This God-centred, spirit-filled, forward-thinking parish seeks an enthusiastic and gifted minister to lead, teach and inspire us as we move forward following the retirement of the Rector.
To be Jesus to our community, the disadvantaged and the developing world

We want to grow and reach out to our community, making the best use of the incredible gifts we have been blessed with at St James. In this document we shall set out a description of our church, our parish community and our mission. We hope this will form a good basis for helping you to discern if we are the right church for you.

We have a committed PCC and a strong Mission Action Plan (MAP)

- **Our Vision** - for people to come to know and follow Jesus and that lives are changed by the transforming power of God’s Spirit.
- **Our Mission** - to be Jesus to our community, the disadvantaged and the developing world
- **Our Values** - Praying, Caring, Giving and Serving.

Who are we?
The benefice is the Anglican parish of St James the Great, Thorley, which lies on the south west edge of Bishop’s Stortford. Thorley, originally a group of hamlets, has increased rapidly in size over the last forty years with the development of Thorley Park, St Michael’s Mead and Bishops Park, prompted by the expansion of Stansted airport, which is just four miles away. We are a very sociable, welcoming church, inclusive to all and value our close sense of community.

Where have we come from?
Our beautiful historic church dates from Norman times and is the oldest building in Thorley. The St. Barnabas Centre (the Barn), also used for regular worship, was converted 23 years ago. We are now a fusion of two distinctive congregations whose style and churchmanship are different. The result has been a blend of traditions and we have times of joint worship as well as separate services. This is much valued and is a distinctive feature of St James’ which we aim to safeguard.

What point have we reached?
Over the years we have enjoyed strong Bible-based teaching and preaching from our clergy, our Licenced Lay Ministers, members of the congregation, visiting speakers and All Nations Christian College students. We have formulated a strong organisational structure themed around our well-developed Vision, Mission and Values which will be discussed later in the document.

Where do we go from here?
We are keen and expect to see further growth especially in the work with children, young people and families. Now we look to a new incumbent to lead us in continuing our journey to pursue and achieve our key objectives as outlined in the MAP. We want to see a growth in numbers as well as in depth of personal discipleship. We want to achieve this while maintaining our strong sense of community and close relationships which we value so highly.
What are our greatest strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats /challenges?

Strengths
- Committed PCC
- Lay leadership (2 Readers + Members of the congregation)
- Committed, experienced membership
- Strong Mission Action Plan
- Parish Office and staff
- Five buildings (not including the Rectory & Curate property) which are well-used and in terms of running costs, are self-financing
- Beautiful, peaceful location
- Music & Prayer Ministry
- Pastoral Care Team
- Fresh expressions (Who Let the Dad’s Out? St James Café; monthly evening service, Little Worship)
- Home groups
- Sermon-linked series notes for home groups

Weaknesses
- Low numbers of children and youth
- Minimal connection with local primary schools
- Reaching families
- Minimal clergy connection to date with Care Home (Premier Court) & sheltered living facility (Parkside)
- Geographical location i.e. on very edge of the parish, remote from town centre and main residential area
- Extended period without an incumbent
- Lack of younger adult members of congregation
- Weak on social media
- Branding and website

Opportunities
- Children and youth
- To reach young families
- Greater connections with local primary schools
- Expansion of Bishops Stortford and Thorley focussing on young families
- Develop social media to reach wider audience
- To reach the lonely
- Extend our mission to the disadvantaged and the developing world as per MAP
- Engage with millenial generation
- Connect with Care Home (Premier Court) & sheltered living facility (Parkside)

Threats/Challenges
- Concern of church members due to uncertainty caused by prolonged absence (18+ months) of Rector/leader due to ill health, after only a short incumbency (29 months)
- Nationally, numerous parish vacancies and insufficient clergy to meet the need
- Until recently house prices have prohibited young adults from remaining in the area
Children’s and Young Peoples’ Ministry

Background
Our ministry to children and their families is key to us and is an area that we shall be seeking to strengthen under the leadership of our new Rector. We have struggled in recent years to increase our numbers and engage with families of late and thus we feel that this is one of our most pressing needs as we move forward. At present, there is an average of 8-10 children attending Powerhouse each Sunday.

Crèche. There is crèche for babies and small children during the 10.30am morning service in the Barn in a dedicated room in the gathering area just outside the worship area, into which the service is relayed by speaker and on screen, but where age-appropriate toys and activities are available. This is run by parents and some occasional helpers. There is also a soft-seating area in the Barn with a small selection of toys, should parents prefer their children to remain with them in the Barn as a family.

PowerHouse is led by a dedicated and caring team for primary school age children. The children start the 10.30am service in the Barn with their parents, before moving over to the Emmaus Centre (building adjacent to the Barn) for Powerhouse. The session normally begins with all the children together before groups split by activity or age – depending on numbers. Activities include drama, games, singing, painting, model making, storytelling, Bible study. The children then re-join their parents in the Barn for the final part of the services including Holy Communion, where the children are welcomed for a blessing when their parents receive the bread and wine.

All Age Worship We have an All Age service on the first Sunday of the month providing opportunities to learn about and worship God together. There are regular activities for local children throughout the year held in the Barn, in particular during the schools’ half-term holidays, for example:
- A circus day – run by Mothers Union
- A pirate day – run by Mothers Union
- Teddy Bears’ Picnic – run by Mothers Union
- An alternative to Halloween
- PowerHouse Christmas party

Although many of these are not overtly “outreach” activities, they are held in the Barn and welcome children who would not otherwise enter the building. These activities are in addition to the services held to include the uniformed organisations attached to the church such as Rainbows; Brownies; Guides; Cubs; Scouts etc.

Secondary school age. There are low numbers of secondary school age children attending church at present, however there is a “pop-up” group available which can be deployed at short notice. This is an area that we are very keen to address and are looking to our new incumbent to lead on.
So, what do we need from our new Rector?

We have asked members of the 2 congregations, including the children, what attributes they feel that we as St. James church community, should be looking for in a new Rector, to lead us forward into a new and exciting era for the church and the community it seeks to serve. Approximately 115 adults and children responded, and the word cloud and following comments from members of the congregation, give a graphic impression of the “wish-list”!

In a nutshell .........
We know that we may be asking too much of one person but above all, we hope that you will lead us prayerfully, laugh with us and love us.

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<td>Community-minded</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Likes children</th>
<th>Likes playing with us (children)</th>
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| Cool; tall; pirate; funny; likes songs & drama; kind |

| Cheery manner; happy attitude |

| Thinks outside the box |

| Someone with life experience |

| Thoughtful & inspiring teacher |

| Not boring but awesome. |

| Sharing the love of God in every work of the church |

| Accessible Welcoming |

| Family-centred; good with kids and young people; |
| Lively; & energetic |
| Down to earth |
| Sociable and visible |

| Outward-looking – local, national, global |
| Wants to form links with local community |
| Passionate for people and for God |
| Likes to talk to people |

| Someone who is a strong leader with good leadership skills |
| Approachable; good listener; good at relationship building |
| Experienced pastoral ministry; accessible |
| Good work ethic; strong track record; resilient |
| Happy to collaborate with lay members |

| Inspiring and gifted speaker |
| Strong Bible teacher |
| Interested in and has knowledge of theology |

| In touch with / can relate to all ages and types; socially interactive |
| Commitment & loyalty to St. James; strong, committed and capable |
| Not controlling, gets to know us before changing anything |
| Passion for people and families; engage with families |
| Heart to bring families into the church |
What can we offer you?

We hope that for the Rector God chooses will find ministering in the Parish of St. James, Thorley, a rewarding task. You will have:

- The full support of the church community
- Servant hearts
- 2 Readers
- Ad hoc support from Deanery Associate Minister
- 2 vergers
- Deputy Wardens
- Sidespeople
- Administrative support – 2 office staff working 30 hours and 15 hours per week respectively
- Premises Assistant – part time
- An office in the Barn
- Talented people to support the day-to-day functioning of the parish
- Strong team willing to develop new ideas
- Prayer support
- A pastoral team
- Prayer ministry opportunities
- A variety of worship
- Fresh expressions
- Different styles of music
- Hospitality
- 2 vergers
- An army of volunteers
- A range of committees
- An active and supportive PCC
- Affiliation to the New Wine network
- The benefit of support from Churches Together in Bishops Stortford
- Hearts for growth
Community outreach

St. James church is involved in the life of the wider church in Bishops Stortford:

- Street Pastors
- Stortford Healing On The Streets (SHOTS)
- Churches Together in Bishops Stortford (CTBS)
- Holiday Bible Week (HBW)
- St. James’ Flower Festival
- Sunday afternoon teas – during the summer months, afternoon tea is available in the Church Room and churchyard for passers by to enjoy a time of relaxation and refreshment. In the winter refreshments are offered together with fun and games, in the Thorley Christian Centre.
- St. James’ Café – on the 1st Friday morning of each month, the St. James’ Café opens its doors to anyone wanting a cup of coffee, home-made cake and a chat
- Christmas Food Bank Advent Calendar
- Lettings – the St. Barnabas Centre (the Barn), the Emmaus centre and the Thorley Christian centre are all let to local organisations and groups for example U3A, Isabel Hospice etc., on a regular basis.

