



St Matthew's, Bethnal Green

Registered Charity No. 1148272

Reflections of the year ended December 31, 2017

presented to the Annual Parish Church Meeting of March 18, 2018

PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

The PCC has met for five full meetings. As usual the discussions at these meetings covered a varied range of subjects involving the administration, maintenance and mission of St Matthew's Church for the benefit of the people of Bethnal Green.

Among the items covered were:

Buildings: The upkeep and the use of the buildings are always a high priority as the PCC tries to be good stewards of our resources, and to make them available for the local community. This past year saw the Parish Room changing its user from the U-Turn Project to 'Arch 76' who describe themselves thus: 'The Arch is a beautiful, safe and creative space for local women. Within this space we try to offer relationships that are open and transparent as we share our whole lives together and learn to love one another. The Arch is a place where people can come to know that they are loved by God and to explore what that might mean and how they can respond to that.'

As always the PCC have been keen to be good stewards of all the resources that St Matthew's has to offer and work to ensure that plans and strategies are in place for the good maintenance of, and accessibility to all its buildings.

Ordinations:

In June St Matthew's hosted the Stepney Area Ordinations and among those being ordained to the priesthood was our curate The Revd Erin Clark. The PCC offered thanks to the many parishioners who worked to make this such a special occasion for the area and our parish community, and it was a further joy to welcome Erin and her guests to her first mass the following day.

Safeguarding:

St Matthew's PCC takes its responsibility regarding safeguarding very seriously, and this year saw a change of Safeguarding Officer as Naomi Agyekum took up the role. All those in our parish who work with children and young people has had to not only undergo police checks, but also to attend regular safeguarding training and the PCC reviews the Parish Safeguarding document annually.

New Forms of Service:

Over the past year a small group led by Erin has been looking into the possibility of extending the liturgical life of the parish in offering another service to the people of the area. They have looked at a model based at a Roman Catholic church in west London called 'Night Fever' which has helped to fashion a shape for a more informal but prayerful and sacramental evening service to be offered on a regular basis at St Matthew's. Towards this end the PCC were pleased to extend funding for a course of training for Erin and another person to explore the best way of providing our own model for an 'alternative' service. There has also been meetings with members of the parish who are keen to be involved but unable to undergo the training due to the fact that it is a full day each week for about two months. It is hoped that such a service will be launched in the early summer.

Working alongside Tower Hamlets Council regarding affordable housing:

Tom Dollard, having attended a Deanery Synod meeting in 2016 which focused on the housing crisis, emailed Councillor Rachel Blake to ask what the church could do? As a result

of their discussion Tom was asked to help to start a group looking at community self-building schemes (of which Tom has experience) including people from Hackney. Tower Hamlets are still exploring to see how they can help. There is a problem for people who are not on the housing list because they earn too much money, but do not have sufficient to allow them to enter the property market. There are a lot of ideas and similar projects which are informing the thinking of the group. Tom's area of interest is design and construction, and co-housing around a common theme. Tom was able to report to the PCC that the Mayor of Tower Hamlets and two Councillors are already behind the idea.

Apart from the matters above and the day to day running of the church and care for the fabric of the buildings the PCC has also discussed and made decisions on:

- Charitable giving
- Finances
- Working with children and young people.
- St Matthew's on-going mission to the local people

Of course towards the end of 2017 the announcement was made that Fr Kevin and Adey would be leaving St Matthew's and as a result the PCC have begun to, not only plan for the vacancy and Fr Kevin's successor, but also to ensure that his ministry here is properly honoured. The PCC would ask the people of St Matthew's to pray so as to discern what God might be asking them to do to support the work of St Matthew's during the vacancy; and also to pray for Kevin and Adey as they prepare for their move.

It is especially important, as we engage with the process of change in the parish, that the PCC is committed and prayerful as we seek to continue God's work in this place; to identify who God has chosen to step into the role of Rector; and to continue to meet the new opportunities that the vacancy will offer. Therefore, as Secretary of the PCC, I would like to thank those who have served so faithfully over the past year, and to encourage them, and other members of the congregation, to consider standing for the PCC for the year ahead.

