

The Brooke Benefice

St Peter's Church, Brooke

St Margaret's Church, Kirstead

St Peter's Church, Mundham with

St Margaret and St Remigius Church, Seething

St Mary's Church, Thwaite St Mary

Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Councils

For the year ended 31st December 2019

Priest-in-Charge

The Reverend Lynn Chapman

The Vicarage

The Street

Brooke

Introductory Letter

Many people have commented that 2019 seemed to be a year of “coming together”, which is cause for great celebration as we continue to work out what it means to be a Benefice and how our parishes can work with each other.

We continued to worship faithfully, Sunday by Sunday, and keeping the feasts and seasons that mark out the year. The plan for Brooke and Kirstead to share a service once a month seems to have worked well for both parishes and some new friendships have been forged through this. We once more celebrated Easter together with breakfast at Seething Village Hall and this inspired an experiment at Harvest time, where we again worshipped and ate together. Not everyone likes every form of worship, but there is a great sense of support and understanding across the benefice for the variety on offer and the need to satisfy all tastes.

Finance continued to be a major factor but everyone was delighted when, by the end of the year, we were able to pay the Parish Share requested of us in full, for the first time since the Trio system began. Thanks go to all those who worked together on the various fund raising events that took place and also to those who prayerfully and generously consider their giving to the church and make regular offerings. Of particular note were Seething and Mundham’s Flower Festival in May, the Open Garden in the height of summer, another “sing-a-long” evening, the Christmas Showtime and the Friends of St Peter’s coffee mornings, lunch and wreath sale. There will continue to be work to do in this area but 2019 was certainly one to be noted.

The sense of togetherness really came to the fore when twenty members of the congregations across the Benefice enjoyed a Benefice Away Day in September. As well as spending time together worshipping and eating, we thought about what it means to be church, what mission is and what our vision for the Benefice might be for the years to come. There is work to do on all these things but already the day has borne fruit with the advent of “All Invited”. These entirely social events have been well attended and it is hoped to develop them and the positive relationships that they encourage during 2020.

2019 saw the introduction of a pet service and the development of worship on Mothering Sunday to encourage members of our uniformed organisations to attend and take part – which they did! The year also saw two joyful celebrations of endings as we gave thanks for the Ladies Evening Group, which closed in January after thirty-five years and also for the work of the Open the Book team in Brooke School. Both services were attended by those involved in the groups and were wonderful times to say thank you for the past and to recognise and appreciate all that had been achieved. Work with Brooke School continues, with classes using the church for lessons and the school attending for worship, while members of the congregation go in to school to help.

I have been most grateful for the establishment of a Benefice Council during the year; seeking to share responsibility for the parishes and their people and to develop new ways of working together for God’s kingdom. 2020 will not be without its challenges but we will be able to look back on all that God has done with us and among us in the past year and draw on the faithfulness and inspiration that we see as we look to the future.

*The Reverend Lynn Chapman
Priest-in-Charge
January 2020*

The Parochial Church Councils

The Parochial Church Councils have the responsibility of co-operating with the Priest-in-Charge in promoting across the Brooke Benefice, the whole mission of the Church; pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Membership in 2019:

Brooke:

Priest-in-Charge	Reverend Lynn Chapman	
Reader	Mr John Ash	Fabric Officer
Churchwardens	Mrs Rosemary Sanford Mrs Daphne Warman	
Representatives on Deanery Synod	Mr David Sanford Mrs Rosemary Sanford Mrs Daphne Warman	
Elected Members	Mr Keith Joad Mrs Christina Jones Miss Diane Marshall Mr Brian Orland Mrs Alison Rhodes Mr David Sanford Mrs Patricia Strachan Mr Philip Strachan Mrs Gwyneth Watson Mr Kenneth Warman Mr Charles Wilde Mrs Diana Wilde	Treasurer Verger Secretary Chair Friends of St Peter's (until April 2019) Lay Chair

Kirstead:

Priest-in-Charge	Reverend Lynn Chapman	
Churchwarden	<i>Vacant</i>	
Elected Members	Mr Andrew Behagg Miss Gillian Green Dr Christopher Kemp Mr Cliff Whatrup	Treasurer

