

A few words from the Vicar

Last month I talked about prayer and mentioned that I often pray about our financial situation. We are struggling to make ends meet, plus we need a new sound system and must find a massive £120,000 for essential repairs to the Church building.

Well, there has been some progress. A small group of us met with representatives from the Diocese recently and successfully argued for a substantial (£17,300) reduction in our Parish Share for this year (see PCC News for details). This will certainly improve our finances although, from now on, there is no excuse for not paying our revised Share in full.

The discussion was full and frank, and one uncomfortable statistic provided by the Diocese is that average weekly giving per adult attender in our Church is substantially lower than that for the Deanery or the Diocese as a whole. In 2016 our average giving was £9.45 per week compared to £14.59 for the Deanery and £17.56 for the Diocese. Clearly, we need to do better.

Giving of our time and money is an act of faith, and an act of trust. The Bible challenges us to ask ourselves where our giving to God comes in our priorities. Tithing (i.e. giving 10% of our income) is the ideal, but the important thing is to pray for guidance, and then give as God leads us. We do this in the knowledge that, *'Each of us must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'* (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Prayer works. It might take us some time, but I do not doubt that we will be successful in raising the money to pay for a new sound system and to cover the cost of the building repairs.

This brings me onto another important building matter. After many years looking after our Church building, first as Churchwarden and more recently as Buildings Officer, Chris Haworth has decided to hang up his spurs. He has done a great job over very many years, for which I am immensely grateful.

This means we are looking for someone new to take the lead on Church building matters. This also means that, going forward, I am likely to find myself devoting more of my time to the building project, and spending less of my time on other matters. Something else for your prayers, I think!

Lately, I have been writing a lot about our Churchyard and our obligation to enforce the regulations issued by the Chancellor. (See <http://ainsworthparish.org.uk/churchyard.html>.)

Scheduled to begin at the end of last month, by the time you read this, I expect we will have begun enforcement action to remove items from graves that do not comply with the regulations. In some cases, we will simply remove non-compliant items and, so that the owners can collect their property later, put them somewhere for safekeeping. In other cases, before acting we will need to seek instructions from the Chancellor or clarification from the Diocese.

I have no doubt this will be a lengthy process, so please be patient.

The regulations cover the whole of the Diocese of Manchester and, locally, we have neither the discretion to vary the rules to suit ourselves, nor any leeway in enforcing them. However, the Chancellor does have some discretion. Should anyone wish to apply to him for permission to retain an otherwise non-compliant item on a grave, I am happy to advise on the process involved.

Likewise, I am more than happy to advise should anyone be unsure whether an item is allowed or not.

All it takes is a phone call or an email!

Every Blessing

Dave