Fresh Expressions of Church

- Little Worship – a weekly service of informal worship for under 5s and their parents/carers.
- Who let the Dads out? – A monthly opportunity for Dads with young children to meet other fathers in the same situation.
- 1st Sunday evening – a monthly service of informal, contemplative worship
- Messy Church – Until the autumn of 2018 a monthly Messy Church was held on a Saturday afternoon. Sadly, this has had to close due to lack of people to run the event following the retirement of the parishioners who had facilitated the “service” for many years.
Where can you find us? CM23 4BE

Although the parish is located in a semi-urban setting the church itself is on the edge of farmland and the Country Park and consists of 3,367 households with a population of 9,194 people (Fig. A). It is in the top 3% of the wealthiest of English parishes, although there are some areas of high deprivation nearby in the town centre.

Bishop's Stortford now has a population of about 38,000 with a large percentage of young families, plus a number from the original community. Overall, it is a relatively mobile population with a significant proportion working outside Bishop’s Stortford, especially in London due to the excellent rail links. There is a good variety of housing, predominantly privately owned. Thorley Parish Council is within East Herts District.
Our community

At St James we are passionate about demonstrating God’s love to people of all faiths and none. We seek to build relationships and engage with our local communities, offering a range of events with both social and spiritual content. We would like to develop further a culture of pastoral and practical support for those within and outside our church family and look for opportunities to serve people outside the four walls of the church. As a church we have adopted 'New Wine' values and are a part of the Evangelical Alliance. We are also a 'Fair Trade' church.

With average property prices in the area of £388k compared with a national average of £240k (Rightmove, 2017), properties are generally too expensive for those in their twenties, so the typical household consists of a family with primary and/or secondary school-aged children. There are 2 primary schools within the parish – Manor Fields and Richard Whittington. With four secondary schools in Bishops Stortford rated by Ofsted as “outstanding”, schooling is very good, and this attracts families to the town.

10% of our community are aged over 65, with some in frail health and living alone or in a care home/sheltered living accommodation, of which there are 2 such facilities within the parish – Premier Court and Parkside respectively. The ethnic mix is heavily biased towards white at 94%. In terms of religion, 65% count themselves as Christian, whilst 32% either do not state their religion (7%) or have no religion (25%).

The church electoral roll at April 2018 consisted of 196 people, of whom 99 (51%) live in the parish. At the APCM in 2013, there were 252 members with 70% living in the Parish. This reduction in numbers reflects a “tidying up” of the electoral role, however since 2013 there have been 77 members who have come off the roll of which 39% no longer attend church, 17% have moved to another church, 26% have moved away and 18% have died.
Hi, I'm Debbie, I have been part of the St James church family for about 6 years now. I usually worship at the 10.30am service in the Barn, but I love the diversity that is on offer through the variety of services and different styles of worship. From my first visit I found the church community to be very welcoming and that is what initially drew me in; that and the love of God that I could sense in the worship and in the teaching. There is a spirit of encouragement amongst the congregation and people show acceptance and appreciation for each other. The supportive atmosphere has encouraged me to get involved in some of the many activities and opportunities that St James has to offer. I am part of the music group and enjoy being involved in that aspect of our worship; I have been on the PCC for two years now and am a member of a homegroup. All of these groups have helped me to build relationships and stay connected to others within a smaller group, and they have enabled me to give back to God and the church community whilst supporting me on my own faith journey.

Hi, I'm Becky

I have been worshipping at St James for around 15 years now, and if I could sum up in one word what St James means to me, I think I might have to say 'cake'! Perhaps not the first word you would think of in relation to church or the Christian faith but, to me, it encapsulates the welcoming nature of our church family and isn't a bad metaphor for the community, love and outreach we offer. Whether you're a regular at our more traditional 9 am Sunday service in the church, the more informal 10.30 service in the Barn, or the monthly contemplative evening service (or various other regular services and events), there are just so many ways to get involved at St James, to help and to serve (cake and each other), alongside the spiritual nourishment available at the services. I am a member of Mothers’ Union, part of a home group and on the PCC, and the love and support I have received from fellow church members as part of these groups over the years have been hugely important to me. I look forward to the church continuing to develop its role as a real community hub that offers a warm welcome to everyone and shows them God's love in ways both practical and inspiring.

Our church has a strong commitment to outreach, hospitality and welcoming which are all very important to me. Also, an emphasis on spiritual awareness and seeking of God’s will for our future development. I am very much involved with the ongoing maintenance of our buildings and support our Premises Assistant in this respect.

Graham Rundle (Chairman of St. James Premises Committee)

Hi, I'm Allison, I joined St. James about 12 years ago after a bit of church hopping! My friend and I were new mums and had just completed the Alpha course with another church, we visited a few churches in the area before settling on St. James. What drew us there was the beautiful setting and the child friendly building - services in the St Barnabas Centre with toddlers seemed much less stressful than traditional church buildings! What kept us coming back was the warm welcome, the diversity of people worshiping together, the immediate feelings of inclusion and the tangible sense of grace I felt moving through the congregation. Since then, St James has nurtured and deepened my faith, through encouragement, teaching and prayer. There are many amazing role models at St James - people who serve God and each other and are wonderful examples of faith in action - these people have taught me a lot and continue to do so. Some years ago, I was invited to join a home group at St James, membership of the group has naturally fluctuated and changed over the years, but it has remained a constant source of fellowship, support and guidance. I have grown through this group in prayer especially - we have had some amazing answers to prayer through the years. I have been encouraged to run courses at St James, something I never imagined doing 12 years ago when I joined with a serious fear of public speaking! With others, I have run the 'Happiness course' and the 'Life explored course.' I am also one of the 'Power house' leaders - together a small group of us lead the children's activities during the Sunday services. I constantly learn from the children. It's hard to put into words what's St James means to me and has done for me over the last decade but really what I find there is an incredible extended family - a place where my family can know God and grow in fellowship and I hope serve others in some way too!

My daughter Catherine and I have been attending St. James for about 15 years. Catherine and I have always felt at home here and feel that it is one of the friendliest churches in Bishops Stortford. Catherine has been involved in many aspects of the church including the choir and helping to lead Messy Church - the leaders have always encouraged and supported her. We also enjoy the social aspect of St. James such as the quiz nights, the Flower Festivals and many more events. St. James is like a second home to us. Michelle
Our history

Over the last twenty-five years we have experienced different seasons in the life of the church. Around 1990 we experienced a season of dramatic growth, with an average Sunday attendance of about seventy growing to a thriving church community that attracted many young families, with an average Sunday attendance of about 400 people. A Tudor Barn generously gifted to the Church to accommodate this growth, was then refurbished and named the St Barnabas Centre. Formal services continue to be held in the Norman church, with more contemporary worship held in the St. Barnabas Centre and this pattern of worship remains to this day. The children’s work grew to such an extent that the adjacent Dutch barn was refurbished in order to accommodate that need, known as the Emmaus Centre. However, numbers began to fall away, stabilising in 2008 but with a further fall in numbers from 2015.
Our buildings

Currently all 7 buildings are in good repair.

**St James the Great Parish Church.** St. James’ dates back to the 12th and 13th centuries. It is a small country church which comfortably seats about 120 people. It is beautifully located on the south western edge of the town and is surrounded by farmland. The church and the Barn are well-served by a large car park.