Mundham with Seething:

Priest-in-Charge	Reverend Lynn Chapman		
Churchwardens	Mrs Gillian Balls Mrs Ann Garnham		
Representatives on Deanery Synod	Mrs Margaret Eastham		
Elected Members	Mrs Jilly Le Coq Mrs Ann Rudd Mrs Judy Baldwin Lady Caroline Egerton	Secretary and Treasurer	

Thwaite St Mary:

Priest-in-Charge	Reverend Lynn Chapman		
Churchwarden	Mrs Mavin Shulver	Treasurer	
Elected Members	Mrs Marion Barwick Mr Tom Edwards Mr Jim Hadingham Mrs Janet Hadingham Mrs Valerie Healy Mrs Su Mahon	(until April 2019) Fabric Officer Lay Chair (until June 2019) (until June 2019) (until June 2019) Secretary	

Benefice Statistics:

	Brooke	Kirstead	Mundham with Seething	Thwaite St Mary
Number of Parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll at the Annual Meeting in 2019	74	13	15	16
Average attendance during 2018	37	7	11	13
Baptisms in 2018	5	1	1	0
Marriages in 2018	0	1	1	0
Funerals (including cremations) in 2018	8	1	4	0

During the year the worshipping community of the Benefice continued to worship Almighty God, to build up faithful Christian witness and to proclaim the Gospel to the community.

Safeguarding:

Benefice Safeguarding Officer

Mrs Laura Cowan

The PCC has complied with the duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding by facilitating the following:

- The adoption and implementation of the House of Bishops' Policy and procedures on safeguarding children and adults who may be vulnerable for the Benefice. The policy is updated annually, signed and displayed in each church.
- A Parish Safeguarding Officer is in post (Laura Cowan) to cover the five Parishes in the Brooke benefice.
- Training and DBS checks for all PCC members, clergy, Churchwardens and Benefice Safeguarding Officer have taken place.
- We have had no allegations or suspicions of abuse reported this year.
- All records are stored safely and securely in a locked cabinet in the Incumbent Vicars' office in the vicarage.

Progress:

- Regular meetings to discuss safeguarding happen between the clergy and the parish safeguarding officer.
- An audit of procedures has taken place and actions where necessary have taken place.
- All training and DBS checks have been recorded and updated as necessary.
- The Benefice website has been updated with regard safeguarding procedures.
- Any risk assessments for activities have been completed and checked by the Health and Safety officer.
- All points on the safeguarding checklist have been met and policies have been renewed in line with the guidance.

Next stages:

- Any new volunteers and PCC employees in regular contact with children and vulnerable adults to be appointed in accordance with Diocesan safer recruitment guidelines.
- Dates for rechecking DBS and updating training to be monitored and implemented according to the amended Benefice document (October 2019).

Laura Cowan

Secretary's Reports:

Brooke:

The PCC met five times during the year. These included two shared meetings with the other PCCs in the Benefice to consider common issues (such as policies and procedures governing health and safety and safeguarding) and a Benefice 'Away Day' at which a vision for the future of the Benefice was discussed. Standard topics at meetings included: finance and fabric matters; safeguarding; the Friends of St. Peter's; and Brooke VC Primary School. Other issues considered and addressed during the year were: the introduction of a shared service on a monthly basis (Morning Worship with Holy Communion), alternating between St. Peter's, Brooke, and St. Margaret's, Kirstead; a pet service; and more joint services with Brooke Methodist Church, in addition to the annual unity service.

Successful fund-raising events for the continuing work of St. Peter's included an Epiphany 'Sing in the new year' ; a summer concert by 'Coro '94'; and a 'Sing-along to songs from the Music Hall' plus events promoted by the Friends of St. Peter's. Fund-raising remains a major issue.

The re-decoration and refurbishment of the Church Room was completed during the year as was the installation of a new sound system.

All PCC members have undertaken requisite safeguarding training and DBS clearance.

