

A few words from the Vicar

The PCC has some weighty matters on its plate at the moment.

Firstly, there is mission. We spent a huge chunk of 2013 developing a Mission Strategy for our church. After months of prayer and discussion, the PCC set some priorities for mission and agreed some deliverables (with deadlines) to go with them. At its heart the strategy is about building upon our strengths as a traditional C of E parish church and, as we serve the community and reach out to all in God's love, to grow the Church.

And growth in this context is not just about numerical growth but is also about growing in faith.

I am pleased to say that we have made a good start and we did grow numerically during 2013. However, that doesn't mean to say we can afford to sit back and do nothing. The mission of the Church is ongoing and in its broad sense includes all that we are called and 'sent' to do as Christians. According to the Five Marks of Mission adopted by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1990, mission includes:

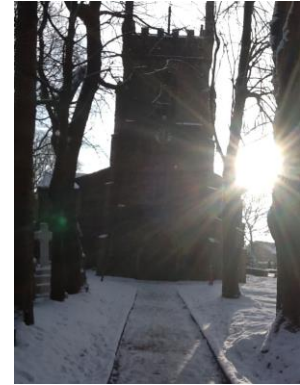
- Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom;
- Teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers;
- Responding to human need by loving service;
- Seeking to transform unjust structures of society
- Striving to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

So, we have a lot to do! Indeed, the job is never done until Jesus returns (yes, as I write, it is still Advent).

This year we will continue to implement the strategy and monitor progress against plan. It would be naïve (the height of arrogance even) if we claimed to have got everything in the strategy right. Indeed, at its heart, the mission of the Church isn't about plans and targets but discovering what God is already up to in the world and joining in! Plans and targets are merely a necessary aid for getting on with the job. Therefore, as some deliverables are achieved, as we discover what works and what doesn't, what is feasible and what isn't and, above all as God surprises us with new things, we will modify the plan and carry on.

What else is going on?

Well, following a meeting with Archdeacon David Bailey in late October, the November PCC was dominated by a discussion about possibilities for the future provision of stipendiary oversight in this parish. The background to the discussion is the projected decline in the number of stipendiary clergy available for allocation to parishes.



Sooner or later it seems likely that this parish (like many others) will be called upon to share a vicar with one or more neighbouring parishes. There are no concrete proposals on the table at the moment, just possibilities. David has proposed we consider a 'West Bury' option whereby we would be linked with St Anne Tottington, Christ Church Walshaw, St Stephen Elton and Kirklees Valley (i.e. All Saints Elton and St James Woolfold). This would necessitate our transferring to Bury Deanery.

The PCC, however, has expressed a preference for a 'Radcliffe' option. This is about building upon existing relationships with St Mary and St Thomas & St John but, in particular, with St Andrew with whom we share an extensive common boundary. Whilst acknowledging the differences in churchmanship/style between St Andrew's and ourselves, the PCC felt this need not be a showstopper. Indeed, a close partnership could be beneficial to both churches as it might open up mission opportunities in the Bradley Fold area.

However, we don't know whether a St Andrew's link is feasible so the West Bury option is 'Plan B'.

And if all that isn't enough, some significant building work is looming plus well, like God's love, the work of a PCC is never ending!

I don't know about you but I'm not very good at keeping New Year's resolutions, so I don't normally bother. Nonetheless, I'd like to invite you to join me in making one special New Year's resolution and it's this; throughout this year to thank God for the work undertaken by the Churchwardens and all other members of the PCC and to hold them in our daily prayers.

Every Blessing

Dave