**Anglican Diocese of Chester – Middlewich Deanery**

**Mid Cheshire Circuit of the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District of the Methodist Church**

**St Mary’s Church, Weaverham ACM Monday 31st March 2025**

**Attendees:** Kath Burgess, Sue Cameron, Lesley Craig, Dot Foster, John Freeman, Mike Hornby, Lindsay Hough, Bob Hough, Carol Johnson, Gilly Latham, Jerry Marshall, Sue Marshall, Cherry McCallum, Gregor Morcom, June Morcom, Lis Rushton, Mike Sanders, Jules Sanders, Carol Seddon, David Seddon, Pam Thomson, Colin Weeks, Chris Weeks, John Wilson, Marion Wilson, Stephen Wilson, Georgina Withington, Rev. Paul Withington

**Bible Reading & Reflection**

Paul read Matthew 5 v13-19.

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

14“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

17“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfil. 18For truly I say to you, until Heaven and Earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of Heaven.

*“You are the salt of the earth.”* A phrase that is often used as a complement.

Rommel referred to the motorcycle and sidecar riders of his mobile infantry as “the salt of the Earth” because they simply, bravely and determinedly got stuck in and helped no matter what the circumstances. And today we understand that phrase as describing someone down to earth practical, friendly and helpful.

Like so many familiar cultural phrases, it is rooted in scripture: Jesus was beginning His ministry and setting out His agenda for change, change that would pay the price of sin and ultimately bring God’s Kingdom to Earth; and it began with the ordinary people who followed Him.

Last Sunday we considered how ordinary people committed to and inspired by God can achieve extraordinary things. And that’s what Jesus was saying here at the beginning of His ministry.

He wasn’t complementing, He was encouragingly challenging the people who were following Him; not the religious rulers, or the politically powerful, or the economic elite, but the ***ordinary*** people, declaring that they could fulfil their God inspired calling whatever their status in life.

The challenge remains the same for us today, to be the Salt and the Light that makes a difference in the world. That helps God’s Kingdom grow and spread and improve the world.

Our Parish mission statement is “to share the light and hope of Jesus with our community” and Jesus’ challenge to us is **are *we* salty**? **Do *we* light up our corner of the world**?

Today salt is mostly used to add flavour, but is also still used to preserve and prevent corruption, take a lovely ham for example. Salt disinfects and yet if it gets in a wound it can sting as it works on the infection.

Light drives out darkness, helps people see where they’re going and avoid hazards. Jesus is described by His good friend and disciple John, as the Light of the world. Because His light that is never overcome, helps us to see and know how a God-inspired human life can achieve the bringing in of God’s Kingdom to Earth.

All that I’ve just said is contained in our mission statement: So we need to look at what Jesus was quick to connect to being salt and light in the world.

***“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.”***

We recite those words every time we use the BCP communion service, a reminder to not simply to be good, but to live in ways that point people towards cheerfully adopting God’s priorities for life.

Jesus wasn’t simply making compliments that were blind to how we live, or the principles of life that we advocate. He wasn’t challenging us to be nice and acceptable to society:

He was challenging us to be challenging, to be salty, like He will be over the next three years of His ministry.

So He goes straight to the point of His ministry:

***“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfil. 18For truly I say to you, until Heaven and Earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.***

We can be so concerned about our popularity as Christians, or as a church, or even for God’s popularity, that we water down God’s standards. Those standards are contained in The Old Testament of our bibles, the nearly two thirds of the holy book that we’d rather not read or refer to because we find it too difficult and God too harsh. **But that portion of our bibles that were Jesus’ only bible.**

The Law and the prophets, that we so often call “old fashioned” informed ***all*** of Jesus’ ministry; when He was turning over the tables in the temple and when He wasn’t judging the woman caught in adultery.

***“19Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.***

***20“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of Heaven.***

He still teaches against sin, telling the same woman ***“Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more”.*** And ultimately pays the price, the very real price, of her sin and our sin and the sin of everyone around us. Because that’s what it takes to be salt and light in the world.

Which is why He began with:-

***“but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”***

And ended with

***“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of Heaven.”***

That is what it is “to share the light and hope of Jesus with our community”.

One of the things that has always interested me about church buildings (of all denominations) is what they say about the people who have met and worshipped and who continue to meet and worship in them.