Mr Philip Strachan stood down from membership of the PCC at the end of April, 2019, on health grounds. Members warmly acknowledged Philip's contribution to the work of the PCC, noting in particular his work on conservation in the churchyard.

Alison Rhodes

Kirstead:

The PCC met five times during the year, sharing two meetings with other PCC's in the Benefice. At these shared meetings the items of business were: the updating and adoption of policies and sharing in the Benefice Away Day, when a vision for the Benefice was discussed.

At other meetings the main business was the fabric of the church, centring on the building project needed to replace the chancel roof and the porch. Finances were also a regular item of business, including obtaining grants for the building project and reports on help offered by the Diocesan Parish Funding Team. Plans were made for Harvest and Christmas services, and for a "new" service on Easter Day. The possibility of re-opening the church for visitors during the week was revisited on several occasions.

Revd Lynn Chapman

Mundham with Seething:

The Parochial Church Council have had four meetings during 2019, two of these were Joint Benefice Meetings.

Safeguarding was quite high on the Agenda and all of the Churchwardens and PCC members have completed their training and all were DBS checked. The Growth plan has also been discussed.

Several events had been organised during the year including a very successful Flower Festival, Open Gardens and a Concert and the funds raised from these helped us to successfully pay our part of the Parish Share in full.

The Restoration and Development Project proposed by the Friends of Seething Church had been discussed as the Mission of the Church has to be at the fore of this project and a joint meeting with the Friends has been proposed.

Judy Baldwin

Thwaite St Mary:

At our three PCC meetings of the year we are very grateful to Mr and Mrs Shulver for hosting them. We joined other PCC's for a joint Benefice APCM meeting in March at Brooke church. Our Future plans are:

- We are looking to organise Friends of Thwaite Church
- Looking for someone to co-op onto the PCC not necessarily a member of the church.
- Holding a Bangers and Mash supper for funds for the church.
- Coffee morning funds for the church.

Su Mahon

Treasurers' Reports:

Brooke:

With the benefit of a reduction in the Parish Share of £6,552, the deficit at the end of the year was £4,829, from £12,533 in 2018.

The Parish Share of £28,080 was paid in full and will remain at the same level for 2020. However, if the PCC is to retain cash reserves at the present level, realistically, it can only afford to pay £21,000 in 2020. If deficits continue even at £5,000 per annum, then funds will be extinguished in four years, unless a substantial bequest is received.

Points to note are:

- the only significant cost increase was for repairs and maintenance amounting to £6,373. This included the redecoration of the Church Rooms at £1,250 and £4,326 for a new sound system;
- collections and regular giving increased by £1,412 with Gift Aid claims increasing by £357 and donations increasing by £1,395;
- fund-raising reduced last year by £2539. Ideally, the target for 2020 should be £8,000;
- income from the monthly Parish lunches remained in line with last year at £634.

- Friends of St. Peter's subscriptions reduced by £52;
- income from the hire of the Church Rooms declined, resulting in a reduction of £512;
 - fee income also reduced, by £117, with no weddings taking place;
 - Parish Magazine advertising was again well-supported with a slightly increased surplus of £567;
 - the General Church Fund deficit is £12,841, an increase of £3,955 and the Church Fabric Fund reduced by £834 to £32,658, represented by bank balances of £19,817;
 - the Bells Restoration Fund spent £25 during the year, leaving a balance of £582.

Finally, I should like to record my thanks to Lesley Hanner for auditing the accounts once again.

Keith Joad

Kirstead:

The 2019 budget forecast a deficit of £1,200.

In the event, total receipts were £8700 in 2019, 57% up on the budget. Giving rose by 18% to £3892 compared with 2018, this was unexpected given no changes in service pattern on 2018, £900 ahead of budget. Services at Easter, Harvest and Christmas and benefice services were well attended, the main cause of the increase, regular giving via direct debit was the same as 2018. Donations were also up by £228 on 2018.

Gift Aid tax recovered was similar to 2018 at £846. Fees were significantly up at £1637 compared with £393 in 2018, attributed to one wedding and a number of funerals/memorial services.

