

St Michael's APCM, 28 May 2023

Vicar's Report - a Preliminary Message

Dear Parishioners,

I plan to give a verbal report at our APCM on 28 May, once we've all had opportunity to read and reflect on the various papers currently being compiled for our meeting.

In the mean-time I'd like to share a short message, above all to communicate my thanks, encouragement and hope after a demanding season for me personally, and our parish corporately.

Since the last APCM in May 2022, my sick-leave in autumn 2022 and then gradual recovery and resumption of ministry, placed extra workload, and spiritual and emotional demands, on a wide range of members of our church. To all of whom I'd like to register my personal, and our collective, profound gratitude.

Ministerial colleagues in the parish, and wider deanery and diocese, have been stalwart in maintaining our worship. Our churchwardens' team, administrator, director of music, office-holders and others took on extra burdens of organisation and administration. The PCC and subcommittees carried on with their tasks and responsibilities with commitment and resolution in my absence. Personally, I was deeply grateful to be upheld in prayer and care by many.

It's risky to list names, in case of omission, but in alphabetic order I do want to thank Bill, Claire, Derek, Gaz, Gill, Graziana, Janet, June, Katharine, Nathan, Peter, Rob, Terry, and **everyone** for all the collaborative and mutually supportive service you have offered the parish and each other in the past twelve months.

Looking forward, I am much better now, thanks be to God. I am currently exercising most, but not yet all, of the tasks and responsibilities that pertain to being Vicar. I am looking gradually and sustainably to further extend my ministry into its remaining areas, in the coming months, and next steps are ongoing.

I am not yet 100%. I continue to try to be sensible, collaborative and consultative, with the wardens and ministry team in particular, about workload, delegation and stress-management. I hope and trust that in the coming months I'll find a viable and enduring *modus vivendi*. So my ministry can function fully, appropriately, and sustainably, for 'whatever time God gives me', to reference King Charles.

Your prayers for this are much appreciated. And wanting to end on a note of hope, let me share my encouragement and gratitude to God for his guidance and sustaining power this past year.

When Bishop Alan came last December to dedicate the bells, he made a moment to speak to me and exhort me. He was encouraged, complimentary and encouraging, about how vibrantly St Michael's life, worship and ministry was continuing, even as I very gradually and slowly recovered. He urged me to trust that God was holding the parish in his care and love, so 'all would be well' to cite Lady Julian. Since then I've seen signs that the Bishop was speaking with insight.

Our post-lockdown renaissance has indeed continued, with new worshippers springing up among us regularly, some to seek baptism and confirmation. Worship, music and parish activity have continued to renew. Some old tasks and rhythms have been put aside, with new ones growing up in their place. Change and challenge are perennial, and I'll share verbally further thoughts on all this on the 28th. But for now, I invite you to ponder **your** gratitude for our church this past twelve months - acknowledging times of struggle and difficulty - but thanking God for his faithfulness, above all.

Derwyn Williams, Vicar, May 2023.