 21:5a)

There are many examples in the New Testament of the transformation to be experienced through faith in Jesus Christ. In a figurative sense, this is memorably shown at the wedding feast in Cana when Jesus turns ordinary water into the very best wine. It is a sign of the Kingdom he proclaims and an illustration of what his entire ministry is about: *changing, transforming, making new.*

Over the last year in our nation and on the world stage there have been some very significant changes of which you'll need no reminding.

In this diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich there have significant changes too with our new bishops Martin & Mike getting to grips with the challenges we face and promoting a vision for growth under the title of 'Growing in God' – in *depth, number, influence and growing younger*. With significant changes in the way the diocesan office now serves and supports parishes, the mood overall is one of growing confidence and optimism in our faith and mission as God's Church here in Suffolk.

And in our own particular church in Lavenham there have no few changes of late – in who we are, in what we do, and in how we worship.

Over the last twelve months we have bade farewell to those of our church family who have either moved away or passed to their greater glory, and we greatly miss them. But the good news is that we have welcomed almost twice as many new arrivals... *so growing in number!*

Among those moving on was our Curate Mark who left us last June to begin his new post in the nearby Stoke by Nayland benefice; and a couple of months later we welcomed two Ordinands here until June this year. We will shortly be further blessed with another Ordinand who will begin his time with us initially as a lay Community Officer (as is his current post in Bury St Edmunds), ahead of ordination as deacon this Advent when he will become Curate. These additional people, with us for a defined period, are proving a tremendous asset in our 'growing in God' as a benefice here in Lavenham and at Preston St Mary, especially through the greater connections we are making with children and families, building on the important work of 'Open the Book' with our local school. Each Ordinand and Curate brings his/her own unique experience, gifts, personality and expertise to enrich our church life. And just as *they* are being transformed through God's special calling, so they nudge *us* to be re-thinking what it may be God is calling us to, what we are doing about it... and how this is, or may be, changing or transforming us.

Liturgically, we can look back at some significant changes and give thanks for these. Our new monthly non-eucharistic Sunday worship is not only giving greater variety for those who attend regularly, but is helping us grow in number by attracting several others who would not normally come to church here. Many of us were brought up in the days before the Eucharist became the central act of worship in the Church of England: when Morning and Evening Prayer were the order of the day – and so are very happy to be singing the traditional canticles we used to sing such as the *Magnificat, Te Deum, or Venite*. This is greatly helped by our new choir (in place now for a full year) who lead our singing with such enthusiasm and dedication, contributing anthems from time to time as well. Their singing, from the main body of the church for the first part of the service, helps give the congregation greater confidence, so enhancing our worship. Very early on it was decided they should be a robed choir, and thanks to the generosity of a couple in the village whose daughter was married here and wanted to provide all the robes for us, our choir is now fully attired in 'Lavenham blue'!

The success of the choir (for which recruitment is ongoing) is thanks to our new Director of Music, Peter Tryon, who arrived almost 18 months ago having thought he was about to begin his retirement after 30 years or so directing the choirs and music at St Mary's, Bury St Edmunds. Peter has worked with unbounded energy, enthusiasm and dedication, and what he has achieved in such a relatively short period of time is remarkable, and we are all hugely grateful.

On the welcoming front, people continue to remark most favourably on the warm welcome we extend to visitors and newcomers, those attending for the calling of banns, and on the occasional 'baptism Sundays', and we are thinking how this might be further developed. Last Christmas those who attended the Carol Service and 'Midnight' Communion were especially grateful for the hospitality we offered of mulled wine and mince pies. We continue to hold Newcomers' Teas from time to time which are well received and an important part of our 'welcome ministry'.

