

The Parish of St Barnabas and St Paul, Oxford

Parish Annual Report for 2008/9

Membership of the PCC

Ex Officio Members

Father Jonathan Beswick, Priest-in-charge and Chairman

Mr Phillip Purves, Church Warden and Vice Chairman

Mrs Claire Herbertson, Church Warden

Fr Miles Maylor, Honorary Assistant Priest

Mrs Margaret Ellis, Licensed Lay Minister

Mr John Hanks, General Synod Representative

Mr Tom Ansty, Deanery Synod Representative

Mr Paul Hornby, Deanery Synod Representative

Mr David Pittaway, Deanery Synod Representative

Elected Lay Members

Mrs Janet Bell, Secretary

Mr Alan Martin, Treasurer

Mr Malcolm Bell

Miss Claire Atkins

Mrs Helen Brock, Electoral Roll Officer

Mrs Julie Anne Lambert

Mrs Jenny Pittaway

Mrs Mary Whitlock

Mr Richard Whitlock

Church Attendance

The average attendance on Sundays has been 80 adults and 10 children.

The average attendance on Sundays in October was 86.

The Electoral Roll was 96 a year ago and is now 106.

There have been six baptisms, including Max Walantiny and Zora Rogers from our own regular congregation, and six funerals, three in church and three in the crematorium.

Review of the Year

The PCC has met six times since the last Annual Meeting in April 2008

This year has not been without its tensions and difficulties as the Parish has tried to discern its future and the shape of its ministry both to its current congregation and to the people of Jericho.

A wider vision for our future has been made possible by some important changes in the ministry provision at St Barnabas. The Oxford Diocese, impressed by the work started here, offered to increase the stipend for St Barnabas from 0.5 to 0.75 until early 2013, on the condition that the Church is able to demonstrate a commitment to developing ministry and mission within the parish and works towards the increase in our parish share contributions which inevitably results from increased ministry costs. The PCC, after some discussion, voted unanimously to accept the offer and the challenge involved. Two of the Catholic societies of the Church of England, the Society of the Holy Cross and the Additional Curates' Society, have offered to provide the other 0.25 of the stipend for the same period.

Our ministerial resources were further increased in January when the Archdeacon licensed Fr Miles Maylor as an honorary assistant priest. Since Fr Miles works as a wound consultant for the Oxford hospitals his ministry here is largely confined to Sundays, but he already takes a full part in leading our worship and in a very short time has made himself known and welcome to the congregation.

We have also been pleased to welcome three ordinands from St Stephen's House who have spent time with us this year: in the summer Daniel Sandham and his wife Kate spent a very happy month in the parish; and during term time James Bradley and Taemin Oh have been placed with us. Taemin and his wife Helen have been able to join us regularly on Sunday mornings for our parish Mass, Taemin helping the team of servers and Helene helping with senior Sunday School. The presence of those preparing for a life of ordained ministry is always encouraging and in these instances has been the basis for developing warm friendships.

Claire Atkins has sent a Sunday School Report in which she notes that numbers of children have increased steadily during the year to an average of about fifteen. In June they were divided into two groups: the older children (seven plus) led by Claire and Helene in the choir vestry and the younger ones in the Institute with a rota of leaders. The classes aim to make coming to church an enjoyable experience for the children, to familiarise them with the Gospel, to offer opportunities for prayer and worship, and to engage in some creative activity which the children can present to the congregation and then display on the new boards bought for that purpose. (Claire's full report is attached.)

One of the focuses for this year has been to strengthen our links and to raise our profile within the parish. We joined with the Community Church once again to sing carols around Jericho, starting this time at St Barnabas and finishing with mulled wine and mince pies in the Institute. We also worked with them to provide a lunch for the homeless (also in the Institute) in February, and hope to be able share further ventures in the future.

