

Great Brickhill Annual Parish Meeting, Tuesday 1st May 2012

Parochial Church Council Report

I will start off this report by saying how hugely saddened the whole church community was at hearing the news that Sir Philip Duncombe had died just before Christmas. Sir Philip was so much a part of this church and its community. Until recently passing over the mantle to David, Sir Philip had been Patron of St Mary's Church, taking the role very seriously, which was greatly appreciated by the Rector. Sir Philip had been a member of the PCC for many, many years, a large number of which serving as Church Warden. Sir Philip's Memorial Service was a true celebration of his life and work and our church was "on show" as never before.

October saw a month long celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible. Most of the readings for the services were taken from the King James Bible, often alongside a modern version of the text. The highlight was a special "Songs of Praise" service where the readings were all from the King James Bible and all the hymns and readings were chosen in advance by members of the congregation.

There has been one change to the monthly service pattern – the Prayer Book Communion Service on the first Sunday of the month has been moved to 11am from 9.30am to enable the service to be attended by a wider group of worshippers and to enable the Rector to lead the service on alternate months. All the services are reasonably well attended and it is pleasing to report that there has been a small increase in the "normal" weekly church attendance figure. The best-attended service of the month is the Family Service on the fourth Sunday - the congregation for this service has grown with the regular attendance of an increasing number of families with small children, which is particularly pleasing. There are several occasions throughout the year when the church is at full capacity. The church continues to welcome High Ash School for a service at least once a term.

In February the Reverend John Waller went on an 11 day trip to Israel and Palestine organised by the Diocese. He has shared his experience of this pilgrimage to the Holy Land at small gatherings and within worship at services in church.

The various outreach groups continue to meet on a regular basis:- the midweek Holy Communion and Bible sessions, the Thursday Group, the Lent Discussion Groups and the Drop-in - each of these activities contributing in their own way to the life of the church here in the village.

Music continues to play a significant role in the life of the church. While we do not have a resident organist or choir master we are very fortunate in having a number of organists who are happy to play at our services. Unfortunately the organ is in need of some restoration work - an assessment has been done of the work required. We await the report together with a management programme for restoring those parts that need attention. On some occasions the piano is used rather than the organ – the old piano was in a poor state of repair but we have recently been fortunate to receive a most welcome gift of a very good piano.

It was a busy year for the "Music in the Brickhills" singers - under the direction of Jerry Breslin they performed a number of concerts. Mozart's Requiem was held at All Saints Church, Leighton Buzzard as there was not enough space for the musicians in Great Brickhill church. The concert raised £4,500 with the proceeds going equally to the Alzheimer's Society and All Saints Church. Later that month the local MitB musicians joined the Kaznowski

Wind Quintet to perform a concert here in church in aid of Macmillan Nurses. Jerry Breslin also masterminded the “Music in the Brickhills” fifth annual performance of Handel’s Messiah in September. The magnificent sum of £3,505 was raised, split equally between the church and Willen Hospice.

Bell ringing practice takes place on a Wednesday evening and the bells are rung before most services. David Middleton continues in the role of Tower Captain and organizes a team of ringers for weddings and funerals as required.

The Church Annual Meeting was held last week. Christine Agambar continues as our sole Church Warden – it is a cause for concern that for the second year running we have not had anyone who feels able to take on the role of a second Warden. Three new people were elected to the PCC, which means that we have a full complement of nine members.

The Church finances remain a challenge for the PCC. The Accounts for the year to the end of December showed a small surplus of £732 and the church was pleased that it was able to pay its full Parish Share to the Diocese of £21,452. This was only achieved because of the considerable amount of fundraising throughout the year and the fact that there were no major repair bills. Necessary work on the Lightning Conductor and other electrical repairs were covered by the generous donation of £3000 from The Great Brickhill Charity. The daily running costs of the Church are currently in the region of £90 per day, excluding any major restoration costs, a very large amount considering our weekly attendance figures.

There were three major events held in the Church during the year and together they raised over £5000 for church funds. The performance of the Messiah Concert, The Spirit of Christmas Bazaar and the Snowdrop Walk. Whilst the fundraising is an important aspect of these events it is wonderful to welcome so many people into the church building.

The Church likes to give donations to Charities both at home and overseas. The total of all the donations sent to charitable causes for 2011 represents approximately 16% of the Income Received for the year.

The PCC have been looking at 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 it will be a priority item on the agenda for the newly elected PCC in the coming year.

A copy of the full Annual Report including the Accounts can be found on the Benefice website. This website continues to be a huge success with the average number of “hits” to the site per month of 7325. In order to keep parishioners informed of news and events a weekly Pew Sheet is prepared for each service. These are uploaded onto the website, or a copy can be collected from the bookcase just inside the main door of the church. The PCC would like to record their very grateful thanks for the hard work of the editors of the monthly Parish Newsletter, and for the inclusion of details of services and events in the Newsletters each month.

This report will be posted on the church 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)