

APCM 2013 Vicar's Report

Maggie and I would like to thank you all for your welcome, kindness and hospitality as we came to join everyone here at St Mary's. You have absolutely helped make the transition so much easier.

I should also like to thank you for your commitment to the work of God here in this corner of His creation - Riverhead with Dunton Green. These thanks go out both to you as individuals and as a community. It is a joy and a privilege to know you all and to share this part of our respective journeys together. Thank you, especially, everyone who helped see the Parish through the Interregnum, and, indeed, the Induction Service.

As we will hear from all the reports which will follow this, it has been an exceptional year for St Mary's. Though, judging by what I have heard from people, when has a year at St Mary's not been exceptional? It would be impossible to list absolutely everything that has happened over the past twelve months, and we shall hear most, if not all of them again in the other reports shortly. So I shall simply recall as much as I can of what has gone on, and who has helped, in church this past year. In listing this, please rest assured, I am thanking everyone parishioners and visitors who has participated and taken the time and trouble to ensure the work of the church continues day-in day-out, season-in-season out. I am constantly amazed and rejoice at how St Mary's refreshes itself each week - due to the efforts of everyone concerned. And when I say everyone, I, of course, especially mean you who are reading this.

So - here we go: Sunday School; Young People-led services; Flowers; Cleaning; Sidespeople; Sacristan; Mothers' Union; Music (in all its forms, & guest choirs/bands); Church Wardens; Admin; Sound; Maintenance (inside and out, including the Churchyards); MiniMag; Landmark; Servers & Assistants; Littlecourt Lunch Club; The Church Hall Coffee & Teas people; Tots and Toddlers; Events Committee; Traid Craft & Fair Trade; PCC (including the Treasurer and Secretary); North West Fellowship of Churches; Deanery Synod; Ministry (both Worship & Pastoral); Dunton Green Parish Hall; Drivers/Lifts; Banking; Ride and Stride; Olympic Torch; Visiting Ministers, Preachers & Speakers; Other Services (e.g. Women's Institute); Christmas Tree Festival; Regular & Occasional Giving; Magazine & Christmas/Easter Card delivery; Confirmations; Pilgrimage; Parish Council Liaison; New Vestments; Trinity School; Safeguarding; Media; Christingle; Scripture Readers; Intercessors; and so on and so on...

Now, of course, with such a wealth of things needed to ensure that this level of commitment to God's work continues, we are constantly on the lookout for helping hands in just about every area I have just listed. Please think seriously about what you may contribute in the year to come. None of it is onerous. Most - if not all of it - is a joy and if anyone feels called to step up and try something new or take something else on, please don't hesitate to contact one or other of us.

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Because that is what, really, my main message is all about in this year's report. God is about community and God is about flow and *abundance*. We all know, don't we, the truism that the more you put in the more you get out? This is never more true than in the service of Christ. Our cup literally overflows the more we try to pour into it. This is what I like to call 'God's Economy'. It has been demonstrated to me time and time again that it is in giving that we receive. Not that we give in order to receive, but it's like those occasions - I am sure we've all experienced them - when we've put ourselves out for someone or something, and we come home one day and perhaps find a card through our door, a little thank-you. Well, in many ways, that's how God's economy works. We put ourselves out for God and we find that, much to our surprise and, not that we are looking for it, but we get God's little thank-you's every so often. Moments when we feel, well, just somehow, blessed.

In the year to come, I shall be discussing with the PCC and, of course, with everyone who is interested, a number of ideas aimed at growing the witness of St Mary's Riverhead with Dunton Green.

The three main elements, again in no particular order, will be:

- How we continue to grow our understanding of who we are, and our role and relationship with the wider parish as a focal point for community life - not least through church events, and printed and electronic media.
- How we continue to seek to engage children and young people in the life of *their* church; and
- How we continue to create a church that is welcoming to parishioners and visitors alike.

It should be a very interesting year.

Although we have agreed that naming names is not necessary in a report such as this, it is important, is it not, to thank those people who are stepping down from key roles within St Mary's?

I am thinking particularly of:

Gill, for all she has done for our very welcome guests at the Littlecourt Lunch Club. You shall be greatly missed, but it is good to know that we shall continue to enjoy your company in church and at various events.

Elaine - who has been a great asset to us in her role as Treasurer. As we note from the Accounts, they have been in very safe hands these past years. I am particularly grateful that, despite other pressures on you, you were kind enough to wait until the new vicar was in place before you started thinking about handing over. The church has lost an asset as regards its finances, but doubtless, knowing you, your contributions to the life of St Mary's will continue in many other ways. Not least your work in developing the excellent Christmas Tree Festival.

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Janet. Now, she is not actually stepping down as such. But she is looking to downsize - I think the term is - her role a little. We are hoping to be able to find someone to support her and the ministry of music in St Mary's sooner rather than later. But let us in this meeting thank her for her immeasurable work in all aspects of the music in our worship here at St Mary's. We are all aware of her fantastic contribution - in just about every aspect of church life but, not least in her encouragement and support of our young people and their hugely valued music-making. It is in this area that Janet is particularly keen to continue.

Diane. I do not think there is anyone here who has not received the benefit of Diane's help, wisdom and ministry. As Church warden, she will be thoroughly missed. Diane, Barry and I especially, are thoroughly grateful for your insight, people-skills and sense-of-humour. I cannot think of a significant church event or service that she hasn't been one of the first to arrive for, and one of the last to leave. Not to mention the reams and reams of DAC application forms, the hours and hours she has spent on the phone to various committees, consultants, workmen and councils on our behalf. The Steps, Diane will be your everlasting monument, plus, when they finally are planted, the car park lights. Of course she isn't going anywhere - not if we have anything to do with it - so it's not 'goodbye'; it is, as we hear in Scripture, 'well done, thou good and faithful servant.'

So, much to be thankful for. Much to look forward to.

May our God fulfill our every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (*Phil 4.19*)

Amen