In a curious way the disaster that struck back in the summer of 2015 when the entire north aisle roof was stripped of its lead proved a great strengthening of our common purpose as a church, when worshippers and non-worshippers alike from far and wide rallied round to help us raise funds for the necessary remedial work. Although we would never have wished this upon ourselves, after the initial disbelief and anger had subsided, we found there was so much to give thanks for in the support received and the way it seemed to bring out the very best in everyone. I'd like to think even this has helped us along the path of 'growing in God' together and, although it happened over a year and a half ago, the positive ripple-effects have continued.

Looking ahead our seeking to further 'grow in God' is prompting us to be thinking if there are ways within our church footprint we could better utilise the generous space and facilities we have in our beautiful building for the betterment of our worship and outreach. The PCC has agreed first to review its Mission Statement and be clear on the vision we share for the church. Then, inviting ideas through a consultation process, to seek God's guidance in discerning and distilling the priorities we feel will reflect our reviewed and renewed vision. (And which connect with the four growth areas set out in the 3rd paragraph above). This way, our efforts and energies in the months ahead will be channelled towards the sustained growth which we hope and pray will be achieved in the coming years for the glory of God.

So it's '*from the old things to the new*', using the familiar words of the late poet & hymn-writer Sydney Carter, that God is calling us: that, by his glory revealed in us and for his glory, we ourselves may be transformed 'from glory to glory', individually and as church.

Rev Stephen Earl, Rector

PCC Secretary's Report

The Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, Lavenham is in The Lavenham Deanery and The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich within The Church of England.

The address for correspondence is:

Revd Stephen Earl, The Rectory, Church Street, Lavenham, Suffolk, CO10 9SA

Telephone number: 01787 247244 email: earls2222@btinternet.com

The PCC is a charity governed by The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956 and Church Representative Rules and registered with the Charity Commission – Charity Number 1131642

The 6 ex-officio members of the PCC are:

Revd Stephen Earl - Incumbent

Graham Patrick - Churchwarden

David Deacon - Churchwarden

Pete Postle - Reader

Chris Burnford - Deanery Synod representative

Pam Evans - Deanery Synod representative

The 11 elected members of the PCC are:

Justine Corney** - Treasurer

Jane Balchin*

Jonathan Boast**

Maureen Cowdroy - also Deanery Synod representative

Nikki Hamilton**

Mary Jackson

Paul MacLachlan - Secretary

Anna Pitt

Tim Rose**

Clare Santer

Simon Wallis - also Deanery Synod representative

* current members of the PCC who have reached the end of their term of office

** current members of the PCC who are standing down

The church is permitted to elect up to 12 members to the PCC. Because Rhoda Ormerod died during 2016 and was not replaced, nominations are sought for six PCC vacancies. Elections will be conducted at the APCM.

Deanery Synod representative elections will also be conducted at the APCM. The number of representatives has been reduced from four to three.

The Council met on seven occasions in 2016 on 20th January, 16th March, 20 April, 18th May, 20th July, 14th September and 16th November. It has met twice in 2017 on 18th January and 15th March. The Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held on 20th April 2016.

The Council has two sub committees: The Finance Committee and The Fabric Committee. These two committees and the Ministry Team and the Families' and Children's Team all report back to the PCC. The PCC also receives the minutes of Deanery Synod meetings.

The role of the PCC is to work with the Rector in promoting in the parish the whole mission and ministry of the church. Many members of the PCC also undertake a considerable amount of work outside the PCC meetings both as individuals and as members of the various other committees. All meetings have been conducted and recorded in accordance with The Church of England rules. A quorum has been reached in all meetings and an average attendance of 76% achieved.

The minutes of PCC meetings, once approved, are posted in the Church.

PCC meetings open with prayers led by one of the clergy. The meetings consider items of church business as laid out in the agenda and receive reports from sub-committees and others – for example the church shop and the church bookstall. A financial report is submitted to each meeting and any correspondence received is read out.

This report contains factual information and statements required by Church of England rules.

