

## **Great Brickhill Annual Parish Meeting, Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

### **Parochial Church Council Report**

It has been another busy year in the life of the church here in Great Brickhill. The highlight was certainly the visit of the Bishop of Buckingham in October when he came to preside over the special service for the Re-dedication of the Church Bells. Following the service the large congregation enjoyed a celebratory tea, a fitting way to mark the completion of the project for the re-hanging of the bells.

The monthly service pattern remains as for previous years. In line with churches across the country there has been a general decline in “normal” weekly church attendance, from an average of 30 a few years ago to 20 last year. Whilst this is a worrying trend we are heartened by the fact that whenever there is a special service, the attendance is way in excess of that figure and on occasions such as the Service for the Bells and the Carol Service the church is at capacity.

Each month one of the churches within the Benefice holds a Special Joint Family Service and these have proved very popular. We try to involve as many people as possible from the planning stage to the service itself. Depending on the type of service, they are sometimes held in the village halls rather than the church. A number of services have been geared particularly for families with very young children.

The various outreach groups continue to meet on a regular basis:- the weekly Holy Communion and Bible sessions, the Thursday Group, the Lent Discussion Groups and the Drop-In.

Music continues to play an important role in the life of the church and we are indebted to Jerry Breslin who masterminds both the concerts and much of the music in the church. The “Music in the Brickhills” concerts raise a large amount of money for a variety of charities.

The Reverend John Waller took a three month sabbatical from 21<sup>st</sup> June to 20<sup>th</sup> September. The PCC were most grateful to all those who helped in any way during that period and particularly to those who took the services within the benefice for the three months while the Rector was away. In March the Rector retired from his position as Area Dean.

The Church Annual Meeting was held in March. Christine Agambar is now our sole Church Warden as Julia Turner retired as Warden having served for seven years. The PCC is grateful for Julia’s huge contribution to the church as Warden, and are delighted that Julia is continuing as a member of the PCC. We also welcome Simon Bennett as a member of the PCC.

The Church finances are of some concern to the PCC. The Accounts for the year to the end of December showed a deficit of £1900 for the year. For the second year running there were problems with the heating pipes. The Great Brickhill Charity were extremely generous in giving a donation of £4000 to help offset the cost of the repair, but this still left a shortfall of £1500.

Due to the reduction over recent years of the General Funds, for the first year ever the PCC did not pay its full amount of Parish Share for the year, in order that sufficient funds remain to cover any large item of expenditure that may be incurred during this year. The PCC paid £19,845 towards its Parish Share, which was £1,000 under its allocation of £20,845. There is a further increase in the Parish Share we have to pay for 2011 - £21,452. The daily running costs of the Church are currently in the region of £100 per day, excluding any major restoration costs, a very large amount considering the weekly attendance figures that I quoted earlier.

The Church likes to give donations to Charities both at home and overseas. The total of all the donations sent to charitable causes for 2010 represents approximately 16% of the Income Received for the year.

Turning to the St Mary's 2000 Projects. During this year the repair of the church tower and the re-hanging of the renovated bells and the installation of the two new bells were completed. The project cost just over £150,000. The PCC is most grateful for the donation from the Parish Council which allowed the project to proceed. The PCC is also grateful to Caroe and Partners (church architects), Whites of Appleton (bellhangers), Whites (builders) for all their hard work and to everyone who has contributed in any way to the successful conclusion of this project.

The PCC are grateful to the team of bellringers for their dedication to ringing the bells, especially each Sunday before our church worship and to David Middleton, our Tower Captain who leads the team and was instrumental in completing the Bells project.

Fund-raising for St Mary's 2000 is now concentrating on the provision of much required New Facilities, the provision of a kitchen and toilet facilities etc. The church is very much committed to this and the sub-committee have considered two sets of plans from the architect and are awaiting a revised set of plans, which will then be put before the PCC to consider.

A copy of the full Annual Report including the Accounts can be found on the Benefice website. The website has been a huge success with the number of "hits" to the site peaking at 9726 in January this year. For those without internet access, a weekly Pew Sheet is prepared for each service – copies of these can be collected from the bookcase just inside the main door of the church. The PCC is very grateful for the hard work of the editors of the monthly Parish Newsletter, and for the inclusion of details of services and events in those Newsletters.

This report will be posted on the website in its entirety and a summary will be forwarded for inclusion in the June edition of the Parish Newsletter.

***Phillipa Cook***  
***(Great Brickhill PCC Secretary)***