Fund raising for the replacement chancel roof and porch was down on 2018. Two new pledges were received, £1,000 from the Bishops fabric fund, £5,000 by the Norfolk Churches Trust. The Friends of Kirstead Church raised £1224 from an Art Expo held in the church. Several meetings with parish funding officers were held during the year to review the fund raising situation and offer advice for sources of funding, but no unexplored avenues were identified

At year end, £18,500 has been raised in funds and pledges, leaving a target of £40,270 still to be raised.

Expenses:

Total expenses were £7193, 5% over budget and a 43% increase on 2018.

Parish share paid was £3120, 100% of the level set by the Diocese and Benefice for 2019. The main increases over 2018 were : parish share ; fund raising expenses (offset by fund raising income) ; allocation of fees (offset by fees earned) ; fabric expenses repairing and clearing gutters ; grass-cutting and weeding of the churchyard (previously done by volunteers).

A deficit of £1900 is forecast for 2020 based on expected increase in expenses including parish share.

Cliff Whatrup

Mundham with Seething:

It is very pleasing to say that Mundham with Seething PCC have paid their part of the Parish Share in full this year and much of this is due to the successful fund raising events held during 2019. The insurance for the two churches this year was £3030.00. There were no unexpected expenses during the year so hopefully 2020 will be the same.

Judy Baldwin

Thwaite St Mary:

2019 was a poor year regarding fund raising which we hope to rectify in 2020. We were fortunate to have £364 less to pay towards the Parish share. End of year bank balances over the last three years have shown a steady reduction in funds (2017 £9100, 2018 £7500, 2019 £6262). Residents of the village have been asked to consider giving by standing order or making a donation to the church.

Mavin Shulver

Fabric Reports:

Brooke:

The fabric of the Church is generally in good order:

- the inside of the Church has been checked for any trip hazards (as required by the risk assessment) and nothing untoward has been reported;
- the dry area round the Church has been kept weed-free and the Church paths have been widened by removing grass growth, with help from David and Heather Haycox;
- work is on-going on the north wall of the Churchyard to remove ivy and any remaining ivy stems from the headstones in the NE corner;
- the lightning conductors have been checked as required by our insurers and were found to be satisfactory;
- a new sound system has been installed and the redundant wiring from the old system has been removed;

- the gas tank has been replaced (this is normal practice after so many years) at no cost to the Church as the tank is owned by Calor;
- the gravestones have been checked for stability. One was found to be unstable and has been laid down on the ground
- the bellhangers, Taylors, are due to replace the wheels on the bells. This work was to take place in autumn, 2019, but will now be done in spring, 2020 – the exact date to be notified to us;
- the Church path is becoming uneven, showing signs of wear and will soon need re-surfacing.

All actions have been recorded and logged in the Churchwardens' logbook.

The next large project is the re-pointing of the Church Tower. The Architect will be contacted to discuss a specification and a start made on searching for grants. It will help if, as a Church, we can show that we have made a start on raising the funds. This will demonstrate a real commitment and will help towards obtaining grants.

John Ash

Kirstead:

The replacement of the Chancel roof and the repair of the porch remain the main fabric items under consideration. Applications for grants have been made, and some have been forthcoming, but to date there are insufficient funds to begin the work. It may be necessary to do one project and not the other.

A new contractor was engaged to cut the churchyard and keep the paths clear. The work has been done well and it is hoped that the contract will continue.

The church remains locked unless in use for a service.

The gutters and drains were cleaned in November to reduce the risk of water ingress. Other minor repairs were carried out through the year as necessary.

Revd Lynn Chapman

Mundham with Seething:

No major works have been carried out this year.

The bats continue to be a problem but we have been accepted for the Bats in Churches project and they will do a survey this spring and summer with a report due in October, hopefully they will then fund cleaning and advise as to any future works.

The churchyard is being kept tidy by the 3 willing helpers and the path is free of weeds. All Christmas wreaths will be removed from the churchyard by the end of February

Gillian Balls

The general maintenance of the church is good.
The slates which slipped on the vestry roof have been replaced.
The loose plaster above the south west window in the chancel has been carefully removed.
The church and church yard are checked regularly.