- The Revd Sr Judith Blackburn, SSM

ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER'S REPORT

The Electoral Roll was revised in the lead up to APCM. This took place from February 10 to 24, 2018.

A copy of the roll was available for inspection on the table at the back of church for two weeks in advance of the scheduled Annual Parish Meeting.

14 names were removed. 5 names were added.

The total enrolment now stands 54.

I wish to take this opportunity to tender my resignation as Electoral Roll Officer to the PCC. Many thanks for the years of patient co-operation that church members have offered me. It has been an honour to serve you all.

- Adey Grummet

TREASURER'S REPORT

Alfred Kamara-Laye, the Treasurer, will be on hand to answer any questions in relation to the annual accounts at the APCM.

DEANERY SYNOD MEMBERS' REPORT

The Tower Hamlets Deanery Synod has met on five separate occasions since the last APCM, and this includes the Archdeacon's Visitation, where Churchwardens were put into office, and the Common Fund meeting.

As usual, each meeting had a particular focus regarding the life of the church and the people of Tower Hamlets with speakers brought in to widen our thinking.

Apart from the Visitation and the Common Fund meeting the first meeting was the Summer Synod held in July which, although a social occasion, also gave the members a chance to meet and hear from one of our local MPs, Jim Fitzpatrick who spoke about his 20 years as a serving member of parliament and the various roles he has undertaken. The meeting heard about his busy monthly surgery where he has met over 10,000 people during his years of public service; and he spoke of housing being the number one issue in Tower Hamlets. He referenced his previous career as a Firefighter and his current role leading an All Parties Group on Fire Safety. Andy Rider, the Area Dean, thanked Mr Fitzpatrick for his years of service and made a presentation of a personalised milk jug to Mr & Mrs Fitzpatrick.

The October meeting was addressed by Bishop Adrian and the theme was the 'Church and Social Justice'. Bishop Adrian based his presentation on the ten Roman Catholic Principles of Social Justice which are also a relevant focus for the Anglican Church. After briefly reflecting on those principles, Bishop Adrian invited the meeting to form small groups to consider how we as a church can respond to them based on Andy Sinek's model of 'Why, What, How?' The feedback was the beginning of a larger conversation about the Church's mission being rooted in Jesus call for social justice acted out in the preferential option for the poor.

The February meeting, like the others mentioned, was held at the Royal Foundation of St Katherine. Unfortunately no representative from St Matthew's was able to attend but the theme was 'Ministry and Vocation in the Church' and the speaker was the Rev Christopher Ramsey. As well as Rev Ramsey's address the meeting was also addressed by people who have acted upon their own call to serve the Church. Parishes were encouraged to pray about vocations, in all their variety, from their own churches and to help people to discern their call through prayer.

If people would like more information on any of these meetings full minutes can be found on the Tower Hamlets Deanery Synod website.

As well as the main substance of these meetings the Synod continues to exercise its responsibilities for appointing School Governors and to keep abreast of all that happens in the area where the churches might need to respond. As usual there has been a wide range of the business dealt with at Deanery Synod from matters at both local and national level that continue to effect the every-day lives of the people of this area. I would like to continue to encourage members of St Matthew's to put themselves forward to share in this important and interesting work.

- The Revd Sr Judith Blackburn SSM

FABRIC REPORT

We are pleased to report that all of our buildings are in predominately good shape.

The Church

Very little input has been required on the main church building. The church building has been mostly kept open during the day but has, at times, been locked following minor security breaches and anti-social behaviour.

Some minor replacements of bulbs and repairs on electrics were performed and these are now in order.

As usual, the roof gutters were regularly cleared of leaves and excess water.

The back chapel had a faculty request approved, allowing for the removal of the small altar and sedilia so that its space can be utilised more fully for broader community activities such as the Sunday School.

