

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF
ST. MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH, GREAT
BRICKHILL**

**Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31st. December, 2009**

**St. Mary The Virgin Church,
Lower Way
Great Brickhill
Bucks.
MK17 9AB**

Bankers:

**Barclays Bank PLC
Leighton Buzzard Branch
The Aylesbury Group
34 Market Square
Aylesbury
Bucks.
HP20 1TT**

Independent Examiner:

**Mr. A. Woodfield
Church Farm House
Watling Street
Little Brickhill
Milton Keynes
MK17 9LZ**

Church Architect:

**Mr. P. W. Crawford R.I.B.A.
Caroe & Partners
18 Deane House Studios
27 Greenwood Place
London NW5 1LB**

Report Of The Parochial Church Council (PCC) Year ended 31st. December, 2009

MEMBERS OF THE PCC

The following persons served as members of the P.C.C. during 2009:-

The Reverend John Waller (Chairman)

Christine Agambar (Church Warden)

Julia Turner (Church Warden)

Clare Amies (Deanery Synod Representative)

Jeremy Hopkinson (Deanery Synod Representative) (Vice-Chairman)

Phillipa Cook (Secretary)

Julian Dawson (retired on 24/10/09)

Rosie Dawson

David Duncombe

Kay Seaman

Valerie Vestergaard (retired at Annual Meeting, 21/04/09)

Neil Cook continued in the role of Treasurer, co-opted to the P.C.C., 14/05/09

N.B. The maximum number of lay representatives on the P.C.C. is 9, as per the prescribed formula for Electoral Rolls of 51 to 100.

OBJECTS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE PCC

The object of the P.C.C. of St. Mary The Virgin Church, Great Brickhill, is to further the work of the Church of England in the parish of Great Brickhill. The Council is constituted under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 and as amended by the 1969 Measure, and is required to co-operate with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in 2004 provision was made for the annual appointment of representatives on the P.C.C. All members of the church electoral roll are entitled to vote and stand for election. There is also provision for the co-option of members of the P.C.C., and the incumbent is ex-officio a member and the Chairman. The Wardens and Deanery Synod Representatives are also ex-officio members of the P.C.C.

ELECTORAL ROLL AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Membership of the electoral roll is open to any lay person who is baptised, over sixteen years of age and has signed a declaration that he or she is a member of the Church of England and is either (a). resident in the parish, or (b). has habitually attended worship in the parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment.

At the start of the year there were 55 people on the Electoral Roll. One joined the Electoral Roll during the year; there was one death and one moved away. Hence the number of Electors at the end of the year decreased to 54, 10 of whom are not resident within the parish.

The usual Sunday attendance for Normal Services during the year to 31/12/09 was 23 (24 in 2008).

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Reverend John Waller continues as both Rector and Area Dean. He takes the majority of the Services throughout the Benefice. Each month visiting clergy take the Holy Communion service on the first Sunday of the month – Sister Hazel has kindly undertaken to lead this service on a regular basis The Morning Worship Service on the second Sunday is locally led. As a licensed Lay Minister Mr. Jeremy Hopkinson regularly takes Services at Great Brickhill and at the other Churches within the Benefice.

There have been no changes to the general pattern of services across the Benefice except that from the autumn there is a special Family Service held each month in one of the four churches. An open meeting is held for all those who would like to be involved in the planning and preparation of these services.

The Gift Aid Envelope Scheme is used for Church collections and whenever possible for fund-raising activities. Dr. Christine Agambar together with the Treasurer is in charge of the administration of the scheme.

The Rector holds regular meetings with the Wardens of the four churches. A “Prayer for Healing” meeting for the Benefice is held at the Rectory on a Wednesday evening once a month and is open to all who would like to attend. The twelve-month “Growing Disciples” course for people within the Benefice, which was lead by the Rector and Rosemary Clarke from Bow Brickhill, came to an end in June

Mrs. Julia Turner and Dr. Christine Agambar in their role as Wardens continued to work hard to keep the Church running smoothly. Mrs. Betty Kinsey and Mrs. Rosie Dawson kindly help out with services when the Wardens are not able to attend.

The P.C.C. met in full on five occasions. The Rector continued in the role of Chairman with Mr. Jeremy Hopkinson as Vice Chairman. At the Annual Meeting Mrs. Valerie Vestergaard retired as a member of the P.C.C. and in October Mr. Julian Dawson tendered his resignation from the P.C.C.

Mr. Patrick Crawford of Caroe and Partners based in London, continues in the position of Architect both for general Church work and also for the Project St. Mary’s 2000.

Deanery Synod:

Jeremy Hopkinson and Clare Amies represent the parish at the Deanery Synod meetings, which take place four times a year. The main points of note for this year were:

- The new arrangements for benefices within the deanery continued to be discussed. The position has yet to be finally resolved as there is one parish which is unhappy with the current proposals. Drayton Parslow has now moved to Mursley Benefice.
- There were presentations by:
 - Robin Brunner-Ellis (Diocesan adviser) re Christian Giving.
 - A representative from PACT (Parents & Children Together)
 - Various members of different benefices on the use made of Lay Led Services
- A Deanery newsletter has been started and two issues have been produced and should be available to view at each parish in the deanery.
- A stand was taken at the Bucks show, jointly with the Claydon and Buckingham Deaneries in August which was well worthwhile.