Paul MacLachlan, PCC Secretary

Churchwardens' report for 2016/17

Following the completion of the re-leading of the north aisle roof at the end of 2015 attention turned to dealing with the (mercifully minor) internal damage resulting from the inevitable water ingress whilst the temporary plastic-sheet roof covering was in place. The water-stained pews and shop/kitchen fittings were re-polished (cost claimed under our insurance). This inspired a project to have the remaining pews re-polished to a similar high

standard and a fund raising campaign was launched, which, at the time of preparing this report, is nearing the point of paying for the nave pews to be dealt with.

The *SmartWater* forensic marking system was applied to the replaced north aisle roof and re-applied to the other roofs.

Unfortunately work carried out in 2015 in an effort to prevent occasional water ingress below the south clerestory wall proved ineffective but additional measures taken more recently seem to have solved the problem. The regular quinquennial inspection of the building was scheduled to take place during 2016 but our appointed architect was unable to attend to this due to a minor personal accident; however a start to the report has been made in early 2017 and should be completed later in this year. We are pleased to report that the general condition of our church fabric remains very satisfactory. Nothing of an urgent nature requires attention.

The waste/recycling bin storage area beside the church tower was very unsightly so a new location was created near the south-west churchyard gate. Over the turn of the years 2016/7 the Parish Council – which is responsible for upkeep of the closed churchyard – had new gates installed on the south boundary replacing the previous gates which had been in place for around 50 years. The church was pleased to have been able to contribute £1000 to the cost from The Biddell Memorial Fund.

Upgrading of the sound-reinforcement system continued with the installation of more powerful hearing loop to cover the entire church, replacing the previous 1990's loop which only gave good coverage in the north aisle/north half of nave. We are grateful to The Friends of Lavenham Church for meeting the cost of this project.

The location of the organ console leaves the organist without a good view of the body of the church so permission was obtained to install a mini CCTV system; however the equipment installed has not proved to be entirely satisfactory – the problem is being investigated with a view to improvement. The console top was previously left 'open' but this has now been finished with an oak cover. An extension loudspeaker linked to the sound reinforcement system was also installed on the console, and improved lighting for the music rack.

A contractor has been appointed to extend the paved area around the extension to the cremated remains plots (north of the tower) and work should commence in the spring. Rebuilding of the west end of the low brick wall alongside the Church Street boundary of the church car park is also scheduled.

During the year the PCC (in its capacity as the Community Council's landlord for the Village Hall site) was approached for permission to build an annex to the VH to house the Lavenham Pre-School. The PCC in turn obtained the necessary permissions from the diocese (owners of the glebe land) and readily acceded to the Community Council's request, subject to certain undertakings regarding the absolute right of the church to use the St Peter & St Paul Room by virtue of its substantial financial contribution to the VH building cost. The PCC also gave the Community Council retrospective permission to install solar panels on the lower west roof slope of the VH.

Graham Patrick and David Deacon, Churchwardens

Treasurer's report and financial review

The PCC has a duty to ensure accounts are prepared and independently examined in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 which incorporate the requirements of the Charities Act 1993 and the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities published by the Charity Commission (the SORP). The PCC also has a duty to approve the accounts and to present them to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM).

A copy of the Accounts for the year to 31st December 2016 is available separately.

The surplus on the **General Unrestricted Fund** for the year was **£5,642** a drop of £9,944 over the surplus of £15,586 in 2015. (The 2015 surplus was before clearing the overspend on the Organ Refurbishment of £14,553 leaving a net inflow of £1,033.) The incoming resources reduced by £16,038 from £127,693 in 2015 to £111,655 in 2016. Part of this reduction was the allocation of £6,228 of the second hand book sales to Restricted Funds and there being no Gift Day which raised £4,087 in 2015. Total Book sales rose by £1,996 but shop income reduced in the year by £305. Overall Giving and Donations fell by £2,733 and magazine sales and Fees rose by £110. Expenditure reduced by £452 from £112,107 to £111,655. The PCC decided to maintain our voluntary Diocesan quota at £64,860 to aid smaller parishes in our Deanery and Diocese whose quota rose substantially following the new Centenary Share assessment. Our assessed quota for 2016 was £55,048. Once again we have been helped by the kind offer by Anthony Faulkner to act as the Independent Examiner thereby making a saving of the fee cost. The **General Fund** Balance at the year-end was **£56,547**, which included liquid assets of £48,316, shop stock £6,979 and fixed assets £1,252.