**Church Room.** Within the churchyard (and curtilage of the church) is a small hall rebuilt in 1994 on the site of the village schoolroom circa 1930s. This room hosts Sunday afternoon teas during the spring and summer months for weary dog walkers, cyclists etc. passing through the churchyard and also some meetings are held therein when other accommodation within the complex is occupied. It is served by toilets and a small, but functional kitchen.
**St. Barnabas Centre (The Barn).** Adjacent to St James is a magnificently restored Tudor barn, which was opened in 1996. It provides a home for the 10.30am Sunday morning service, as it can comfortably seat 300 people and at Christmas, copes with 300+. There is a large patio. The Barn has a good-sized kitchen which is well-fitted and can cater for any occasion. The Barn is also home to the parish offices (on a mezzanine level), which accommodate the Office Manager and an admin assistant in 1 office with the 2\textsuperscript{nd} office (formerly used by a previous Rector), which is currently being used by the Curate who will be completing her training with us this year. There is an additional office on the ground floor which is unused at present plus a large L-shaped room and these are affectionately known as the Cowshed Rooms. The Barn is equipped with monitor screens, a sound system and Wi-Fi.

**Emmaus Centre.** Adjacent to the Barn is the Emmaus Centre which comfortably seats 70+ people and has a well-fitted kitchen. The centre was constructed in 2003 to accommodate the children’s ministry however it is also home to many social and church groups and is rarely empty throughout the week. The Emmaus Centre is equipped with Wi-Fi and has a small car park to the side. Between the Emmaus Centre and the Barn is a garden area and raised patio with tables, chairs and parasols.
**Thorley Christian Centre.** The church also has responsibility for the Thorley Christian Centre, formerly an ecumenical outreach project, which is situated within the parish, next to the Rectory and in the middle of Thorley Park. This is let to regular users, mainly during the day and is home to a popular pre-school and after school club which operate daily.

**Rectory + Curate’s House**
The Rectory is situated in Vicerons Place, in the centre of a modern residential area (Thorley Park) on the south-west side of Bishop’s Stortford, about one mile from the town centre and ¾ mile from St. James Church. The house is adjacent to the Thorley Christian Centre and faces a sheltered housing complex – Parkside. A supermarket, petrol station and neighbourhood shops are nearby. It is a 4 bedroomed, detached house built in 1985, with garden to the side and rear; adjoining garage built of brick under a concrete tiled roof. Internally on the ground floor there is a porch, hall, cloakroom/toilet, study, sitting room, dining room, kitchen and utility room. Upstairs, there are 4 bedrooms – one en suite, all with fitted cupboards, one with washbasin, plus a family bathroom and separate toilet. It is fitted with double glazing throughout. There is a 4 bedroomed Curate’s house in Thorley Park with an office attached, which is in good repair and fitted with double glazing throughout.
Our Strategic Vision

Our MAP group has dedicated time and prayer to seeking God’s purpose for St. James’ and as a result has produced the Mission Action Plan which has been adopted by the PCC and wider church and which can be seen in Appendix 1. Our 4 values of praying, caring, giving and serving, set the foundation by which we live out the local Church of England mission of Living God’s Love.

**Praying:**
We all know the importance and benefits of regular and persistent prayer, so clearly and frequently outlined in the Bible. At St James there are many opportunities to join with others in prayer: - prayer ministry after every 10:30am service; home groups and other small groups; prayer partnerships; accelerator prayer, prayer walking, monthly prayer breakfast and more.

**Caring:**
St James is a caring community. We have a pastoral care team, prayer ministry and very active Mothers’ Union. As well as all the caring that goes on through our network of home groups, there is an incredible level of personal care going on every day. It seems that God has given us a particular calling to this ministry. Through care and love people can develop and flourish.

**Giving**
We recognise that we serve a generous God and that all we have comes from him. St James responds by being a generous community. Most give regularly to the church (as well as to other causes in many cases) and often support special projects in the church too. As well as giving to the church, early believers gave to one another as each had need. At St James there is a warm spirit of generosity to each other too. By living generously, we reflect the heart of God.

**Serving**
St James is a serving community. Many serve God and each other by giving time to the work of the church. We believe that we have all been given gifts. We help each other find and use our gifts to serve one another and our community.
Leadership Structure

**Rector**

**PCC**

**MAP Group:**
- Rector; 5 others

**Standing Committee:**
- Rector; Church Wardens; PCC Secretary; Lay member; Treasurer

**Worship Planning Committee:**
- Rector; Readers; Church Warden; Lay member

**Finance Committee:**
- Rector; Chair Finance Committee; Treasurer; PCC Secretary; Office Manager; Church Warden

**Staff Team:**
- Rector; Curate (in 3rd year); Office Manager (PT); Admin Assistant (PT); Premises assistant (PT)
Services

St. James the Great

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<td>9.00am</td>
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<td>Morning Prayer</td>
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<td>Morning Prayer</td>
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<td>BCP</td>
<td>Common Worship</td>
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<td>An informal, contemplative service – fresh expression</td>
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St. Barnabas Centre

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Emmaus Centre

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<tr>
<td>10.00am</td>
<td>Little Worship</td>
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There is a variety of service styles offered throughout the month to ensure that members of the church family can worship in the way they find most appropriate for them. Where there is a 5th Sunday in the month, there is a joint service of Holy Communion in either the church or in the St. Barnabas Centre. During the week there is a service held in the Emmaus Centre tailored to reach the under 5s in the local community plus their parents / carers. St. James is an inclusive and prayerful congregation that tries to avoid being limited by labels.

Our worship is centred upon the Word of God and celebrating the Eucharist together as a church family gathered around the Lord’s table. We feel that there is much scope for the further development of the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit in worship, however one of the strengths of St James is the diversity in liturgy. We believe that it is important to offer a service of Holy Communion on Sunday mornings alternating between our two adjacent worship centres.

As can be seen from our pattern of worship, the liturgy follows the forms of both Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer and also includes informal, all age and contemplative services. In the evening of the first Sunday of the month there is a contemplative service giving parishioners the opportunity to worship in a relaxed and thoughtful way. The 9.00am service in St James Church is a formal Anglican service whilst the 10.30am service in the Barn is a contemporary, less formal, Anglican service with PowerHouse (Sunday School) for the children.

Members of the congregation are encouraged to take an active role within the different services including serving as deputy wardens, servers, communion assistants, reading scripture, leading intercessions, prayer ministry, preaching and leading worship. At the 09.00am service we have a robed choir, and crucifer and our active bell ringers ring the bells between the two morning services.
Special Services

Throughout the year we have special services for Mothering Sunday; during Holy Week; Harvest, Remembrance Sunday; a Crib Service; a Carol service and a Thanksgiving and Remembrance Service. As well as the formal service settings, there are also several special or occasional services each year where guest speakers may be invited to teach on a particular theme, for example during Lent. These have an informal liturgical structure and incorporate sung worship, sharing of the word and prayer.

Occasional Offices

On average there are:

- 5-10 baptisms each year held during either the 9am or 10.30am services. Families who bring children for baptism are asked to attend church regularly before dates are fixed and attend a preparation class.
- 4-6 weddings each year
- approximately 20 funerals each year.

The Ministry of Music

There is a strong tradition of choral singing in St. James church with more contemporary worship music lead by our wonderful worship group being enjoyed in the services in the Barn. This is welcomed by those members of the congregation who find a greater freedom helpful in their expression of worship. So, we hope that there is something for everyone. We hope that you will have experience of both traditional and contemporary worship and encourage them both to grow.

Social Justice

Throughout our MAP, there is a key focus on issues of social justice and God’s perspective of how we should “act justly.” Many of our congregation are actively involved in domestic and internationally focused charities and other organisations involved in taking action on issues of social justice. As a result, we held our inaugural Charity Sunday which enabled 24 such organisations to be showcased. This was followed by a sermon series on social justice and a subsequent evening looking at how we as a church can do more to serve others.
Appendices:

Appendix 1: Mission Action Plan (MAP)

Appendix 2: Financial Statement

Appendix 3: Small Groups reports for 2017-18
**Appendix 1: Mission Action Plan**

**St James Thorley**  
**Making Jesus known**

**Our Vision**  
People come to know and follow Jesus and lives are changed by the transforming power of God's Spirit.

**Our Mission**  
To be Jesus to our community, the disadvantaged and the developing world.

**Our Values**  
Praying, Caring, Giving and Serving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Praying</th>
<th>Caring</th>
<th>Giving</th>
<th>Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We all know the importance and benefits of regular and persistent prayer, so clearly and frequently outlined in the Bible. At St James there are many opportunities to join with others in prayer: - prayer ministry after every 10:30am service; home groups and other small groups; prayer partnerships; accelerator prayer, prayer walking, monthly prayer breakfast and more.</td>
<td>St James is a caring community. We have a pastoral care team, prayer ministry and very active Mothers’ Union. As well as all the caring that goes on through our network of home groups, there is an incredible level of personal care going on every day. It seems that God has given us a particular calling to this ministry. Through care and love people can develop and flourish.</td>
<td>We recognise that we serve a generous God and that all we have comes from him. St James responds by being a generous community. Most give regularly to the church (as well as to other causes in many cases) and often support special projects in the church too. As well as giving to the church, early believers gave to one another as each had need. At St James there is a warm spirit of generosity to each other too. By living generously, we reflect the heart of God.</td>
<td>St James is a serving community. Many serve God and each other by giving time to the work of the church. We believe that we have all been given gifts. We help each other find and use our gifts to serve one another and our community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This MAP has been drawn up whilst the Rector is on sick leave and will therefore be reviewed in due course.