Music and Bells:

The organ continues to be played by various organists on a weekly basis. Mrs. Julia Turner organises the rota of organists for each service. On some occasions the piano is used rather than the organ; the set of CD's are used when there is no organist available. There is not a resident Organist/Choirmaster but the choir sing at two services per month whenever possible, and regularly join with the Brickhills choir. Mr. Jerry Breslin coordinated the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols with the help of Mr. Robin Dawson and organist, Mr. Paul Dickens.

The "Music in the Brickhills" singers under the direction of Jerry Breslin performed a concert in the church in May. The programme included Handel's "Zadok the Priest", Purcell's "I Was Glad" and Vivaldi's "Gloria". The evening raised £2,030 for the MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Society and the St Francis Children's Society. Jerry Breslin also masterminded the "Music in the Brickhills" third annual performance of Handel's Messiah in September. The magnificent sum of £4200 was raised for Willen Hospice.

With the offer of grants from various bodies including the Parish Council, funding has been secured to enable the bell restoration project to proceed. In October the bells and bell frame were removed and the bells were taken to Whites of Appleton to be restored. Work is being done to strengthen the tower and a new eight-bell cast iron frame will be installed in the Spring of 2010. The six bells will be re-hung, along with two new bells that were cast in October by Whitechapel Bell Foundry where the existing six bells were cast.

High Ash School:

High Ash Church of England School has a governing body of fifteen members including three Foundation Governors appointed by the Oxford Diocese. During 2009 these positions were held by Reverend John Waller and Dr. Christine Agambar, and Mr Butch Baker In January 2010 the school had 228 children aged 4 to 11 on roll, taught in eight classes.

This year a Marketing Strategy was devised and implemented resulting in the school now filling all its places for the academic year 2010-2011 and the school is now oversubscribed but only 14 of the incoming 40 pupils are drawn from the school catchment area of Great Brickhill, Little Brickhill and Stoke Hammond. The majority of pupils at High Ash live in Milton Keynes and are therefore "Out-of-County" children, putting the school at risk.

The school continues to operate with extremely high standards and new initiatives and projects are embraced readily. The school hopes that, following a recent external evaluation, its Arts Mark Silver Award will be up-rated to "Gold".

RE and Spiritual Developments

The school has continued to hold spiritual development at the centre of its work. This year a link has been established with Disraeli School in High Wycombe (a multi-faith school). The children took part in Disraeli's harvest festival which integrated a range of faiths and secular ideas about harvest. Children also contributed to the St Mary's Harvest Festival service. Christingle took place at St Mary's and the special time of reflection was evident in the church. The nativity production this year, called "Out of the Darkness" took a slightly more spiritual and symbolic approach (along with the usual frivolities!) which the children responded thoughtfully to. There are plans to develop a spiritual garden.

The headteacher, Louise Eaton, is training to be a SIAS Inspector, to work for the Diocese inspecting RE and Spiritual Development in schools across the whole Diocese.

Midweek Groups and Charitable Giving:

The Wednesday morning Communion and Bible Study continues on a fortnightly basis with appropriate breaks during the year, under the aegis of the Rector. The study sessions often provoke very interesting discussions and are much appreciated by those taking part.

The Thursday Group continues to meet fortnightly on Thursday afternoons for discussions, talks, tea and chat; the programme also includes a number of outside visits. During Lent the Thursday Group expands and changes to become the Lent Group. Lent Lunches are organised and a theme is studied over the 5 weeks. Lent Lunch donations are given to known charitable causes where we know that the money reaches the point of need.

The Drop-In Centre continues to open each week on a Monday afternoon at the Parish Hall. Monies received by the Drop-In, in excess of expenditure incurred, were used towards the carriage cost of sending Shoe Boxes to Romania under the auspices of "Link Romania", an organisation which works with the many poor and needy families in Romania. A total of 68 shoe boxes were despatched in November 2009. Money from the Drop In Centre is also donated to help medical needs in Constanza, Romania. A donation was also made to the P.C.C. towards the cost of the heating repairs.

A September Coffee Morning was held in the village in support of "Cancer Support Macmillan – Create a Stir". A total of £820 was raised.

The charities supported by our Outside Giving (£1,190) are:- Water Aid; Willen Hospice; Historic Churches Preservation Trust; Bucks. Historic Churches Trust; Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute; Milton Keynes Bereavement Counselling Service; The Bridgebuilder Trust; Society of Mary and Martha. This year's Christian Aid House-to-House Collection in Great Brickhill raised a total of £792. The sum of £357 was sent to the Poppy Appeal from the Remembrance Sunday collection in Church. The money from the Lent Lunches £201 was sent as follows: £101 to the Society of Mary and Martha and £100 to Willen. The Christmas Card Tree in aid of Nuevo Reto, an orphanage in Guatemala, raised £260.

The total of disbursements to charitable causes during the year was in excess of £4,000. This represents approximately 12% of the Income Received (excluding Assignables) for the year.