St Barnabas has continued to be involved in considerations about the boatyard site. Fr Jonathan, bearing the St Barnabas banner, was very visible at the canal development appeal in the summer, the result of which was that Spring Residential's planning application

for the area was rejected. In February the church hosted a lively open morning organised by the Jericho Living Heritage Trust with music, drama, art and a display of locally-led aspirations for the development of the boatyard site.

St Barnabas was also the venue for eight concerts and a number of visits from, among others, The Betjeman Society and Brookes University Architecture students.

The Parish Magazine, *Jericho Matters*, launched in early February, has provided a vehicle for combining church and parish news. With a print run of 1650 copies it was delivered to all the children in the school as well as to every household in the parish (over 1100), to friends of St Barnabas and to the congregation. It has been well received and North Oxford Properties have offered to sponsor its production. The next issue is due in early May in time to cover our Patronal Festival.

The weekend of the ride and stride also gives us an opportunity to become more widely known and we are grateful to those members of the congregation who 'rode and strode'. We must again mention particularly Dorothy Woodward who this year cycled to 50 churches. We are grateful, as ever, to Fr Dennis for maintaining a presence in the church throughout the day. It has always been a cause of regret that we are not able to leave the church open on a more regular basis for visitors and for those looking for a quiet place for prayer. Those of us who spend time here during the week are, I think, surprised by the number of people who come in and express an interest in St Barnabas and its history. We are now able to offer them a new, more complete guide to the church and are very grateful to Anne Abley and Richard Whitlock for this excellent production.

Once again the Provost of Worcester, Dick Smethurst, and his wife, Sue Gillingham, generously hosted our Friends' Lunch in the Linbury Room. We are grateful to them, and to David Pittaway for organising this event. Our traditional series of 'bring and share lunches' after Mass during the summer was once again co-ordinated by Claire Atkins. The opportunity to meet together informally as well as to worship together is an important part of our shared life as a Christian family, and this year, at the initiative of one of the Choir, a small group, which fittingly calls itself The Epiphany Group, met regularly for discussion during the weeks before Lent. And this year two Lent Groups are meeting, one in the evening, and the other sharing a simple lunch in the Institute.

We were deeply saddened by two unexpected deaths during the summer. Marion Shirley had worshipped with us for many years. Michael Broadway had served here as organist for over fifty years and was much-loved. His funeral and memorial services gave the congregation and particularly the choir a chance to express something of their affection. He is remembered by a plaque on the side of the organ. Both Michael and Marion are greatly missed.

We owe Bob Lowry and the choir a great debt of thanks for maintaining such a high standard of music in the months following Michael's death. We have, however, been very fortunate in finding an excellent new organist and choir master. Dan Chambers, a former organ scholar at Worcester College, joined us in January and has been delighting us, and challenging the choir, ever since.

The year ended on a high note when we welcomed the Lord Mayor of Oxford, Councillor Susannah Pressel, to St Barnabas Parish Mass. This was a splendid occasion, the 'civic

service' of her year in office, and she came in full regalia and with other councillors and her mace-bearer.

The Annual report gives an opportunity for the PCC to record formal thanks to those who have given their services to the church over the past year: to Helen Brock for her work both as sacristan and Electoral Roll Officer, to Janet and Malcolm Bell for keeping the garden so well, to Richard Whitlock for his unstinting work on maintaining the fabric of the church, and to Mary for overseeing the flowers, to our team of servers (children and adults), to those who faithfully clean the brass and silver, who wash the linen, who help with providing coffee after Mass, with Sunday School, and those who sing in our choir.

But we need to-day to give particular thanks to Karen Melham, to David Pittaway, to Alan Martin and to our outgoing church wardens, Claire Herbertson and Phillip Purves. Karen has decided to step down from her role as Parish Administrator at the end of April. She has done an excellent job over the last two years, providing stability and co-ordination at a difficult period in a very gracious manner, and we are grateful to her. David, after several years of faithful service, has handed over the work of PCC Secretary to Janet Bell. Alan has given notice that he intends to stand down as Treasurer next year. He has been our Honorary Treasurer – always courteous, meticulous and totally reliable – for twenty-seven years, and we owe him an enormous debt of gratitude. Claire and Phillip have served as Church Wardens for eleven years. Their duties over the last few years have been unexpectedly heavy, but they have worked for the Church with unstinting commitment and energy.