Ann Garnham

Thwaite St Mary:

In early spring the PCC had the front hedge removed, it had become too wide and unstable. Once the hedge had been removed and the bank landscaped it became clear that we should not replace it, as it opened up the church, improved road safety and parking for church goers.

During the summer we were fortunate to have a Duke of Edinburgh student do his voluntary work in the churchyard. He cleared ivy from gravestones, mowed, strimmed and generally tidied up.

The church notice board is being moved from an obscured site in the churchyard to a more prominent position within the churchyard, so that information can be more readily available to the community.

As always the PCC is indebted to the local residents for their help in keeping the church and its surrounds clean and tidy.

Tom Edwards

Reader's Report 2019:

I have again enjoyed a good working relationship with Lynn and value this shared Ministry to the Benefice.

I have conducted the following services during the year:

Services taken alone: 5

Services shared: 23

Sermons preached: 5

Funerals taken: 1 (+ 2 shared + 2 burial of ashes)

Sacrament taken to the sick/housebound: 2

In addition to services, I normally lead the monthly prayer and meditation group and was a member of the 'Open the Book' team until it finished at the end of the 2019 school year. I also go to the Village Hall Cafe which I consider to be part of my ministry to the village.

I attended Bishops Day and Wardens Day during 2019 and a one-day course on 'Frugal Innovation'. They were all very good, being interesting, informative and helpful. I also attended the enthronement of our new Bishop, Bishop Graham, in my role of Reader.

In the summer, I decided that it was time to resign from my role as Sub-Warden for Readers for Norfolk South. I have undertaken this role for nine years and, after discussions with the Warden of Readers, we agreed that I should hand over to the new Sub-Warden on 1st January, 2020. In the autumn, I held one meeting with about ten Readers/PTOs attending and also attended Readers Committee meetings and Selection Day.

My recent illness curtailed my Ministry for the latter part of the year (and will do so for the first part of 2020.) I should like to thank everyone for their support, prayers and good wishes which have been gratefully (and humbly) received.

My working agreement with Lynn was reviewed in December, 2019.

John Ash

Depwade Deanery Synod Report 2019:

Depwade Deanery Synod met three times in 2019.

On 2nd April, we gathered at St. Peter's Church, Brooke. After the usual business, we divided into groups and considered how we could work more effectively as a Deanery. After our discussions we met together for feedback.

On 19th June, we met at Hempnall. The main theme was 'listening'. Four representatives came from Diocesan House to speak on finance, information technology, the Diocesan Advisory Council and education. This was a very interesting and informative meeting.

On 31st October, we met at St, Mary's Junior School, Long Stratton. The theme for the evening was 'Empowering'. We split into three groups and had twenty-minute discussions on: 1. Belief that we could do more for children, young people and families; 2. Empowering everyone to hear God's call; 3. Keeping it simple, from the bottom up.

Each meeting finished with a short act of worship.

In June members attended the annual "Depwade Deanery : Delving Deeper" event, this year centred on different types of prayer. A variety of workshops were on offer and members chose to attend according to their interest. The evening concluded with worship together.

A Deanery walk, tea and Evensong was held in September.

In October members joined others from the deanery in welcoming Bishop Graham Usher on his visit to the deanery. There were refreshments and time to meet the new bishop before he presided at the Eucharist.

All Deanery Synod meetings are open to anyone from the deanery who would like to attend.

Rosemary Sanford

Other Church Activities:

Brooke:

Bell-ringing

Bell-ringing practice takes place on Thursday evenings where new methods are taught and striking (hopefully) improved upon. We try and ring for as many Sunday services as possible but there are very few 'Brooke' ringers. We are therefore pleased to have help from outside the Parish – especially from Paul and Sandra (who are now 'Brooke' ringers) and John from Norwich. On the first Friday of the month, we have a 'silent' eight-bell practice using the dumb bells and silenced tower bells.

For ringing to carry on into the future, we need new ringers. It seems increasingly difficult to attract them.