Church Rota and Communications:

Various rotas are drawn up (flower arranging, coffee, churchyard mowing, church locking, cleaning, reading, intercessions, clergy, assistants at Holy Communion, organists) to ensure the smooth running of the Church. The Monthly Rota detailing all the rota information on a single sheet is displayed on the Notice Board in the Church porch.

Dr. Christine Agambar produces the weekly Pew Sheet for all services for which the P.C.C. and members of the congregation are most grateful. The schedule of Services for each month also appears in the Parish Newsletter. The Church continues to pay the Editor of the Parish News an annual amount to cover the cost of the inclusion of Church items in Parish News.

In December a website was set up for the Benefice (www.brickhillchurches.org.uk) with a section dedicated to each of the four churches. The website includes the schedule of all the Church Services, a calendar of events, photos, contact lists etc, plus information about the diocese and deanery.

Children and Youth:

During the year there were no Junior Church activities such as Junior Quest or Crusaders.

However, the Youth Café run by a leader from “Youth for Christ” based in Aylesbury, with the help of a team of volunteers, has been held at High Ash School. It is now in its second successful year of operation and has over 100 young people aged 11 – 14 on its role.

Over the summer months, numbers were up to over 50 with many outdoor pursuits such as football, rounders and basketball. Further activities have been added, offered by adults from the local community such as crafts – cards, headbands, Easter wall hangings, cooking, painting and so on. Numbers attending have been in the 20 – 30 range over the winter but this is expected to rise again with the onset of the lighter evenings.

A handful of youth have been attending the Youth For Christ monthly event in Aylesbury where they meet with youth from other youth café’s in the area.

REVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTS

The Church had a deficit of £380 this year (2008 deficit £6,106). There was an increase in Church Collections and Gift Aid including tax rebates amounting to £8,203. The increase in Donations (£5,980) is due to the Great Brickhill Charity donation of £5,500, which this year went towards the heating repair costs rather than to St Mary’s 2000.

The total Expenditure (excluding the figure for Assignables) increased by £7,573 – notable increases were in the Parish Share (£2,240) and General Maintenance (£4,582) due to the cost of the heating repairs. The amount of Outside Giving this year remained at £1190, with donations being made to both overseas and local Charities.

Payment of the Parish Share:

The P.C.C. paid its Parish Share (£20,262) in full. This figure was 12.4% higher than last year’s payment. There will be a further increase in the Parish Share in 2010 to £20,845.

Restricted Items:

As well as general income the P.C.C. has received donations which are restricted as to their use, the money having been given for specific purposes. Under the Charities Act accounting regulations, the restricted funds have to be identified separately in the main accounts. The P.C.C. is able to confirm that it holds sufficient and appropriate assets to meet the conditions of expenditure of all restricted funds. Details of the balances of funds and the assets which are held to represent those funds are contained in the Balance Sheet.

During the year the Project St. Mary’s 2000 Fund decreased by £21,852 as final payments were made on re-roofing the North Aisle and re-painting the North Wall of the Church, and work started on the Bell Project.

The total amount raised for St. Mary’s 2000 came to £52,445. The following items are worthy of note: Francis Coales Foundation £2,500; Bucks Historic Churches Trust £8,000; Great Brickhill Parish Council £33,333; All Churches Trust £500; Plant Fayre £2,501; Kay Seaman’s Enterprises £818. Donations, Covenants, Gift Aid and many smaller activities contributed to the total.

PROJECT ST. MARY 2000

North Aisle Re-roofing:

This year saw the completion of the repair of the north wall by Grangewood Builders. The work has been carried out very satisfactorily and the workmen had been kind and considerate throughout. The only difficulty was completing a few “loose end jobs” once the contractors had formally left site, which meant we could not sign off the contract and collect our English Heritage grant money until 2010. The VAT refund can then be applied for.

The completion of this project brings to an end English Heritage’s substantial financial assistance and backing for our roof restoration .As a Grade 2* listed building and with English Heritage’s investment in our building we are now obliged to make the church open to spontaneous visits by them to make sure that the building remains in good shape.

Bell Project:

In conjunction with this work the bell project commenced. During the year Caroe and Partners, our church architects, prepared plans and documentation, with an estimate of £138,267 (which included £4,050 for repairs to the church tower walls) to complete the work. It will be sensible to accept that slight variations in costs might occur as the work develops and any unforeseen problems surface. The necessary permissions were sought and granted. Whites of Appleton (Bell-hangers) and Whites Of Appleton (Builders) were engaged to carry out the work. David Middleton, our tower captain, raised a fantastic amount of money, with a substantial grant from the Parish Council and monies from several other bodies. In September the bells were lowered to be renovated, prior to being re-hung with the two additional new bells: the tower, would at the same time, be repaired. David Middleton arranged a trip to Whitechapel Foundry in London to witness our two new bells being cast: a fascinating and historic visit.

New Facilities:

Caroe and Partners was engaged by the PCC to begin planning the new facilities. A sub-committee was formed and a Statement of Need produced and agreed by the PCC, to enable the architects to commence work.

To all those who have contributed in any way to any of these projects we give heartfelt thanks.