

Parish of St George, Stalybridge

Vicar's Report to APCM 20th April, 2010

Sabbatical leave

In some respects this last year has been a strange one for me as for three months I was on sabbatical leave and largely absent from the parish. This was my first ever sabbatical in 39 years of ministry, I looked forward to it and enjoyed it very much. It was a great opportunity to be freed from the telephone and the never ending demands of parish life, to enjoy a more regular daily pattern and to focus on one subject area. I chose to interview a range of people about their values and beliefs and in the end had 109 responses from interviews and email questionnaires. I still hope to write a book to tell these stories of the varieties of modern religious experience. I am very grateful to the wardens and my clergy and lay colleagues who looked after things while I was absent and enabled me to take the time out. It well demonstrated the principle of shared ministry.

Church Council

The Parochial Church Council meets each month during the year on the third Tuesday, with the exception of August and December. It continued to meet during my absence under the able chairing of George Vernon, the PCC Vice Chair. It's discussions/reports have included:

- The ongoing maintenance of the church and grounds
- New lighting scheme
- Roof insulation
- Fundraising
- Worship, especially the Eucharist in Ordinary Time
- Charitable giving, including support for FOMO and the Christmas Child.
- The Garden of Remembrance, including wording on choice
- The proposal to install telecommunications equipment
- Fundraising including gift day, spring and Christmas Fairs
- Arrangements for the Bishop's Pilgrimage and review
- The Prince's Trust
- Arts and Craft Exhibition
- Youth Work
- Safeguarding including Vetting and Barring

Some of the highlights in 2009 have included:

Bishop's Visit

The Bishop of Manchester visited the parish on March 31st as part of his pilgrimage to all the parishes, "Run the Race". He arrived by train for tea in the Station Buffet, was taken to Cosmo Bingo, the Police Station and the RASH Keyhole Centre before returning for supper with guests followed by a service in church.

Arts and Crafts Exhibition

Was held from 11th – 14th June and, though not attended by many people was a good beginning and had a wonderful range of art and craft work all done by church members and local people. It is hoped to repeat this in future, perhaps in partnership with a local art group.

Saints Alive!

The concert during the exhibition was a great success and enjoyed by participants and audience. One participant was so overwhelmed by her first public singing appearance. The exhibition and the concert both demonstrated that "St George's has got talent!"

Keith's ordination to priesthood

Took place at Manchester Cathedral on 27th June and on the following day he presided at the Eucharist, followed by a buffet lunch. Keith has continued to grow into this new aspect of his continuing ministry, continues with his ministry to sea cadets and has recently been appointed as a GMP police chaplain. For the first time in a number of years we no longer have a reader and this is something we need to address for the future.

Church Banner

The new banner in memory of Zoie Vidler was completed and subsequently blessed and dedicated. Our thanks to the team of 'sew-ers' and to the Vidler family for their generosity.

Garden of Remembrance

It was a great joy to have the Bishop of Middleton dedicates the new Garden on 4th October, with the Lord Lieutenant in attendance. Our thanks to the team who have helped organise this, Gary Walker and colleagues who undertook the work and Alan Smith for sorting the faculty! We must also thank our team of churchyard keepers and grass cutters for the incredible job they do throughout the year.

Church Fairs

Our thanks are due, as ever, to those who organised two very successful events, both in terms of money raised and also as community activities. We are especially grateful to the 'Grotto Group' who have organised Santa's Grotto for us for the last 15 years and who retired after the last Fair. They will be a hard act to follow.

Youth Work

Monday Agapé and the Junior Youth Group continue to thrive due to good leadership - as do our uniformed organisations. It has been sad to lose the open senior youth group on Thursdays (though they will be meeting at the new Copley youth centre) and the Prince's Trust. Loss of the PT now means that we have no daytime use of the lounge/hall except the Thursday toddler group.

Worship & Music

A lot of time has been spent by the Council this last year in discussing worship, due the revision of the Eucharist in Ordinary time. This included the recent questionnaire to the congregation and 36 replies were received with very useful comments. We now need to address the design of all age worship on the 4th Sunday so that it better meets the needs of our local community many of whom do not have a background of churchgoing.

We are also sad to lose Chris Anderson who has left us after 15 years as our Director of Music. His last service in that role was on Easter Day. We are extremely grateful all that he has contributed and achieved in that time and wish him well in the next stage of his musical journey.

Looking ahead

I am due to change to my retirement career in February 2012. I am not counting the days but this realization does begin the focus the mind on priorities for the next year or two for St George's. One priority must be an energy efficient and cost effective heating system for the building. But I would also like the new PCC to address the question of where we would like to be in 2-5 years time – under God what kind of church would we like to be and how will we achieve it. These are challenging questions in today's climate. I hope that you will pray about and help us to meet this challenge.

The Bishop's vision: "Run the race...look to Jesus; and pass on His Faith, Hope and Love" (based on Hebrews 12:1-2 and I Corinthians 13:13) To achieve this he asks we pray that, under God: a) Churches grow b) Giving increases and c) Communities are served.

What's your vision.....?

Ian Stubbs
April, 2010