

Vicar's Report - APCM 2024

The APCM is a time to look back and reflect on the year, giving thanks to God for all that has happened and also a time to look to the future and what we would like to see happening in the coming year.

The various reports in the Parish Review booklet, reveal that it's been a good year in the parish. We have grown. New people have joined and are finding faith. Our October attendances were again up, occasional offices were up, our giving was up - though not by as much as our outgoings. There are lots of good things going on. Messy Church is going really well and drawing new families into church life, St Andrew's are really embracing the opportunities afforded by this amazing new building. You all deserve a massive well done, and a big thank you. I want to say a particular thank you to the PCC members who give generously of their time as your representatives - to meet with me and help to discern God's will for the parish as we go forward. It's not an easy job and they do it diligently and well and they deserve our thanks.

I also want to pay tribute to Andrew and Jenny Dyer, who have been through so much over the last year, and yet have continued to serve the parish so faithfully through it all.

I'd also like to say a big thank you to Amanda, my wife, for all her support and help with the parish administration. It's not one of my greatest gifts and I'd be lost without her.

As I've reflected on the past year or so ahead of the meeting today, I'm reminded that church is what we make it. We are the people of God, an outpost of his kingdom in our parish. In Christ, we have everything we need to be the people God is calling us to

be and everything we need to do the things that God is calling us to do. Hudson Taylor the great missionary to China, said that God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply.

I heard a colleague said recently that it feels like the Church of England that we were ordained into is passing away, and a new one is being born - but no-one is quite sure what that will look like yet. This is a liminal moment. A time of rapid change. I wonder if the same might be true of our country too. Society seems to be becoming more secular and yet there's a growing interest in Christianity among the young. AI promises much and threatens more. Old certainties are being shaken.

One of the guiding principles of the rebuilding of St Andrew's after the building project has been permission to try things. It's a good principle for uncertain and anxious times. It says we don't know what will work in this rapidly changing world, so let's try some things and see. The PCC would love to hear your ideas, your hopes and your dreams. Let's listen to the whispers of God beckoning us out with him into the new. Let's learn together - so if something doesn't work as well as we hope it will then let's try again - never giving up, never giving in to despair. The priority now is to apply that work to the rebuilding of St Michael's - not physically, although in time I think you will need to re-order further to better serve the village community - but rather rebuilding the worshipping community and reaching out beyond it to draw new people to Jesus, by building on the good things that are going on now, and the many seeds that have been planted over the years.

As vicar here I stand as the latest in a long line of predecessors since HENRY de WANETYNG was summoned as the first Vicar of Cumnor in 1298. I walk past quite a few of my predecessors graves every time I head over to St Michael's. That reminds me that I'm just a steward here. And it reminds me too that it's not

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about me and it's not all up to me. You are the church of God in Cumnor, and Dean Court and Farmoor. The people around you need you, and they especially need you to point them to Jesus. I preached earlier about hope - Paul reminds us that with Jesus the worst thing is never the last thing. There's always hope. My prayer for us today and for the year ahead is that we would grab ahold of that once again and dare to dream about the bright future that God has for us as we walk hand-in-hand together with him.