

Great Brickhill Annual Parish Meeting, Tuesday 7th May 2013

Parochial Church Council Report

It has been another busy year in the life of the church here in the village with several highlights. The first of these was on Sunday 3rd June, when a special service was held in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee - after the service, in the churchyard there was a ceremonial tree planting by Sir David Duncombe and unveiling of a new seat, which was kindly donated by the Great Brickhill Parish Council to mark the Jubilee.

As The Nativity was not being held this year, the opportunity was taken to hold a Crib Service on the Sunday before Christmas. There many young families at the service and "Mary, Joseph and Jesus" made an appearance, along with shepherds and their sheep.

During the last week of the Easter term as part of their Curriculum Week, the children of High Ash School created reflective areas in the church and shared their thoughts and ideas of the meaning of Easter. Members of the community were invited to share reflections with them on the Wednesday evening.

The attendance figures for services remain fairly consistent. The congregation for the Family Service has grown with the regular attendance of an increasing number of families with small children, which is particularly pleasing.

The various outreach groups continue to meet on a regular basis. The one change is that the fortnightly Thursday Group takes a break after the New Year Lunch until after Easter.

Music continues to play an important part in the life of the church. The Benefice choir is growing in both numbers and in confidence. The choir is made up of both experienced members and relative newcomers to choral singing. They practice regularly on Monday evenings under the enthusiastic and dedicated leadership of Jerry Breslin. The choir welcomes newcomers from across the Benefice.

There is concern about the state of the organ and a report has been prepared detailing the work required for a restoration programme. Interim work is planned for 2013 but the major work can be carried out within the next five years. The first fundraising event is being held this coming Saturday – a concert in the church at 7.30pm.

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 month. Christine Agambar continues as Church Warden and she is joined by newly elected Warden, Val Beardmore-Baldwin who was already a member of the PCC. Otherwise the PCC remains unchanged.

The Church finances remain a challenge for the PCC. The Parish Share to the Diocese of £21,724 was paid in full. The Church had a surplus of £2,743 for the year to December 2012. The building was kept dry and warm, on what has been the coldest and snowiest winter on record. Despite the fact that there were no major repairs last year, the daily running costs of the Church are in the region of £89 per day.

The major events held in the village to support the running costs of the church last year were:

- The Christmas Fair held in The Parish Hall, which was very well supported and is likely to be a regular feature of the Christmas calendar in future years.
- The Snow Drop Walks which were well supported on both Sundays
- The Plant Fayre, which raised a large amount despite the terrible Spring weather.

The PCC is extremely grateful to all who give financial support to the church in these particularly challenging economic times.

The Church likes to give donations to Charities both at home and overseas. The PCC also arranges events in support of charitable causes. Of particular note was the Charity Evensong in December, which raised £1100 for Willen Hospice.

There has been a longstanding intention to provide some new facilities for the church in the form of kitchen and toilet facilities etc. The PCC has put considerable thought and time into how the project should move ahead. There is a preliminary scheme for an external extension that is based on ideas developed around 15 years ago. Now that we are in a position to take the project forward the PCC has been re-examining these proposals, to see if they are still the correct approach. After much discussion professional advice has been sought on the options open to us, as best practice and guidance on work to listed churches has changed much over the last 15 years. An architect has been appointed to prepare an options appraisal to look at what approaches we could consider. This report has been completed and a date has been arranged for the PCC to meet to agree the way forward. It is not possible to give any more details at this time. No final decisions have been made, but we are on the road to exciting developments in the near future.

A copy of the full Annual Report including the Accounts, can be found on the Benefice website:- www.brickhillschurches.org.uk. This website contains full information about services, events etc. A weekly Pew Sheet is prepared for each service, which is 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 offer their thanks to the editors of the monthly Parish Newsletter for all their continued hard work and effort, 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)