

Liverpool Parish Church Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2019

Rector's Report

At the start of every year we have virtually an empty Parish diary, and yet within weeks of the beginning of this year we were gearing up for one of our busiest years. The opportunities we have to serve those around us and to lead them in worship are seemingly limitless. I'd like to spend a few minutes of this Report talking about our civic ministry, which is more extensive than any non-cathedral church in the country. When I arrived here, I think there was a feeling within the regular congregation that the civic side had nothing to do with them, or even the church itself, but was a role fulfilled by the Rector. Conversely, I think it was sometimes felt that the Rector's civic role meant that he was not available to be a parish priest for the congregation. Neither of these is true, and I hope that in the last few years we have managed to break down the barriers which separated civic and parochial ministry.

Some of this progress has been made by improved communication. Particularly through the e-bulletin, I hope that more people know what is going on in the building between Sundays. In the last week alone Liverpool Parish Church has been at the heart of the City and Diocese. Last Saturday I brought forward a major motion to Diocesan Synod about blessing same-sex relationships; throughout the week I have been working on two civic events which will take place off-site: one for the Hillsborough anniversary, and one a civic celebration of faiths and cultures in Liverpool. On Tuesday I represented the Diocese at the Diocesan Interfaith Advisors Conference at Lambeth Palace. During the week we have hosted a photographs exhibition called 'Homeless Liverpool' before on Thursday running a major conference on homelessness in Liverpool with over 240 delegates. At the conclusion of the conference we unveiled a new sculpture in our church Gardens. And then on Friday we held the UK premiere of Alessandro Scarlatti's 'St John Passion', first written in 1679. And yet in the last week the clergy have also presided at twelve regular acts of worship, and taken Communion to people at home. We have had our second Lent House Eucharist, we have engaged with people wanting to get married or wanting their children baptized, and we have had all the normal attributes of parish life.

For Liverpool Parish Church that counts as a 'normal' week. It has not just been the work of the Rector, but instead the work of a large number of us – both lay and ordained. In previous years I have used this Report to talk more about our congregational life, but I'd like to encourage us all to take pride in our unique ministry, and I'd like to invite everyone to share in it. From promoting events through to volunteering at carol services, this is 'our' ministry.

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

I John 3.17-18

This is a text which should inspire all ministry, but it seems to me to be particularly relevant to our ministry. It makes a direct link from seeing need to acting upon it. In the midst of a busy City, we are well placed to demonstrate truth and action.

The Church, as we all know, is a collection of people rather than a building. Whilst we all have a share in ministry, I should like to thank my clerical colleagues. In the last year we have all been blessed – and often entertained – by the ministry of Fr Fergus, and we look forward to celebrating his ordination to the priesthood in June. The Revd Michelle and Fr Bill give us far more than many self-supporting clergy can offer and are an integral part of the strategic direction of the Parish. Our

honorary assistant clergy, Fr Ray and Fr Yazid, similarly play a full part in the liturgical and pastoral ministry of the Church, as do Fr David Emmott and other retired clergy.

But I should like to finish by paying particular tribute and saying thank you to Peter Summerfield, who is standing down as churchwarden after five and a half years. Not only has Peter been valiant in getting here jolly early on Sundays every week, and steadfast in his grumpiness when we have had three or more events in one day, he has been there whenever something is needed. Peter always calls in throughout the week, and has been the natural project-manager for so many ventures – most recently the Homeless Jesus sculpture. I am delighted to say that we won't lose his expertise: the PCC is creating a new role of Deputy Warden, so we won't be letting him go yet. Pauline Lewis continues as warden, deploying the pastoral gifts which I haven't got, and we are delighted that Eva has agreed to join the team. At the very least that will bring the excellence and pre-eminence of the Parish Church to the golf course as well.

But most of all I should like to thank all of you for making St Nick's such a happy place to pursue God's mission. For a Parish Church we are pleasingly un-parochial, and our practice confirms my belief that following Jesus Christ in Liverpool is a pilgrimage of service, but also of joy.

The Revd Canon Dr Crispin Pailing
Rector of Liverpool
7th April 2019