

Christ Church West Wimbledon APCM 2014 – Vicar's Report

I would like to begin this morning by expressing my appreciation and gratitude to Sharon Mawhinney who steps down after five years as our church warden. During her time in office, we have faced some uniquely challenging weeks and months at Christ Church as well as some of our most happy and celebratory. Through it all, Sharon has shown dedication, generosity, a tremendous capacity for hard work and a skilful effectiveness which makes me really thankful that we have been able to benefit so much from her gifts. I take it as a mark of finally getting the hang of parish ministry that at last, after 26 years of vicar-ing, a church warden has not shot off for a long lay down and blissful retirement. Amazingly, Sharon has agreed to stay on as Chair of our Building Development Committee and as a member of the PCC. Even more extraordinarily, she has agreed to become a member of Deanery Synod in order to achieve this! I will miss her as church warden but can only re-iterate my warm appreciation for her support to of all of us and to me over the last five years.

I would also like to thank Julie Grainger at the completion of her first year as warden. Julie has quickly become a brilliant church warden and we are all very lucky to have her as part of what has become a really happy PCC and standing Committee. And a very warm welcome to Sally Edmunds who becomes warden this morning. Sally is an experienced church go-er who has looked after regular user bookings to our hall for a couple of years before today and so actually, becoming warden will be pretty small beer in comparison!

Thanks also to Judy Luddington stepping down from PCC membership this morning having given two three year periods of service and to Ron Barnett who has decided not to stand for re-election to Deanery Synod. We are very grateful to all they have contributed to our life together. We welcome Godfrey Banks back to PCC membership and also welcome Paul Sinclair as our newest synod rep. We are grateful to Stewart Sanson who has also agreed to join the PCC.

This year we have been delighted to welcome Richard Hall to Christ Church. Richard became our Director of Music in January and already he has re-invigorated the choir, set up a children's choir and been with me to Hollymount to recruit members. His combination of musical skill, personal organisation and liturgical sensitivity make him an excellent addition to our number

This year the Building Development proposal grew up and became a project. The PCC voted by 15 votes to one to proceed with the project and in the autumn, a very good number of members of the congregation attended one of our presentations of the scheme and an overwhelming proportion of the congregation expressed their support of the proposals in the subsequent consultation process. Consequently, the process of securing planning permission began and pre-planning application consultations were held. We await the production of a written report after verbal responses expressed a good deal of satisfaction with our plans. At the same time the process of securing legal and financial assurances have continued with the PCC ensuring that every step in the process is undertaken properly and in accordance with the best interests of the parish.

The most important development this year has been our Parish Away Day and the plans that have emerged from it. A response to the Bishop's initiative 'Faith, Hope, Love', 'A Way Ahead' becomes our mission action plan and copies of it are available this morning. Already, as mentioned earlier, Richard has begun work on our Junior Choir and Chris Larkman has begun to set up a Bereavement Support network. We have been successful in applying for a £5000 grant for this work from the Diocesan Mission Fund and this service for the local community is one of the most exciting aspects of our three year plan.

Some of the highlights for me this year have been another brilliant pancake party, being a member of the rota for Bruno Bear Club on Thursday mornings (every vicar should be blessed with the privilege of reading stories to two year olds). Celia Berwick's funeral which was very sad but also filled with hope and love, the Christmas Carol Service where Stephan Bown, Ron Cayless and the Brass Group combined for a wonderful Christmas 'launch' and the PCC vote to get going properly on our Building Development proposals. This has been a really good year at Christ Church during which I've felt myself to be closer to God, back on track and ready for what's next. I'd like to express my gratitude to everyone who worships here for making this the community it is and for being willing to work with me as we seek God, invite our neighbours to join us and walk joyfully together in Christ.