

A few words from the Vicarage ...



It does feel strange to think that this is my penultimate 'few words' (just to let you know that I will still pen another for August!) before retiring. It doesn't seem so long ago since that very first Issue number 1. I do hope that this publication has not only been a success, but that it has also served a useful purpose for you in communicating the work and witness of the church family here at St Paul's.

Communication across various modern methods of media has developed immensely even in the short time I have been here - the use of e-mail has made a huge difference and our Facebook page now has over 100 subscribers (or 'Likes'). Also, our Parish website is now used for a much wider range of facilities - from the provision of facts and information to receiving enquiries on a wide range of matters, including applications for Baptisms and Weddings.

During the month of June, I spent another wonderful week as Duty Chaplain at Westminster Abbey - this was my third time and it was no less rewarding, no less fulfilling and no less tiring! I still regard this service as a real privilege as I meet and greet the thousands of visitors to this historical centre of church life, the vast majority of whom are tourists whilst in their midst are genuine pilgrims and faithful witnesses to the Gospel.

The Duty Chaplain is front line for all who seek the ministries on offer - whether it be the Sacraments of Confession and Anointing of the Sick (with the laying on of hands) or simple advice regarding their concerns. The hourly prayers are well received and are a timely reminder that the Abbey is a working church, a place of worship and prayer - and it is the Duty Chaplain who delivers these.

Standing outside the norm of church structures, the Abbey is entirely self funding, receiving no support from the Church of England or from

Government - hence the standard entry charge of £20 (concessions are available) for visitors. That said, churchgoers can gain entry free of charge if their local parish church obtains a Parish Pass beforehand. St Paul's has such a pass and a number of our parishioners have made use of this already - I will leave this with the wardens should anyone wish to visit. Of course, no charge is made for any of the services.

No sooner had I returned from London than, due to illness, I was asked to stand in and lead prayers for the Mayor of Fylde's Chaplain at the Armed Forces Flag Day Ceremony in St Annes at which Lady Shuttleworth (wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire) presented the flag. Life is never dull, that's for sure!

The most frequently asked question at the moment is what do I plan to do on retirement? The true answer is that I plan to plan! It is my intention to take stock afterwards as I have no wish to be sidetracked until the job is done - it would be too easy to become '*demob happy*' and be distracted from what needs still to be done and so, only on 1st August will I say, 'it is finished'; until then, it is business as usual.

God bless you all,
your Vicar,

Fr D.