Dawn Pullan

Brooke Adventurers Football Club

Brooke Adventurers Football Club enjoyed another exciting and successful season which culminated in an enjoyable end of season celebration last June.

The 2019/2020 season started off with a few changes. The U10s have been temporarily disbanded as the league could not find enough U10 teams for us to play against. Hopefully this will change next season. We are grateful to Rob and Giles for stepping in and coaching the U12s. After a slow start, the U12s have come on in leaps and bounds and have won some excellent matches. The U14s and U16s have also had a good season so far with lots of goals scored.

It is important that members of Brooke Adventurers continue to exhibit sportsman like behaviour at their matches and we are pleased that the players always do their best to represent the Club in the best possible way.

We are as always grateful for the coaches from each of the teams who do so much to ensure that games run smoothly. Thank you also to all the parents who travel the length and breadth of the county to support the players.

Joanna Longe

Brooke and Kirstead Parish Magazine

There have been no changes to the team that prepares and proof-reads the magazine for printing (Gwyneth Watson, John Ash, Linda Riley, Ruth Dodds, Ken Warman and myself). Rachel Brown continues to liaise with County Hall for printing the magazines and organises the distributors, whilst Maria Andrews continues to manage the advertising. Some of our distributors have indicated that they wish to retire from this role. There is thus a real need for more volunteers to ensure that the magazine can be delivered in good time.

I have been pleased to receive more news items from Brooke School during the last year and the inclusion of more photographs has proved popular. I have also received several local photographs for the cover. More would be welcome!

Priority is always given to Brooke and Kirstead news but, space permitting and if asked, we include items from Mundham, Seething, and Thwaite and also from Alington, Bergh Apton, Poringland and Stoke Holy Cross. We regularly include notices about the community cinema and library at Poringland Community Centre.

I should like to express my appreciation of the work done by all who contribute to the production and distribution of our magazine.

Stephanie Ash

Brooke Benefice Website

Our website attracted an additional 5,590 more visits in 2019, peaking during the summer months. The cost of hosting it has remained unchanged at £120 per annum.

We should continue to promote the website at every opportunity to attract a wider age range and encourage them to participate in all that we offer across the Benefice.

Month (2019)	Unique Visitors	Number of Visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan	738	3287	5214	13497	290.39MB
Feb	725	3146	4331	10744	393.03 MB
Mar	881	4106	5212	20995	562.42 MB
Apr	842	3729	5127	19208	379.40 MB
May	815	4716	6631	18215	283.81 MB
June	893	4483	5790	20836	357.71 MB
July	921	4092	5555	16144	309.72 MB
Aug	807	4016	5530	14200	392.74 MB
Sep	731	1605	2503	9660	193.73 MB
Oct	856	1819	2882	11399	357.74 MB
Nov	1259	2248	3169	13739	276.37 MB
Dec	1488	2535	3759	15672	534.71 MB
Total	10956	39782	55703	184309	4.23 GB

Keith Joad

Brooke VC CE Primary School

2019 saw Brooke school flourish in many different ways. The daily presence of the headteacher, along with the appointment of new members of teaching staff, and latterly the appointment of an assistant head, added confidence to the school and helped a settled atmosphere to develop.

The school adopted a new behaviour policy, used consistently across all activities and this has had a positive impact and added a sense of togetherness. Children are praised in public for their behaviour, work and attitudes, with a small group attending the Village Hall Café each week as one of the rewards on offer.

In September the school vision statement was updated and all involved in the school are now aware that they are: achieving together, learning together and growing together, rooted and grounded in God's love. The school values have arisen from this work and many examples of resilience, togetherness, kindness, wisdom and love are evident in and around school.

The partnership between school and church continues to develop. As well as regular worship, in both buildings, members of the congregation have also been involved in fund raising events and helping in school. The school joined in with Christian Aid week, with each class having their own breakfast, to which parents were invited. For the first time a school carol service was held in church and this was well attended and enjoyed. A partnership book, in school and church, displays the outcome of this work together.

