

St Mary's Riverhead with Dunton Green Vicar's Report, APCM 2018

As always, I am so grateful to everyone who contributes to the life of St. Mary's in whatever way they are able. No matter how great or small you feel your contribution is, please be assured that it is always valued. There are, of course, dozens I am always so grateful for, bearing in mind all that they have done for St Mary's over the past year. However, the other report-writers, I know, will be thanking people for their contribution, in whatever it is they have had a gracious hand in. And I gladly endorse them. Thank you all.

I would, however, like to make special mention and thank those hardy souls with whom I generally have day-to-day contact (sometimes frequently). Known rather wonderfully as: Officers of the Church: John Curtis and Diane Williams, Margaret Nicholas, Ronnie Todd, and Stuart Wigley. I also thank Rev'd Mark Griffin, Rev'd Anne Bourne and Rev'd Peter Flynn - along with other ministers - who have kindly come to take services at St Mary's over the past year. We hold Daphne Harrison in our prayers as she continues to train for Licensed Lay Ministry.

Thanks also go to our organists Janet Sharp, Nick Castell and Daniel Eaton and the choir for keeping it rich and keeping it real throughout the year. It is a great privilege and joy to share the worship with you all. Thanks, especially, to Nick for the links we have forged with Walthamstow Hall and the heritage we have established through the school adopting our old Copeman Hart organ. The music events in church, outside the services during the year, have been splendid. I am particularly grateful to Kristi Jagodin and the London Estonian Society's Mixed Choir for coming to sing with us. We look forward to many such occasions in the future.

Thanks, too, to the Monday prayer team, Bible Study Group, those who responded to the Archbishops' week of prayer "Our Father", and those who have begun our occasional Sunday evening services of The Word, including moving testimonies from people willing to share their journeys of faith.

The Sunday school is, of course, our lifeblood for the future. We are so grateful to all who have set themselves apart to help bring hope into reality. Particular thanks to Nichola Joyce, while warm thanks and farewell to Anne Straight and Jo Adams for their valuable contributions over the years. Meanwhile, help is always needed at Sunday School.

Once again, if anyone is thinking that, perhaps, they might consider taking on the role of churchwarden in the future, please let me know, and we can discuss it. Don't be put off by the world-weary demeanour of our present wardens - they always look like that (smiley face). Being Warden is a very important and rewarding role. You don't need to be retired; you can have a very busy life outside of church, and still contribute fully. In fact, I was once a Warden. Yet, Maggie and I had a young family and we were both working full time. Do think and pray about whether Jesus might be calling YOU.

Similarly, we will be losing a number of valued members of our PCC this year, as their term of

office is up, so please do think and pray about whether you might be able to help us.

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. There are many things we can be grateful for. My Parish Report notes many of those highlights over the past year. In 2017 we will say goodbye to Archdeacon Clive - our love, thoughts and prayers go with him and Jane as they enter into this new and exciting phase of their lives - a doubtless busy and fulfilling retirement. We will also say goodbye to Mark Griffin as he and Clare embark on an exciting new life in Canterbury Diocese. We look forward to growing our links with Pastor Annika Laats, our brothers and sisters in Harju-Risti and Estonia generally. The generosity of Tesco, the hard work and vision of The Kent Wildlife Trust and the support of Amherst School has meant that the grounds around St Mary's provide the community, whoever they are, with pleasant surroundings and a way of helping contribute to the protection of our precious environment and wildlife. Thanks to all.

The leadership team are delighted that people of all ages and backgrounds are increasingly joining us. That is our whole purpose. One might almost say it is our mission statement:

Making St Mary's a place of welcome, fellowship and community in Christ.

At the Church of England's general Synod this February, they received a paper looking at reform and renewal. Here are the two key points they made and, I think, we should all take the time to read, consider, understand and pray over:

1) Until, together, ordained and lay, we form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel, we will never set God's people free to evangelise the nation.

2) Until laity and clergy are convinced, based on their *baptismal mutuality*, that they are equal in worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission, we will never form Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.

In other words, it is not enough simply to mean well and to do what we can to make people feel welcome and valued whenever they come. We simply cannot function without the help of all those I, and all the other report-writers, thank from the bottom of our hearts. And we certainly won't be able to go forward from here without the help, support and hands-on assistance of everyone, especially those who we might call the next generation. The two points above make it very clear - this is YOUR church. YOU make it what it is.

So, a special plea to every member of our church family, new and not-so-new. Please do offer yourselves in some way. You would be more than welcome, and will find it a fascinating and fulfilling thing to take a role in a place that means so much to so many people. Please think and pray over the next few weeks about getting involved and then let us know. *Let it be your Easter Resolution: to participate in some way, no matter how small, in keeping your church the lively*

and welcoming place it has always been.

Take this report home with you and, in a quiet moment, from time to time, please read the following prayer to yourself:

My church is composed of people like me - **I help make it what it is.**

It will be friendly - **if I am.**

Its pews will be filled - **if I help fill them.**

It will do great work - **if I work.**

It will make generous gifts - **if I am a generous giver.**

It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship - **if I invite and bring them in.**

It will be a church of love and faith - **if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these same things.**

Therefore, with the help of God, I will dedicate myself to the task of being all the things I want my church to be.

Amen

Finally, once again, Maggie and I thank everyone for their love, support and encouragement over the year. You have done so much for us as we continue to share this amazing journey.

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.

God bless you

Martin