Quite a few people have talked to me recently about our church buildings, the challenges they offer us and their beauty and practicality or not.

So I’ve taken some time to look around St Mary’s and see what it says about the faith of its family over the centuries.

Whilst it’s a Grade One listed church, which means inside and out, its history is all about sharing the light and hope of Jesus in our community in word and action; its writ large in the beautiful stained-glass windows.

The resurrected Jesus ascending to Heaven in the centre of the centre window flanked by the gospel writers.

**We preach that still**.

The main window in the Mary Chapel tells two stories of repentance and two stories of healing, healing and repentance deliberately connected.

**That happens in our church**.

The other stained glass in the Mary Chapel is of the annunciation to Mary: The wonderful moment when God got stuck in and an ordinary Jewish girl said “yes” to God; enabling the salvation of the world.

The main window in the Wilbraham Chapel depicts Jesus’ call to feed, to refresh, to cloth and to shelter those in need.

**We do that through the Lighthouse, our cafés, supporting the food bank, and our disaster relief giving**.

In the Wilbraham chapel is a stained-glass panel recently made to remember the Covid Pandemic and our experience of it, and St Mary’s Church helped in that, by staying in contact, shopping and cooking meals for the sheltering and needy.

The crucifix over the pulpit is the reminder that we should preach and know nothing but Christ and Him crucified.

On the North side is a stained-glass panel in memory of the reverend Charles Spencer Stanhope, who died in-post on the 14th October 1795. The panels honour the great prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah and the apocalyptic prophets Ezekiel and Daniel, they remind us not to sin now, of Christ’s authority, of the resurrection and the need to gratefully fund the work of the Kingdom.

On the South Side are two more stained-glass windows that tell the history of the church and the good people who enable St Mary’s centuries back “to share the light and hope of Jesus in our community”.

**For today’s world *we are* The Salt of the Earth**. ***Are we salty***? Because in Kingdom terms we’re good for nothing if we aren’t.

Are we shining lights not only of Gods love but of His authority and justice? Or is that light hidden, leading others around us to stumble and fail to find God?

That’s what the church is about, that’s what I’m about, as best I can.

The church isn’t about us, but it is for us. Because the church is about God and His love and concern not only for us, but for everyone, that we all should be eternally safe in Him. That’s “the light and hope of Jesus”.

**Prayer**

Creator God, may every breath we take, be for Your glory, may every footstep show us Your way, that trusting in Your presence in this world, then and now, we may always be active with You wherever You lead and always secure in You who lives and reigns for ever.

**Amen**

**Annual Meeting of Parishioners**

**(As required for the Anglican Parish of St Mary the Virgin; Weaverham)**

**Elections of Churchwardens**

Both Colin and Bob were prepared to stand for re-election. Colin was elected in 2020 so this will be his 6th and possibly final year, Bob had served just one year. Paul thanked them both for all the support they had given him over the past year.

2 nominations, Colin Weeks and Bob Hough had been received. Unanimously agreed.

**Annual General Church Meeting**

**(As required for Weaverham Methodist Church)**

**Elections of Methodist Stewards**

As Janet was not present, Paul took the Chair for this part of the meeting. Due to his recent illness, David Whitfield had decided to stand down as Methodist Steward at the moment, Lindsay Hough was prepared to take on the role in place of David. Mike Hornby was happy to continue in the role. It was hoped that David would be well enough to come back to Evensong soon and be able to help and advise Lindsay in the role. The meeting unanimously agreed to this election.

**Annual Congregational Meeting**

Apologies; Janet Asprey, Jonathan Gore, Gillian Horth, Margaret and John Jefferson, Denise Mitchell, Vicky Rushton, Susan Winnington, David Whitfield and Sue Wilkins. Paul asked that we hold Janet and her family in our prayers. Janet would now be on a sabbatical until the summer and hopefully she will be on the road to recovery. Paul said that he missed her enthusiasm, her determination to keep Methodism going and the support she gave him, so we all hoped to see her back with us soon.

**The minutes of the previous AGM:** No errors raised.They had been available in the back of church and emailed to those who requested them. They were agreed unanimously by the meeting and signed by Paul.

