

Visitation Report

St Andrew Enfield 1818

Date: 4 September 2018

Fr John Hawkins - Archdeacon of Hampstead

Introduction

My thanks to the Revd Steve Griffiths, the Churchwardens and the PCC for their preparations for the visitation.

Meeting with the Incumbent the Revd Steve Griffiths

Steve has been in the parish for four years, and in the three years since the last visitation he has been very busy embedding the changes that he had to make when he first came to the parish, particularly around safeguarding and other compliance issues. As Steve has been exceptionally busy during this time he is very appreciative of the support of his Churchwardens and the PCC.

Steve did share the fact that the parishioners are genuinely concerned for him and for the level of work that he does, and he does work exceptionally hard. And at the time of the visitation life has been made particularly difficult by a spate of antisocial behaviour, which is concerning for many of our clergy as they minister in town centre environments like St Andrew's, and this becomes exhausting on a personal level. Also at the time of the visitation the previous arrangements for the caretaking of the hall had come to an end as the fixed term contract of the parish assistant David ended.

St Andrew's has become a flagship church in the Archdeaconry for youth work and youth ministry, and this has been very much one of the marks of Steve's energy and imagination, working in partnership with his wife Jo, using her experience in this field to head up the youth and community project MABS. This youth ministry and the youth minister that St Andrew's now is, is by definition a resource for the whole Archdeaconry, and I am very grateful for the energy and work with young people that flows from this. Recent evidence of this is the £12,5k raised and invested in The Haven, which is now a designated space for young people, and I was able to see this in its very early days.

The ministry that flows from St Andrew's under Steve's leadership has an impact locally as well as across the Diocese. The latest aspect of this are the plans for Ridley Hall to be able to offer lay training in the Diocese, which is starting in September 2018 and 25 students are enlisted for the training. This follows the creation of the St Edmund's Course for Christian Studies, for which great thanks must be given to Steve for setting this up, and although he has had to step back due to time pressures, it is because of him that the course continues to resource lay leadership.

Another Diocese-wide initiative has been the transitions research project, involving fifteen churches in a five-year study to look at the issues that face the Church of England in this Diocese

over its ministry to young people at Years 5 to 8 at school, transferring from primary to secondary education.

Another aspect of Steve's ministry has been to encourage home-grown initiatives, and this can be seen in the recent commissioning of nine lay ministers, all from within the congregation. This is a very important part of Steve's vision and work.

With all that is taking place I am conscious of the fact that Steve has worked exceptionally hard since he came to the parish. I would like to raise the issue that it is important that this does not come at a personal cost to him and his wife. The church building also requires significant investment and attention due to its historic nature, and with the imminent collapse of the tower they need to repair the parapets on the roof and carry out a number of significant pieces of work, not least some conversion work in the church to make it fit for the third millennium and outreach into the town centre. All of this is an extraordinary amount of work and I hope that Steve will feel adequately resourced in this, not just by his own congregation and community but also those who work around him and for him within the Diocese.

Steve has worked very hard to raise significant funds for the parish: £397k has been raised to date through his endeavours without a single jumble sale in sight. This is to be commended on and I wish to express my thanks to him for this achievement.

Meeting with the Churchwardens Paul Edwards, Victoria Wiggins and Patience Wilson

I was able to meet all three Churchwardens and we spoke about the inevitable dynamic between those who are able to run with Steve and catch his vision and those who find change unsettling. Their role as Churchwardens is to assist those who struggle with change as well as resourcing those who are excited by the vision of their priest.

We spoke about the Mosaic Group, which is a mother and toddler group in the church, run by external volunteers, which is a very good sign. We also talked about the Thursday morning service, and I have been able to witness a significant number of people attending this service, perhaps even more in some churches than their Sunday services.

We spoke about the outward-facing nature of church life under the leadership of Steve and the wide variety of music that he has brought to the church, not least through his own considerable ability and creativity as a musician.

We spoke of their joy in the fact that the daily office takes place in The Haven, which is a warm and inviting environment. The Haven is also used as a space for young people to drop in. We also spoke about the development of a monthly, informal music group that works alongside the more formal choir with its rehearsals and its Sunday performance within the liturgy.

I found all three wardens to be engaged, positive and supportive of life at St Andrew's.

Meeting with the PCC

I met with 16 members of the PCC and on asking them to describe life at St Andrew's with one or two words there was a great variety of answers, from 'hopeful', 'encouraging', 'joyful' and 'welcoming' to 'sustaining', 'a spiritual home', and also the word 'challenging' which was used by

more than one PCC member. Clearly there was pride within the PCC and the congregation about the community focus of the church and its vision, which was mentioned by one PCC member as an important aspect of their shared ministry.

Reflecting on changes within the last three years it is clear that the PCC sees the engagement with children, young people and their families as being in evidence, more services targeted for them being offered.

We spoke of the use of volunteers, which is a sign of the inclusivity of the ministry here – many are welcomed and their gifts are deployed. We looked at the challenges of the historic building and its fabric. The move to meet one particular challenge was universally supported by the parishioners with their Incumbent at the APCM. This will clearly require a significant amount of work in the years ahead, and alongside that keeping in mind the need to use the building to reach out to the town centre, not least as the town centre has been scheduled by the local authority for some considerable redevelopment.

Work with elders needs to be mentioned. The PCC was keen to see that this also continues to be at the heart of St Andrew's ministry, with a pastoral lay ministry team supporting the ordained ministry in providing home communion to elders and house bound.

The PCC is clearly proud of the fact that the congregation is very diverse and consist of different age groups, and I sensed the excitement around the beginning of the work of the Transitions Group which looks at the challenges of ministry for teenagers who are moving from primary to secondary education.

The PCC mentioned the Exodus Group, which meets on a Monday night and has an exciting agenda for young people, with anything between 20 and 50 young people attending. The PCC clearly understood the need to make sure that all their children's work needs to have at its heart the desire to disciple young people as well as to challenge them in their Christian faith.

One of the PCC members asked: 'How do we encourage volunteering to be seen as a mission pathway within the life of St Andrew's?'

Mission Action Plan

The Mission Action Plan is currently being redrafted for 2018. Its focus is a more welcoming, outward-focussed ministry, taking advantage of building's historic significance and its proximity to the town centre. Behind the exercise of creating a Mission Action Plan has been a thorough consultation with the congregation, resulting in 212 recommendations, which the PCC needs to bring down to two or three key focal points of activity which need to be prioritised in the years ahead.

Conclusion

St Andrew's is a very lively and engaged church and worshipping community. Clearly Steve's leadership has taken this parish forward considerably in the last three years, and this has been noted at Area and Diocesan level. The fact that St Andrew's is the Area Youth Minster is a

significant milestone, and I pray that we will continue to see the benefits of this for all our churches and learn some of its good practice, not least from the outcome of the research on the Transition Project.

Steve is clearly very much engaged in his ministry, and although now facing the challenge of needing to address the historic fabric of the church I pray that he will be adequately resourced and supported, not just by his own leadership but of the Diocese, particularly Parish Property Support and my role as Archdeacon.

If there is any criticism to be made, then I feel it incumbent as the Archdeacon to own up to the fact that there may have been times when I have not adequately supported Steve and his work, and I pray that this will change in the next three years ahead so that Steve does not feel in any way isolated or undermined by decisions made by those around him in the Edmonton Team.