

AGM Report 25th February 2007 Rob Lamerton

with additions

Three things that didn't seem to get said in the report:

1. Thanks to Rebecca BUT even more:
2. THANKS to the 2006 Parish Council: Denise, Hardy, Roger, Ann, Elizabeth and Shane.
3. Thanks to all!

Rector's Report — Rob Lamerton

(To be read in conjunction with Rebecca Newland's report.)

It seems appropriate that we have our AGM at the beginning of Lent this year. Lent is of course a time of reflection and repentance in preparation for the great celebration of Easter and the Resurrection of Jesus. Repentance is translated from a word which means to change direction or to change one's mind! Change can be difficult! When you think about, however, it is happening every day of our lives: noticed and un-noticed! In fact if we were not growing and changing we would start to become concerned. I can recall the great concern of parents when their child was not putting on weight or progressing at school. For them the lack of the change of development was a worrying sign!

I think the same is true of anything!

The change of repentance is the rearrangement of our priorities and the discarding of certain behaviours and attitudes as well as a greater dependence on the grace of God to bring about renewal. The ultimate renewal is the resurrection we encounter at Easter! In its totality it is no less than life out of death! Our experience may be somewhat less than that but ultimately this Lent / Easter time is about change!

I also see that in the Wilderness, the devil tries to put Jesus off that game! Like Jesus, we are also challenged to keep focus on what it is we are here for: Sons and daughters of God.

As I return to the business of being the priest at St Philip's people have been asking me if there were any experiences of our trip in the UK which gave me inspiration or new ideas for our life at St Philip's. As I begin to reflect on things I do see areas where we can do things differently and better:

Worship:

Reordering and renewing especially to simplify and shorten.

The care and inclusion of children.

Congregational singing (*Firmly believe that this Sunday Eucharist is at the heart of our worshipping life BUT...*)

Prayer list: Include other parish activities along with Northbourne Flats. Develop a Prayer Cycle for "streets and organizations" in our parish area. Refresh the prayer for those in need monthly.

Work on a format for worship: Greater freedom to hear people's story Offer simple worship Gathering in a less rarified / more earthy place (All Bar Nun!)

Discussion group re DVD's, CD's, books etc.

Continue the Tuesday meditation

People who are our seniors. How do we care? Seminar/House Group...

We can no longer expect that the people "out there" are going to simply come to church. The "Come and See" program is wonderful but is about step four in a five step program of getting people into church. (If that is what we want to do?). The earlier ideas are probably more likely to be steps 1-3!

I have even pondered the possibility of getting another job for two days a week and freeing up parish funds for the employment of a childrens/youth worker for one day and an administrator for one day.

We can no longer expect that the church will forever remain the same with rectors in fulltime employment and the present structure! The more flexible structure would allow the parish to have the benefit of skills I do not have. It would also allow me to come at the work with a greater contact in the community.

On re-reading, I realize that the next paragraph was a bit of a whinge! It it was it was me whinging about me, and how I need to set boundaries. I value your help in doing that!

Settling back has been more difficult than I had expected and probably was not helped by the fact that I did not allow myself the luxury of a couple of days to rest, sort the office and get to the planning of my work. It is a bad habit of mine that I get caught up in things which I should avoid and run out of time for the things which are important. Before I went away I spent the last week or two helping get the office set up and assisting Rebecca to the point where I jeopardised some aspects of my trip. I MUST spend time just doing for myself to enable ministry to happen more effectively.

I really value the parish office as well as the new phone and computer. It is so much easier to draw boundaries between work and home. So it is happening So much so that when I am at home I find it easier to relax! Of course this raises the question of Pandora's space and location!

The note about getting Sandy to do less in the parish is probably inappropriate for this report, but it highlights the tension of living and working "ON SITE". It points to the need for us both to be able to step back from the parish from time to time!

On that note I have asked (begged!) Sandy to do less in the parish for her own good and so the parish doesn't become too dependent, ... and for my sanity.

It was great to go away and have the confidence that Rebecca Newland would keep the parish on a good track. I am very grateful to Rebecca and probably even more grateful to all of you for enabling her AND continuing the ministry of St Philip's. THANKS! I am also very aware that there was a considerable extra cost in providing for me to take the length of leave I did!

Some of what I had hoped to do whilst in the UK was not able to be accomplished! Still, we achieved many things! I am not sure we discovered any congregations or styles of worship and ministry which stood out and inspired us in a way that we could say "We should do that!" In fact in some ways I found that I simply want to reinforce what we are doing, trying harder to make it better and to add some ways of reaching out.

One thing we did discover was the tradition of the "GREEN MAN" a man who is at one with nature and is a symbol of renewal and regeneration. We have brought a GREEN MAN from York Minster to recall our GREEN HERITAGE.

We were encouraged by the health of the church in England! From the variety of services in the local parish church to the balance of formality and informality of a country parish, the many ministries of a Local Ecumenical Project and the wonderful ministry of the lay people in the church where our son John worships! The most important issue for all of these congregations was to make a mark in their local community!

It seems this same issue has confronted St Philip's while we were away! Just how do we communicate our faith to the community in which we are placed?

And I guess that raises the question about who will be wardens and parish councillors? We joke light heartedly about it, but we need a team of committed men and women on faith who have in mind the interests of St Philips and how we can serve God in this place. I was reminded last week that Jesus challenged his disciples to be SALT of the earth AND LIGHT of the World.

Salt invisibly works away —

Light is the visible evidence:

BOTH ARE NECESSARY