**Electoral Roll Report**

Jules Sanders gave the following report;

The Roll was revised this year – last revision 2019. The total number of people on the electoral roll is 105. [Lost 27 in 6 years]. Some of our members have moved away, and, sadly, some of our very faithful members have died. If any of your circumstances have changed ie – address, phone number etc. please let me know.

Bearing in mind GDPR, only the minimum information necessary has been collected and stored electronically on a password protected computer.

We will continue to actively encourage people who are not on the roll to think about 'joining up and joining in'.

Paul thanked Jules for her report and also for all the work she does behind the scenes in the running of the Parish.

**Annual Report of the ECC and the Financial Statement**

John Freeman presented the accounts which had been independently examined by Kevin Pickering. The accounts had been available for inspection and now John gave us a brief summary. He told us that we were living beyond our means, as during the past twelve months we had run up a deficit but had not had to draw down any money from reserves, there were sufficient funds in the current account to cover this deficit. However, this could not continue into the future and we needed to increase our annual income. Fortunately the fund raising had been successful during the period and all the work on the roof and stonework had been carried out and paid for.

Paul thanked John for looking after the finances and for all the work he does for St Mary’s. Paul took the opportunity of reminding the meeting that John had been made an Honorary Canon of Chester Cathedral for his work in the Diocese and the Parish. John had also been made the first Freeman of Weaverham for his work in the village by the Parish Council so that made him “Freeman Freeman!”

**Appointments**

John had spoken to Kevin Pickering who was happy to continue as our Independent Examiner and the meeting agreed.

**Annual Report on the Proceedings of the ECC & activities of the Parish**

Pam Thomson then spoke to the Annual Report on the Proceedings of the ECC and Activities of the Parish. This report, along with the accounts had been available in church and via email for people to read. The business of the church was carried out during the year as the ECC met on a Monday evening. The year’s activities followed a very similar pattern to last year with continued support for the majority of services. There was a “sunrise” service at Easter and we repeated last year’s “Experience Christmas” which again was very well appreciated by the local primary schools. Café Church is now a firm fixture in the service pattern and social activities continue with the Tuesday Café and Thursday Craft Group. Pam reported that the Safeguarding group had met and that a Basic Awareness Safeguarding training session had taken place at St Mary’s during the year. The Annual Report contained more details from some of the church groups and on the different activities supported during the year.

**Churchwardens’ Report on the Fabric of the Church Buildings**

Colin Weeks gave a report on the Lighthouse and church buildings but he confessed that he had not prepared as well as he should have but promised to do his best.

**Lighthouse**

All the statutory tests have been carried out. The building is very well used by church and village groups. New groups since 2024’s Report are dancing and fitness classes with all the past year’s groups continuing to use the building. The main hall has been painted, various small faults repaired and there is a plan to paint the toilets in the coming months. Changing the lighting to LEDs is still being investigated due to delays in receiving replies from possible grant sources. A new musical keyboard has been purchased for use at Café Church and other times. The building is a well-used asset and Colin and his management group are to be thanked for looking after it for us.

**Church**

All statutory tests have been carried out.

The work on the roof and stonework has been carried out and paid for. Colin reminded us again that the boiler was over 30 years old and it had failed just after Christmas and services had to be held in The Lighthouse. Fortunately, it was possible to repair the boiler but finding a suitable replacement heating system has now become a priority. There is a small group looking at the issue and costs versus greener options may be a stumbling block. Georgina said that we should have faith and do our very best to choose a green option and trust in God that we would find the money to pay for it. John Freeman feels that money will be available from the Diocese if a suitable plan can be drawn up.

There is ongoing work required in the graveyard which is the responsibility of Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC). Some of the churchyard walls need attention. This has been going on for some time but Colin is hopeful it will be resolved soon. The new PA system is still a work in progress but hopefully this will be finalised very soon. The Loop system in church has failed and a repair/replacement will be required as soon as possible as some of our congregation are unable to hear. Work has been done by the bellringers and Bob Hough on the bells and tower during the year. the clappers were removed and taken to Taylors of Loughborough to be rebushed at the beginning of May, then replaced. Work was also done on the louvres, replacing some and refurbishing others.