These four values set the foundation by which we live out the local Church of England mission of Living God’s Love:
Growing

Going Deeper into God
St James is a community that loves to go deeper into God. We long to build our faith and know Jesus better through worship, prayer, Bible study, openness to the Holy Spirit and fellowship with other believers. We like to grow by living out our faith every day, using our gifts and God given creativity. We build from the past to meet the needs of the future, seeking out where God is leading us.

Engaging

Transforming Communities
St James is a community that engages with Thorley, Bishop’s Stortford and the world through many ministries. We want to be even more rooted in our own communities and see communities transformed through faith shared, loving service, justice and mercy.

Inviting

Making New Disciples
St James is a community which seeks to grow in numbers. We believe this is biblical, a clear command of our Lord, who wants everyone to know His love.

Personal invitation is at the heart of this call. We simply invite others to “taste and see” and decide for themselves, being ready, of course, to give a reason for the hope that we have.

Background

The Parish of St James consists of 3,367 households with a population of 9,194 people and lies to the south-west of the centre of Bishop’s Stortford (see Fig. A). It is in the top 3% wealthiest of English parishes. This gives us a responsibility before God. The age profile of the population is shown in Fig. B:

With average property prices in the area of £388k compared with a National average of £240k (source: Rightmove), properties are generally too expensive for those in their twenties, so the typical household consists of a family with primary or secondary school aged children. With three secondary schools in Bishops Stortford rated by Ofsted as outstanding, schooling is very good, and this does attract families to the town. 10% of our community are aged over 65, with some frail health and living alone. The ethnic mix is heavily biased towards white at 94%. In terms of religion, 65% count themselves as Christian, whilst 32% either do not state their religion (7%) or have no religion (25%).

The electoral roll at April 2017 consisted of 208 people, albeit a further 6 have moved away subsequently. At the APCM in 2013, there were 252 members with 70% living in the Parish. This reduction is numbers does reflect a tidying up of the electoral role, however since 2013 there have been 77 members who came off the roll of which 39% no longer attend church, 17% have moved to another church, 26% have moved away and 18% have died.
There are two services each Sunday – the 9.00am which is a formal service in the old Church building, and the 10:30am which is less formal, larger and is held in the St Barnabas Centre which is a refurbished Hertfordshire barn. It could be said that the reduction in numbers on the electoral roll is reflected in attendance at the larger 10.30am service in the barn with a 12.5% reduction in average numbers over each of the last two years. However, the reality is that the reduction in numbers is more to do with those who are on the electoral roll coming much less frequently.

Nevertheless, God has blessed the church with tremendous facilities, and the barn is used regularly throughout the week for community functions and events. In addition, God has blessed the church with talents and God-given gifts to enable us to serve one another and the community.

Conscious of the need to connect better with different age groups, a number of initiatives have been developed over the years such as Little Worship, MU-run family fun days three times a year and more recently Messy Church and Who let the Dads Out? (with a corresponding mums’ group).

Many church members are involved with other charities, e.g. Herts Young Homeless; Safe UK serving disadvantaged women in Malawi; the Fairtrade shop run on behalf of Mildmay Mission Hospital for its work in Uganda, as well as with a families group called Cromarty Sunday that meets monthly in the barn.
With a mission to “Be Jesus to our community, the disadvantaged and the developing world” our Mission Action plan will focus on these three areas:

### Our community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our situation</th>
<th>Our focus</th>
<th>Our plans</th>
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| Geographically our main buildings are on the edge of the parish’s residential area rather than at its heart. Also, the Parish is on the edge of Bishop’s Stortford, and therefore at times it can be difficult to be noticed. Work has started on upgrading our image and raising our profile. There are two primary schools, a care home and a large sheltered housing development within the parish. For those specifically looking for a church our “shop-front” consists of the website and our church services. For others, it includes events such as: afternoon teas, flower and music festival, circus and pirate family days, Glitter n’ Glow, Christmas and Easter services, other services such as baptism / marriage / funerals and memorial services. Such events draw a few people into our regular Sunday services. Nevertheless, with the significant fall-off in attendance at services, our current worship pattern seems not to be sufficiently attractive. There has also been a significant fall-off in numbers attending Powerhouse – our children’s work. Competition from sporting events is a significant factor here. We have a number of fresh expressions of church such as Messy Church, and Little Worship that meet at more convenient times of the week for people than a Sunday morning, and which work well. | Our focus is on God and our attentiveness is to Him and His work among us. We ask Him to use His church to bless our whole community. We want to develop a deep understanding of the place of prayer in the life of the Church, and a commitment on the part of all Church members to be engaged in praying about our community, as well as our own church family. As we’re changed by experiencing God and become more like Him, we will bring His presence into our relationships and interactions with our communities and networks. Out stated focus is to be Jesus to our Community. To achieve this, the clergy and every member of the church need to be actively involved in community life – with the clergy leading from the front. To back this up, we need to build a strong family life within the church, with the clergy and the members of the church knowing and supporting one another in the challenges that life brings and helping to build one another up as fellow disciples of Christ, recognising each other’s gifts and encouraging each other to use those gifts to step out in faith. As part of developing those gifts, we also need to grow new leaders within our Church family. We seek to use all our activities as stepping stones that help all of us, whether new to the faith or not, to keep moving forward in our journey of discipleship. | Our plans will be developed in four areas:

1. **Our services**
   - Focus on developing the beating heart of the church as worship which joyfully celebrates the love of Jesus.
   - Ensure the ‘formal’ part of our services is kept to time and services in the barn are as informal as possible whilst being sensitive to the need for reverence before God and allowing Him to minister among us.
   - Continue to support and develop fresh expressions of church and explore new opportunities (probably not on a Sunday morning) to engage different people groups.
   - Take every opportunity to connect with our community through services such as baptism / marriage / funerals.

2. **Church Life**
   - Have bi-monthly drinks evenings at the barn with the Rector welcoming newcomers and existing church members so that we all get to know each other.
   - Regular “Going Deeper” and other courses.
   - Encourage church members to take part in home-groups and whole-church prayer events such as accelerator prayer and prayer breakfasts.

3. **Community involvement**
   - Develop our calendar to include a range of events, such as relaxed social events at the barn to which we can invite friends and neighbours, and termly outreach events to include the Christian message.
   - Roll out the Life Explored course to challenge people on their life journey and as a pop-up basics course introducing the Christian faith. This can be run on a resource-light basis, 1-2-1 or in a group. We will later consider doing Alpha, which is more resource intensive.
4. Children and Families

- Where children are due to attend an event or be involved in a service, we will endeavour to ensure that the priority is of it being accessible, inclusive of all and a “fun” time.

- All family events will be coordinated to ensure connection and cohesion between them.

- Whilst being mindful of the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations), we plan to build the database of family contacts by ensuring that at each family event cards are handed out for those who would like to be notified of future events and completed cards will be added to the outreach database.

- Invitations to events will be sent to all those on the database who have indicated their interest in being so notified.

- Consider ways in which adults and young people in the church can, on occasions during the year, study the same materials creating connections that encourage everyone in a family to discuss Bible passages.

