

Great Brickhill Annual Parish Meeting, Tuesday 7th May 2019

Parochial Church Council Report

As usual the timing of this Parish Annual Meeting comes very soon after the Annual Church Meeting, which was held last week on 30th April.

The first part of that meeting commenced with the elections. Julia Turner was re-elected as Church Warden. The Rector thanked Julia for all her help during the last twelve months and for agreeing to continue in the role for another year.

Phillipa Cook, Mary Maley, Angela Northen, Margretta Smith and Joy Wilson continue as members of the PCC. Jeremy Hopkinson will serve the third of his three-year term as Deanery Synod Representative.

In presenting the Annual Report and Accounts for the year to 31st December 2018 the Treasurer highlighted a few points:

- (1). The Accounts are prepared on Receipts and Payments basis, which avoids the strict regulations from the Charities Commission
- (2). There was a deficit for the year of £708
- (3). Total disbursements to charitable causes represent approximately 11% of Income Received
- (4). The Parish Share is the annual amount payable to Oxford Diocese – this covers the cost of clergy, housing and training. The payment due for 2018 was £25,615 (6.3% increase). Due to the projected deficit for the year the Parish Share actually paid was £15,000 (only 59% of the total amount due). The Parish Share for 2019 is £25,243 (slight reduction of 1.5%). It is unlikely that the full amount will be paid due to the loss of benefactors whom we had relied upon to pay the Share in the past. Great Brickhill's Share seems very high compared to neighbouring villages and the hope is that the amount can be lowered to a more realistic level.
- (5). The daily running costs of the Church including the full amount of the Parish Share, are currently in the region of £101 per day, excluding any major restoration costs.

There then followed a photographic review of all the events over the last twelve months, approximately 100 photos taken mainly by David Marlow.

The Wardens' report followed – Julia thanked:-

- (1). All those who assist with the services:
 - The Rector and all the visiting clergy and Jeremy Hopkinson, Valerie Kerr and Phillipa Cook for leading our services
 - Jerry Breslin (Organist and Choirmaster) and Susan Noon & Rosemary Howell for playing the organ for us on occasions
 - Andrew & Margretta Smith for playing the music at the Family Services
- (2). Our Tower Captain, David Middleton, for looking after the tower and bells, and for arranging the bell ringing at our Sunday services.
- (3). All the volunteers who help with the daily running of the church. There are over 80 people who help with various tasks around the church and churchyard.

The average weekly attendance on a normal Sunday is down to 19; this follows the national trend. Attendance at special services was much higher. Two services were held away from the church:- the May Family Service at Brickstock and The Nativity at The Old Red Lion, with grateful thanks to the Cricket Club and Helen Ivory for allowing us to hold these services.

A service of particular note was the Remembrance Sunday Service when nearly 200 people attended to commemorate 100 years since the Armistice Day in November 1918. There was a display around the church of servicemen from Great Brickhill, the names of those who survived the war and those who died during the conflict or shortly afterwards from their wounds. The research was done by Tom Rolls and Edward Maley. A special poppy wreath was laid by members of the Great Brickhill WI.

Five funerals were held during the year but there was only one wedding. There were five services of baptism, four of which were held within the normal Sunday service.

High Ash School gathers four times throughout the year for worship in the church. When the whole school attends the church is full to capacity. On some occasions there is a separate service for the younger children and one for the older children. Valerie Kerr has been leading “Open the Book” at High Ash, a project which offers primary school children an opportunity to hear the major stories of the Bible in weekly assemblies.

The plaster was taken off the rear of the south wall to allow the wall to dry out. Pews were taken out to allow the refreshment point to be moved to this area to the rear of the font, in order to create a temporary gathering area. This has been well received.

Following the appointment of the new architect in January 2018, plans were drawn up for the new facilities. These were approved in principle by the DAC (the Diocesan Advisory Committee) and the formal planning application was submitted to AVDC in November.

The refreshment point will be housed in the area used for the temporary gathering area. There will be no reduction in the overall seating capacity of the church as there will be sufficient storage capacity for chairs. The toilet facility will be within a small extension through the west door with a short link to the church.

The planning application has not yet been approved as various bodies such as Historic England have to be consulted. When the application is approved detailed drawings will be produced and the tendering process will take place. Only at this stage will there be a clear indication of the cost of the work but it is hoped that a substantial portion of the cost will be covered by grants. The P.C.C. believes that the plans provide for facilities that are both achievable and affordable and will meet the needs of the church in the years ahead.

A series of fund-raising activities was held throughout the year, including the February Snowdrop Walks, the Plant Fayre in April, a tombola and teas at Brickstock in May, regular Ladies Who Lunch events and an Advent Coffee Morning in the church. Over a weekend in July there was a photographic exhibition “Our Village Past and Present”, a display around the church of scenes from around the village, through the ages. On the Sunday afternoon Jerry Breslin and the Cryers Singers gave a performance of renaissance music, followed by cream teas in the churchyard.

Already this year we have had two record breaking events, the most successful ever Snowdrop Walks and Plant Fayre, with thanks to David and Sally Duncombe and John and Celia Hall. There is a Fashion Show, in the Parish Hall, this Saturday 11th May – tickets are still available for that. The re-scheduled “Sweet Music” Concert, organised by Butch Baker will be on Saturday 12th October.

I will finish by echoing the comment made by Julia at the end of her report last week – we give thanks for our lovely church as a place for worship, or quiet prayer or contemplation, but also as somewhere to find friendship and support.

A copy of the full Annual Report for 2018 including the Accounts, can be downloaded from the Benefice website:- www.brickhillschurches.org.uk. This report will also be posted on the church website and a summary will be forwarded for inclusion in the June edition of the Parish Newsletter.

Phillipa Cook
(Great Brickhill PCC Secretary)