Whilst Colin and Bob do their best to keep on top of all the never-ending list of jobs they really could do with more help, so please help if you can. Paul thanked them both for all their hard work during the year.

**Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod**

John Freeman told the meeting that the Deanery Synod had met 3 times during 2024. The new Director of Outreach for the Diocese had spoken, the message was that we needed “To Grow the Church Younger”. Safeguarding remains an important topic for the Diocese with the introduction of more courses and systems. On the financial side, Chester is one of the more prosperous Diocese but still operating at a loss but John felt that the new Director of Finance understands that many parishes are struggling financially. On a more upbeat note, the Deanery Synod held a Songs of Praise at Moulton in the summer which was very well attended.

**Elections of Trustees**

Paul advised that we should have 12 Trustees.

Completing their 3-year term were Jerry Marshall and Pam Thomson.

They were both prepared to stand again and had been nominated and seconded as follows;

Jerry Marshall – proposed by Bob Hough seconded by Lindsay Hough

Pam Thomson – proposed by John Freeman seconded by Colin Weeks

A third nomination had been received for Kathryn Burgess, proposed by Sue Winnington and seconded by Pam Thomson; Kath had shown her willingness to stand. All three were unanimously elected by the meeting and Kath was welcomed as a new member of the ECC.

**Terrier & Log Book**

Bob Hough informed the meeting that a new centre aisle carpet had been purchased during 2024, the cost being contributed to by a very kind legacy from Stan Walters. A new electric piano had been purchased for church. We were in the process of installing CCTV so church could be open for longer periods of time to fulfil an earlier grant requirement. As part of security improvements, all valuable items had been marked with “Smart Water” to deter thefts.

At this point Paul took the opportunity of thanking everybody for all their work. The retired clergy, Stephen, Sue and now Carol Seddon who had joined us after retiring from Castle Church, the lay readers and OWLs (Occasional Worship Leaders), pastoral workers, the choir, the music group, the various organists we have, the bell ringers, one of the few groups to be “growing younger” and all those who help with ministry and preparing for services, especially Jerry, Sue, Vicky and Geogina who do so much with Café Church. He also thanked the practical people who fix things, look after the buildings and garden and flowers, keep everywhere clean and tidy, run the various cafes and craft groups, work at fundraising and make it fun, the people who do all the admin and all the necessary behind-the-scenes activities and he apologised if he had left anybody out.

**Additional Matters**

**Fundraising**

Pam reported that 2024 had been a successful year for fundraising. We had raised just over £15.5k, donated £860 to the various groups who had performed for us and paid for all the work on the stonework. We have had several concerts in church from different choirs and bands, an evening with Adrian Plas, a barn dance and a ukulele band concert in The Lighthouse. Weaverham History Society had an event linked to a book launch commemorating people from Cheshire Villages from WW1. St Mary’s helped with the refreshments and the money collected was given to the fund. However the highlight of the year was the September Steam Day, the stars of the show were the Burrell showman's steam engine No.3093 'Dreadnought” and a fairground organ. There were other steam engines, tractors and old vehicles outside church. Inside there were several model railway layouts and Paul ran a giant Scalextric challenge. And from the tower roof the bellringers ran a Teddy Bear Zip Wire where many soft toys took the exhilarating trip from the top of the tower, across the main path to the churchyard. We were even visited by the Bishop of Chester who came on his motorcycle. Although the weather could have been kinder it was a great day and attracted many people from the village who hadn’t been in church before. Paul said he heard somebody on their phone saying “You’ll never guess where I am and what’s going on …”

Lots of people worked very hard to make this happen both using their contacts and on the day itself. Not only did it raise money but everybody had a great day and many people were welcomed to St Mary’s for the first time.

“Raising the Roof” has now become “Building the Future” and work continues with a new heating system being the target.

**Chairman’s Remarks**

As always this meeting highlights that lots of people need to be thanked and hopefully I won’t miss anyone out, if I do it’s because so much is happening in our Parish and so many different people are involved.

Bob, Colin – Ensuring things get done practically around the church and ensuring our property is as comfortable and useable as possible. Supported by a diligent band of cleaning teams.

Linda and Gilly for their assistance in pastoral work; despite their own health restrictions they have remained quietly supportive and prayerful behind the scenes, for which I am extremely grateful. Gilly has taken the lead with our baptism families and also increasingly found herself in a ministry to the dying and house bound. I’m also grateful for her gentle yet deep spirituality and her fellowship.

