

The Church: History, Heritage and Legacy

Summary of sermon preached by Rev Canon Jo Loveridge 28th April 2019

Acts 5.27-32. Peter defends himself before the High Priest; he follows God who raised up Jesus

John 20.19-31. Jesus appears in the upper room and dispels Thomas' doubts

These readings are so apposite that it seemed right to make this sermon the Vicar's Report for 2018-19.

The very beginnings of the Church

The Gospel story is the first meeting of the disciples after the Crucifixion. They were so afraid that they locked themselves in. Jesus appears saying "Peace be with you", "As the Father sent me so I send you". Thomas, who was not there, needs convincing in the form of physical proof, which he gets a week later.

The reading from Acts is rather later; by now all of Jerusalem is abuzz as the disciples had 'filled Jerusalem with this teaching'. Pressed, Peter says "We are witnesses" that Christ has freed us from our sins and brought the Kingdom of God – life in all its fullness.

From the very beginning the church was called to witness God's love to the world,

Moving on in history

Some 650 years later, in Anglo-Saxon times the people of Hertford have built a church here, which was the venue for the Synod of Hertford in 673 – trying to establish the correct date of Easter.

The building itself was witness to God's love as well as a place for communal worship. A new church of clunch and flint was built circa 918 and appears in the Domesday Book. Between them, these buildings served the people well for towards 400 years.

The 10th century church was then extensively remodelled (or completely

rebuilt) in the new 'medieval' style in the shape of a cross with a tower.

As you know this building was burnt down and between 1893-5 the present All Saints was built. This building, like its predecessors has a nave with a roof in the shape of an upturned boat. 'Navis' is the Latin for boat – so we are all in the boat of Christ!

Each generation has added to the church as part of their witness to the love of God, to worship together and to further God's kingdom. This includes the Memorial Chapel in the 1930s, the conversion to electric lighting, and continues to the present day with the glass doors and welcoming area built in 2003 and the revised lighting in the Memorial Chapel and adjacent areas.

Thanks to all this wonderful history, we have inherited a legacy in the form of this amazing building, built on the firm and historic foundations of ancient tradition and faith. Of course, the Church is much more than a building – we are the 'Body of Christ' – and you can read more about that in the Vicars Viewpoint in the front of this magazine.

This Easter Sunday, we saw both 'churches' at work, beautiful flowers, art, a building lovingly maintained by our work party, glorious music and the whole family of the church young and old celebrating the Resurrection together.

What is our legacy to be?

Rather like those early disciples, we need go out and witness as we build a sustainable future for our church, one that allows everyone to grow in faith and fullness of life.

Sustainability

As Colin's report on page 5 shows, we need to raise more income – approximately £20,000 this year.

We are looking at how we might encourage more legacies and raise more through stewardship. We are also beginning to consider more radical alternatives as the annual gap continues to grow.

Succession planning

Many people put a lot of effort into All Saints, most have been doing so for many years and so we do need to think about who will take up these roles and challenges in the future – without people there is no church.

New people

Critical to this is that we make this somewhere where new people feel welcomed, valued and comfortable so that this becomes 'their' church.

The diocese has some thoughts on things we might consider such as the accessibility of our worship – how well does it resonate/flow? How do we remove the need to juggle the various books and papers and so on, making families feel an essential part of All Saints.

Serving the community and looking after the environment

We are already doing things that make it easier for people to 'come in' to our church through Hot Choc Stop on Mondays (aimed at school age children and parents/siblings) and the Dementia Group on Tuesdays (older generation).

We have also been looking at our environmental credentials and, only yesterday, Swift Boxes have been fitted to the church.

Make it personal

A young student wrote of her experiences of two different churches. In the first, she attended every Sunday. Everyone (including the minister) seemed to believe each visit was her first. She gave up after three months.

A little later, in doing a good turn for a neighbour the student discovered that the neighbour was a regular church-goer. At this church the student was carefully introduced to everyone and received a 'welcome' letter from the minister two days later. Intrigued she returned the following week to find many people greeting her by name. Needless to say, she stayed – and 12 years later was ordained priest.

