

Christ Church West Wimbledon

APCM 2013 – Vicar’s Report

I would like to record my heartfelt thanks to Sharon Mawhinney for her support as church warden through what has been, at times, an extremely testing year. This has been Sharon’s fourth year as warden and in all sorts of ways has been the most challenging of all. Week by week, even at times of great stress and in the face of some very difficult situations, Sharon has managed to communicate to me that unflappable calm and committed support which is so vital for any church community to flourish. She is a real team player and has been open, discursive, creative, organised and down to earth all at once. Her clear thinking has helped us to solve problems and to keep the show on the road. Sharon said to me shortly after the Olympics had finished that all the brit flag waving had made her more passionately Canadian, well, all I can say is ‘O Canada’, thank you!

David Essex tendered his resignation as Churchwarden to the Bishop of Southwark on 29 January 2013, which the bishop accepted shortly thereafter. David Essex resigned because he believed that I had a conflict of interest regarding the proposed sale of parish land to enable the diocese to erect a vicarage for the benefit of myself and my successors, and David considered that I was acting improperly by being involved in related PCC meetings, deliberations and the writing of reports in which such sale was discussed. David drew my attention to the issues relating to my personal position in September last year, and many times subsequently. Ultimately he felt he was left with no choice but to refer the matter to the Charity Commission and to resign. The Charity Commission have since written to me and have

confirmed that David’s representations to me were well founded and I have subsequently followed their advice.

Thank you also to Julie Grainger who becomes our new church warden this morning. Unlike most possible candidates for the job, Julie did not require heavy persuasion from me. She said ‘yes’ readily! God bless her.

Thanks also to Farhad and Simon our Readers, to Sara in the office, Tom at the organ, Sarah our Pastoral Asst., Grace in the vestry, Elaine at the flowers, Pat and her stewards, the Pastoral team, the PCC, the social committee, the Jnr. Church leaders, the cleaners, the coffee makers the readers the prayers, the pushers and drivers, the gardeners and bakers, group leaders and followers, thanks to all who make Christ Church good. There are so many that by naming many, I’ve now run the risk of leaving someone out so apologies to you too but you are all appreciated, you make this church what it is and so many, week by week tell me that what it is, is warm, friendly, inclusive, welcoming, and, yes, Godly and I thank you therefore on behalf of the whole worshipping and wider community.

Today we say thank you and well done to Paul Sinclair and Ebenezer Osinuga who are stepping down from membership of the PCC after their three year period of service. During the year we have already had to say good bye to Joslyn Taylor and Alban Thurston both of whom moved away. Also this morning, Godfrey, who is remaining our Treasurer, is also stepping down from the PCC. Therefore, there were five vacancies on the PCC and, thank you God, five nominations of people to join the PCC! Many

thanks to all those who have served the church in this way and welcome to Lynda Coleman, John Davey, Sally Edmunds, Chris Larkham and Pat Spencer who will take their places.

As ever, I'd like to highlight some of the significant aspects of the year since we last met together in this way a year ago. In May we dedicated our new lights and now have had them for a little more than a year. I think they really enhance the look and feel of the church and their flexibility allows for the creation of specific moods and tones for different times and services. Their arrival illuminated the gloomy nature of the west wall and its painting and the cleaning of the window this year has been a literal revelation and looking that way it now feels like a completely different church.

This year saw the start of a relationship with the Norwegian Lutheran church who, building on their links with the Norwegian school in Arterbury Rd. have begun a series of services and activities in church on Monday afternoons. It is a tremendous pleasure to be able to welcome other Christians to use our buildings and we continue also our relationship with the Wimbledon Korean Baptist Church on Sunday afternoons.

In September we started a new initiative and once we'd decided what a 'young' adult might be, we settled on a monthly meeting after the 10.00am service on the first Sunday of the month for that important and previously somewhat overlooked group at church. We still haven't had a trip to Alton Towers or a night on the lash....but we might get there!

Jnr. Church is always there of course but I'd like to pay especial tribute to the leaders particularly after yesterday's marvellous Eco-Activity afternoon and the launch this morning of Toddler Church in the Truman Room. Our

work with young children seems to have been invigorated of late and as we all love having the children closely bound into the whole of our life then the leaders deserve our particular recognition. As also do the members of the Social Committee. This year there have been some wonderful events; Quizzes, haggis fests, Advent fairs and the general hint of heaven that members of that committee communicate. Apparently their meetings are social events in themselves, a precedent we might all seek to emulate. Well done all keep up the good work, we love it!

I'd also like to recognise the good will and generosity of those four members of the congregation who have offered to be Chalice administrators. In every church, the community has to guard against the risk of some tasks/roles seeming to belong only to a particular group of people. I think we're good at that watchfulness but it was particularly good to have the ranks of the helpers at the 10.00am communion refreshed in this way. Email recruitment seems to be a very effective way of drawing people (not to say mince pies) into church jobs!

Finally, I'd like to report on the progress of the Church Building Development proposal. Last year I had to report on the frustrating twelve months we had experienced since the APCM in 2011. I reported that the proposal had been reanimated by the Archdeacon and that work was under way again. I expressed the hope that by the time of this meeting we would be in a position to bring detailed plans to the wider congregation. We are there, or at least we are almost there. Had it not been for an unforeseen complication that arose with regard to my personal position and the need to establish whether or not I had any sort of conflict of interest and what, if that turned out to be the case, we should do about that, meant that a hoped for series of meetings of the PCC to

decide on the scheme before Christmas had to be postponed. Those issues having been resolved, work has continued apace. I would like to pay tribute to the work of the Building Development Steering group at this point. Colin Holloway, John Davey and Sharon Mawhinney have worked tremendously hard for the last two and a half years to bring us to the point we have arrived at today. At our January PCC meeting, it was decided that the proposal had reached a stage where it needed to be handled by a full and formal committee of the PCC therefore, in January, Godfrey, Brenda Thurgood and subsequently Sally Edmunds, joined the group to form the new committee. After an excellent presentation by the architect to the PCC in March, we are now ready for the scheme to be brought formally to the PCC for its approval on May 14th. One week later, the PCC will meet again without the architect or Diocesan officers being present to vote on the scheme. If the scheme is approved by the PCC, it then becomes a project. It then becomes 'our' project and a full consultation will begin with the whole congregation. At its regular meeting on May 8th, the PCC will make the detailed arrangements for this process.

Some people have expressed frustration that all of this is going on in the background without adequate information being shared with the congregation. It is reasonable for intelligent, engaged, committed people to experience this frustration but until the PCC decides, it is not a project; it remains just a proposal, an idea. Once the PCC decides, then it becomes something real and formed and something upon which every member of the congregation will be invited to comment and ask. Waiting is hard, trusting the people you have elected to do this sort of work can be hard but the waiting is almost over! I believe that what is being brought to the PCC and what will then subsequently

brought before the wider congregation is an exciting, forward looking, community minded scheme that will overwhelmingly improve what we do, what we look like and what we offer to the worshipping and wider communities. The driving vision behind the scheme is our desire to offer to God, to each other and to the people out there, the best we possibly can rather than something that is just about and sometimes not quite, good enough. A desire to better fulfil the mission of the church is what fires the engines of this work and I believe that when, in the next few weeks, we come to discuss this scheme together we will come to share a vision of a future for Christ Church where we will be able to significantly enhance our welcome, our worship, our service and our life.

2012/13 has been a challenging and at times exhausting year. I believe that we stand on the brink of something very exciting and very good. I hope and expect to be able to look back on 2013/14 as a year in which we will have taken a major step forward together.