

St. Mary the Virgin Fryerning, 2009.

2009 has been a year of loss and adjustment as we look to continue to demonstrate the relevance of the mission of the church to the community here in Fryerning and beyond.

The death of our Churchwarden Alan Beach was a blow to the church. Alan had particularly been a tower of strength during the building work and was always very supportive of the aims of the ministry. Janet Collins took on the position as our new warden, to join with Judy Parmenter in these very important roles. The Benefice Reader Sue Elliott-Jones took on the mantle of P.C.C. Secretary. Members of the P.C.C. and the sidesman's rota have all had to be actively involved as illness and other issues have meant fewer people to cover important tasks.

Following the completion of the main building work in 2008, Michael Bysouth was commissioned to design and build furniture for the vestry and a cupboard for under the tower. He also restored a chair in the vestry. We have tried to raise money for the planned necessary refurbishment of the organ, but with limited success. The work is scheduled to begin in April 2010.

The dedicated members of the kneeler group continue their skilful activities, designing and making beautiful kneelers for use in the church. Thanks are also due to all those concerned with ensuring the flowers in the church are beautifully arranged to enhance the atmosphere for worship.

All organisational activity and building refurbishment are simply for ensuring the ministry happens at the church and on behalf of the church. There were some encouraging signs and developments during 2009. It is clearly true that the church still draws people for important services and commemorations. The Nine Lessons and Carols service, with a splendid choir and once again organised by Derek Bevan, was the highest attended service of the year with one hundred and eleven people in the

building. Refreshments were served after the service and over seventy people were still socialising an hour later. The Remembrance service, with a large contingent from the Explorer Scouts and representatives from the Church School and the Parish Council, had ninety eight people in attendance. The lively Crib service on Christmas Eve had a congregation of sixty five adults and thirty children. The Easter morning service also topped fifty in attendance, as did the Family service on December 27<sup>th</sup>. The Family service for Harvest was just over forty people, as was the Christingle. Refreshments are now usually served after the Family service and this has clearly helped develop a sense of community.

Our traditional services have a faithful following, but a high age profile and over the years these have been very difficult to attract new and younger people to attend. The Family service also has a loyal following, but many of those who attend come just monthly. In an effort to address these realities, a Common Worship Morning Prayer service was introduced in June. This still leaves five Book of Common Prayer services out of seven regular services held each month. Services have been taken by Revd. Sue Cruse, Revd. Miranda Seaman, Derek Bevan, Sue Elliott-Jones and myself. Derek has also continued his work with the choir and provided special items for main festivals. Thanks are due to all those who act as sidesmen and for John Moore-Bridger for playing the organ at the majority of the services and to Richard Overill for playing at the Family service. Claire Renowden has also played at some of the occasional offices.

Eight baptism services were held during the year. Thanks are due in particular to Barbara Hallows for assisting at these occasions that are always valued by families. We also had five weddings, but only one couple live within the parish. The reality is that many who look to the church as venues for these services do not live within the parish. Being adjacent to the municipal cemetery for the civic parish of Ingatestone and Fryerning, the

church will always have a function as a venue for funeral services. During 2009 we hosted twelve funerals. Thanks are particularly due to Sheila Evill and Barbara Huxtable for acting as vergers at both weddings and funerals.

The Spring Lunch, Father's Day Barbeque and the Christmas Bazaar provide both very important social occasions and also much needed fundraising. We also had a very successful concert with cellist Orlando Joplin. This demonstrated that with the new facilities in the church building, it is a suitable venue for small concerts. Thanks are due to Fay Cherry and all members of the fundraising committee for their work.

The church hosted an ecumenical service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January where Revd. Kate Hackett, a United Reformed Churches minister preached. Janet Collins and Barbara Hallows have represented the church at Deanery level and Barbara and I as members of the Diocesan Synod. This has enabled us to have a wider appreciation of the difficulties faced in sustaining ministry throughout the Diocese of Chelmsford.

We have looked beyond our own parochial concerns and have generously supported Harvest for the Hungry, with over thirty boxes of basic food items being brought to our harvest service. Other items were taken to Homestart. The Revd. Sue Cruse led the self-funding delivery team representing the charity that came entirely from our benefice, that went to Bulgaria in November. As a church we also supported the Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Appeal.

2009 has been a year when it has become more apparent that many key members in the church should be in the position to increasingly share responsibility with younger members. However, the age profile of the church family means this is only of limited possibility. As we face the future, we need to

acknowledge the reality of our situation and prayerfully consider how best to address the challenging issues concerning the future.

Revd. Patrick Sherring,  
Rector of Ingatestone and Fryerning.