The **Restricted Fund** balances have increased by £13,653 over the year to **£51,661** after taking into account the additional income from book sales as above £6,228. The **Fabric Fund** stands at £47,714 and we await the 2016 quinquennial report. The **Bellrope and Flower Funds** balances are £490 and £5 respectively.

We continue in 2017 with the initiatives of the '£1 a week club', internet giving scheme and cash in the attic for auction which we hope will continue fund raising for the church. We have again committed to the Diocese to continue to pay the Parish Share at the rate of £64,860 rather than the 2017 assessed rate of £56,924 under the new Centenary Share for as long as the parish can afford to, to support other parishes in the Diocese. We however await an anticipated change in the way that the Diocesan share is calculated.

Justine Corney, PCC Treasurer

Lavenham Deanery Synod Report 2016

The Lavenham Deanery Synod has met 3 times in 2016. Diocesan Synod elections were held at the June meeting. Benefice reports were received from Cockfield (February), Woolpit and Drinkstone (June) and Rattlesden (September).

In February there was no visiting speaker but there was a full meeting. A report was received from Rev. Tiffer Robinson about the business of General Synod. Topics included the migrant crisis and a report of the 'church buildings review group' which looked at lightly

used rural churches. The second meeting discussed a report on evangelism although Tiffer commented that the report was urban based and omitted any discussion on rural evangelism.

In June the visiting speaker was Bishop Mike Harrison, the Bishop of Dunwich. He spoke on 'Practices for Disciples' as part of Growing in Depth from the Growing in God diocesan strategy. Jayne Buckles retirement from St Edmunds Way was noted and thanks expressed to her for her service. The Deanery Plan was further updated and accepted by the Synod. Lynn Cardale who had been Deanery Secretary for 7 years 'retired' at this meeting and was presented with a small gift. The position is now occupied by Peter Rutt (Rougham Benefice)

In September the speaker was not visiting but our Rural Dean Stephen Earl. He spoke about his sabbatical earlier in the year, featuring his visit to South India and trip to Iona. The report was a fascinating insight into the operations of the church on another continent and the differences and similarities between the challenges of working in Suffolk and working in Tamil Nadu. The Synod also received a report on the Diocesan Synod and an invitation to join the 'Who Cares' initiative.

Insurance and lead theft were continuing topics throughout the year as parishes looked to install roof alarms or similar deterrents.

Finance: Howard Webb the Deanery Organiser reported at each meeting. Parish Share payments were still falling short across the diocese but the Lavenham Deanery was still able to pay most of the share requested; the shortfall significantly reduced by the generosity of certain parishes.

Ministry Team Report

The Ministry Team comprises Rev Stephen Earl, Pam Evans (Elder), Pete Postle (Reader), Clare Santer (Assistant Warden), Mary Jackson, Paul MacLachlan and Matt George. In addition, both of our Ordinands, Lynda Sebbage and Elke Cattermole, attend as available. The Ministry Team has met 7 times since the last APCM. The Ministry Team were consulted about or directly or indirectly assisted with the following events:

- the Quiet Day at Otley Hall on 23 June
- the Mother's Union service on 18 September
- the Jean Guy Memorial lecture on 13 September - *Messianic Justice in Isaiah* by Prof Hugh Williamson OBE
- the Quiet Day at Pleshey on 29 September
- the Harvest service and lunch on 2 October
- the study group meetings in October to look at Biblical characters with *Feet of Clay*
- two adult confirmations at a Deanery service on 8 October
- the Growing in God update meeting on 13 October
- the Christmas Fair on 26 November
- the Christingle Service on 7 December
- the Ash Wednesday service 1 March
- the Lent ecumenical study course – *Living an authentic life* – 5 weeks in March/April

- the Lent lunches – 6 Saturdays in March/April
- the Easter trail – March /April

The Ministry Team made recommendations to the PCC regarding the adoption of a monthly non-eucharistic service. The first such service was held on Sunday 28 August 2016.

