

Vicar's Report to APCM 2008

I'd like to begin my report to the APCM with some thank yous. In particular I'd like to say thank you to Chris for another year of dedicated service to the church and to Mark at the end of what has inevitably been a first year as Church Warden with its particularly steep learning curve. I hope that they are not too exhausted! Chris, tonight, begins his final year as warden which means that pretty much from now, we will be alert to possible successors!

In addition, there will be changes to the PCC tonight. John Wilson has not so much stepped down from the PCC as moved across to become one of our Deanery Synod representatives where two long standing servants of the church step down tonight from their role as synod rep and therefore, ex officio members of the PCC. We look forward to welcoming Joslyn Taylor and Judy Luddington as new members of the PCC. Monica Brown has been a pillar of this community for more years than most of us can remember. Many of you will know better than me the debt of gratitude we owe her. There is a small token of our respect and thanks to go to Monica from this meeting and I'm sure that we would all like to send with this symbolic gesture, our love, best wishes and appreciation for the innumerable ways in which Monica has given of herself, to Christ Church, over the years.

Also stepping down from representing the parish on Deanery Synod is Colin Holloway. For me, Colin has been there throughout my time with you at Christ Church. He was a member of the interviewing panel when I was appointed and PCC secretary before and since. We will all want to thank Colin for his calm wisdom, his fantastic ability to get to the heart of the matter and his inimitable way with words. I know that Angela thinks that sometimes he's too much the craftsman when it comes to the PCC minutes but it's been a rare pleasure for an incumbent who enjoys the well crafted phrase in literature so much, to encounter PCC minutes that are almost poetry! On a personal note, I would like to record my sincere gratitude to Colin for his support, encouragement and guidance during my first four and a half years at Christ Church. We are rather different people with a somewhat different style and approach to lots of things. What a good thing that we are a collection of the varied! I have very much appreciated having Colin's careful, well thought out, balanced input to so many meetings, discussions and decision making processes. We will miss him and we send to him also, with this small token, our heartfelt gratitude and love as he stands down from the PCC.

While we are thanking, I'd like to mention Sara in the parish office, Grace our verger, Farhad and Simon our Readers and Ron our director of music. We are very lucky to have such a band of hard working dedicated 'office holders' at Christ Church. This year, I would also like to pay tribute to members of the Hall Committee and particularly to Lynda Coleman and Sue Rocksborough Smith who have worked like Trojans to get us out of the difficulties we found ourselves in with the hall last summer. Again we are truly grateful. I will have missed important and valuable people out but this is a chance to say thank you to everyone who contributes to the life of the church in this parish. That's pretty much all of you. Well done! There's no church without all the thousand and one things, great and small that contribute to the whole.

It feels as though it has been a year with a number of highlights: our joint study group last autumn with our neighbours in the Wimbledon Team was a great success, Toddler Church on the first Tuesday of each month is a valuable addition to our provision, Easter morning at dawn was encouragingly well attended and we will be hoping to double the twenty strong band who celebrated the resurrection with prayers and champagne at dawn next year! Our Eco-Festival was a fantastic event and we look forward to number two in June of this year. Our young peoples group on a Sunday evening, KFH, is a success as is our Traidcraft stall which this year began the sponsorship of a child, Kardy, from Senegal. Our new way of collecting and allocating funds for charities seems to be going well. Levels of giving seem to be holding up well and the increased communication about the various charities is valuable and helpful. Our choir is great, the new concerts from the Jigsaw Players are a blessing and daily Morning Prayer is often attended by members of the congregation. The children's Service on Good Friday was overwhelming - we ran out of Easter Garden making kit and our Junior Church is flourishing.

I'd like to express here my appreciation for the incredibly dedicated hard work put in by our treasurer, David Essex. More on money anon. But I'd like to thank David for helping us to focus upon our balance of

payments situation and to look at our income streams in particular. This January, we were all invited to join a very modest but highly productive review of what we are able to give to Christ Church. Christian Stewardship is something for us all to hold in our prayer. What do we receive from God? What are we able to give? My gratitude to those of you (and it was a high number) who responded positively to the invitation to ask and answer those questions this year.

Not everything in the garden is rosy however. Tiny numbers of people participated in our Advent and Lent prayer and/or discussion groups. We really haven't got the hang of coming out to things in mid-week and the experiment of inviting members of the congregation into the homes of other members was a notable failure. Something to work on in the future. The November quiet morning only attracted seven people, carol singing only six (and I know it was choir practice night but that only deprived us of about 10 possible extras). We remain a church where it is hard to get anything like our full compliment to participate in things outside Sunday Mornings. Modern Life? Maybe so and I don't suppose we're the only ones. Certainly I'm left feeling that the amount of hard work needed to set up these things is not worth the effort for the numbers they seem to appeal to. For the coming year, I will be looking more and more to partnerships with our neighbours in these directions given that our one foray into this sort of sharing has been so successful.

So, another year passes. There's lots been done, lots of it very well, there are flagging bits, dog eared bits and bits that will need our close attention in the coming year. Our journey toward God is a journey during which we help to build the Kingdom. We search for reconciliation, truth and love and it won't ever be easy or straight forward. But on we go knowing that we are loved and knowing that all will be well.