

St Thomas of Canterbury, Woodford Parish Council Chair Report for 2019

Since the AGM of last year your Parish Council has continued its regular monthly meetings. As many will be aware the Parish Council recognised some time ago that most of the work done in the Parish was by people working alone or in small groups and the main work of the Council was to encourage and facilitate these groups as much as possible.

Briefly then: -

The Becket Centre Committee meets regularly with Health and Safety one of the major issues. They are currently arranging to replace the kitchen ovens as these were causing problems. Some re-decoration has been started. Unfortunately, this has now had to be paused owing to the issues mentioned below. The centre being left in an unsatisfactory state has been a constant problem in the past (doors left open, rooms untidy etc.) and considerable progress has been made improving this.

Fees for the use of the centre have also been a recurring issue and we intend to bring before the PPC a possible solution for those who feel that the charging of fees is unfair.

The Fabric Team continue their excellent, usually unseen, work of keeping the site running. Their numbers have been rather depleted during the year nevertheless they continue to repair doors, windows, kneelers as well as engaging in many other tasks. Anyone willing to help out, even occasionally, will be very welcome on the team

The IT and Communications Team continue to provide good and effective communication within the Church Community. The Parish Website has had 27,000 web visits since the site was inaugurated 18 months ago and this number continues to grow. The provision of the newsletter by email grows weekly and has now reached 460. Facebook and Twitter also attract attention and the recorded Masses, enabling the housebound and others, unable to get to church, to experience Mass online, have been viewed over 900 times.

The Liturgy Committee has been doing work involving five groups, Sacristans, Altar Servers, Eucharistic Ministers, Readers and Ushers. New guidelines are in place for some of the ministries. Refresher sessions have been started and will continue for other groups. Time has been spent collating details of the different groups attending the various masses these being kept in the Parish Office.

Social and Other Activities

The social group sometimes working with other groups (Liturgy, Fabric, Music etc.) has been involved in many activities during the year - The Easter Egg hunt, Outdoor Mass, 24-hour Adoration International Evening. Social activities are the essential life blood of the Parish and we are constantly striving to increase the number held each year.

Health and Safety and Child Protection

This has required a huge amount of time and effort. We really must ensure we address issues raised by our insurers and fully comply with all the regulations. To this end groups are working on Emergency Evacuation of the Church, Safety in the Church and all other areas on the site. Slowly but surely these changes will come into effect and will affect all areas of parish life.

Other Issues

The two major issues over the year though have been quite new.

The first concerns our future. As you all know the Bishop's vision is for us to have two priests supplying the three parishes of St Ann Line (South Woodford), Our Lady of Lourdes (Wanstead) and us. This will require the three parishes pooling resources and working together but despite meeting regularly there is still intense debate as to how we achieve this.

The second issue concerns the fabric of the buildings. The PPC recently circulated a letter outlining the need for roof and the heating renovation. The former is currently proceeding well. Plans for the heating are well advanced though some major areas (such as exactly how we should heat the Church) remain to be clarified. We are hoping to start the heating work in the spring of 2020. Needless to say these improvements have involved the PPC and others in many meetings with roofing and heating specialists. There has also been considerable concern as to how we find the money to pay for these improvements.

It is quite clear that a great amount of work will still be required over the next few months by all parties if issues relating to the heating are to be completed. The PPC feels strongly that we as a Parish should be intimately involved in all the discussions on the topic and I am happy to say that so far all discussions have had a strong input from various different parish members and groups.

I have in describing the activities above tried to give a flavour of what the PPC has been doing over the past year. I am also including with this an article that was done earlier in the year that many may not have seen describing what the PPC does you may find interesting.

Finally,

May I thank those that are leaving the Council for all the hard work they have done over the past year or more. Their contribution is very much appreciated - rest assured though it will not be long before we are contacting you again for help! Many thanks also to the Secretaries to the Council, Geraldine and all others without whose help we would not be able to function.

Much more remains to be done. Many of us believe that we need to be much more involved in pastoral work and the fabric issues of the past year have led us to lose sight of this. We certainly can and should do more in this area - but that is for the coming year!

Kit Tranmer June 2019