

Nicki's AGM Report

given in place of a sermon on 10th December 2017

I think the first thing I need to do in my first AGM report is thank you for your very warm welcome to St. Cuthbert's, with a special thanks to all those who worked so hard leading up to my arrival, sorting the rectory and organising my institution. It really is much appreciated and I have certainly felt at home since the day I arrived. My thanks go to both Bob's and Gavin for all they do regarding property and health and safety.

I appreciate this last year may have been a hard one for you and, certain people in particular, as you journeyed through the vacancy and also said 'goodbye' to your curate Sarah. I know there has been a lot of hard work going on in the background to keep the church running from day to day. I would like to thank Sarah for her help in my first week here and wish her every blessing in Falkirk.

So, what have I learnt in the last six months?

You all care, and St. Cuthbert's means a lot to you.

I have witnessed a loving, caring community who truly love God. This is evidenced in worship and music, Sunday School, how beautifully the church is decorated with flowers, Shalom, St. Raphael's, Brew & Blether, Open Forum, Good Grief Group, hospitality, Eco- congregation, Phoenix group, looking after the church gardens, participation in organisations outside of church, Christian Aid, the Verandah Club, Food Bank, support of refugees, Leprosy Mission, work with the elderly, website maintenance, keeping your bodies fit with badminton - the list goes on and on, and all the reports are in the AGM booklet. I thank you all for everything that you do in living the Gospel in and outside our church building.

I would like to add a personal thanks to Donald for all he does in organising the choir and organists for each service. He does so much more behind the scenes and, sadly for me, has decided to retire from his role at the end of January. However, I know he has done this for many years, so I thank him for the short time he has worked with me and wish him well in his retirement. Thankfully, we will still see him singing in the choir. It is lovely to have a choir to help lead worship and I thank you all for your support and for putting up with my

requests for refreshments following some services, which Carol has arranged without complaining. Aren't we blessed to have so many gifted organists, my thanks go to Julian, Andrew and Philip – and I hope Philip is recovering well following his hip operation on Monday.

I have learnt that St. Cuthbert's is a very privileged church in having a beautiful building and gardens with few issues, a lovely rectory with a few more issues and a bank balance that looks very healthy. However, I must confess that I was very surprised to learn from a diocesan report that we are, in fact, in the bottom third in the table of giving within the diocese. We really need to try to change this.

I believe that you may be a victim of your own success. The hall rentals are booming and boosts the bank balance, but if it wasn't for the hall, we do not receive enough money from within the congregation annually to actually fund a rector. I certainly don't like to speak about money but I ask you all to prayerfully consider your giving and, if you can, increase it. Don't forget to gift aid if you can. I would also ask you to consider St. Cuthbert's in your will. I would like to thank Martin for his support and guidance and all the work he does looking after our finances.

I have learnt that there is a great amount of work being carried out by loyal volunteers. Churches would not survive without volunteers and I thank you all for what you do.

However, I have heard that some of you are getting tired in your roles and need releasing from some of your duties, so that you can serve and worship God with joy. I believe that part of that work could be taken on by a part-time paid administrator, giving volunteers more time and energy to focus on what God is calling them to do. I am in the process of putting a proposal together to take to the vestry in December, which has been discussed with Martin and Elspeth. I would like to thank Elspeth for the many years she has given in producing and printing many things to assist in the life, work and mission of St. Cuthbert's.

I have learnt that you care deeply for the elderly, so much so, you have a paid worker for the elderly. I have spent a lot of time with Mary, who I knew before I arrived. Did you know that she has been here for 20 years? She has so much experience, expertise and love but even Mary can't do it all. I am in the

process of putting together a pastoral visiting team to assist (and not replace) both me and Mary in visiting the sick and housebound.

I have learnt that we have a wonderful group of enthusiastic youngsters who will do anything you ask of them. They are led by an even more enthusiastic leader in Megan Emmerson, who I truly can't thank enough for her loyalty and commitment. I also thank her band of helpers – you know who you are. The older young people have participated in Alpha Youth with pizzas over the past couple of months, and they are not afraid to challenge. We have also been blessed to see so many babies in church lately; congratulations to all the new parents and grandparents.

I have learnt you have a loyal and committed group (in no particular order) of worship leaders, readers, intercessors, welcomers, flower arrangers, gardeners, sacristans, sound controllers, group leaders, hospitality arrangers, an archivist, a producer of service sheets etc. etc I am amazed by the amount that goes on here and I would like to thank Margaret Holmes and her helpers for all they do in arranging our social life, which we enjoy so much.

I have learnt that some of you feel quite broken by the number of vacancies you have endured over recent years and need to be shown love and compassion. I am trying hard to show and share that and have visited a number of you in your homes. It will take me a while to get around to all of you, so please be patient.

I have learnt a lot more than I have written but I know you want to get out of here today. So, what about the future:

We begin with a vestry training day in January, as we will have a number of new members. This will be focussed on Mission.

During Lent, Annie Naish, the bishop's enabler of mission, will lead us for six weeks on an abridged mission shaped into course. I hope many of you will be able to attend. Joan and I attended this course in November and December and feel it will benefit St. Cuthbert's.

We will be preparing for the arrival of a third year ordinand in Advent of 2018.

We will be putting together an application to the bishop for a curate beginning in the autumn of 2019.

We need to look at ways of increasing our giving.

I will be making a proposal for a part-time administrator.

We will be looking for more people to assist in the running of the Sunday School / youth events.

We need more help in the sacristy.

We need more ministrants / ministers of the word.

..... more readers and intercessors, sound people, welcomers

In fact, we need more of lots to fill our rotas and give the regulars a break, and I ask you to prayerfully consider where you feel you belong within the jigsaw that is St. Cuthbert's and, if you feel you can help, please speak to me, the people's warden or the rector's warden.

Speaking of those two vital roles, I would like to thank Jane and Joan for all they did during the vacancy and especially Joan for all she has done in supporting me since arrival and for continuing to produce the Sign while we have been without an editor. It really is much appreciated.

During the meeting after the 10.30 service, I will be giving a very short PowerPoint presentation, hopefully showing all that St. Cuthbert's does.

Our Gospel reading this morning was the beginning of Mark's Gospel. Six months in, we are still at the beginning of our journey together.

I believe we have to thank God for our differences and celebrate them. We have to communicate, we have to love and we have to pray. We have to let people outside our doors know about Jesus and why we follow him. If we don't tell them, who will?

I would like to end by quoting the Archbishop of Canterbury, just before his consecration:

"I am utterly optimistic about the future. We will certainly get things wrong but the grace of God is far greater than our biggest failures. We will also certainly get much right, and have already done so."

I thank you all.

Amen.