The Church Support Group was set up in November 2014 and an Executive Committee was formed at the same time. Our committee met for the first time on the 21st May 2015 and has continued to meet regularly since, as required. The fact that it is over a year since that meeting until today, our first A.G.M., is an indicator that we have been rather wrapped up in sorting things out.

Initially, we had to get consensus on our objectives and plan ideas on fund raising, making the church more attractive to visit and used more. We then turned our attention to reaching out to those responsible for managing the church. We did this by inviting the treasurer to talk to us about the state of church funds, co-opting a member of the PCC and then inviting Revd Celia to discuss our plans and make sure we did not contravene any religious conventions, this resulted in us co-opting her onto the committee and she has worked closely with us ever since. I would like to thank her for the valuable role she plays in being the link with the church management hierarchy and the school (which has a new head teacher and secretary).

We then hit an obstacle because the members of the PCC did not stand again and the church wardens resigned. This meant that the people managing the fabric of the church were no longer there. After long negotiations and meetings with the venerable Elizabeth Snowden, the Archdeacon of Chelmsford, we were able to establish that a small PCC did exist and we could all continue with our work together. I would like to mention that Archdeacon Elizabeth has been very supportive and has acted in a constructive way so we could move forward.

What we did discover was that there was a long list of outstanding repairs that require immediate attention and we realised we had to become more involved in the management of the whole church structure to ensure it remained open, despite it not being in our remit. I would suggest we need to get approval for this action from you all today.

While all this was going on the team were “champing at the bit” to get things done. Harold immediately started getting light bulbs fixed, rose beds dug and plans for the gravel path and managing the compost in the church yard and provided a step ladder, all at his own cost. This was at the same time as getting the bank account set up and the finances sorted. David was off sorting dangerous gravestones, weed killing, cleaning up the porch, filling holes in the drain and sweeping it clean. I could go on more about all the things they have done, so thank you Harold and David.

On top of this we organised four fund raising events to raise money and fill the church. Thanks to Penny, David and Tim Boem.

The ownership of the church car park changed and we needed to negotiate to continue usage. That was not only agreed, but the pot holes were filled in, the area resurfaced and the notice board refurbished. Thank you to Gary Sharpe for his co-operation.

We began to realise that there were ongoing maintenance issues, such as sweeping the drainage gully, and we needed to set up a rota and appeal for volunteers. A report in the newsletter produced good results and Christopher Woods volunteered to be on our list, Jean Offord took on the upkeep of the remembrance garden and Patrick Wreathal offered to do maintenance work on the church yard. I have already met with him on a site visit and he will cut back the rear hedge that is overhanging the graves. These offers of help not only lighten the load, but they give encouragement and moral support, so thank you very much.

We are in the process of re-doing the gravel path to and around the building, putting a drain in to stop the porch from flooding and putting up fencing to contain the compost with a sign asking people to take non-compostable material home to make the area more attractive, and we have not spent any of your money yet. In addition we are helping to manage the huge list of essential repairs starting with work to prevent damp in the South aisle.

It is essential that I give a special thank you to Penny for her extensive work translating all our talk into a recognisable printable version for our records. Finally I would like to thank you all for your continued support.

Questions.