

Rector's Report General Vestry Meeting Aug. 2020

We meet in strange times this morning as is evident from our surroundings, The 'Easter Vestry', as it is almost universally known, on an August morning. It is wise to remind ourselves today we meet to review our affairs for 2019, and not this year that is more than halfway over.

That year was disturbed enough in the parish, especially the second half when we realised the serious state of the plasterwork in St Andrew's Church, and we owe a special debt of gratitude to our financial and glebe teams, and in particular to our Glebewarden, Ian Watkins, whose commitment to this was absolutely monumental, especially when we consider that he was also involved in the refurbishing of the Old School House and that all his work is undertaken voluntarily alongside his family and business commitments. I also pay tribute to our Hon Treasurer and his team for the manner in which they faced the challenges of the year under review, and have continued to do so in the subsequent unexpected challenges we have faced subsequently, and also use this time to say a heartfelt 'thank you' to Ken McAllister, who holds no office but managed the long awaited project to remortar the tower in St Doulagh's, and has since managed the relighting of the area around the well to improve security.

Another parishioner who deserves our heartfelt thanks is Anne Taplin, our Parish Administrator. For a number of reasons 2019 has not been an easy year for her, but Anne's dedication to the parish is a principal cause as to why the Parish Centre has been a contributor to parish funds to an extent undreamt of when it was built in 2005.

The churchwardens had a busy year with unexpected challenges in St Andrew's, and I thank them for their dedication and initiatives. I would record in this report the contribution of my churchwarden, Reet Dreimanis, on the birth of her daughter, Lara, early this year. It is the first time that I have been able to congratulate any of our Churchwardens for increasing the size of the parish by personal effort while in office. Despite everything, Reet has been exemplary in her duties and has quickly become an essential part of St Doulagh's, and I also thank Jennifer Young, ably assisted by John for the enormous contribution they have made in St Doulagh's, and to Graeme Tarbox and Linda Barry for the cheerful way they have organised everything in St Andrew's.

Our lay readers, have been active during the year under review, and I have also received support when needed from Rev Ken Sherwood and Rev Kingsley Long, and while Jamie Heffelfinger is no longer with us, he continued to give us great support with Messy Church and a team has been set up to continue this when it is feasible to do so, as well as the Toddler Service. The choir have also been faithful in as much as circumstances allow: their year was brought to a close by the work in St Andrew's, and when this was complete, it was but a fortnight before the coronavirus disruption. I thank Rodney for his work with the choir and also for his maintenance of our temperamental organ: we may not appreciate how much it would cost to maintain without the hard work of Rodney and his wife, Sue.

Many favourable comments are often made by locals and visitors about the state of the grounds in both churches, and I would like to mention the hard work of Tommy Delaney and his son Ruairi for the hard work over and beyond what they are paid to do. I would suggest that you take an opportunity to wander down the Churchyard and look at the flowers and shrubs planted along the northern boundary of the new part of the Churchyard, transforming a very neglected area into a place of hope and life.

Olive Haynes has maintained and encouraged the life of the Mothers' Union, and the Table Tennis Club and Bowls club continued their activity during the year, and we also hosted the Girls' Brigade and I say thank you to Nadine Watters, their Captain for all that she had done for the Company since she took over as Captain a number of years ago.

The current coronavirus pandemic is a matter on its own, and I hope that by next year's General Vestry meeting, to be held hopefully next April, we will be able to say we have got through the worst crisis the parish and our country have ever faced. I would, however, thank all those who volunteered to supervise and assist the resumption of worship in our churches. This team was led by the seemingly boundless energy and leadership of Emer Bryan and Anne Winslow-O'Dea. There is still a long way to go but by last Sunday we have restored the Wednesday and 8am Eucharists, and services are being held on Sundays at 10am and 1130am. Sadly, we are still not allowed to sing and this is the main source of moans I have received! There are also problems with restrictions on use of rooms which stand in the way of evening and children's worship, and these imposed restrictions have also severely restricted the use of the Parish Centre.

But finally, let us not forget that tonight is not just about reviewing a calendar year in the life of the parish. It is also about electing officers for the future, not just a Select Vestry and a clutch of wardens, but also this year Nominators and Synods persons. There are posts of major responsibility and need people who will between them be representative of the parish and who will work together prayerfully for the good of the parish and the wider church. This is a time of great change and challenge in every aspect of social life, but let us avoid the temptation to despair at the upset caused to so many things which we have come to see as part of the central fabric of society. God calls us, each and everyone, to reach out with the message of his love to all those who are distracted and despairing. A society that has taken it for granted that things will always get better in terms of material wealth and world peace will listen afresh to the message of Christ as long as we do pickle it in aspic, but present it refreshed and relevant