



Vicar's Report to the APCM 2005

It gives me great pleasure to be able to come before you this morning to deliver my first report to the parish annual meeting as your vicar! Last year (as your priest in charge), I explained how the PCC had come to the decision that now was not the right time for Christ Church to become a part of the Wimbledon Team Parish.

Following on from that, the Diocesan Pastoral Committee, the Archdeacon and Bishops Richard and Tom all agreed that the suspension of the living (effected upon the resignation of Celia Thomson) should be lifted and that an incumbent (vicar) should be appointed. The P.C.C. met for what I hear was a charged and turbulent discussion at the end of which members emerged exhausted with the effort of deciding whether to advertise the vacancy or on the other hand save themselves a few quid and put up with the bloke they'd already got. John Davey was clearly on form ... for here I am! Thus it was that on a balmy evening in December ... well spiritually anyway) and amidst much local cheer and happiness, I was instituted and installed as vicar of Christ Church. Hoorah!

Joking aside, I thank you for having me as your vicar. I think it's good for Christ Church at the moment to have had the suspension of its living lifted and certainly good for me. With twenty years to go before retirement I enjoy a security of tenure not enjoyed by many in today's volatile work environment. And that really isn't meant to send shivers down anybody's spine! I appreciate the fact that now it is up to you and me to decide how long I stay and no-one else.

And now some 'thank-yous'. I am grateful for the continuing atmosphere of collegiality that characterizes life at Christ Church and would like especially to thank Sue and Chris, our talented and hard working wardens, without whom things would grind to a halt very quickly indeed. Mary does sterling work in the parish office and deals graciously with my scribbled, late and ungrammatical notes as she toils heroically with a worn out photo-copier and I thank her. Ron and the choir, for my money just go from strength to strength. No end of people tell me how well balanced our musical life at Christ Church is, with an unrobed choir that sings twice a month and then leads occasional treats such as choral evensong,, Advent and Christmas carol services and Palm Sunday events. I would like to mention Elaine Chester this year whose professionalism and contemporary edge make flowers at Christ Church a continuing delight. We are grateful to our verger Grace Tapping for her hours of unsung, dedicated care for the church fabric and for the time she puts in at services in church beyond the borders of Sunday. He doesn't like it to happen too much and I'm not allowed to go into detail but I would like to record my gratitude to Paul Brazier for the numerous ways in which he has contributed to the support and development of the parish this year. I would like to thank those members of the PCC stepping down from service namely: Ian Christie, Mary Ann Bown, Clare Pickard and Pat Spencer. We are very grateful for all that they have contributed to Christ Church in this capacity over many years. All of them are committed to church life in other ways and I know that we shall see plenty of them as they take a well earned break from this particular aspect of church life. I welcome Mark, Martin, John Wilson and Margaret as their replacements and thank Bob and John Davey for agreeing to stand for another year.

This has been a busy year (again!) September saw two more developments in the role of young people at Christ Church. We began a youth group for those of our young people (and their

friends) who are of secondary age. There is a report on their year in the booklet of reports but I would like to express our shared gratitude to the leaders who are willing to give up Friday evenings to provide this service to our youth. At the same time, we initiated the use of junior servers who act as acolytes at the 10.00am service. In the coming months I would like to see them expand their role so that they come to support the small group of adult servers until we arrive at a point where the adults and young people come to be one group and the young people are able to take on other aspects of the servers' duties.

In January we began a new service at 11.30am. Called 'Life Lines' it aims to provide an opportunity for those new to church to come to a short informal service where there will be a particular emphasis on exploring faith and learning to belong. The service happens every Sunday and a small but dedicated congregation has become established. However small the numbers and whatever the noise level,, the intimacy of the occasion always makes it holy and worthwhile. Established members of the church are always very welcome to join in with this celebration and to help build links between new people and the regular worshipping congregation.

I hope that everyone enjoyed our Patronal Festival with its re-vamped programme, the star attraction of which was, for me, the chance to eat a fabulous breakfast between the 8.00 and 10.00 services. What few ounces of energy that remained after a sprightly(!) 2¼ hr. jaunt around the parish boundaries was spent on the consumption of cake and evensong to conclude the day. We'll do it all again next year with perhaps a slightly modified parish walk after lunch!

In January we prepared and launched our planned giving review. Thanks to the careful work done by the Stewardship Group, the process unfolded smoothly and the results were very encouraging. Over seventy people responded to the appeal by increasing the level of their giving and some twenty four responses were from those who had previously not been part of the planned giving scheme. We have more than achieved our target of increasing the level of our annual by income by £20,000. This is a tremendous vote of confidence in our church and sets a determined tone for the future. Stewardship needs looking at each year as we remind our selves that what we give in financial terms is part of the whole of what we offer of ourselves to God.

Throughout the year our hall has been transformed into the beautifully decorated, well equipped, shiny floored facility we see today. Work is ongoing and there are developments planned for the toilets and in access for those with disabilities. I would like to pay tribute to members of the hall committee and especially to Clare our hall manager whose commitment and energy make such an enormous contribution to the running of the hall and thereby to the whole life of the church especially in terms of our outreach to the community.

We now speak to passers by in Cope Hill and Cottenham Park Road in accents clear and still, as our new notice boards are finally in place. It took a while and I have endured considerable amounts of ribbing from my clerical neighbours who almost weekly enquired if I was staying just a few more days as my name seemed never to be ready to be committed in paint on the notice boards. But there it is and there they are, bright and new and I hope you like them.

For the rest, we have had a very busy Lent and Easter period with a new children's service on Good Friday which was a definite success, a new morning discussion group meeting monthly on the last Wednesday of each month, the start of an adults enquirers group on Wednesday evenings in church, a refurbishment of the parish web-site, the collation of a congregational email data base and a review of Christ Church News under the tutelage of Paul Brazier and Margaret Thomas.

Since we last gathered for our annual parish meeting we have said farewell to a number of faithful worshippers who have moved away, notably, Kenneth Stowe, Peggy Lancet, the Deane family and today, Ole Skjodstrup and Linda Johns. We wish them all well in their new ventures and look forward to welcoming them back when they come back to visit.

We have commended into God's loving hands, Dennis Pinnell, Ruby Myllys, Brian Skelton, Olive Clarke and Mollie Lloyd and miss them all dearly.

Loving God, help us to live fully in this present moment where you are to be found in sadness and joy, in chaos and in quiet, in laughter and in grief. Walk with us and help us to know you there. Free us from anxiety and help us to be joyful.

And on a concluding note of joy, you may be interested to hear that after eighteen months, the diocese has finally got round to putting a new kitchen in the vicarage. We are living in chaos but those nasty dark pine cupboards have gone! One room down twelve to go!!!