The update meeting in October 2016 prompted the Ministry Team to consider what Growing in God might look like in Lavenham. Following recommendations from the Ministry Team, the PCC agreed that, in the short term, our focus should be to:

- form a welcome team to meet and greet people on the door – this will be progressed by our church wardens
- appoint a team of Street Representatives to welcome new arrivals in the village and to act as a point of information/contact between their neighbours and the church – the Ministry Team will progress this
- invite comments on how the church building might be adapted to better equip the church for welcome, worship and ministry – the PCC has agreed that a questionnaire should seek the views of those connected to the church so that a coherent plan can be drawn up.

Responding to a request by the PCC, the Ministry Team are re-considering the Church's Mission Statement.

The Church has continued to act as a collection point for the Storehouse food bank, operated by the Vineyard Church in Sudbury. Due to poor attendance we are no longer advertising a Friday morning service.

Families and Children's report

Open the Book - we take a Bible story to the school assembly, acting it out with narrator and involve several children to help us. We endeavour to do two each term in Lavenham school. They are very much enjoyed by children, staff and US!! Julian & Celia have helped lead this recently for which Pat and Colin have been grateful due to their work load. We also took a Bible story, The Burning Bush, in this form to Melford School, as they are very keen to be able to do the same. The children and staff were very appreciative. We are always keen for more 'actors' to join us.

Very few children attended the **2016 Easter craft day** in church and our **Summer Holiday Club** was cancelled due to a poor response and priority given to my daughter's wedding.

The **2017 Easter craft morning** will be held in the Salvation Army Hall on **13th April**. Although the Salvation Army are asking for a donation for the use of hall it is a more suitable venue. We are asking for families to book a place as they did in summer. There will be crafts, an Easter Bible story and light refreshments.

Work sheets, colouring sheets and/or word searches were enjoyed by many children and families attending our **Remembrance Day service**. This is well worth repeating in 2017.

Our 2016 Christingle church service was well attended and much enjoyed by children. Thank you to the many helpers who prepared oranges beforehand and who assisted at the service. Despite advertising to families at the Christingle service there was little interest in the

Posada nativity scene which is usually passed around the village during December. Perhaps we need to give the Posada a year off in 2017?

A Children's Christmas Craft Club was held on Thursday 22nd December. This was advertised at the Christingle service and fliers were given out in school. Parents were asked to book a place and all children were registered for safeguarding purposes. It was a great success with 14 children attending. There were many crafts, several helpers and children all appeared busy and clearly enjoying themselves. We were delighted to have two ladies from the East of England Coop who brought their own table of crafts and stayed all day to help. A buffet sandwich lunch was provided. The day closed with a Nativity play read by June Linscott from 'The Well Good News' booklet by Bible Society and acted out by the children. On leaving all children got a Nativity book and a gift from our church shop and sweets from the East of England Co-op.

The Nativity Crib service on 24th December was wonderful! Elke wanted involvement from children and to use the main church. The large crib was placed in centre aisle and seats in an arc on both sides. We had mentioned this service at the craft club day and handed out fliers as the children departed. Most of the children from our craft day came bringing with them parents and grandparents, there were around 50 people present! As they came in they were invited to take a knitted figure from a basket which they in turn placed into the Stable at certain points in the service. At the end, they were invited to take a sheep home, which they all did with enthusiasm and, of course, one little boy took the STAR! The sheep were kindly knitted or donated by Maureen Cowdroy, Lindsay Warden & Erica James, many thanks.