The Watch House

Following structural work and internal decoration, the Watch House is now occupied by the St Matthew's curate and her husband. As a result, the PCC no longer receives an income for this property.

The house was subject to a burglary and measures to improve the security of it have been explored.

The Watch House is in mostly good condition but recent reports have discovered continued damp that will need to be remedied at some stage in the near future. The PCC is looking into funding this work.

The Parish Hall

There is a long-term lease with Oscar Media. An income is being received from the building being let.

As the group is coming towards the end of its lease, discussions have taken place with regards to it carrying out the building works it is contractually obliged to do. A survey to determine the nature of these works has been completed and discussions are ongoing as to when and how these will be undertaken. The group has until the end of its lease to ensure that these works are done.

The Parish Room

As of March 2017, the parish room was no longer occupied by its long-term tenant the 'U-Turn Project'. They cleared out their furniture and it was left ready for new tenants.

It has since been rented out to Arch 76 who use it for charitable work. Much like the previous occupants, much of this is based around assisting local, vulnerable women.

The PCC retains the right to use the building on occasions when it is not being used by this group and to continually negotiate its usage.

The Parish room is in very good condition.

The Rectory and Flat

The Rectory and the Rectory Flat are not the direct responsibility of the PCC but the Diocese of London. They are both kept in good order by the residents, Fr Kevin Scully and The Revd. Fiona Green respectively. As Fr Scully will be leaving St Matthew's next year, there will need to be an architectural survey of the property by the Diocese before deciding whether or not any major works need to be carried out. It has been established that the PCC will retain some form of access to the rectory during this time and the Revd. Fiona Green will continue to occupy the flat.

Ingrid Doris and Matthew Shelley (Churchwardens)

CURATE'S REPORT

I was surprised when I realised that when I sat down to write last year's Curate Report, I was still a deacon. Being made a priest, and having that event happen at St Matthew's, has been an obviously significant event, but it seems like it happened longer ago. The preparations for this event, both personal and organisational (let's not forget the portaloos!) were a big part of the past year for me and for the parish. The training element of my post continues, with supervisions, Post-Ordination Training evenings, and training days sprinkled in.

This year has seen the growth of the Friday after school Club for kids (including a few new parent volunteers), a small group of youth (mostly kids who've outgrown Friday Club), and a number of youth and children's events, run ecumenically and based at Weavers Fields Adventure Playground. Out of the latter have come potential opportunities for funded youth/

children's work help which I continue to pursue with a steering group. One area that has declined over the past year have been children's involvement in the liturgy, whether in All Age services or as altar servers.

Many fixed points in my duties in parish life continue – masses and other events, visiting, taking services at care homes, assemblies, and occasional offices – one of the highlights being baptising Stacey, Karim and Carol and preparing them for confirmation at St Paul's Cathedral last Autumn. Alongside these fixed points come one-off pieces of work: helping contribute to the Tower Hamlets Community Plan spearheaded by the Mayor John Biggs, with a team co-ordinating the Stepney Area Clergy conference, and speaking on the panel for 'the Church and Millennials' at the Calling London summit.

In the latter part of this year I've begun to see if there would be space and enthusiasm for a new evening service or 'worshipping community' at St Matthew's, based around adoration of the blessed sacrament. To this end I've been on a course with the Centre for Church Planting, which has been helpful and at times stretching and out of my comfort zone. I have gathered a starting team to support this new venture, and have been told by the CPC finance committee person that we are likely to receive a £20,000 grant in Summer 2018, which money will benefit both this project – which we are calling 'Happening E2' – as well as the wider parish.

As Kevin has announced his departure in April, I have also been involved in supporting the Wardens, PCC and congregation in their preparations for the vacancy. It is my belief that the people of this parish have many hidden strengths and skills and that they are better equipped than they know for the next chapter of their life together. Praying for and serving St Matthew's in this time of transition is a challenge but one that brings with it many joys, as I see people embracing uncertainty and trusting in God amidst the change.

- The Revd Erin Clark