I’m also grateful to Stephen for the home visits that he has offered. And to Sue Wilkins for enabling and organising the prayer ministry after church services. That’s as well as their help with ministry and now also Carol Seddon who chose to join us this year following her retirement from her parish in Castle. Our worship is also enabled by our new OWLs (Occasional Worship Leaders) Jerry and Sue Marshall and Gillian Edwards and emeritus lay readers Jules and Mike Sanders.

Not forgetting everybody involved with Café Church – lots of work required to make this happen, especially Vicky, Sue & Jerry and Geogina, supported by our ministry team and musicians.

Who also help with Sticky Fingers alongside others who help with the hospitality, their imagination creativity and welcome enable new young families to begin to discover God’s love and His Kingdom values both in church and beyond into the community. This is where growth must come from as we seek to grow our church younger.

Our music makers, Chris and Marion and the music group, the organists, Bob Owen, and Margaret Done and our choir.

We have continued to encourage and help Henry Goulding develop as an organist; it was a delight to hear him play again at our midnight communion and see how far he has progressed over the last three years.

Our informal brass band! Enabled by Vicky Rushton, please pass on our gratitude to the musicians and we look forward to them helping our worship again at Christmas.

These last two show the importance of looking to the future developing talent and services that will continue to effectively share the gospel in the twenty first century.

Our occasional Friday Evening Fellowship meetings, Tuesday Café and Thursday Upcycling / Crafters morning continues to develop fellowship, support, and introduced us to various issues around the world. Marcia has also started a dementia friendly café on a Friday providing needed support and fellowship to those living with dementia. So thank you to Marcia, June, David Whitfield and anyone else I’ve forgotten.

Our bell ringers who are truly all Age, enabled and encouraged by Pam, who also assists the practical running of the church as the ECC secretary and Jules as our parish administrator, they both demonstrate extreme patience and organisational skills in helping keep the vicar’s admin. up to date.

This ACM (for all that it causes Pam, Jules and myself to break out in a cold sweat) gives us a chance to shed a light on all that God has achieved in us. It has been another year of highs and lows, and St Mary’s continues to face a financial challenge, as expenditure continues to slightly outstrip income. But we are doing and achieving an awful lot with our resources, as we will see in the visual review of the year; a year of new beginnings and sad farewells.

We’ve gained young families; we’ve lost some dear friends and members. We’ve faced financial challenge and we’ve seen God’s good provision, so when we look at what God has done with us during 2024, it truly is a sign of God’s blessing and enabling.

I’m not going to add to my salty reflections at the beginning of this meeting, but I want to start this part of the meeting by reminding us that the success of the Parish depends on each and every member of our church being open to the leading of God’s Spirit, willing to be led by those God has anointed as our leaders.

During my ministry here I’ve tried to make St Mary’s as welcoming and inclusive as possible, whilst remaining salty and true to the whole canon of scripture. Not least to be a role model to the fact that we must each be under the authority of scripture. From the feedback that I get I am succeeding in this.

I’ve recently made the church Council aware of the challenges I’m finding in being a parish minister and especially the challenges we face in maintaining the worship and witness life of the parish as our worship leaders and key members of our congregation grow older and in some cases less able.

This coming October, I will be 65 years old and in November 2025 I will have been your vicar for seven years, which included over two years of restrictions due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, which commenced just a year after I arrived.

Given my age and how long I’ve been in Weaverham, I want to reflect tonight on how ministry has impacted myself and my family and how that impacts the life of the Parish.

A year into the Covid Pandemic and its restrictions, Parishes were required by Arch Bishop Justin and the Arch Bishop of York to push through the LLF process, just as we were recovering from the psychological and emotional trauma of the Pandemic and its necessary lockdowns. As we have discovered this is an emotionally loaded subject.

But at that time National Synod couldn’t work out where it was on this issue, which is why I made sure we took our time on that issue (some said “dragged my feet”), precisely so that we could heal a little from the effects of the Pandemic, and perceive where we and society are on this very sensitive issue, finally making a decision on our *present* position as a parish in 2024.