Parish Safeguarding - all helpers have DBS checks. Future dates for safeguarding training can be found at <http://www.cofesuffolk.org/safeguarding-training> if anyone wishes to attend.

The children's area in church: needs constant refreshing with crayons, paper, books and toys. Perhaps we as a church family can all help with this?

I am always happy for new helpers to assist with any of our activities, up-front or behind the scenes. Please contact me on 01787 247631

Mary Jackson Team Leader and Safeguarding officer

Musical Director's report

This has been a very busy year at Lavenham with some significant events.

Firstly, there was a "come and sing Messiah" on Good Friday with 166 singers, orchestra plus soloists, who performed to a highly appreciative audience.

Secondly, the new choir started early in the year. Although many people said they would come, the reality was somewhat muted. However, we have averaged around eight for each service and are enjoying supporting the worship. The Christmas carol service went very well indeed. We would love to hear from any potential recruits.

Thirdly, there was a new summer series of lunchtime concerts called "Lavenham Vox".

This series of eleven thirty minute concerts has been well supported with audiences of around thirty plus. Items included Old Buckenham Hall School, choirs, organ recitals and jazz.

2017 looks like another busy year with an Easter performance of Stainer's Crucifixion on Good Friday, initially for the deanery, but now expanding rapidly across the region.

Concerts have been organised for June and July in the Vox series with all new performers.

However, my main aim has to be to enlarge the choir and I am really working hard on getting some youngsters in. It is essential that for the church community to flourish we must be fully inclusive and do all we can to welcome everyone.

There are more things underway, but at the present time I want to keep my tinder dry!!

Please pray that all this may be accomplished. In the words of St Augustine of Hippo: "He who sings, prays twice".

Peter Tryon, Musical Director

Lavenham Life report

Magazine Sales - during 2016 we continued to be well supported by A R Heeks & Son, the Co-Operative Group (original store), Lavenham Butchers, Lavenham Newsagents, the Salvation Army and our own church bookshop.

Magazine Subscription Postal and Delivered Copies - we have a total of 15 subscribers.

Advertising - advertising income from adverts in 2016 was down by around £1700 on 2015. This was partly as a result of a reduction in colour adverts, policy decisions to reduce the number of pages allocated to paid adverts to meet our guideline of no more than one-third of the magazine and to increase the availability of discounts and free advertising for registered charities and 'not for profit' organisations. We raised 116 invoices for advertising and subscriptions and at the end of December we have forward-booked sales of £4704 for 2017 and £14 for 2018, with numerous advertisers renewing annual bookings. At the 31st December 2016 there were no bad debts for the year.

We continued with our policy of securing payment 'up front' before our copy deadline of the 17th of the month preceding month of publication. We have not had any incidents where advertisements have been withheld awaiting payment. 2013 advertising prices have been held during 2016 and it is recommended that they shall apply throughout 2017.

Printing - we continue to receive a very good level of service, both in printing quality and delivery, from Spingold who currently charge £340 for 60 pages including colour on front and back inside and outside covers together with the four-page centre spread.

General - the magazine committee are most grateful to John Page who took over as editor early last year. John has brought his previous experience of editing village magazines to Lavenham and made many changes to format and content which have been well received. The four-page, colour, centre spread will continue, subject to supporting colour advertising income, but John would like to receive more villager's interesting photographs. John entered Lavenham Life in the National Parish Magazine Competition and out of over 600 entries in the A5 category our magazine came tenth, clearly the result of all his hard work.

David Boast, Business Manager (Advertising and Sales)

Open the Book (OtB) Team report

For those who are not aware, OtB is a national initiative which introduces Bible stories to primary schoolchildren. The stories are taken from The Lion Storyteller Bible.