- Find ways to provide support where a single parent brings their children on their own.
## The disadvantaged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our situation</th>
<th>Our focus</th>
<th>Our plans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St James is conscious that its Parish is in one of the most affluent areas of England. Given the affluence around us, we have a responsibility before God to manage our resources well and support others in need. There are however pockets of disadvantage in the Bishop’s Stortford area. Members of the congregation are involved through Churches Together in projects such as the Winter Night Shelter and also the local YMCA. Affluence however does not prevent challenges in areas such as on-line safety for children, mental health problems for all the family, family break-up and worries about debt. Such areas are already being tackled at least in part by Church members e.g. through our strong Mothers’ Union branch which focuses on family life.</td>
<td>Our focus is to meet people at their point of need. This means providing support for what are often “broken” lives. More work needs to be carried out amongst our community to determine the issues that matter to them. In addition, we will be prayerfully attentive to the needs of those we meet day to day. Financial wealth can sometimes lead to spiritual poverty as people are unable to see their need of God or church. It is sometimes hard for a rich person to become like a little child and so enter the Kingdom of God. How can we help? We want to help people in our local community nurture their souls in this frantic world and make the most of our beautiful and peaceful location by becoming a spiritual oasis, providing a space to be refreshed in mind, body and spirit, through love, prayer and meditation on God’s creation and his Word. However, our horizons also need to be raised to the needs of the disadvantaged, beyond our Parish boundaries.</td>
<td>Our plans have three lines of development: 1. Provision of regular workshops meeting people’s needs, covering issues such as mental health and well-being and on-line safety for children. 2. Encouraging more members of the church to get involved in projects run by Churches Together in Bishops Stortford e.g. the Winter Night Shelter, Foodbank, Contact Centre and Money Advice Service 3. In the medium term to develop links with at least one other church in a disadvantaged area of the country whereby we can foster an exchange of talents, developing a relationship that provides mutual support and enables us to learn from them about meeting the needs of the disadvantaged in our communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our situation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Our focus</strong></td>
<td><strong>Our plans</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual members of the congregation are actively involved in a number of projects which provide support to the developing world. This includes:</td>
<td>We believe that it is right for the church to adopt the Micah challenge: “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” To this end we will support overseas projects and encourage each other to step out of our comfort zones and get involved with overseas mission. As part of this challenge, we also believe that it is right to be cognisant of the environment and the need for sustainability, including the avoidance of actions that would deplete the world’s natural resources - thereby supporting the long-term ecological balance. As an adjunct to this, we understand that the Millennial generation are actively engaged in such areas and believe that this focus will attract a younger generation, as we respond, with them, to the injustice of our world.</td>
<td>In the short term, we have intimated our support for a Church couple to progress their passion in this area and to become involved in the Tearfund Action Community. 2018 is Tearfund’s 50th birthday; this community will look at the theology and actions we can take around jubilee. The aim is to bring these actions and challenges to our church, helping us to grow in our understanding of the issues, to consider our own lifestyles and initiate change. In the medium/long term, we hope to develop specific links with an overseas church, perhaps through our connected missionaries, and foster a relationship whereby we can support that church, whilst at the same time learning from their experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Our connection with All Nations College, with visits to St James from former students recently - covering Nepal and Rwanda.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Students from All Nations regularly on placement at St James, giving individuals in the church an opportunity to build relationships with them that can potentially be sustained after their return home / move to the developing world.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Safe UK supporting projects in Malawi</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Fairtrade shop supporting Mildmay Mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Individuals working in Uganda / Ghana / Malawi.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
KEY OBJECTIVES SET

- In the short term to stem the fall-off in numbers, both at services and on the electoral roll, and in the medium term to see growth in numbers.
- 80% of all Church members to be connected with homegroups or other church groups and contacted by their group leaders to see how they are doing, especially if they are not in church / their group for more than three weeks in a row. Everyone belongs, and everyone matters.
- 20% of church members regularly attending prayer events.
- Run Going Deeper twice a year and multiply the number of course as we develop new leaders.
- Grow our connection through the clergy with Richard Whittington and Manor Fields schools. Pray for and consider how we can encourage and support Manor Fields with their recent “inadequate” Ofsted judgement. Continue regular visits to Parkside and Premier Court through the clergy and the Pastoral Care team and find ways to grow and support the pastoral team.
- Twice-yearly visitation of all families connected with the Church with children of Powerhouse age in order to foster growth in our children’s work.
- 50% of the church become engaged in supporting local community or overseas development projects, e.g. through the Tearfund Action Community.

KEY ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES

- Invite people individually and within services to the Life Explored course and run courses throughout the year as soon as there is demand.
- Build the Outreach database to list all families who have attended events and use the database to invite them to future events.
- Have testimonies in church about prayer events and homegroup membership to encourage attendance.
- Grow the associate membership scheme for homegroups and invite associate members to homegroup socials. Use technology where appropriate.
- Organise an 18-month calendar of future social and seeker-friendly events, to include all events in our existing schedule in order to avoid scheduling clashes, and publicise via the web, printed media and personal invitation.
- Build on the restored relationship with our neighbours living around the church buildings and pray for wisdom in balancing their needs with running evening outreach events. Invite them personally to such events.
- Worship planning group to consider a shake-up of the 10:30am service in the barn:
  - Reduce liturgy, possibly using Fresh Expressions liturgy where appropriate.
  - Rejoice and celebrate the love of Jesus!
  - Keep worship in the barn as informal as possible (whilst still being reverent).
- Bi-monthly drinks evenings for newcomers and existing members of the church to get to know each other and the church leadership.
- Promote the Tearfund Action Community within the Church and encourage engagement with the principles involved in Micah's challenge.
• Make contact with and where possible find out why people come less often or have left the church and how we can help them belong again.
Appendix 2: Financial Summary

- Parish share has been paid in full each year
- Of the legacy income received in 2017, £26,892 has been designated towards St Barnabas Centre roof repairs, which will cost around £76,000 in 2019
- Major property repairs to St James Church are funded through a strong Friends of St James group, which is a separate charity
- Once the Barn roof repairs have been completed (expected by April 2019), all properties will be in good repair
- At the end of 2015, there were no reserves. The congregation responded amazingly to a stewardship campaign to build the reserves up again – for which we give thanks to God. In addition, the congregation has really got behind our ‘fix-a-tile’ campaign in 2018, so that we will have replaced the barn roof early in 2019
- The St Barnabas Centre was gifted to the Church some 22 years ago and is therefore not a Diocesan property. The value of the barn is estimated at almost £2 million.
- Since our reserves were eliminated by the end of 2015, our missional giving has been restricted over the last few years. The PCC has now moved towards a policy of gifting a percentage of the excess of income over our Parish Share to mission.

### Unrestricted income and expenditure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Actual 2016</th>
<th>Actual 2017</th>
<th>Actual 2018</th>
<th>Budget 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned giving</td>
<td>116,365</td>
<td>111,764</td>
<td>107,546</td>
<td>102,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income tax recoverable</td>
<td>35,913</td>
<td>29,743</td>
<td>30,085</td>
<td>27,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>27,892</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises income</td>
<td>56,679</td>
<td>58,636</td>
<td>61,274</td>
<td>59,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundry income</td>
<td>51,332</td>
<td>22,185</td>
<td>21,888</td>
<td>16,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>260,289</td>
<td>250,220</td>
<td>220,793</td>
<td>205,980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parish share</td>
<td>92,581</td>
<td>101,244</td>
<td>103,535</td>
<td>96,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises expenditure</td>
<td>42,416</td>
<td>48,776</td>
<td>57,150</td>
<td>46,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff costs</td>
<td>40,287</td>
<td>31,167</td>
<td>36,653</td>
<td>38,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other costs</td>
<td>19,774</td>
<td>18,869</td>
<td>19,708</td>
<td>24,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>195,056</td>
<td>200,056</td>
<td>217,046</td>
<td>205,805</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Surplus for the year            | 65,233      | 50,164      | 3,747       | 175         |
| Adjustment to property value    | (2,900)     | (3,000)     | -           | -           |
| Reserves brought forward        | 281         | 62,614      | 109,778     | 113,525     |
| Reserves carried forward        | 62,614      | 109,778     | 113,525     | 113,700     |
All age music group.

The all age music group provides the music for both the first Sunday of the month services in the Barn and the Crib Service on Christmas Eve. Being part of the group is an opportunity for anyone to use their musical skills to support the worship for these services. We have a committed group of eight regular singers and musicians and we would love to welcome others. If you feel God is calling you to dust off that old clarinet, guitar, tuba (or drumsticks – we could definitely do with a drummer) you know where we are!

We rehearse in the hour before the service and music is available for those who would like to practise beforehand.

