

Chairperson's Report for the APCM, 18th. October 2020. Christ Church.

Well- what a year! Though, to be honest, I'm focussing on last year, 2019, as would have been my remit if the APCM had been in April or May, as usual. It was the second anniversary of my Licensing Service yesterday, so an apt time to look back, reflect and give thanks to God for his grace and faithfulness to us all.

So let me remind you of some features from last year. As we do, I think we'll be able to identify what is important to us, as a Parish Church, in terms of our DNA, which will help us be led by God into the new phase of what it means to be church in these days and for the future.

So, for example, we are an important Christian hub for our parish in terms of rites of passage, in a way that may not be so apparent in an urban or city parish. Rev. Lucinda reminds me that Little Drayton is a village, albeit adjacent to Market Drayton. There were 26 funerals here in church, with many more in the crematoriums, over the 12 months. We had 21 Baptism Services, often with multiple candidates, and 4 weddings. The Baptism Services included several adults, and there was one emergency baptism for an ill infant, who is now well.

I also believe that mission, including of course through our Pastoral Services, but also in a broader sense, is an important part of our calling. We are a welcoming church, and have offered fellowship and support through the Film Club, the Family Services and Messy Church, through the newly launched Parish Magazine, the 'Christ Church Chat,' the Parish Lunch, the Messy Morning in September, the amazing 'Open Gardens' Day in July, the Dementia-Friendly 'Songs of Praise' and Carol Services, the Dementia-Friendly Area Network Group, Jay's Bereavement Groups, Art for All, and the Job Club. Advent and Christmas also saw us gladly welcome Rev. Lucinda here, with her Licensing by Bishop Sarah. We had a Nativity Play Service, and, at the top of the year, an Epiphany Party hosted by Jane Eastham.

The Knitted Bible Exhibition was also extraordinary, with knitters meeting regularly, and then having many visitors, including the whole of Year 4 from the Junior School. We also welcomed children from Buntingsdale Primary School, for a short Remembrance Service in November, and loved their Christmas Show which they repeated for us here.

Some of these events were both outreach and fund-raising in their focus: a good time of fellowship for us, but also we note the support of friends and also non-church attending parishioners in their support of Christ Church.

Discipleship is an important part of ministry here, too, and we've benefited from various bible study groups and courses: The Lent Group looked at the Stations of the Cross, the Beginners' Bible Study was launched and has looked at various topics, the Advent Group looked at 'Sabbath as Resistance,' and Chrissie and the Mental Health First-Aiders led a series on mental Health, called 'Lifting the Lid.' We rejoiced with Mick Lewis as he was confirmed by Bishop Michael in June, and where possible, we have rearranged our Service Booklets so that they are easier to follow and to understand. The Churchyard won another Diocesan award, and the Quinquennial Report gave a glowing report (on the whole!). We've had various people look at the Organ and we enjoyed a fascinating lecture cum recital on its history. The tabernacle was moved from the reredos to the north wall, during a challenging period for myself and the PCC.

So- am I torturing you by reminding you of past triumphs and sorrows, which are not possible now?? I hope not! Rather, I rejoice in a fellowship of Christians who are determined to live out their faith individually, but also within this fellowship, who are keen to grow in their faith so that they can also share their faith through mission within this community. I rejoice in a group of varied personalities and gifts who work well together, and work hard. I give thanks for your creativity and your joy in serving God, and because of this, I have hope for the future. We thought about 'crossing the abyss' when we were able to come back physically into church in August, knowing that we probably won't be able to go back to how we were. There is a sense of bereavement in that, which we would do welcome to recognize and note. 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion...How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?' (Ps 137, vs. 1,4) lamented the exiles from Jerusalem. But God still loves, empowers and calls us. His Kingdom still needs to be extended here in Little Drayton.

Let us trust Him to be with us in all, and through all times and things.

Let us pray:

Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which you have given us, for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us. Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day.

Amen.

Richard, Bishop of Chichester.

[Jane Morris, 17/10/20]