At the same time as the LLF conversation, National Synod introduced “The Care and Well-Being of the Clergy”. Well-intentioned, but very flawed, for example initial guidance expected clergy to bare all to their church councils, on the naïve assumption that the councils would universally look after their clergy.

It was made worse by the provisions for wellbeing being largely “physician heal thyself” the national church offered warm words, but little sensible help, support or guidance. For example at the last National Synod, clergy were told that they should now take 36 continuous hours off instead of 24. But how does that work? Are the extra hours to be spent mostly asleep?

Clergy are not told what is not important in ministry; what they can ignore. For example at the Chester Triennial clergy conference in 2023 a very senior bishop (not of this diocese) told Chester clergy that their heavy workload was their own fault and for example weren’t obliged to take on weddings or funerals. But how would it be pastorally if this vicar refused to take funerals in this village?

I want the Parish to understand my current family issues and how my distance away from them makes these issues even more demanding.

{Paul made those gathered aware of all the health (mental and physical) challenges and bereavements that have impacted his immediate family over the last 12 years of his ministry; all of whom are (or were) at least 3 hours journey time from his Parishes.}

In my previous parish (4 churches looked after by 2 vicars) discussions about a Pastoral Reorganisation of the parish (the money was running out), began in 2014 (the year my father suffered a massive Stroke and died 5 weeks later). Many discussion meetings led to a PCC decision in 2016 that the Parish would reshape to 2 churches looked after by 1 vicar. Because I was not the Team Rector I was therefore facing potential dispossession (being required to leave the parish), I had to find new Parish: All whilst continuing to work as a parish vicar.

Two years of prayerful testing of my calling, 17 applications, 5 interviews and 3 job offers led to our arrival in Weaverham in November 2018.

A vicar is never off work; because the vicar is always responsible, even when on holiday. The vicar has to spin all the plates, new enquirers, the major festivals, the worship content, the weddings, the funerals, the baptisms. Regardless of whatever may be happening in the lives of his daughters, his mother, his brother, his wife, his sister-in-law and in his own health (mental and physical).

I have tried to make St Mary’s as ecumenical and inclusive as I can, and I believe I have succeeded from the feedback that I have received. So when you’re working with me or commenting on me, remember that my aim is always to make St Mary’s as welcoming and accessible as possible, recognising the spectrum of spiritualities and understandings of Christ, whilst also ensuring that it is the gospel of Christ crucified, risen and ascended that is preached and upheld.

I try hard not to let God down and maintain a salty light shedding ministry in sermons but that takes time to prepare and for my own health, I am now much stricter about the hours per week that I work and much more defensive of my time off.

Going forward over the next year or so, worship patterns may well have to change, but at this time I am unsure how, because there is such a broad range of spiritualities that need to be supported in this varied and lively, loving parish. I am open to suggestions as to how to change worship patterns and will be consulting with the Diocese.

As I said last year moving into the future will take time, wisdom and sacrifice, so please pray, please seek to know God better through His word, and please pray for the leadership and especially for the ECC and those who volunteer in leading worship.

The Cure of Souls in a Parish is a great responsibility and it is very stressful, so I am quite often worn out. Ideally I would retire this October but I can’t and I am unsure when I will be able to retire, but that day is drawing near.

This is why I am so very grateful to all who help my ministry and especially Georgina for her quiet, strong, imaginative work and support. In the pictures that follow, note how many of us it takes to put on events, but recognise and remember how much joy and fellowship was shared in those preparation times as well as the events themselves.

At this point John Freeman thanked Paul and Georgina for everything they do and wished that their trials and tribulations would improve soon.

**AOB**

John brought a paper cut out of a dove. These were available in Chester Cathedral. If you were in Chester, John asked that you pop into the Cathedral and write a peace message on one of these doves and Chester Cathedral were planning an art installation of many of these doves.

**Slide Show**

Paul had collated a wonderful slide show to finish the meeting. It showed many of the groups and activities at St Mary’s from 2024 and reminded us of how busy the church has been. At the end of the slide show John Freeman proposed a vote of thanks to Paul and Georgina for all their hard work and he hoped that their recent trials and tribulations would improve in the near future. The meeting echoed John’s comments with a round of applause. This part of the meeting then closed with a short prayer and The Grace.