Music Fellowship Report

St James’ Music Fellowship is passionate about music in worship and worshipping through music. The Fellowship is particularly effective when we act together, such as at Joint Services, weddings, the Carol Service, special services and in our outreach activities. Most weeks we are seen in our smaller sub-sections: Choir, Jubilate, Music Group, Orchestra, Worship Band, Wedding Singers or simply as individuals and small groups supporting the monthly communion service at Premier Court, Messy Church, the Prayer & Thanksgiving service, the Service for the Imposition of Ashes and other services for which musicians are requested, including the occasional funeral. As with every passing year, there have been changes within the Fellowship. We have been pleased to welcome [redacted] and [redacted] who are now singing with us regularly, and [redacted] who supports us when he is able. It has been especially pleasing and encouraging that Lesley has been able to sing with us for many of the Sundays during 2017.

Our main outreach activities this year have once again centred round the Festival of Flowers & Music and Christmas. During the Festival we were blessed with musical moments performed by musicians of all ages, with three organists volunteering their services, as well as piano, cello, solo and group singing. At Parkside we led a carol service based around ‘The Kitchen Sink Nativity’ for the residents and their families. This was well-received even if the snow did mean that there were more singers than families present! At Premier Court we intended to once again sing carols in the corridors, but this had to be cancelled due to strict infection control procedures introduced by the Home.

Training and development are important for all of us to grow and develop. This year saw the award of 2 dark blue ribbons and 2 yellow ribbons, the highest award that can be achieved locally under the Voice for Life Scheme. Our 2 junior members have now been transferred into the adult training scheme at dark blue level and are working hard towards achieving the red ribbon. We continue to enjoy affiliation to the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) and the East Herts Church Choirs Association (EHCCA). We were delighted to host the EHCCA Good Friday Choral Evening Service. A choir of 60+ members, including 5 from St James, learned and sang psalms and anthems to lead this very special/poignant service.

Do you play an instrument? Do you enjoy singing? We offer a warm welcome to those who are enthusiastic about music and worship. Please contact [redacted] or [redacted] to identify where within the Music Fellowship your skills can be nurtured and developed.
Finance Committee

Over the last year, in the absence of the Rector, the Finance Committee has consisted of [redacted]. We meet on a quarterly basis. The role of the committee is to oversee the preparation of the financial budget for the PCC, to prepare, monitor and review the management accounts on a quarterly basis, and to oversee the preparation of the year end accounts. The church is a registered charity and so the accounts need to comply with best practice, and financial oversight needs to meet the best governance standards.

In addition, the committee is called upon to consider what capital expenditure can be afforded and to plan for future expenditure. Thanks to the generosity of the Church family, 2017 was a year when we were able to build up our reserves, but the Committee is mindful of the fact that increased capital spend is inevitable, and accordingly has set a deficit budget for 2018, which has been approved by the PCC.

[redacted] has chosen to step down from her role as Treasurer at this APCM, and we wish to express our gratitude for all that she has done.

Mission Action Planning team

Back in 2016, we commenced our “Leading your Church into Growth” (LYCiG) programme and over a period of six- or seven-months assimilated masses of feedback from the Church family about what you considered to be good about St James, areas where we could improve and ideas about where we believed God was leading us as we moved forwards. In the middle of 2017, our focus shifted from assimilating information to starting to prepare our Mission Action Plan (MAP) which was long overdue. Our MAP was approved by the PCC at its meeting in November, and this agreed the following key Vision, Mission, and Values for the Church:

Our Vision  People come to know and follow Jesus and lives are changed by the transforming power of God’s Spirit.

Our Mission  To be Jesus to our community, the disadvantaged and the developing world.

Our Values  Praying, Caring, Giving and Serving.

In the absence of the Rector, the MAP group now consists [redacted], and the focus of the group in 2018 is the implementation of the plan. We generally meet every six to eight weeks.

Church Flower Team

2017 began as always, quiet and uneventful, arrangements being done in the Church as usual only this time they enhanced the building even more as it had, at last, been completely redecorated internally. 4 couples were married in the Church in 2017 which was quite a contrast to 2012 when 12 couples tied the knot (less work for us BUT!!). By mid-summer the Team took a very big decision which was to retire at the end of the year and hand over to someone else. My thanks go [redacted] for all their hard work and dedication over the last 12 years, you have well and truly earned your retirement.
Archivist’s Report

This year the Churchwardens and PCC have been able to provide an additional area for the interment of ashes in our churchyard. This was funded by The Friends of St James the Great. A new information board on the Church Room wall sets out the Churchyard Regulations as required by the Diocese of St Albans. The Friends of St James churchyard database is updated annually [http://www.friends-stjames.org/Churchyard_Survey.htm](http://www.friends-stjames.org/Churchyard_Survey.htm) It now has details of over 1300 interments in our churchyard. This enables us to answer the many enquiries we receive from relatives far and wide.

The Churchwardens and PCC have accepted an invitation by The Commonwealth Graves Commission to install two small signs at the entrances to our churchyard to indicate that there are graves of servicemen interred in our churchyard.

We continue to welcome visits to our church by interested groups. This year we have hosted guided tours from three Cub Scout packs and two local schools as part of their badge work or school curriculum interests.

Churches Together Bishops Stortford (CTBS) report

St James’ representatives on CTBS are [blank]. The forum meets 3 times a year. Over the past year, CTBS has organised a variety of events, including:

- The Good Friday United Service and Walk of Witness
- The CTBS carnival float and field stand
- The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- The CTBS Christmas card
- Carol singing.

CTBS also monitors and supports a range of associated activities, such as the Night Shelter, the Money Advice Service, planned representation in Stortford North, support for Syrian refugees. A new initiative, “Try Praying” is being trialled by several churches in Stortford.

We give thanks for all these activities, which together represent a united witness to our town.
Worship Planning Group

The worship planning group plans the service rotas for both the Church and the Barn, in terms of who is leading the services, who is preaching and who is presiding at Communion. Where it is considered appropriate, the group also plans for linked sermon/home group studies. Generally, the group meets four or five times per annum.

In the absence of the Rector, the group has consisted of... During 2017, we have had to factor into the planning equation the fact that, as... is in training, she is restricted by the Archdeacon as to how many services she can lead and preach at in any month. We have been very fortunate that... has been available to support us and very generously given of his time. So, we have been able to organise a communion service every week, but this may not always be the case in the future.

The Church family will be aware of... wedding and so she has stepped down from the group. We are immensely grateful for all she has done on the worship planning group as well as her role in leading and preaching at services and everything else that she has done behind the scenes. She will be sorely missed.

Premises Group

2017 proved to be a very busy year yet again for this small group. Not only coping with recurring maintenance but effectively dealing with the increasing implications of Fire Control together with Health and Safety requirements/regulations. In addition, the perennial flooding risk to the SBC is still proving difficult to solve but the possible course of action put forward recently should, if implemented, ameliorate this. We have also been investigating a more permanent solution to the condition of the car park. The 5 St. James properties present constant maintenance issues and our aim is to assist the P.C.C. in keeping costs to a minimum!

We warmly welcome... our Premises Assistant to the group and any others who feel they could offer assistance at times.

Home Groups

Home groups continue to play an important role at St. James. These small groups meet regularly, and provide the opportunity to build relationships with God, with one another and with the local community. Prayer and Bible study play a significant part in meetings, as well as discussion & times of fellowship. A prayer map has recently been produced, and each group is being encouraged to pray for an area of the parish.

Currently there are 8 groups, who meet weekly or fortnightly, while Open Home Group provides the chance to sample Home Group life once a month. We would love to have another daytime group, & new members are always welcome.
Messy Church

We welcome people of all ages on a Saturday afternoon once a month to the Thorley Christian centre, right in the heart of our community. We continue to develop, aiming at making a true alternative to church as we know it, particularly trying to find ways to attract older children and teenagers. We have celebrated church festivals. We’ve had fun with water and stomp rockets. Activities are linked to a theme, exploring an aspect of life with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, whilst having fun. There’s something for everyone, from prayer, to painting and sticking. We worship using things we’ve made or done, songs, prayer and stories. Then have a meal together. Our numbers remain between 20-30.

Little Worship

We start with a creative activity and play. Then gather together for a Bible story, and to sing simple worship songs and other favourites. Then back to play and refreshments. At the end we make a circle, sing, and pray for the needs of those we love, and thank God for all He’s provided. Over the year we looked at Jesus’ life and people he met, and the creation story. During school holidays we welcome the families for ‘Tea and Toys’. We have 20-30 including babies, pre-school children and whoever they bring with them. The adults appreciate the friendly supportive atmosphere. Many thanks to all those who work so hard at creating it.

