

Rector's Report on 2017 – APCM – 26th April 2018

1. 2017 was yet another year of positives.
2. The growth has continued albeit gradually.
3. Growth has been offset with some drifting away and so we need to guard the back door so to speak.
4. For me the key appointment was that of Jo Ash as our pastoral care worker – a post which has made a massive difference.
5. Other staff appointments were for Emma to go F/T as our youth team leader, Tom our half time kids team leader, Bob Johnstone as the Centre Manager and Rosie Hayes as our Operations Manager.
6. We said goodbye to Amanda Marshall at Christmas.
7. Angelina Chilver as promoted to glory in early June leaving a massive hole in a range of ministries.
8. The summer camping trip to Focus was wet but happy with relationships deepened around the camp fire.
9. Our W/E away was a huge success and feedback indicated that an annual one would be appreciated.
10. The VIP Party where we thank our team members was great fun and really appreciated.
11. We held a New year's Eve party which was exhausting but a great success.
12. Our service offerings went from strength to strength.
 - a. The 9.30 saw new families each week and were all to attend we'd not have enough room for the kids.
 - b. We are in the top 10 of average Sunday attendance for children in the Diocese.
 - c. The 11am hovers around the 85 mark and copes with the noise and mess at the start.
 - d. Messy Church has grown dramatically
 - e. In terms of numbers the 6pm is our largest congregation and sadly under represented here tonight
 - f. If you only count adults then the 11am is our next largest – well represented here tonight
 - g. The 9.30 pm has more souls attending than the 11am but a lot of them can't yet vote!
 - i. Change APCM next year to be more inclusive?

- h. The 8am dwindles
 - i. the 6 o'clock has bedded in and has its own distinctive DNA.
 - j. Livestreaming was introduced at the contemporary services and we hope to be able to pipe this through for the 11am to residential care homes.
13. The Community Lunch went from strength to strength.
 14. 3 Alpha courses saw many make commitments d have borne much fruit.
 15. Members of the staff team and PCC attended two 48-hr learning communities called Lead Academy which has helped our thinking about our vision and strategy.
 16. Holiday Club went very well indeed.
 17. Our Connect Groups continue to thrive under Michael Greig's leadership with 180-200 members.
 18. The pastoral care load, including caring for the homeless, helping those with addictions, ex-offenders and handling complex safeguarding issues – particularly with vulnerable adults. The work MG and JA have done is awe inspiring
 19. The Benefice – its future shape and size – continued to demand time and effort in deliberations.
 20. As ever I am indebted to
 - a. the Wardens (Paddy & Sarah),
 - b. Jan
 - c. and her heroic team of volunteers in the Office
 - d. Judith for once again helping with the Annual Report
 - e. our dedicated staff team,
 - f. the PCC,
 - g. all you volunteers.

Rector's Look Ahead

This is the part I love!

You know me

Emotions on sleeve – hope you can see I am still loving the job!

Happy wife – happy life

Walk out at 8.30pm Sunday night –

- love this place
- love the people
- love this church

God has been so good

I may be over analysing but sometimes happy feeling make me wonder whether I'm getting too comfortable here

Problem with this is I cannot see anyone in the Bible who is being used by God getting comfortable!

So one of my prayers is just that God would speak

- Would show me
- Would guide me
- Lead me

So I say "here I am Lord – send me"

Not in a sense of sending me somewhere else

But as your shepherd so to speak

Show me where to lead this precious flock.

My forthcoming sabbatical will be a time of great refreshment – for I am tired and being your vicar is an unrelenting job. I am certainly not wanting any sympathy but pastoring any large church is unrelenting and I pray I return deeply refreshed.

Physically I'll be knackered from a long flight back from the US but spiritually fresh – I hope.

I'll be uploading to the website some prayer points for my sabbatical as some kind souls have offered to pray for us all.

I did want to say that you mustn't expect me to come back having been up the mountain. This isn't study leave

I may have some new ideas but please don't set me up for a fail thinking I'm like a Moses figure!

We'll be in Buckingham for the first $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sabbatical and then in the US for all of August.

You'll see me around town and although my family will continue to worship here I'll be worshipping elsewhere.

No need to avoid me! Just don't talk to me about church – especially things like how well Danny is doing & would you like to find another job?!!

Danny will be the acting Rector although legally Gussie will be there if anything really kicks off.

I was reading an article about cults and communes and what pulls intelligent thinking people into them:

3 things pull people in:

- the longing for community;
- the longing for some kind of spiritual experience;
- and the longing for some sense of purpose.

These are 3 things will pull people into any enterprise

Could be the choir?

The Landy restoration project!

Christianity traffics in all three desires as well, but adds the important dynamic of the truth God has revealed about community, experience and purpose.

