

A few words from the Vicar

Life is not without its challenges and at Christ Church we face a few. For example, sooner or later (who knows when) we will be sharing a vicar with one or more neighbouring parishes. When that happens, we will need to work hard to make a success of it, as I am sure we will.

Also, we need to undertake some remedial work to the church building. We have begun the long process of applying to the Diocese for permission. Once that challenge is overcome, we face another challenge; finding the money to pay for the work!

The biggest challenge we face, as always, is how to answer Jesus' call to engage in mission and evangelism. We are called to loving service, and to share the good news of Jesus Christ so that others might come to know his saving love for themselves. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Therefore, the PCC is in the process of agreeing an ambitious update to our Mission Action Plan, and is planning several new initiatives. Our vision is one of a growing, thriving Church, alive with the love of Jesus. To move towards this, we need to address two important issues.

Firstly, it needs to be understood that mission and evangelism are not the sole responsibility of the clergy. Jesus calls all Christians to engage in the mission of the Church. The more of us who respond to Jesus' call, the greater the impact we can have for good in our community.

Of course, we are fortunate that many from this Church are already prepared to give of their time to support this work. They do so in so many ways. However, the more volunteers we have, the more we can achieve.

Secondly, we are not paying our way. Despite a fantastic fundraising effort and the generosity of many, we finished 2016 with a deficit and are likely to do so again this year. This is not

sustainable, particularly at a time when we need to fund much-needed building work. Also, there are financial costs associated with mission and evangelism. Operating with a deficit severely limits what we can afford to do and, therefore, achieve.

Last year we failed to pay our Parish Share in full and, unless things change, we are unlikely to pay it in full this year either. The Parish Share (£53,000 in 2016 and 2017) is our contribution to Manchester Diocese. The Diocese mostly uses the money it collects from parishes to maintain parish ministry, primarily clergy employment costs. So, we pay a substantial sum to the Diocese but receive a substantial benefit in return.

Our Parish Share also supports ministry within poorer parishes. We have an obligation to support them and, if we fail to pay our share in full, we are failing them. As Bishop Philip of Burnley said recently, “... a church that abandons the poor might well be financially viable. It’s just that it would no longer be the Church of Jesus Christ.”

Our response to these two issues? Throughout October we are running a Stewardship campaign. On 1st October, and on successive Sundays, everyone attending Church will be handed a booklet. This will explain our financial situation in more detail. The PCC hopes that everyone will respond by prayerfully considering their giving to the mission of the Church, both in terms of time and money. Remember:

‘The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.’ (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Every Blessing

Dave