Barnabas Fair Trade

Part of the mission of St James is to be an engaged community promoting social justice. St James is also registered as a Fair Trade parish. The Fairtrade stall exists not only to sell fair trade goods so that third world producers have a market and receive a fair price, but also to remind us all that we have a choice when it comes to our purchasing power. The way we spend our money can have a positive impact on people in poverty. The stall promotes the sale of Fair Trade Real Easter Eggs and Real Advent Calendars, both fair trade products containing the Easter and the Christmas stories respectively. We also sell Christmas cards with Christian messages. Total sales since the stall began in 2007 have now exceeded £127,000 and thanks go to everyone who supports the stall. All the profits from the stall go to the Mildmay Mission Hospital and their work with children with Aids in Uganda. A total of £9,000 has been donated so far including a cheque for £3,500 sent in December 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday sales</td>
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<td>23% reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music exams</td>
<td>£816</td>
<td>£1,392</td>
<td>70% increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarion Housing office sales</td>
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<td>£1,553</td>
<td>47% reduction (now ended)</td>
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<td>Flower Festival / Craft Fair</td>
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<td>1% increase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>£2,890</td>
<td>14% increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£14,490</td>
<td>£12,758</td>
<td>12% reduction</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Bell Ringers Report

St. James’ Church, Thorley hosted the Bishops Stortford District Bell Ringers Quiz on 29th March 2017. Several teams participated and Thorley came 5th.

After nearly a year the new wooden wheel for bell number 5 was installed. The wheel was lifted up to the battlements of the bell tower and then lowered into the belfry on 26th July 2017. On August Bank Holiday Monday, bell chiming was made available to members of the public.

On Saturday 16th September 2017 a district bell striking competition was hosted by Thorley and the team from St. Michael’s came first. However, during the course of the competition the wooden stay on bell number 3 bell, broke. Fortunately, the bell striking carried on with care. Another wooden was made and fitted on 28th September 2017 with the help of Bishops Stortford St. Michael’s steeple keeper.

During the year we rang for 5 weddings for which we had to import some ringers because of the shortage of Thorley ringers. Ringing for Sunday services during the year was not always available due to lack of ringers.

Bishop’s Stortford Deanery Synod

The new Triennium of Bishop’s Stortford Deanery Synod for 2017 - 2020 started in September 2017. The Revd Mandy Brown was commissioned as the New Area Dean at the Deanery Open Eucharist Service in November 2017 by the Archdeacon of Hertford, The Ven Janet Mackenzie. There are several changes taking place at the Diocese and this will impact on all Deaneries. Alison Jackson has been appointed to the Hertford Archdeaconry as a ‘Fresh Expressions Development Officer’ and her work will be with the Deaneries. The Deanery Synods this year will be looking at: Safeguarding, Children’s Work and the introduction of Fresh Expressions. We are hoping to take a group to the 'Thy Kingdom Come' evening service at St Albans Cathedral on the 20th May 2018. A new Lay Chair has been found, we are still looking for a new lay secretary!

The Church and Church Room Volunteer Cleaning Group.

Our small but dedicated group of volunteers have managed to sustain this very valuable service throughout the year (helped by a contract cleaner just once a month in the Church). Sadly, our numbers have recently reduced further, and we urgently require more volunteers for both the Church and the Church Room. Unless more help is forthcoming, we will be unable to maintain this level of service into the future.

It is of interest that not all our volunteers belong to St. James Church.
Friends of St James the Great, Thorley

In last year’s report to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) I was pleased to note that the Friends were poised to make a grant to the Parochial Church Council to cover the full cost of the redecoration of the interior of the Church, which had then just been completed. Following the discussion at the Friends’ 2016 Annual General Meeting, and with the agreement of the Parochial Church Council, we had by last year’s APCM turned our attention to raising funds to improve our Church heating. By the middle of 2017 the Friends had raised what was believed to be sufficient funds to cover the full cost of the upgrade that had been suggested to the Parochial Church Council by the Diocesan Heating Advisor. At the request of the Parochial Church Council, we then turned our attention to raising funds for a range of new projects. These were to create a path border for a new Garden of Remembrance in the Churchyard, as the current one is nearing capacity; to undertake work that had been identified in the last Quinquennial Report as being required on the north walls of the nave, vestry and chancel, and on the south porch; and to provide a new floor covering for the Church Room. Many of you will have noticed that the stonework border for the new Garden of Remembrance adjacent to the Church Room is already in place, as is a laminate flooring in the Church Room. Our main fundraising event during the last year was, as usual, our annual Festival of Flowers and Music held over the August Bank Holiday weekend. The Festival was once again a great success, both as a significant outreach opportunity and also financially. The Friends’ other fund-raising activities during the course of the past year were a sale of plants in May, an Autumn Craft Fair in November, and our Sunday Afternoon Teas from the Church Room during the summer months. Most recently we held another very successful and most enjoyable Quiz Evening in February of this year.

The Friends would like to once again be able to offer Sunday Afternoon Teas from the Church Room during the months of May, June, July, August and September this year. However, this will only be possible if volunteers are forthcoming who are prepared to organise rotas for segments of this season, together with those willing to sign-up for the individual weekly slots in these rotas. Please let me or any of the other Committee members know if you are able to help in either way.

During the course of the past year it has become clear that significant sums will soon be required to undertake work in areas of the St James’ estate that fall outside the remit of the Friends. The Committee therefore agreed that the Friends should step aside from organising a Festival of Flowers and Music and associated Craft Fair over the 2018 August Bank Holiday weekend to enable the Parochial Church Council to use the extended weekend this year for fundraising in support of other parts of the St James’ estate.

New members of the Friends are always welcome. The minimum family subscription is only £5.00. By joining you will be supporting the work of the Parochial Church Council by helping to preserve our ancient and beautiful Church building and to maintain our Churchyard.

Reasonable Faith

This is a small group which meets twice a month in the St Barnabas Centre. We use multi-media to explore different aspects of the Christian faith and welcome people to bring along their issues, problems or concerns for discussion in a confidential and non-confrontational setting.
The Churchyard Volunteer Grass cutting and Tidy Up Group.

Once more, despite at times very contrary weather (and machinery!), our small but enthusiastic team of volunteers (some are not Church goers but just wish to help) have done a very commendable job over the whole 2017 season and we have received a number of compliments from members of the public.

We have three major challenges to overcome if this work is to continue successfully into the future:

We need new volunteers over the next couple of years to offset the increasing average age of this Group. (Anyone who enjoys manual work in the open air would be very welcome).

The problem of burning or otherwise disposing of the increasing volume of tree & plant debris. This is overtaking the capability of the present small team; also, there are Risk Management issues to be faced.

Due to heavy usage and rough ground there is an ever-increasing cost of Machinery Servicing, Breakdown and Replacement. At present this is still being largely met by the FOSJ and by personal donations.

Planned Giving Report

The Parochial Church Council is able to reclaim the basic rate of income tax that has been paid on donations made by UK tax payers who have completed a Gift Aid Declaration covering their giving to St James the Great or have made a particular gift using an appropriately completed Gift Aid envelope. This adds 25p to every eligible gift of £1 at no cost to the donor, given the current basic rate of income tax of 20 per cent. The total of such eligible giving in 2017 was £118,861. This enabled claims to be submitted to HM Revenue and Customs that resulted in tax repayments totalling £29,715. The corresponding figure for eligible giving in 2016 was £146,175, which led to tax repayments of £36,544.

The vast majority of giving to St James the Great is under our planned giving scheme whereby individuals agree to make regular contributions, predominantly by standing order or through weekly envelopes. This enables the Parochial Church Council to plan ahead and set budgets with a degree of certainty. Almost all of this planned giving is under Gift Aid or through the similarly tax efficient means of Payroll Giving or a CAF (Charities Aid Foundation) account. If you do not already support the work of St James the Great through planned giving or are a UK tax payer giving directly to St James who has not completed a Gift Aid Declaration, please consider doing so.

The Government’s Gift Aid Small Donation Scheme (GASDS) additionally allows parishes to claim a Gift Aid style repayment on small cash donations of £20 or less up to a maximum of £8000 (£5000 prior to April 2016) of otherwise ineligible donations per tax year per church building. Although this is discouraged as a means of regular giving, it did enable the Parochial Church Council to claim a further £1,790 in respect of the cash received through service collection plates and other cash donations during 2017, compared with £1,412 in 2016.

