

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

As ever, 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.

On the subject of Wardens, we have, sadly, to say goodbye to Barry in this role as he has completed his years serving us all at St Mary's. We are immensely grateful to Barry for all he has done, not least through the Interregnum. His calmness, patience, sense of humour and wisdom will be greatly missed.

I would encourage everyone to consider whether they might care to step into Barry's shoes at some point. With Barry's departure the new Warden will, essentially, take on the role of 'junior' to John Curtis. So the tasks will not be too onerous. In fact, Barry managed to hold down an important and demanding full-time job, carry on being a husband and father (marrying off two daughters in the process), and still have time to go on holiday - all the while serving St Mary's so effectively.

If anyone is thinking that, perhaps, they might consider taking on this role in the future, please let me know and we can discuss it. I would be happy for people to come along to PCC, Standing Committee and Vicar and Wardens meetings as an observer, so they can see what is involved at first hand. Importantly, if you don't think you would be any good in the role of Warden I would especially like to hear from you. Because A) you will be fine, and B) humility, rather than hubris is a good mark of Christian service.

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.

As I said last year, and will be certain to say every year by definition, Change is always with us. 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 Doris Gosnold has put in to every aspect of the life of St Mary's. Many of you will be unaware of quite how much Doris has done - and she promises will continue to do - for this Parish. She is not stopping everything but has decided this year to step down from PCC and Standing Committee duties and being a valued member of Deanery Synod. For everything that she has done in these areas we all at St Mary's owe her a great debt of gratitude.

There are many things we can be grateful for. To note just a few highlights over the past year:

- I think particularly of our developing partnership with Risti church in Estonia and their Pastor Annika Laats. Long may this continue to grow. The Partnership Service last Autumn in this respect went extremely well;
- We have enjoyed our relationship with Trinity School and shall be sorry to see them go when they take up their new home in Wildernesse later this year. We wish them well and assure them of our prayers.
- Then there were The Christmas Tree Festival and its Carol Service, The Hosting of the Women's World Day of Prayer, the Vicarage Garden bring and share lunch, Our new Home Group our focus on specific charities throughout the year; and so on, and so on...

One change I should like to particularly mention is where the music of St Mary's is concerned. At the last APCM we welcomed Edwin Davis and his family. Sadly for us - but happily for them - they found a new home and role at Ightham and we wish them every blessing for the future.

Meanwhile, we are delighted that Janet has kindly agreed to continue supporting our music ministry at St Mary's; especially through the brilliant work she does through the Youth Music Group, not to mention the choir and playing the organ. St Mary's will be pleased to note (no pun intended), however, that she has not been left to do all this on her own. We are very glad indeed that two excellent musicians have agreed to help us out where our music and choir is concerned. Daniel Eaton and Nick Castell. We welcome them and hope they will feel sufficiently at home with us. We will certainly value what they can bring to us.

On a less happy note (pun now intended) our organ, after over twenty years of sterling service to the community, crumpled to its knees exhausted. As many of you will know, the process of either repair, rebuild, or a new purchase is well in hand. Your PCC continues to keep a close eye on things - especially where the undoubted - and *significant* - expense is concerned.

I am delighted that the 'welcome desk' and welcome board are now in place and that at some point in the near future we shall arrange and publicise times when visitors can come in and have a look around our wonderful church building.

Looking ahead briefly, the main task this year will be to encourage members of the congregation to think and pray about regular giving, including signing up for Gift Aid. The costs of running St Mary's and the Diocese in general - to which we contribute - increase year on year and such giving is both painless and incredibly valuable. We shall also be looking, in the Autumn, towards encouraging people to think and pray about how else they might participate in the life and work of St Mary's. It is, all of those who already contribute so much will agree - an immensely rewarding and surprisingly painless gift to offer one another and the community in general.

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