The Team Rector’s Report to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2021

Of course, it is only 7 months since we held the much delayed Binsey APCM for 2020, and now we are meeting for the APCM of 2021. In the time, since the previous meeting, we have experienced 2 more periods of National Lockdown, and also celebrated both Christmas and Easter with services in 10 of our 12 churches, so it has been a period of significant contrasts with plenty of up’s and down’s. With services continuing to be held in church since Easter, we are hoping (and praying) for sustained improvement over the summer, and the welcome return of other activities as well.

Despite all the uncertainties and challenges that remain, being able to return to worshipping together in church for Easter, brought a welcome boost, to everyone involved in the life of our churches, even though some members of our congregations have not been comfortable about returning to worship in church. Therefore, we have continued to send out the service via email each Sunday to over 100 church members and also have recorded the service most Sundays, so that it can be viewed on-line. We also held services via Zoom during Lent, and averaged 30 worshippers, who seemed to enjoy being able to share in worship together and see one another. However, a good number of people are not on the internet, so not able to take part in worship in this way.

Overall, we know that the primary purpose of our buildings is to hold services and to enable people to gather together in prayer, worship and fellowship. Hence, the necessity not merely to gently encourage back those people, who have stopped attending church since last March, but even more importantly to bring new people into the life of our churches and the faith of Jesus Christ. It is encouraging that baptism requests are now starting again and we must do all that we can to maximise those opportunities to build relationships with baptism families. Likewise, we look to do the same with all wedding couples, particularly those that live locally.

In each of our churches, we need to consider what activities we can hold (both inside and outside) that bring people from the wider parish together socially rather than simply seeking to raise much needed funds. Of course, there is a real pressure on the parish churches to generate more income, not only to cover local costs, but to pay for the costs of ministry as well. The fact that the Parish Offer (of £105,000) was met in full for 2020, demonstrates the commitment of the churches in the Binsey Team to do all that they can. Whilst, we understand that the Diocese has no option, but to ask the parishes for more money to meet the costs of ministry, the timing is less than ideal given that we are still in the process of encouraging people back to church again. However, we will consider prayerfully what might be possible and hold further consultations and discussions in the next few months.

I finish by thanking everyone involved in the life of the Church here in Binsey, and for all your hard work, encouragement, love & prayerful support. Above all, we need to pray, continue to work together, and encourage one another. In the midst of change and uncertainty, we can be reassured that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Stephen Banks

Revd Stephen Banks - Team Rector