

Great Brickhill Annual Parish Meeting, Tuesday 3rd May 2016

Parochial Church Council Report

As ever this evening's meeting comes just after the Annual Church Meeting, which was held last week on 27th April.

The formal part of the meeting commenced with the elections. Both the Wardens of our church here in the village retired from their posts. Christine Agambar had been Warden for 11 years having taken up the post in 2005, serving as sole Warden for two of those, in 2011 and 2012. Val Beardmore-Baldwin came to the end of a three year term of office.

The Rector thanked Christine and Val for their hard work as Wardens and presented them with a gift on their retirement. I am pleased to say that the role of Warden is now in the capable hands of Julia Turner who has kindly agreed to take on a second term, having served for 7 years from 2004 to 2010.

Clare Amies, Simon Bennett and David Duncombe did not seek re-election to the PCC. Phillipa Cook, Angela Northen, Margretta Smith and Joy Wilson continue, joined by newly elected member, Mary Maley. Jeremy Hopkinson will serve the third of his three year term as Deanery Synod Representative.

In presenting the Annual Report and Accounts for the year to 31st December 2015 the Treasurer highlighted a few points:

- The Accounts are now prepared on Receipts and Payments basis, which avoids the strict regulations from the Charities Commission
- Total disbursements to charitable causes represents approximately 13% of Income Received
- The Parish Share payment to the Diocese for 2015 was paid in full, £22,267 (a 4.7% increase). The Parish Share for 2016 will be - £22,955 (a further increase of 3%)
- The daily running costs of this Church are currently in the region of £97 per day, excluding any major restoration costs. The increase is mainly due to higher energy bills and some additional repair work

The Wardens' report followed – last year the emphasis was on the work undertaken in response to the 2013 Quinquennial Report and it was hoped that 2015 would be a quiet year. However on 13th June the heavens opened and we experienced abnormally heavy rain and winds. The rain literally poured into the church along the North side and, on investigation, we found that 40% of the lead on the North Aisle roof had been stolen during the night. The first priority was to mop up, contain the damage to the fabric of the interior and put up some emergency cover on the roof. The theft was reported to the Thames Valley Police, Ecclesiastical Insurance, the Diocese and Historic England. Emergency repairs were carried out by a roofing contractor supplied by Ecclesiastical Insurance. A full assessment of the damage then revealed that not only had 45 square metres of lead sheeting had been removed but also the remaining lead sheets had been damaged in the process with the lead flashing dislodged and slates broken on the Nave Roof. Our established roofing contractor who had recently completed some repairs to the roof, undertook the necessary mid-term repair work without the use of scaffolding. The cost of the total repair was £5,900 and was carried out by the end of July, since when the interior of the church has been entirely dry since last July.

In consultation with Great Brickhill Parish Council some clearance work has been carried out in the Cemetery including removing some substantial weed trees and clearing the walls of ivy. We would like to thank the VIC Committee of the Parish Council and Rectory Farm for their hard work in making this possible.

Very little has changed in the interior of the church over the last year. We have continued to discover greater versatility in the use of the Lady Chapel and yet are able to retain a quiet and dignified space for quiet reflection and prayer and worship at other times.

Throughout the year we have sought to facilitate the PCC's emphasis on Mission by providing flexible and welcoming arrangements for many forms of service that will (hopefully) relate and inspire a greater range of people and ages. We are particularly pleased to be able to provide facilities in support of Children's Church during Family Services and for the Drop-In Coffee Club on a Monday mornings. We are also pleased to host services organized throughout the year by High Ash School and, for this year, the week-long Easter Experience.

There has been very little time to undertake the desired work to modify the interior of the church a little (incl the removal of front pews) although work on the font plinth is in hand. With regard to adding new facilities this has been delayed due to the retirement of our church architect. The new PCC will soon be in a position to appoint a new architect.

The Rector gave a presentation of slides and photographs of the main activities of the year:-

The average weekly attendance on a normal Sunday remains at 24 but the average is significantly above that for the Family Services.

There is now an emphasis on the social side of our events, the fellowship element as important as the fund raising. A Summer Concert & Garden Party and a Farm Walk and Breakfast were held, the aim not primarily to raise money.

That said, the main fundraising events were the Plant Fayre, the Snowdrop Walks and the Christmas Fair – these three together again raised in the region of £5.5k.

Giving to Mission is a focus for the PCC – there is the usual annual outside giving but also giving to mission:- in 2015 this was support for the Youth Café and in 2016 to the Bridgebuilder Trust, which works closely with High Ash and other schools in the Milton Keynes area.

Direct giving to the church is important but it would not function without volunteers. There are over 80 people who help with various tasks around the church and churchyard but we are of course always looking for more volunteers!

The challenge for the year ahead is to work on our mission and outreach, but also look to the core of our worship, prayer, spiritual life and growth.

A copy of the full Annual Report for 2015 including the Accounts, can be collected from the bookcase just inside the main door of the church, or can be downloaded from the Benefice website:- www.brickhillchurches.org.uk. This report will also be posted on the church website and a summary will be forwarded for inclusion in the June edition of the Parish Newsletter.

Phillipa Cook
(Great Brickhill PCC Secretary)