The total amount reclaimed from HM Revenue and Customs in respect of giving in 2017 was therefore £31,505, compared with £37,956 in 2016.
Safeguarding Report

Safeguarding is the responsibility of EVERYONE. The Church of St James the Great, Thorley fully supports and endorses the Safeguarding Policy Statement of the Church of England. It is our policy to safeguard the welfare of all by protecting from physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual harm and neglect.

Our vision is to provide places where everyone can discover more about how much God loves them and what it means to follow Him. We want to ensure that this happens in a safe, transparent and accountable environment. To this end our Policies & Procedures plus the Safeguarding Good Practice documents were reviewed and updated where required in October 2017. All adults, no matter what their role or involvement within the church, are responsible for following the St James’ Safeguarding policy at all times.

Adults, i.e. those over the age of 18 years, who are involved directly with young people under the age of 18 years and/or vulnerable adults are required to submit to the DBS checking procedure. We currently have a total of 41 people, in addition to the Clergy and Readers, who have been through these checks due to the nature of their roles within St James.

During 2017, the Church of England introduced a set of Safeguarding training modules – C0 for those who need a basic awareness of Safeguarding, C1 & C2 for those who require a greater understanding due to the role they undertake on behalf of the Church. The training provided is of a national standard and is specific to the context of the church. By the end of 2017, 60 members of St James had completed the basic awareness course and 7 the more detailed courses. These figures do not include Clergy & Readers as there are other modules specific to these roles.

During the year we liaised with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer on two occasions to ensure we were following correct procedures in situations that impacted, but did not directly involve, St James.

Whatever your role, we thank you for all you do in making St James a safe place for worshipping and meeting with God.

To undertake the online Safeguarding training module C0, please visit https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/ and select ‘online training’. C1 is now available as an online course too.

The Music Group

We praise God for the year that has passed and with a renewed focus on prayer, the music group has continued to be a blessing as it leads the sung worship at the 10:30am service. Our thanks go to the dedicated core of singers and instrumentalists who regularly use their gifts to glorify God and to serve others. Christmas 2017 was a special time as the whole music fellowship and members of the congregation combined to form our carol service choir and orchestra. This year, amongst the traditional carols, we performed ‘The truth form above,’ ‘Midwinter,’ ‘Shepherd’s Pipe Carol’ and ‘Rejoice and be Merry.’ A scratch hand bells group added an extra festive feel. We especially thank [conductor] (conductor), [accompanist] (accompanist) and our excellent technical team.

We look forward to the year ahead and anticipate an exciting time.
Worship Band

The band has continued to lead worship, on the third Sunday, at the 10:30am service. We have broadened our repertoire, introducing some new songs into the regular mix. The group always prioritises prayer before leading a service and recognises that this greatly enhances the worship anointing. Together we still feel led by the power of the Holy Spirit and we look for ways to further grow our spiritual gifts. It has been an immense privilege to lead the band for another year and I remain excited at the start of a new season of growth and renewal among us. Thanks to the team and to the congregation for an ongoing covering in prayer.

Youth work

Bringing together a critical mass of young people has been a challenge over the last year. Alternatives to the GAP format have been explored, such as "pop-up" youth church on Sunday mornings, trips to the Taste cafe, and partnering with Bridge Youth church which is run by St Michael's and Holy Trinity. Several young people are also involved in Cromarty Sunday once per month. Support for young people developing in faith and space for building peer friendships in this context is much needed, and leaders’ experience of attempting this through GAP are that a cross-church approach would be helpful to pool resources and bring together a larger group of young people across churches in Bishops Stortford.

Trailblazers (Blazing a trail for others to follow)

It seems no time since we published our last report. It is now 8 years since the first meeting of this men’s group, and it is hard to believe that an old man who had no idea that it all began because of him. Walk with Jesus and He will direct our paths. You can depend on Jesus, He won’t let you down if you wish to join the group or you are thinking about it, don’t hesitate – come and enjoy the fellowship.

We are blessed with a really good bunch of guys, most are retired and most with a story to tell. We gather from 10.30 am ‘till 11am with coffee and chat. At 11am an interesting talk and finish at around 12 noon and pack up and go to the Harvest Moon for lunch. We normally have a “Burn’s” lunch each January. As for food we served the usual “Burn’s” menu.

We changed things this year and had a British Isles programme of songs led by the Bishops Stortford Woodwind band. May God continue to bless us,
KITE - Keep in touch with everyone

St James has a good reputation for the friendliness of the people, who are the church of the living God in Thorley. The KITE team maintains a list of people to keep in touch with either by phone or visit as agreed with the person that they keep contact with. We do not want to be intrusive or duplicate work done in the home groups.

We are all God’s children and we care for each other. The group is small, but each KITE keeps an eye on their contact, and will advise the Pastoral Team if their input is needed. If someone is lonely, needs a small chore done or item from the grocers or chemist, please contact John Clark.

PowerHouse

PowerHouse aims to give children an age-appropriate opportunity to learn about God during the ‘boring’ bits of the grown-ups Communion service. In Explorers (KS2) and Climbers (KS1) over the past year, we have studied the Christian Character, Christian Foundations and Jesus, with our usual mixture of silly games, acting and smearing the Emmaus Centre with paint and dairy-free chocolate. Annice continue to lead us in song.

We have struggled this year with numbers, both of children and leaders; typically, we get 4-8 children across the two groups. The small numbers mean that group activities are challenging. We are therefore proposing to trial merging the groups next term, but with separate bible study sessions for the two age groups. This will also help the leaders who are often needed every other week. Numbers have also impacted pre-school groups, with Scramblers (3-4-year olds) not currently running, with the children going into the crèche during morning service.

SHOTS (Stortford Healing on the Streets)

Stortford Healing on the Streets is now in its 7th year. There have been many opportunities to pray and share God’s love with people as we have given out leaflets and chatted, seeds have been sown in people’s lives. It is encouraging that God uses SHOTS to draw people with many needs and it is a privilege to pray for them and hear their stories – some are regular visitors. We often pray for physical healing including cancer, skin disorders and back problems. When we pray we always focus on God’s love for the person.

Last September, we hosted a training session at St. James’ led by [Mark Marx](#) (founder of Healing on the Streets) from Coleraine Vineyard. It was well attended and attracted people from other areas, as well as refreshing us in our ministry.
**Prayer Ministry Team Report**

The Prayer Ministry Team consists of a volunteer group of trained listeners, willing and concerned to be available for anyone touched by life’s issues. It is a confidential service (within certain legal requirements) and has been of benefit to a wide range of worshippers over the years.

Prayer Ministry continues to be offered during and after the 10:30 service in the Barn and is located in the far corner of the Worship Hall. It is hoped to extend this service to the 09:00 service in the church in due course; but, in the meantime, any member of the earlier congregation can come to the barn at coffee time and ask for a member of the Prayer Ministry Team to pray with them. It is always an honour to be of support to our church family.

**Mothers Union**

We have had a successful year so far led by Ruth Boniface, who has had to step down for personal reasons. Ruth was an excellent leader and put a great deal of time and effort into MU. We would like to record our thanks to her for this huge commitment.

Mothers Union at St. James continues to grow; no mean feat when other branches are closing! We have been fortunate in having a very enthusiastic membership, great speakers from our own Branch and the church, who have come to share their lives and works at Branch meetings.

The Pleshey retreat day was again, very successful and we were blessed to have Ruth Atkinson as our speaker. Mothers Union role in modern society is changing gradually, but our members remain forward thinking and positive about supporting Christian family life and values and fundraising to help maintain these values globally.

**Street Pastors Report**

Street Pastors continues in Bishops Stortford town centre on Friday nights, with the backing of Churches Together, the Town Council and the Police. Our Prayer Pastors continue to provide prayer support and wisdom through the year.

Again, this year we provided marshalling for the Good Friday March of Witness.

Having reached a low head count we are slowly growing again with new people training and others returning after a break. Good news, as we go into our second decade serving the night time community in Bishops Stortford.

The street activity in the evenings varies from quiet to very busy, but not always as one would expect. As we present a caring face of God on the streets, we have a very rewarding time, assisting people for the first time, as well as meeting grateful people we had met and helped in the past. A continuing presence does count.

If you have a Friday evening to spare why not come along as an observer. You will not be bored, I promise you.