Steeple Keeper’s Report, November 2018:

**General Remarks:**

As last year. The bells do not currently have any serious defects, although there are a number of minor/longer-term issues that Whitechapel identified when they inspected both towers last year, and some others that I identified in the course of last year.

**Recent Activity**

Held an IAP Ringing Course (Jan. 2018), involving tying the clappers.

Spent a lot of time re-splicing and moving various ropes, which eventually led to…

Bought four new ropes. As things stand, therefore, the ropes on the 1, 2, 4, and 6 are new; that on the 3 was replaced last year, and those on the tenors not too long before that: so hopefully we’ll be set for ropes for a bit.

**Long-Term Projects still underway:**

- Cleaning the bell chamber\*

- Improve lighting in the bell chamber. Current (short term) plan involves running an extension cord over the ceiling and hanging shop lights from ceiling on E. side.

- Add some more decoration? I’d like to put up a framed copy of the bellringers’ prayer from the Follow-On Book, in some sort of medieval font, somewhere on the stairs: this could be in English (if people want to actually be able to read it) or in Latin (if you don’t want that much prayer right in your face.) I’d also like to put a medium-sized sign with information about the bells at the bottom of the stairs, so that parishioners and passers-by could have a little more connection with them and with us.

**Issues that need to be addressed:**

***Urgently:***

- [none]

***In the Short Term:***

- Oil clapper on the #7 *(and anything else that’s squeaking)*

***In the Mid-Term***

- Check/Replace stay on #2 (slightly cracked?)

- Remove clapper from tenor and see if the bushing needs to be replaced, and if there’s anything else we can do to make it swing more easily

- See if gudgeon of #5 actually needs repairs; if so, do them.

- Work out guidelines for when we open additional trapdoors to allow the bells to be more audible *(Easter, July 4, any time we’re tolling, others?)*

***Some time in the next couple of years:***

- Finish making new slider for the #2

- Make new slider for #5 that actually fits\*

- Fix hinge on the trapdoor over the #2

- Make a blind for the skylight in the passageway

- Contact church about extensive repairs to the stairs etc. (see over)

- Measure existing stays, to determine where the holes for the bolts on new ones need to go

\* Issues identified by Whitechapel survey

**Roof and Staircase Problems: Preliminary observations**

It has been clear for some time that the route up to the ringing chamber needs serious work. **As things stand**, the spiral staircase creaks in a way that suggests that it needs to be rebuilt; the roof over the stairs leaks, which is starting to lead to the floors rotting (or at least getting mildew); and the roof over the anteroom *also* leaks, although I haven’t (yet) see any sign of this causing other problems. (In addition, the walls in the ringing room keep shedding paint, and those of the belfry keep shedding brick fragments, but I think these are less immediate issues.)

We *might* be able to **fix the staircase** ourselves, with some help from someone with some carpentry experience; but the parish would want to get involved, and it would be a lot of work and disruption. **The roof**, I think, needs to be looked at by a professional, and probably sooner rather than later, before anything seriously starts rotting.

Complicating this (both positively and negatively) is that **Father Warren is retiring as Rector** (=head honcho) of the Church of the Advent, effective January. This means :

1. In the short-term, things *may* be somewhat chaotic around here: a search committee will be interviewing candidates for the Rectorship, there will likely be a tendency to put off any major decisions/projects, etc.
2. Anything related to finances and buildings (normally the joint responsibility of the Rector and a ten-member Vestry) is going to be in the hands of a property committee. I believe Kara Rodgers *(former ringer at Kent)* is on the latter.
3. I (and some other people in the parish) are hopeful that the new rector, once he[[1]](#footnote-1) is actually appointed, will do some sort of fundraising campaign, to address this sort of issue.[[2]](#footnote-2) Stay tuned, and we’ll see what we can do…

1. A woman rector would normally be perfectly possible in the Episcopal Church, but given the politics of the C.o.t.Advent, it’s not *reeeaal* likely… [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. And also some of the less essential stuff, like replacing/fixing worn tiling and maybe scrubbing a hundred years’ worth of incense and coal smoke residue off the interior of the church. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)