Chaplain’s AGM Report 2009

As God said, I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

2 Corinthians 6. 16

The AGM gives us an opportunity to look back on the previous year and say thank you for all those who have contributed to the life of our church and its community. I want to add my thanks to those already expressed by the churchwardens in their report and to offer my heartfelt thanks to them for their support.

We are a church which enjoys the benefits and blessings of a mainly, but not exclusively, young community. Numbers attending worship and wider church based activities remain encouragingly consistent, but God’s Kingdom always has room for more people even if that means squashing six into a pew and not four! The ministry of hospitality and welcome extends beyond Sunday services and there was a generous response to the call for beds for Graham Buckle, an Anglican priest from London, and his team for their annual retreat to plan the year ahead. Holy Trinity also welcomed as locum Michael Roberts, with his wife Su, who not only took the Sunday services but also lovingly tended the garden. He has agreed to come again this Summer.

Nurture of children is high on the list of priorities but everyone, regardless of age, is called to a deeper faith in God. I wish to thank all those who are involved in Children and Young People’s Sunday Groups and those leading house and prayer groups. We had some excellent teaching at Houlgate by Jonathan Lamb who led us through part of Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians. Lance Pierson returned to give a riveting dramatic rendition of St Mark’s Gospel to an all age audience, some of whom were moved to tears. The book stall still has copies of the commentary on St Mark’s Gospel, and over a hundred copies of Love Life, Live Lent have been sold. The children’s nativity play, the Miracle Plays with adults and teenagers, Posada, these and all the above mentioned are ways in which we try to encourage people to walk the way of faith.

First Communion, Confirmation and Jon and Millie’s wedding were special celebrations, not only for the individuals and their families, but for the whole church. Many thanks to those involved in all the hard work and preparation that such events demand. Another highlight for me was attending the ordination in Strasbourg of John Moore to the diaconate. I was John’s academic tutor during his theological studies. Having completed my stint as tutor for John, I was presented with a challenge by the local ecumenical group to give an evaluation of the Anglican Communion in the light of the Lambeth Conference of 2008 – in French!

Dan Meyer only stayed with us a short time as youth worker. This very able and likeable young man got on well not just with the youth but with people of all ages and it was a great sadness for us that he returned to England for personal reasons. We wish him well for the future.
We are able to cover our expenses and to support missionary giving and community outreach projects and we pray that we may continue to be a people of generosity, as shown in the Harvest Offering where the best was offered to God and not the dregs of the kitchen cupboard:

    do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbour. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so,

from Deuteronomy 15

Church is not just another activity competing for our attention and asking for our involvement. Rather it is people gathering in the name of, and on account of, a saving God. It is about a community rejoicing that this God saves us from sin and death for love and life. We are a people among whom and for whom God rules; that’s what the Kingdom of God is about. And the God who gives himself to us in Jesus, calls us in turn to give ourselves to the world. Christians are nurtured and formed in community gathered around the word and sacraments, in an atmosphere of acceptance, where failure is not a disaster. As one person remarked recently, ‘Family services are so forgiving’. So it should be in all worship. We hear God’s word and receive the sacraments; we pray in response; we are reconciled to God (assured of his forgiveness); we are blessed; and in turn we are to be a blessing not just to each other but to the world.

The challenge for this coming year is how can we be a blessing to each other at Holy Trinity and in the world.

Trevor Whitfield