Revd Lynn Chapman

Choir

As usual, thanks are due to the choir members for their loyalty during the past year, not only for singing at services but also at village events such as carols in the Village Hall, to which the wider community come. We also sang at an event in Stoke Mill from which we received £200 to be donated to our chosen charity, the East Anglian Air Ambulance.

Not many churches have a choir which sings at nearly all the services through the year and which sings such a wide range of music. St. Peter's is fortunate to have such an expert group of singers and such a high standard of music. We sang, as usual, in the Royal School of Church Music Festival Service at Norwich Cathedral; an inspiring service with 200 singers, giving us the chance to sing anthems which we could not do on our own. We have lot of sopranos and altos , but are still seriously short of tenor and bass parts, a trend seen in many choirs.

My thanks must also go to Alison Rhodes for her help with playing the organ.

Brian Orland

Christian Aid Week 2019

For Christian Aid Week, 2019, the Benefice collection was made as usual by the distribution of envelopes with parish magazines. Thwaite is the exception, where Mavin Shulver valiantly continues her village collection in person.

At Brooke, we held a 'Big Brekkie' at St. Peter's before the Christian Aid Week Sunday service. We were delighted that Brooke VC Primary School held its own 'Big Brekkies' for each class. Parents and members of the 'Open the Book' team were invited to join them.

We raised the wonderful amounts of £1107.98 (Brooke) and £151.00 (Brooke VC Primary School).

Gwyneth Watson

St Peter's Churchyard

Churchyards are invaluable refuges for wildlife because for hundreds of years they have never been ploughed, treated with fertilisers or sprayed with pesticides. As a result of this low intensity management, they are particular havens for some increasingly rare wildflowers and therefore floral-rich habitats, ideal for pollinators and insects.

For many years there have been designated conservation areas in the churchyard, managed by small group from the PCC. Following an open meeting at the Vicarage in early September, 2019, this group has been expanded and now meets each month, under the name 'Wildlife Friends' in order to consider how the biodiversity of the churchyard can be increased and improved.

The conservation areas have been expanded and marked with standing poles. These areas have a different mowing regime from the rest of the churchyard. Over the winter months, the Wildlife Friends will erect nest boxes along the boundaries and an information board. So, as the spring unfurls, churchyard visitors can find out about the plants and creatures they should look out for.

In two previous years, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) has worked with the PCC to run a public event, looking at the wildlife in the churchyard. Unfortunately the NWT is unable to continue to do this. However, in the spring, NWT will be visiting churchyards in our Benefice to survey the wildflowers and will provide us with a report on their findings. They will advise how each churchyard could be effectively managed for the benefit of wildflowers and pollinators. The NWT's new report will update their 2015 Brooke review and give the Wildlife Friends a focus for their future work.

New members of Wildlife Friends are very welcome and the practical help, knowledge and enthusiasm they bring will ensure our churchyard continues to be an exceptional refuge for Brooke's wildlife.

Brian Orland and Diana Wilde

Community Lunches 2019

Numbers attending still fluctuate but we consider it worthwhile to continue as those who attend seem to enjoy the soup and cakes on offer and are often in no hurry to leave! These are good reasons for us to keep going. We have eight helpers: six who make soup on a rota basis – two per month – plus Jenny who bakes cakes and washes up and Diane who sets up and clears the tables and chairs. Their help is greatly appreciated. Also, we are still able to raise a little for church funds every month. We are grateful to all who support us.

Daphne Warman

Friends of St. Peter's

Membership of the “Friends” stands at 112, down 9 from the previous year. This produced an income of £674 (please note that several members paid more than the membership fee of £6).

Events during the year raised the following amounts:

Easter Coffee Morning:	£390.00
Summer Lunch:	£1031.00
Christmas Coffee Morning:	£962.00
Resulting in a wonderful total of:	£3057.00

Our thanks go to all who hosted these events on behalf of the “Friends” and for those who attended.

Collection of members’ subscriptions remains a problem. I hope that a volunteer will assist me in this by collecting on one side of the village.