OtB was introduced in Lavenham in May 2011 and remains a firm favourite with the schoolchildren. The core team is as strong as ever, although very sadly we lost our narrator, Rhoda Ormerod, during the year. Rhoda enhanced the assemblies with her 'BBC voice' and was an ever-present member of the team. We fondly believe that just a few days before she passed away, she gave one of her best 'performances'. She is sadly missed.

In addition to the storyteller, other members of the Team act out the stories, ably supported by children from the school. Audience participation remains a popular element of each assembly.

The Team provides costumes and props and each presentation concludes with a brief period of quiet for reflecting on the key messages from the story and a short prayer.

In addition to the OtB assemblies, the Team supports both the School Harvest Festival Service and the Annual Christingle service.

Photographs of OtB 'performances' are displayed at the back of the Church and a section about Open the Book can be found on the Church website.

Colin Rockall

Church Shop report

As usual we have been very grateful to all those generous people who have given time to help with the Church Shop in 2016. For various reasons we worked with fewer than usual and we hope to recruit extra help this year. When visitors come to the Church we find it rewarding to talk with them, hopefully being able to answer their questions about the Church, and usually making some sales. Financially, our figures are very similar to 2015.

Sales £12,947.56 Purchases, adjusted for Stocks £7732.56

Profit £5215. Gross margin (as in 2015) 40% , which is where we would expect it to be.

We are happy to continue managing the Shop this year, but, in no way would we wish to "outstay our welcome", so, if anyone expresses interest in taking over from us we are open to offers.

Jane Orbell & Lionel Baker.

Church Bookstall report

The bookstall was formed 9 years ago to supplement Lavenham Church funds. It goes from strength to strength. The total profit to the end of the year was £90,257.

In 2016, the bookstall provided £6,227.53 (Church Insurance) for the Fabric Fund and £4,456.92 for general purposes. Its success relies entirely on the generosity of those who give books, buy books and volunteer to run the stall. In particular, I mention Jane Balchin who retired at the year-end, having given freely of her time, energies and expertise since the stall's inception.

A team of three – Diane Page, Marjorie Newman and Margaret Lillyman – continue the task.

Marjorie Newman

Lavenham Bell Ringers report

We continue to provide bell ringing support to Sunday services, weddings and occasionally tolling the Tenor bell for funerals. Our ringers are Mary and Alan Baker, Mervyn Cochrane, Martin Weaver, Margaret Lillyman and Jonathan Hill supplemented by our Rector, Rev Stephen Earl, John Smith, Jan Kelsall, Alison Glaister and Allan Gould when they are available, Graham Morrey's training is progressing well and he is a valued addition to our band. We also provide the ringers for Preston St Mary's 6 bells.

Since June we have been having a monthly practice on a Thursday morning between 9.00 and 10am, together with a number of visiting ringers from local towers. This has proved invaluable in progressing our ringing and hopefully the congregation and villagers will have noticed some improvement!!

On Saturday 28th January 2017 Lavenham hosted the South West region of the Suffolk Guild of Ringers district practice, when some 30 ringers from local towers and beyond were able to ring on what is considered to be one of the finest set of bells in Suffolk.

Climb the Tower days were held on the 25th & 26th June 2016, in conjunction with the church being open for the Volkswagen Festival held over that weekend in Lavenham. Our thanks for the stewarding assistance we received.

Ringling in Lavenham is in good heart and we very much enjoy the opportunity to meet and demonstrate our love of our bells.

Martin Weaver

Friends of Lavenham Church report

During the last year the Friends have supported a number of projects totalling around £2500 including an extension to the hearing loop system, oak top for the organ console and a cctv camera for use by the organist. The commitment to assist with the extension to the cremated ashes area in the churchyard remains outstanding and agreement in principle has been given to meet the cost of a cupboard for the audio equipment.

A social outing to Gooderstone Water Gardens and Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk proved most enjoyable and another outing is being planned for the summer. A number of new members have been recruited; however more are needed to maintain our level of support to the church.

Ian Thompson, Treasurer