

Fr Nigel's Annual Review 2019

A very big thank you, firstly, to all our Church officers especially our Standing Committee who, in the past year, have seriously shaped the PCC agendas and direction. As you will have read from Chris' 'Review of the Year' (p.3-4 purple doc.) the 'Growth Group' has already implemented a breath of fresh air to our thinking and development in several practical ways:

1. An additional weekly e-News prepared by Julia, with colourful additions and encouragement to join in with what we can do locally to grow God's kingdom
2. A new look at our Welcome ministry involving a wider cross-section of people and age groups. We are pleased to be guided by our new chief sidesman, Philip James.
3. The introduction of a new lay team to produce the Bible Society's 'Open the Book' for collective worship in both our CE Primary schools.
4. The growing of our 'Altogether Parish Eucharist' involving more of our congregation in its content and shape. The musical content also needs to keep 'all ages' on board (these are not a day off for choir adults!) – because we are a church **family** and all of us need to be seen to celebrate that. Sometimes we have to compromise 'excellence' for 'accessibility' and be open to a more relaxed way of making Eucharist, albeit only monthly at present.
5. Our pastoral and spiritual care has been recently extended by encouraging our Lay Assistants to take the Sacrament to the sick and housebound. This has been endorsed by Bishop Martin and is a great help to the clergy in all our Parishes.
6. Our house groups, however seasonal or temporary, are happening and enjoyed, but we still need to attract new-comers instead of being the same small, group 'of the converted'. How can we unlock that challenge in the coming year as people called to live out our Christian vocations in greater depth?

Regarding our 'Future Plans' (p.5 purple doc.), I hope and pray that the PCC will be proactive this year in not just ticking all 6 boxes, but really relish their content and 'Gospel' promises.

It was good to welcome back Natalie after maternity leave towards the end of last year and her new, updated and revised 'Children and families' booklet comes highly recommended – whatever age you are, or, feel! Please talk with her if you would like to help in any way with any particular activity or group.

In this past year we have lost a number of faithful parishioners who will be greatly missed and I want to mention especially Keith Olney (our former Head Sidesman) and Warwick Child (our former Chair of Friends of Mayfield Churchyard and for many more years, our sole Editor and Producer of our parish Magazine). Just these two 'souls' alone represent almost a 'century' of commitment and service to our Parish family. Please remember them in your prayers and give thanks for all their cheerful discipleship and 'caritas.'

Some present 'Farewells'...firstly to Karen Mack as our Safeguarding Officer, for more years than I can remember! These have been difficult and testing times for our Diocese in particular, and Karen has shown great resolve to keep us mindful of what we have had to do to improve our standards, training, and effectiveness. I commend her report to our new PCC. This Egg will be waiting on her doorstep for her return from holiday later tonight as a sign of our gratitude; we delighted that another Karen (Dines) is taking on the mantle while Mrs Mack will still be around to help with DBS checks and help whenever needed in the background.

The second 'bombshell' (for me at least) is to announce that Jan Meryon is stepping down as our Verger later in June. Again, she has done more years than I can remember, but she has been the wisest and kindest friend at nearly every wedding and funeral here and really will be a hard act to follow! I am sure Jan won't mind waiting for her present later in the year.

In terms of other 'Thank Yous' – inevitably we must thank Nicky in the Parish Office whom, I tell everyone now, is really 'in charge' and of course to my wife, Liz, whom I always try to say 'is not'! A big thank you to Di whose ministry is much appreciated and who helps all of us to know the joy of being a deacon to others.

I couldn't go without mentioning also the huge work of Tony Woodliffe and the Fabric Committee over this past (and present) challenging year – a year dominated by rain, leaks, and more rain! They have all put in hours of voluntary time and labour, and they all deserve our best applause...

I also want to thank the Nicholson Trustees who have been beavering away behind the scenes to plan for a new Chapel space for the new interior downstairs of the Cottage Hospice in Five Ashes. We think the opening will now be in the autumn but in terms of our service times and overall pattern of worship across the Parish, we will have to put our 'thinking caps' on. We will need to provide the right pastoral and spiritual support at the best times for as many different groups of people as possible. This will surely take time to evolve, so we will need to experiment later in the year without presuming or expecting we will all get what we want straight away! Instead let's be open to the best kind of 'change' – change which brings 'growth.'

I want to end with some old news that perhaps is not widely known in the Parish – that at Christmas I stood down as a Foundation Governor of both our CE schools in the 'Aspire Federation.' 19 years is quite long enough for anyone in that demanding role but it has been a great privilege working with 6 different Heads who have come and gone in that time. But the trouble is (I hope this makes you smile) a Parishioner said to me only days ago 'Well you have been here quite a long time as our Parish Priest...You must be thinking of retiring soon! Well I can only answer feebly: 'Fair point, mea culpa!'

The future, mine and yours, is in the Lord's hands so let us pray that our future is bright, whatever befalls.