

## **Churchwardens' Report on Fabric Goods and Ornaments**

June 2022 saw us marking the end of Rosemary's long and successful innings, throughout what proved to be, one of the most difficult periods in recent church history. The baton was passed to us both, at Pentecost, just as Claire's beautiful Flower Festival was in full bloom. The next few months proved to be baptisms of fire.

We give thanks to Rosemary for our detailed apprenticeship, for Derwyn's leadership, and the support of the entire parish, who encouraged, and prayed for us as we began our journey.

Summer 2022 saw temperatures rising ferociously, and St Michael's proved to be the coolest place in town. The ultimate joy was a sense of life being breathed back into the church as schools, and bookings returned to fill our pews, offer praise, and provide useful revenue. It also marked the commencement of the Bells Restoration project.

As churchwardens, we are charged with the responsibility of keeping this Grade 1 Listed building in good repair. We are deeply indebted to Terry and Peter, our fellow wardens, for the many hours they spend dealing with water ingress, roof inspections, heating failures, alarm and fire maintenance and other minor emergencies. Much preventative maintenance has taken place. Terry has been instrumental in beginning to change the lightbulbs in church to more eco-friendly ones. (We know now, that this has saved the church a considerable amount of money in this time of very high energy prices.) The winter having been so cold, put a strain on the heating system, and new parts were required for the boiler. In addition, we had to be ever mindful of the rising cost of gas.

Thanks to our two devoted and conscientious teams of cleaners, we have been able to keep our beautiful church as clean as possible, whilst the restoration work continued. Working parties, met regularly to keep clear the outer perimeter of the church so that gutters and drains remained free from obstruction. We would be delighted to see more volunteers at these working parties as this is essential preventative maintenance work.

Stewarding for events and services is another area in which we rely heavily upon the congregation. St Michael's is a popular venue for choirs, concerts, and recitals. These all require stewarding and we are always endeavouring to recruit more.

It seemed sensible to postpone the QI until the completion of the Bells restoration work in order that the Tower could be accessed safely. (This has now taken place, and we await the architect's report.)

Together with the fabric of the church, archives, ornaments, fixtures and fittings have to be maintained. Our thanks are due to John Steward and Peter, who have been putting together a detailed inventory of our silverware and artefacts. All the hallmarks and distinguishing marks are identified, recorded and photographed with great skill, and are important

constituents of our church heritage. On completion, the congregation will be able to view the inventory, and it will be seen also by Archdeacon Janet at Visitation, summer 2023. New candlesticks were made for the Lady Chapel in memory of Philip Smith, and once again our heartfelt thanks go John Steward.

Cowell House remains tenanted, and in satisfactory condition. In addition, the rent has been increased.

There have been many highlights in worship during our first year. The Dedication of the Bells service presided over by the Bishop of St Alban's was a particularly joyful occasion with a celebratory cake made by Daphne, and a glass of bubbly afterwards. A packed church for Christmas services and those at Easter were others, providing uplifting worship in our post pandemic world. It has been wonderful to see our lovely children and young families with us each Sunday, taking part in services and growing in faith as they thoroughly enjoy a Godly Play with their inspired leaders

Overall, it has been a privilege to work with such devoted and committed people; to have such willing and gifted volunteers; to share worship, fellowship and the opportunity to go deeper into God together. Thank you so much, Derwyn, clergy, warden team, Katharine and congregation together will all those I have forgotten to mention, for giving us your trust, love and support during our fledgling first year.

Claire Conquest and Gil Johnson

Church wardens