Our longing for a spiritual experience is reflected in the first line of our vision to be a church that worships God

The longing for community in the second line "to make friends"

And the sense of purpose in the last line "to change the world"

We have this right and of course the truth:

- That God created us for relationship with him
- That He loves us and that
- God saves us through his son

Runs through all we do like the letters in a stick of Brighton rock.

And so using those 3 lines from our vision, these are the challenges that face us:

How do we worship God better?

- Constantly review of service provision
 - By creating service teams
- Do we need to address the limited gap between 9.30 and 11am always a pinch-point
- More creative at our all services.

How do we create community better?

- New church school at some future point
- Potential of a church plant – new worship centre
 - Potential to move some of the messy and noisy services off site
- Intentional about discipleship
 - Making disciple-making disciples
- Connect groups a vital part of this
 - Cannot over-emphasize their importance

And thirdly how to we create that sense of purpose to make a difference, to transform society around us, to make disciples of all nations?

- The Centre
 - Plans to join in plans for a community hub
 - Unthinkable that we lose this
- Cycle of Alpha courses
- Keeping a view of the wider world though our mission partners
 - I long to see some sort of youth mission trip overseas
 - Using contacts in India to create a life-changing mission experience
- Talked about growing deeper with God and one another but also need to:
 - Grow younger
 - I'm good at attracting middle aged men

- Need a balance on the team so we can also attract the hard to reach millennials
- Stay focussed on raising up the church of tomorrow
- Grow wider in our evangelistic impact in our community

Some of what I've outlined involves change and certainly sacrificial giving.

And of course no one really likes change which is why
If you want to make everyone happy sell ice cream - don't be a leader!

I want to Focus on 2 areas:

1. Outreach:
 - a. Evangelism
 - b. New School and worship centre
 - c. The Centre and its future
2. Administrative, financial and Operational matters

I'm going to start with some things that exercise people a lot, stir up emotions a lot.

I don't want you leaving here thinking about these things in priority over the other more gospel orientated things!

Stewardship

- No director
- No fundraising
- Need innovative thinking
- Sacrificial giving
- If you can help – see me

Ceding from the Benefice

- Will be our own parish
- Mistake but ...

Staffing

- The deficit has in part caused us not to renew one staff contract
- But if we are to grow we have to increase the staff size.
- One role that we feel will unlock potential is the appointment of an assistant minister
- That is why we should buy a house

- No help from the Diocese
- Office space needed

Changes to the fabric of this building

- Baptistry
- Side chapel:

Many people have indicated that they think the Lady Chapel is untidy, in fact not a very usable space. We no longer use it for Communion on Wednesdays and its principal use is now by the prayer team.

The PCC have suggested that in dealing with that area we ought to extend the dais right across to the South wall.

A small group is working on proposals which include replacing the window that was removed when the chapel was made in 1914, an old photograph of 1905 shows a stained glass window in place. The intention would be to retain the panelling around the East and south walls.

The prayer ministry team have made some suggestions as to what they would like to see there. The intention is to produce an uncluttered space for private prayer and for prayer ministry.

Preliminary discussions with the DAC are moving very slowly, not because they are opposed to reordering the space (they agree that it needs attention) but because of the complications of finding out where all the items currently in it came from

We are hoping that many of the details will be with the original faculties which are deposited in the diocesan archives in the Aylesbury records office.

Once we have completed the preliminary searches and enquiries, and have heard the opinion of the DAC then some initial proposals can be made and put up for consultation. After that some formal proposals can be prepared.

- Cafe area
- Kitchen

- **Welcome sign**

- **Chairs**

- Accepted that they are not designed for what they are being put through

- Upholstered covers are no longer recommended by the DAC
- In compatible with small people and meals
- More yacht club than life boat
 - £155 compared to £120 for the steel.
 - If we bought 300 that is £31,500 to £42,000 (using the 300+ rate)
 - Worth an extra £10,500
 - Also need to consider the wooden chair has a 10 year guarantee as opposed to a lifetime guarantee on the steel ones

But lets look at the other area:

Outreach

- Who or what follows George?
- Good at attracting Christians
- Poor culture of invitation
- Alpha

New school

- Growth will at some stage lead to the need
- We'll be ready!

Alongside this would be a church plant with a large auditorium

- Community space
- New worship space
- £15k for a project officer

Finally there's the centre

- So important to our outreach
- Doing so well under
- Bob and the Management Committee
- What next?
- Community hub
- Can't imagine life without it

In summary

- A season of consolidation where we focus on doing what we are already doing even better
- A season of getting deeper into God
- A season to progress some fabric issues with as much communication and transparency as possible and I hope not too much fuss
- A season to get our stewardship strategy regenerated

- And a season where we look out into the community to seek out the lost sheep with zeal and vigour, always ready to share the good news of the gospel.

May we be a church that if it suddenly disappeared would be missed hugely!

To do all these things we need to pull together as the body of Christ

To stay humble – ever reliant on His guidance and power

And to seek the power of the Holy Spirit in all we do.

Eph 3

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.