

Annual report for APCM 28th March 2009.

2008 has been a year when we have consolidated our growth and development from previous years, together with undertaking the most significant improvements in the church building for many years. These realities reflect on the industry and dedication of the many people that constitute this church here in the village, serving both God and the local community.

The year began with considerations of how to react to the huge congregation at the 2007 Christmas Eve Crib service. The 2008 attendance at the two Crib services exceeded the numbers. 2007 had seen increases of 18% in regular attendance and this growth was to be continued in 2008, with further 8%. New people bring with them different perspectives and opportunities. Revd. Miranda Seaman officially joined our benefice team in February. Christiana Asinugo joined us in November for four months on placement from the North Thames Ministerial Training Course. Sue Elliott-Jones, a Reader, moved into the village and worshipped regularly with us. All three of them added to the worship experiences that we have been able to offer. Chris Denton in particular, and her team of Sunday Club leaders have worked very hard throughout the year. They have been supplemented by a new group of teachers, though there is still room for others to be involved.. Elise Gennings has taken on the significant task of keeping in contact with those who have had their children baptised at the church. Many other people have also increased their involvement with the church and also wanted to grow in the faith and learn more about God's love. In October we hosted the Deanery Confirmation service with people coming from six other churches to join our seven candidates. A group from our candidates have continued to meet with Sue Cruse to follow a course, *Getting to know the Bible*. The number of people taking the New Daylights Bible reading notes continues to grow and the Seekers group that meets to talk about these notes meets monthly. In January 2009 we began a new initiative, *Changing Lives for Good*. Running this DVD

presentation and discussion group after the main service on the second Sunday of the month has demonstrated the desire for people to wish to apply their faith beyond Sunday worship.

Fundraising efforts have continued throughout the year with a number of events, including one at Ingatestone Hall. These events not only raise funds but help us to grow together as a community and also serve our wider community. Our thanks go to all the Fundraising Committee, and particularly to Jill Williams for her work with the Ingatestone Hall event. Attempts at raising money from outside agencies have proved mainly fruitless. In order to pay for the significant work needed in the church building, the P.C.C. felt it appropriate for us to hold a Gift Day on Easter Saturday, our first such event for many years. This was very successful, and with funds already in hand, enabled us to undertake the installation of the new heating and lighting systems. These have greatly enhanced the sense of welcome and comfort in the building. The new lights in particular have emphasised the need for a general re-decoration in the main body of the church. We also have plans to improve the Petre Chapel so it can be used for a number of purposes. Fundraising efforts and Gift Days will continue towards these goals. While we focus on these improvements, we need to also remember our regular giving and commitments towards the ministry locally and in the Diocese.

It has been very heart-warming to see how our church has supported international issues. Sheila Walters has continued in her efforts towards our support of projects in Kenya. Marie Davison co-ordinated our shoebox appeal for Operation Christmas Child which collected over eighty five shoe boxes. We saw great generosity from our community for the Harvest for the Hungry appeal for food for Bulgaria. Over one hundred boxes of basic food items were collected on behalf of our church, Fryerning Church and the school. Tables were also sent from the school and the Infant's School. Sue and I were fortunate enough to travel to Bulgaria in November, funding

ourselves to be part of the delivery team. We certainly saw the real needs amongst the people. The trip was covered by the local media, with reports in a number of newspapers including *The East Anglian Daily Times* and *The Month*, the monthly newspaper of Chelmsford Diocese.

Worship is the main focus of our activity and continues to be well served by Ian Cruse. The choice of hymns is always thoughtful and compliments the Scripture readings. His work with the choir and their singing adds to our general worship experiences. Gerry Precott and all those who assist with Communion and intercessions also display that the services involve many people. Our Family services have been well supported by the Brownies and it has been good to welcome the Beavers and Cubs. The Harvest service was particularly well attended. Revd. Sue Cruse led our Remembrance Day service, which has become the main focus for the community and was attended by civic representatives. Plans are in place that in 2009 we will hold the service for the installation of the new Major of Brentwood. We also hosted the annual Churches Together New Year's Eve service which had a congregation in three figures. Pat Coleman and her team of arrangers who work behind the scenes with the flowers add to the pleasant atmosphere in church. Sue Prescott and the Welcome Team ensure that all those who attend worship are greeted with a smile and provided with all they need.

2008 saw sixteen baptisms services, fourteen of which were for those aged under one year. A number of these came through our EMUs group, which continues to be strong on Friday mornings. Sue Cruse is ably assisted by a dedicated team of helpers. The Emus service on the first Monday afternoon each month is a worship experience where those with very young children feel relaxed.

We had eight weddings in the church during the year and one blessing service. We clearly benefited from the time when the

building work at Fryerning meant that these services could not be held at that church. The same is true concerning the holding of ten funeral services. It continues to be difficult to convince the wider community that the church is the obvious setting for a service for a person from the local community, irrespective of their history of church attendance.

We continue to play a significant part in the local Churches Together, being well represented at the Lent Course and on the Good Friday Walk of Witness. Our Deanery Synod representatives are Mark Jobin, Martin Taylor and Marie Davison. Mark also represents us on the Deanery Standing Committee. In January 2009 we hosted the Deanery Synod at the Church of England Junior School.

Our School Governors play an important part in the life of the school. I take a weekly assembly at the school and Phil Manterfield always makes anyone associated with the churches very welcome. The children visited the church for their Easter, Leavers and Harvest celebrations. Together with Fryerning Church, we paid for gifts of Youth Bibles to all Year 6 leavers. The year 2 class from the Infant's School also visited for an afternoon about the work of the church.

We are blessed with the people who are part of our church community. Allen Matthews and Michael Allen continue to act with dedication in their capacity as Churchwardens. Martin Taylor undertakes the task of Treasurer with the necessary efficiency. Richard Hollox produces exemplary minutes as our P.C.C. Secretary. All our P.C.C. members bring positive energy to our monthly meetings. Margaret Taylor, Pat Clark and Teresa Cattell-Hollox serve us greatly with their work on the Towers, as does Jill Williams who organises the advertising and Betty Weaver and the large number of distributors. The Towers is now for sale in Avrohurst.

It is a great blessing that we have developed an ethos of so many people being involved with our ministry, all playing their part and seeing it as a collective responsibility. However, particular appreciation needs to be given to Revd. Sue Cruse. During April, May and June I was fortunate enough to be on sabbatical after eleven years of ordained ministry. I was confident that all would be well under the leadership of Sue. We have all seen her grow from being an ordinand, through her curacy into her enhanced role now as Associate Minister. The service in November only confirmed all that we already appreciated about her ministry. It was highly appropriate that on behalf of the wider community a number of representatives spoke on all that Sue continues to give in her service to God both with us, as Chaplain to the North Thames Ministerial Training Course, and as a committee member for Harvest Plus.

We can thank God for his many blessings to us throughout 2008. This was designated as a year of Hope. We can see it as a year for which to be thankful.

Patrick Sherring.