

Incumbent Report – St Anne’s with St James

So another year, and covid has been a shadow over the whole year, though thankfully not so bad in its effects as it was a couple of years ago. A year in which the world has changed, and become more anxious and damaged, a year which leaves us with a more uncertain sense of the future.

It is tempting to try and get things back to how they were, as we emerge from the restrictions, but we are called to move forwards into what we are to become, not get trapped in what we thought was right then. Of course we carry with us, and tend, the heart of what is handed down to us but Covid taught us that the heart of the gospel beats even without the ‘normal’ liturgical and ecclesiastical structures. A good steward brings out of the treasure-house both what is old and what is new (Matt 13:52) and a key part of what we do in the coming year is to discern what we bring out from the old, and what we bring from the new.

Part of what is new, is a new pattern of worship in the parish which we are testing – midweek at St James, both because we think many families find mid-week easier than a Sunday, and because current clergy numbers do mean that not all churches can have services on a Sunday morning each week. Both of these are factors in how we make plans for the future.

We have identified as a PCC three key areas to prioritise –

- *worship that is rich and nourishing for all, younger, older, regular attenders, and newcomers;*
- *helping each and everyone grow spiritually;*
- *being involved in, working with, concerned for our wider community and world.*

In this last area, we are developing our eco-church credentials, not for their sake, but energising our younger members and looking to change our habits and attitudes to be more in harmony with the world God has given us; we are also doing what we can, with the wider community to support Ukrainian families, and we continue to support Urban Outreach and the Children’s Society.

Thank you to all who do so much to make ours a thriving parish – whether administratively which is so important, practically (our grounds and buildings are beautiful and welcoming), pastorally in caring for others, or financially, and we know that as our running costs (energy bills) go up, so do every home’s. We trust “church” is worth giving to, for the place it is, for the things we do, and for the hope we share. How do we also learn to share our faith and help others find God’s love for themselves?

This coming year we face change, as we move into a new Mission Community working with parishes we know already and with new neighbouring parishes to the south. We will learn from them and we have things to share. No doubt we will also face some other challenges as well.

This year we have welcomed Hannah as Curate in our Team – she is here to learn and grow as a minister so that she is equipped to serve where God calls her next, but we have been greatly enriched by her gifts, skills and presence.

Thank you to the wardens, Harry and Nikki and to our Treasurer Barbara, to Steve for all you do for our buildings, and to David who sorts our Gift Aid. A special Thank you to Ross Heron who hands on the baton of PCC Secretary after many years of careful and dedicated commitment; what a gift to our Parish – Thank you, and thank you to so many others.

May God, guide, guard and bless us in the coming year.

Peter