

Vicar's Report to APCM 2011

Once again, it's my great pleasure to begin my report to the Annual Meeting by recording my grateful thanks to a whole host of people. One of the great things about being vicar at Christ Church is that there are always many, many more people to thank than I've got time or capacity of memory to include. I hope that if I've forgotten or left you out, you will forgive me.

Once more our Church Wardens, Mark and Sharon have been terrifically supportive of the life and work of the church over last year. Both have significant commitments beyond the life of the church and so are busy for most of the time. We are very grateful for the sacrifices and contribution they both make here.

Thanks also to every member of the PCC. Plenty of clergy dread their meetings with the PCC. I pity them because I very much enjoy meeting with the PCC. Sometimes ministry can be a rather lonely experience and the opportunity to share in a real sense of doing things together is a blessing. It is to the PCC's credit that this sense of a shared ministry is deeply embedded in all that we do here and that it never feels like a battle! This evening Martin Evans and Brenda Clarke step down from the PCC after having served for two three year terms. They get at least one year's break and we thank them very much. Also this evening we elect a new cohort of Deanery Synod reps. We express our particular gratitude to John Wilson, Jenny Tomlinson and Lynda Coleman released this evening from Deanery Synod. All have given distinguished service. We welcome our new reps., Alban Thurston, Brenda Thurgood and existing PCC member Ron Barnett to join our continuing rep Joslyn Taylor therefore, as ex officio members of the PCC.

We also welcome Tish Mousell and Julia Warner who have been elected as new members of the PCC. In the wider church, I'd like to pay tribute to Heather Field for her generosity in continuing to co-ordinate the Bruno Bear Club on Thursday mornings even though she moved to live in Epsom about two years ago! I believe that she is now on the verge of handing over to new co-ordinators and so I'd like to say how appreciative we are that this important part of our work has been sustained by Heather long after we might have expected her to end her involvement. As another year turns, so once more I need to thank Sara in the parish office. Sara is a crucial part of the effectiveness of our church community and we are very grateful indeed for her efficient, careful and dedicated stewardship of the parish office. Last year I was very happy to welcome Irene to her new role of Director of Music. Irene has found her feet this year and having settled into what we have been used to is now in a position to think of

ways in which music at Christ Church can be developed. Grace Tapping continues to be a 'pillar' of the church. Though not a very tall one, she's rock solid and we're very grateful for her endless commitment, kindness and hard work.

I'd like, this year, to thank three other groups of people. Again and again, I hear how 'good' Christ Church feels. Three groups of people that I think contribute enormously to the way church 'feels' to people are the Stewards, the Pastoral Team and the Cleaners. All are essential tasks, all are done incredibly well and we all benefit from the ministry of those who welcome, tidy up after and care for those who worship here.

Once again this year we have welcomed new people to church and are of course delighted to do so. Once again we have had to say goodbye. This year we have lost our good friends Richard Thurgood, Monica Brown and Doreen Howell. In their own special way, each has given so much to this church and we miss them. That said; imagine the joy at the party in heaven as three new Christ Church guests arrive.

In terms of church life, this feels as though it has been a busy year of activity and preparation for activity. Finally and joyfully, our new high altar kneeler was completed and the last element of our 150th birthday celebrations was laid down at our Patronal Festival only 14 months after the end of our celebratory year! It's a lovely thing to have and thanks to all the stitchers co-ordinated by Wendy Hamilton.

We have begun a new 1st Sunday of the month service: Celebrate Together which seeks to bring together our 10.00am and 11.30am congregations. I think that so far it is working well. It may well not yet be the finished article and I'm happy to hear suggestions for tweaks and revisions. I think that the PCC is going to have to re-visit the Life Lines service which has recently shrunk to very small numbers.

In December we welcomed the Wimbledon Korean Baptist Church which now uses church and hall every Sunday afternoon for worship and fellowship. It is very good to be able to host local Christians and enable their worship and community life.

At our last PCC meeting we agreed that we would form a new link with the parish of St Francis of Assisi Barham Green in Bulawayo. This is part of the outworking of our area link with the diocese of Matabeleland and we look forward to working with the congregations of both churches to establish and strengthen the link to our mutual benefit.

I'm sorry that a series of quiet days offered at St Columba's House in Woking were only taken up by very small numbers of people, that only a very small group of parishioners is travelling to Iona in June and that attempts to set up a parish retreat have once again come to nothing. I think that this is a problematic area of church life and one where I'd be grateful to hear from anyone with good ideas as to how we might make retreats/quiet days/days of prayer a more successful part of our church life.

In the autumn, the gas fire in the Truman Room gave up the ghost and left us trying to heat it with small radiators and air blowers. This failed. On the verge of laying out £2-3000 to install a new gas fire, we discovered, in the nick of time, that the existing gas supply comes directly from the hall. Given the uncertainty over the future of the hall, we have decided that in the immediate future we will therefore heat the Truman Room with a more powerful free standing heater which we are now in the process of acquiring.

Our lighting appeal now stands at something over £20,000. The PCC has decided, subject to satisfactory arrangements for after care, to proceed with a specification prepared by A.J. Smith a company experienced in providing lighting for churches. The quote for this work is in the region of £35,000. We hope that a refreshed Lighting Appeal will close the gap between funds raised and funds required. A concentration on wills and legacies at this year's stewardship Sunday in May will aim to achieve this. We are quite sure that any development of other parts of our plant will not impact adversely upon a renewed lighting system. It is worth paying tribute to Mark, Sharon and those they manage to rope in to help them, for their hard work and frankly their courage in changing the light bulbs in church which now blow with such frequency that continuing with the existing lighting provision is simply unsustainable.

Finally, I'd like to report on the progress of our Proposed Building Project. This time last year, we were able to present to the APCM the overwhelmingly positive response from the congregation to our invitation to comment upon the PCC's vision for the future of our church, hall and vicarage buildings. We were able to listen to some of the concerns of some members of the congregation who were uncertain about the need or desirability of the proposed project. We were charged with establishing a steering group who would work on behalf of the PCC to continue the exploratory process. This has happened. Through this year, the group has met together and with diocesan officers to crystallize the parish vision, explore potential planning issues and have invited two firms of architects to draw up possible schemes that would achieve our vision. The steering group has been encouraged and impressed with the approach of diocesan officers. To date the entire cost of planning investigations, drawing up

architects' proposals and initiating valuation reports have been met by the diocese. We are now at the stage of discussing the cost implications of our preferred scheme and will hope to be in a position to bring a final and detailed proposal to the PCC by the end of this year. If this proposal meets with PCC approval, we will then immediately embark upon a consultation process with the whole congregation before seeking planning permission for the scheme. Again, it is worth emphasising that we are still in the planning process. It will not be until we have a finalised, costed scheme to bring to the PCC that we will need to embark upon any debate. I am happy to answer any questions you might have with regard to the process but am not in a position to give any details about plans as they have not been finalised and are still subject to costing, revision, development and change. That said, all concerned were delighted that both sets of preliminary drawings from the architects described schemes which provided massively improved resources, a hall space which matched the current provision, and which leave the wild garden untouched.

At prayer this morning, we read the following meditation by Martin Smith: (A Season for the Spirit' pge 127)

May God bless us all with the eyes to see and the ears to hear his presence with us, every day
Amen