St Barnabas has reached an exciting point in her development. Numbers – at the Parish Mass, at Evening prayer, on the Sunday school registers, at the Lent Groups – have increased, as has our active involvement in the parish of Jericho and in the Deanery. We hope to build on this start by a prayerful sharing of our visions for the future at the parish away day next month, and by establishing a 'mission group' which will examine our priorities, opportunities and resources and report back to PCC. For this work we ask for your continued prayerful support.

Margaret Ellis, Licensed Lay Minister

25 March, 2009

Parish Priest's Report

My sense is that the work is going well at St Barnabas: there is a lot of positive energy around and much for which to give thanks. The last year has been a demanding time in a number of ways, and the Diocese has asked hard questions of us at St Barnabas: the gauntlet has been thrown down, but with humour and the offer of support and encouragement. So: we are moving forwards with growing confidence into the next chapter of our common life.

Thanks has been given elsewhere to some of those who contribute so much to our life here, but I must make mention of one or two: Claire and Phillip are coming towards the end of their long tenure as our Churchwardens. Between them they have done more than many of you will ever realize in the last years to keep St Barnabas afloat. Not many churchwardens have had to face what they have faced. I suggest that, in due time, they might write a Churchwarden's survival guide!

There will be time to give proper thanks in due course, when their moment of retirement finally comes. Maggie has been absolutely unstinting in giving her time and energy to the work here, and especially to the people of St Barnabas. Fr Simon has regularly been a cheerful support and encouragement, together with Fr Allen and most recently Fr Miles, who has swiftly got stuck into Jericho life, bringing with him his delightful blend of wisdom and down to earth humour.

Some notable changes that have taken place in the last year are the growth of Sunday School, the appointment of a new Director of Music, and the relaunch of the magazine. The Sunday School team has worked hard, and we are gaining a modest reputation for being the place to come if you have young children! Especial thanks to Claire Atkins, who leads the seniors every week. And Dan has begun to get the measure of us, entering into his new role wholeheartedly, having taken up the reins from Bob, who held them so ably in the months following Michael's death. The magazine is a terrific achievement, of which I hope we are all proud. We have also established a happy friendship with the Melkite church: ecumenism with a difference!

But, most importantly, Sunday by Sunday it feels to me that there is a happy and cheerful spirit bubbling away in St Barnabas. There is an increasing number of friends, old and new, joining us: for this we give thanks. We do of course have our differences: of character, of religious temper; but I hope we can handle those, and one another, with courtesy, kindness and without suspicion. St Barnabas is many things to many different people: but I hope that we will all agree that we want our life here to be characterised by one thing above all others, and that is a great love: for God, for each other and for our world. Whatever else St Barnabas is, let it be a place where we rejoice in the love of God, because we know that love in our own hearts and lives. Let us love out of the abundance that we have received.

I want to close by reminding you of an occasion which, I think, illustrates the very best of what St Barnabas is about. Last July we hosted a concert in which the combined resources of the church choir, the school choir and orchestra and the choir of New College came together. It was a terrific evening: between the rehearsal and the concert, the church was filled with people picnicking and chatting; wine was being drunk; children were playing and exploring. The concert itself was splendid, finishing with a whole-team effort in Parry's 'I was glad'. A parent arrived to collect a child at the end of the evening and greeted me in the porch, saying "Something very special has been happening in there", gesturing into church. I agreed. St Barnabas had provided an hospitable space in which to draw together both sacred and secular, both the very local and the very best of what Oxford has to offer. Long may we continue in this.

Sometimes I worry that we won't be able to do what is asked for us as a parish: then I take comfort in the realization that we cannot do what is asked of us. Only God can do it, but he can do it through us: and if that is our beginning place, then we have nothing to fear.

Fr Jonathan Beswick
25 March 2009