David Sanford

Ladies Evening Group (LEGS)

The Ladies Evening Group was formally closed at the Annual General Meeting in January 2019. Remaining funds were donated to the Magdalene Group and St Peter’s Church. A Service of Thanksgiving was held in April at St Peter’s and this was well attended, with refreshments afterwards giving the opportunity for members to meet and reminisce.

Some members have gone on to form a Social Group in the village, which continues to offer the friendship and help that many derived from LEGs.

Revd Lynn Chapman

Norfolk Churches Trust Sponsored Bike Ride and Walk

This annual event took place on 14th September. It was a bright, sunny day – just right for a cycle ride or car tour of some of the beautiful country churches open especially for the occasion.

Our three intrepid cyclists and others travelling by car, raised **£584** (including Gift Aid) which will be equally shared between St Peter's Church, Brooke, and the Norfolk Churches Trust.

We are grateful to all the "Church Sitters" who welcomed the cyclists and other participants and to generous sponsors who helped raise such a significant sum.

Ruth Dodds

Norwich Food Bank

Throughout the year, donations have again been extremely generous; in particular, donors have responded to requests for 'most needed items' which vary according to the season.

A car-load of harvest produce from the churches in the Brooke Benefice, the Methodist Church and Brooke VC Primary School was gratefully received at the Food Bank warehouse in late October.

The request for luxury treats to include in Christmas hampers alongside the regular staples resulted in three crates of goodies ranging from Christmas foods to toiletry Gift Sets and everything 'Christmas' in-between. All were received by the requested date so that the hampers could be made up and delivered in time for Christmas.

Ruth Dodds

Open the Book

The 'OTB' Team completed its fifth year of sharing bible stories with students of Brooke VC Primary School at the end of the school year, 2019. The team has now worked through all four books, and went 'back to the beginning' in September, 2018, to Book One, with the story of creation and other wonderful stories from both the Old and New Testaments.

Having thus completed a full cycle (plus one), the Team has decided to take a break. Although 'OTB' in its current format has come to an end, the School has been encouraged to take over from where the OTB Team left off.

'OTB' was celebrated by a special service on 23rd June, 2019, at St. Peter's, Brooke, which was well-attended by students, their parents/carers and staff of the school as well as other members of the congregation. Members of the team were moved by the lovely cards of thanks which each class had carefully crafted and which have been on display in the Church. Each member was also presented with a gift to mark their role in bringing Bible stories to a new generation.

We have thoroughly enjoyed working with the students and staff and have endeavoured to bring to life many Bible stories in vivid and inter-active ways, that we hope will have a lasting impact.

Alison Rhodes

Kirstead:

The Friends of Kirstead Church

The summer the Friends held their bi-annual Art Exhibition in the church. This was well attended, with some amazing exhibits. A total of £1224.11 was raised for the fabric of Kirstead Church. A donation of £40 was also received from the Thursday Painters who met at Kirstead Hall.

Judy Murphy

Mundham with Seething:

The Friends of Seething Church

As this report gets written every year at about this time, perhaps it is a good opportunity to remind ourselves about the Friends of Seething Church and why the organisation was formed. In 2008 when we began, churches were under real threat. As with so many other church buildings, there was always the possibility of closure or selling the building off for, say, a private house. It turned out that this was something that, whether church goer or not, parishioners were unable to contemplate and to stop it happening, the Friends of Seething Church came into being. While the threat hasn't gone away, the support of the Friends and its fund raising has clearly demonstrated this ancient and beautiful building is highly valued and the parishioners would, quite clearly, like to see its extended use made possible by improved facilities.

As you will recall from my last message, the Lottery turned us down. They gave us some useful advice which we are discussing which is to install a kitchen and servery in the Church but raising the money for the work ourselves (there are grants specifically for this purpose) and when the three years have elapsed, to return to the Lottery for the Wall Paintings only.

We ended the year with over £10,000 in the bank. The Christmas Fair held on 16 November 2019 produced £1065 – a splendid result. It had a great atmosphere and people came from all over South Norfolk. The Friends would like to express their thanks to all those who helped in any way to make this result possible.

Caroline Egerton