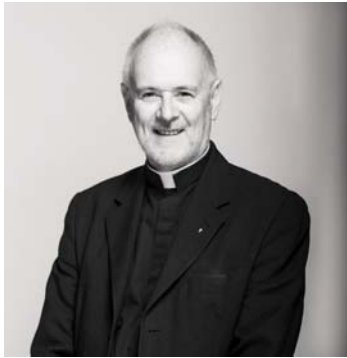


A few words from the Vicarage ...



These last few weeks have been rather hectic, to say the least! The Easter *Extravaganza* was followed closely by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on Palm Sunday; then a very full programme for Holy Week and Easter - all of which, I hope, were found to be truly uplifting experiences. Many thanks to all who worked so hard to make the *Extravaganza* such a success - and Bobby Ball was quite inspirational in his opening of this event. Despite the snow, the cancellation of Bouncy Castle and donkeys, it was a truly grand afternoon - thanks to all involved.

It was good to see so many at the APCM - this is such an important date in our calendar as we deal with the business of running St Paul's. This is the occasion when we reflect upon the past year and lay plans down for the ensuing year - we also say farewell to those who have served us well on PCC whose term of office has ended - so Rhona Robinson has finished her term (not her first, it has to be said) and we are grateful for all that she has done on PCC.

We also thank John McIntyre for his valiant services as churchwarden - though I am delighted that he remains on PCC for the time being. I am also delighted that Sheila Swindells was re-elected as churchwarden and has been joined by Keith Turner who will take over the reins (or wand!) as from the Archdeacon's Visitation on 14th May - I look forward to working with both.

Welcome, too, our three new members of the PCC - Loraine Lee, Dorothy Storey and Helen Thompson; whilst Richard Redcliffe was re-elected.

As I write, I have to say how much I am looking forward to what will surely be an exciting new challenge as I shall be the Duty Chaplain at Westminster Abbey for one week. So, from Monday the 8th until

Saturday the 13th April, I will don the red cincture of the Royal Peculiar and be available to the public each day whilst the Abbey is open.

As many will know, Westminster Abbey sits outside the norms in terms of its governance in that it is not part of the Diocese of London and is answerable directly to the reigning monarch - hence its 'Royal Peculiar' status. This is also the prime reason for the entrance charges it makes to the general public - as it receives no funding from either the Church of England or the Government. I realise that this entrance charge sits uneasily with many people - however the Abbey is not alone in this respect.

My duties are simply to be there and to be available to anyone who wishes the services of a priest for any reason. Each hour it will be my duty to call everyone to silence for a short period of prayer as a reminder that, whilst the Abbey is obviously an important and popular tourist attraction, it is also a house of God and a place of public worship.

On at least one occasion during the week of duty the undoubted privilege will also be afforded me to lead a Eucharist service which is held at the nave altar at 12.30pm and will be, I'm sure, a moving and humbling experience for me. It is certainly not something I ever imagined would fall within my grasp - to stand at the Lord's Table in such an iconic church, one which is renowned and recognised world-wide, and lead God's people in this most sacred of services.

So, perhaps you will keep Elizabeth and me in your prayers during that week as we will keep you in ours. Thereafter, we will be back among you once more, hopefully richly blessed for the experience.

Fr D., Vicar