Chairman's Report 2022

This has been a year of activity and sociable fundraising, whilst behind the scenes we have been continuing to modernise the governance of the Friends, move forwards with the Pinnacles Appeal and update our database and practices.

A table-top sale was organised by Elisabeth Barratt and others last December, and as well as bringing fees from the stall holders, we raised money from the cake stall and merchandise table.

In March Mary Wilson organised a lovely afternoon concert of poetry and original music by an ensemble who have links to Mere. It was very well received by an appreciative audience, and the organisers gained valuable experience in putting on this sort of event – from sourcing staging, to modern ticketing methods.

A jumble sale in April organised by Fiona Jukes and Maggie Durkee was a significant fund-raiser. It was also a very traditional village event that can be characterised by the modern buzzwords of 'sustainability' 'circular economy' and (my favourite) 'pre-loved'. Win-win!

Mere celebrated the late Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee in style in June. The Friends ran a very popular tea room in the Grove Building, and a plant stall in the Churchyard alongside other local charities. There was a real atmosphere of celebration, and significant friendliness and co-operation with other charity stalls.

A week later, in conjunction with the Mere Gardening Club some of our members participated in Mere Open Gardens. Luckily the sun continued to blaze, there was a very good turnout over the two days as people flocked around a very varied selection of gardens throughout the town. The Friends raised money from not only a portion of the ticket sales, but also the tea room we ran in the Grove Building on both days.

There are a great many people to thank for all these activities, from those who generously donated items for the jumble sale, tearoom and plant stall; the kind and generous sponsors; to the people who gave of their time and strength to collect and move stuff around, serve teas, and man stalls. Finally, a huge vote of thanks comes from me, and no doubt, all of you, to everyone who actually organised these events. They liaised with others, filled in forms, made phone calls, counted

money, button-holed people and ‘followed up’ admin. You know who you are; (in no particular order) Maggie Durkee, Fiona Jukes, Bill Price, David Bett, Elisabeth Barrett,
Mary Wilson and Richard Wilson . I hope I haven’t left anyone off the list - Thank you, all!

The Pinnacles Appeal.
The Friends also continue to lead the Pinnacles Appeal which is a separate project from the general fundraising work we do for St Michael’s.

A new sub-committee of the Friends (Maggie Durkee, Bill Price, Elaine Stallard, Elisabeth Barrett and Sherry Jenkins) has been formed to focus on this project. Currently they are working with the architect, Brian Watts and a specialist scaffolding advisors to refine the scaffolding plan before the final round of obtaining quotes. The closing date for tenders for the work is 20th October. After the quotes are obtained work on applying for grants with local and national bodies (including the National Lottery Heritage fund) will continue. Thank you to you all the work on this exciting and necessary project.

Other work
A working group of Committee members has also been set up oversee our systems and ensure that we are compliant with requirements of the Charity Commission and using best-practice in all our activities. This includes modernising our methods and record-keeping, and we will be also working on security, managing data and cash-handling.

(Some measures have been incorporated into the amendments constitution already).

We are continuing work to update the membership database, improve our communications, and recruit new members. The Friends are in a unique position to channel people’s interest, energy and contribution to the life of the Church of St Michael. It is a place of worship and also a beautiful and historically significant building at the heart of its’ community, and everyone is welcomed to play a part in sustaining it. Thank you all very much.