

St Mary's Riverhead with Dunton Green, Vicar's Report, APCM 2014

As always, there are far too many people to thank individually for everything they have done for St Mary's over the past year. I am very grateful for the way everyone contributes to the needs of the Parish in whatever way they feel able. Whenever there are things needed to be done, new ways of approaching traditional tasks, or ideas for the future, we are never short of people wanting to contribute with their thoughts, prayers or in a practical way. So thank you all. Particular thanks, of course, go to the Wardens and all members of The PCC. Your support and commitment is invaluable.

The other reports given at the APCM have identified so much of the work and energy that has gone into the running of St Mary's over the year. Huge thanks to both those who are responsible for such roles, teams and key church matters, and to everyone mentioned in those reports.

In terms of people, we have sadly lost a number of dearly-loved members of the congregation over the past twelve months, and this has been a particular source of sadness for all of us. We shall cherish their memories.

Meanwhile, change is always with us, and one or two members of the congregation have either moved on to pastures new or are stepping down from long and valuable service to St Mary's in various capacities. We wish them well and assure them of our love and prayers. I am particularly grateful to the dedication, inspiration and hard work that David Holmes and Ruth Merson have put into Sunday School over the years. They will be a difficult act to follow. I am sure the various parents and helpers who will step into the breach will provide similar levels of love, care and enthusiasm for our young people who are, after all, the future of St Mary's and the Church.

To note just a few of the material changes and initiatives: I think particularly of welcoming the Hermitage Ensemble, welcoming the young people of St Mary's as they take over a worship service or two, developing relationships with Trinity School, the successful launch of the Christmas Tree Festival Carol Service, the Sunday School and Baptism Families' picnic, piloting Home Groups & Bible Studies, our focus on specific charities throughout the year; and so on...

One change I should like to make particular mention of is where the music of St Mary's is concerned. At the last APCM we thanked Janet Sharp for everything she has done in this regard over many years and promised her that we will find a replacement before this year's APCM. We have, as we all know, kept that promise. We have welcomed not just Edwin Davis but also his family - Christine and the boys; all of whom have settled in to be a part of St Mary's very quickly. We are delighted to have them share their gifts and talents with us, and look forward to exploring new ways of worshipping Christ through music in the years to come.

As far as the future goes, three particular initiatives spring immediately to mind: First, by the Autumn, it is my hope that we will have developed our welcome policy towards any and all visitors to St Mary's, especially in creating a welcoming environment for people as they come in, and those West doors opened more often than before.

Second, in developing our youth policy, I am looking forward to, from time to time, joining in with St Luke's Sevenoaks and St Mary's Kippington and their joint Youth Services and Youth Events.

And Third, we have already started to make connections with our brothers and sisters in the Estonian Lutheran Church, and the Pastor Annika Laats and people of the Parish of Harju-Risti in particular. We hold them in our prayers. We are delighted to be hosting the Celebration of our Diocesan Estonian Link at St Mary's on 5th October this year. Doubtless, exchange visits and other opportunities for growth in this area will follow.

Finally, once again, Maggie and I would like to add our thanks to everyone for their love, support and encouragement over the year. You have done so much for us as we continue to settle in to our life here. We are particularly grateful for your prayers which, we can assure you, we shall continue to need as we all seek to grow together with you in our walk with Christ at St Mary's.

May God bless you all as you continue to find ways of following your individual calling as followers of Christ and finding new ways of participating in the life and worship of his church here at Riverhead with Dunton Green.

In His Name. Amen