In summary

Like those early disciples, we need to witness in faith and to work together in building our legacy for those who come after.

Vestry Meeting

Andrew Povey-Richards reported that our completely new roll included 151 names. Two electors had died and some 21 new names have been added.

Colin Bird and Julia Gough were re-elected as Churchwardens.

APCM

Vicar's Report

Jo gave an extensive and entertaining list of thanks – too many to include here beyond a general "Thank You" to everyone, especially those who do the many unglamorous, unseen and vital tasks that keep all the wheels turning.

Elections

The following were elected to the PCC:

Jonathan Bates, Andrew Belfield, Rosemary Bolton, Nerine Chalmers, Fiona Earle, Cheryl Massey, Wendell Newbold, Martin Penny, Mary Penny, Andrew Povey-Richards and Ann Stephens-Jones.

NB. Janet Bird and Dorothy Toyn are also members as they are our Deanery Synod Representatives (along with Colin Bird).

Sidespersons were also elected – a full list is available in the minutes of the meeting (and is the same as that from last year).

Finances

Highlights from Colin's presentation are shown below:

2018 INCOME – GENERAL FUND		
	2017	2018
Planned giving	48,544	49,254
Donations	20,686	12,685
Income tax	16,764	18,251
Baptisms weddings and funeral fees	9,998	7,111
Charity collections	4,031	6,667
St John's Hall	7,000	7,000
Fundraising	9,253	16,096
Investment income	696	737
	£116,972	£117,801

2017 EXPENDITURE – GENERAL FUND		
	2017	2018
Parish share	69,634	72,485
Other charitable donations	4,050	6,667
Utilities	10,792	8,851
Insurance	6,793	6,997
Music	13,562	13,187
Other service costs	2,258	5,770
Administration	8,608	8,393
	£115,697	£122,350

2018 FINANCIAL OUTCOME – GENERAL FUND		
	2017	2018
Income	116,972	117,801
Expenditure	(115,697)	(122,350)
MDF re Soundbites	3,500	3,500
Transfer to Fabric Fund	(2,500)	
Transfer to Organ Fund	(1,500)	
Net surplus/(deficiency)	775	(1,049)
General Fund at beginning of year	34,140	34,915
General Fund at 31 December	34,915	33,866

After paying outstanding bills, and allowing for anticipated grants, our Fabric Fund will have circa £12,500 and the Organ Fund £9,000. These are far too low.

2019 GENERAL FUND BUDGET		
	Budget	Budget
QUARTER TO 31 MARCH 2019		
Income	116,972	117,801
Expenditure	(115,697)	(122,350)
MDF re Soundbites	3,500	3,500
Transfer to Fabric Fund	(2,500)	
Transfer to Organ Fund	(1,500)	
Net surplus/(deficiency)	775	(1,049)
General Fund at beginning of year	34,140	34,915
General Fund at 31 December	34,915	33,866

In summary, like last year:

- We are only paying our way by launching Q4 appeals

- We are heavily reliant on too few people making sizeable donations
- We do not have sufficient money in our Fabric Fund to pay for any material works
- Our Organ Fund is still woefully short of what is needed to keep the organ in good repair
- Sustainability – we now have to get serious!

The full presentation is available at allsaintshertford.org/reports/2019/2018finance.pdf

Geoffrey Rice was elected as our Independent Examiner for 2019-20.

Reports

Copies of all the reports received are in a blue folder at the back of church or at www.allsaintshertford.org/apcm.php

Churchwardens Report

Over the last year the Vestry Roof has been fully repaired, the Reredos repaired and cleaned and Roof Alarms fitted.

The last of these has increased our Insurance Cover for the lead roofs from £7,500 to £16.1 million – and the premium has slightly reduced too.

An appeal has been launched to undertake repair work on our 115 year old bells. The bell ringers are leading this effort.

