

# Liverpool Parish Church Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2018

## Rector's Report

Any organization needs to balance being pro-active and reactive, and St Nick's is no different. Some of our activities are brought to us – requests for special services, or room bookings and other partnerships – and other activities need to be generated by us, and we have plenty of those as well. The question which must link all these activities is what our agenda is, and how we fulfil it. We shall return to this question.

The last year has been as busy as any in the past. Significant projects, such as refurbishing the Alexandra Room, have enabled us to reach out to those around us in different ways. We have probably welcomed more people than ever into Church, and we have hosted exhibitions and concerts. Projects are a good way of measuring activity and ensuring that, as a body of people, we maintain our momentum. In the next few months we shall see the culmination of some long-standing projects: it is two and a half years since we first discussed siting a memorial to the MV Derbyshire in our Gardens, and in September this year we shall unveil not just a sculpture, but also an architect-designed landscaped area with new seating and the sculpture as a centre-piece. Another long-term project will be unveiled next month as the Liverpool Plinth project welcomes its first sculpture to overlook Chapel Street. We are not an art gallery, of course, so why are we doing this? It is both our contribution to the urban landscape, and also an exciting way of making people stop and reflect. The first sculpture on the Liverpool Plinth might be considered by some to be controversial – though probably not as much as the CND-emblazoned Christ on a Donkey which originally sat on the plinth in the 1970s – but it will provoke us to reflect on aspects of human experience and our responsibility towards our neighbours. This, surely, is part of our agenda.

Clearly our agenda must also be expressed in our worship – both in our two services every day, and also in baptisms and weddings, in civic services and in carol services, in commemorations and celebrations. Such a diverse output also includes activities such as our community choir and our engagement with social outreach projects such as the Micah Foodbank. The more we do, the more we must be able to articulate how our agenda is expressed through these activities.

If that is reflected in our corporate life, then it must also be the same in our individual lives. And although I shall now reflect on our clergy team and their activities, in fact we could say the same about each of our lives. We are blessed with a growing and committed clergy team here. Revd Michelle and Fr Bill are tremendous colleagues and I'd like to express my thanks to them. Fr Bill only joined us in June last year, but immediately blended into church life as if had always been here. Revd Michelle has given us stability and also incredible dedication as she holds together our significant wedding ministry. Both of them are also very good company, and that's more important to our community than anything else! But as well as their visible public ministry here, they both join me in having many other commitments in the City beyond their paid work. Michelle, for instance, is a trustee of YMCA Liverpool; Fr Bill has fingers in many pies across the City, including

strategic work with homelessness. And I am involved in a number of charities and companies, including chairing the board of the Albert Dock Charitable Foundation, and Mission in the Economy, providing workplace chaplaincy across the region. In addition this year, we have been joined by Louis Johnson as our Parish Assistant for three years as he trains for ordination. He has taken a full part in pastoral care of the congregation, and in working on projects and services. We are also blessed with other clergy who assist us, and in particular I should like to mention Fr Yazid Said, Fr Ray Hutchinson, and Fr David Emmott. We could not continue to pursue our agenda without them. In a couple of months' time we shall also welcome Fergus Butler-Gallie to our staff team following his ordination on 24 June.

By this stage you may be wondering how we should articulate our agenda. In 2015 the Parochial Church Council articulated this in three ways. They felt that our agenda was:

- to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ
- to contribute towards a just and fair society
- to promote the place of the Church serving communities

This summarizes what we do, but I don't think it should be that only one of these aims is met in a single project or output: in all that we do we should be working to this entire agenda all the time. When I look at the year ahead, we seem to have more going on than last year, but all bound up in this agenda. For example, we are working at the moment with the Oasis Trust on a project with schools marking the centenary of the end of the First World War. We shall primarily be working with nine schools who will all come here on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November to commemorate this significant event, but although the themes we shall explore will be around war and peace, the agenda we as a church are pursuing are around the proclamation of the Good News, the building of a fair and just society, and also serving our communities.

Our church community is strong and committed. Over the last year we have lost friends to death, old age, or moving away from the city. But we have also gained many friends: our electoral roll report earlier showed once again that new people have joined our fellowship. As our community increases, we also grow in our ability to deliver that agenda, but reactively and pro-actively. This is not our agenda, but God's agenda, and with his help we shall deliver it.

The Revd Dr Crispin Pailing  
Rector of Liverpool  
22<sup>nd</sup> April 2018