

An important part of a rector's report to an APCM is to thank everyone for all they have done to help our church in the last year, and I'm not going to break that rule. I want to start by thanking three groups of people.

Particular thanks go to our 4 church wardens who look after their respective church buildings and what goes on inside them. Some people say that rectors have to work hard – but, believe you me, so do church wardens, and I am very grateful for all that Lisa, Karen, Malcolm and Liz do - a good chunk of which I never know about. What I would say, though, is that if we again had 2 church wardens in each church they wouldn't have to work quite so hard.

I'd then like to thank our PCC secretaries and treasurers whose role I always see as the closest we have to our business managers. So to Rachel (twice as she also looks after the Benefice finances) and Iverna, to Hilary and Alan, Bethan, and to Neil and John, thank you so much. And also an extra thank you to Malcolm who, in the absence of a PCC secretary in Shepreth, is covering those duties as well.

And that third group are our musicians of course including our organists. And I would like to start this group by thanking Colin for the goodness know how many years of service he has given to both Thriplow and Fowlmere, before having to stop last year due to his health. Never have I seen someone change so much simply by being sat at an organ.

So then thank you to Stephen and Stephen, to Iverna and Martin, to our Benefice choir, and not forgetting occasional musicians like Ally and Rosalind.

And I could go on listing people like the Messy Church team led by Liz and the craft mornings team led by Kate; the children's church team, the people who look after our buildings and churchyards, our cleaning teams, our flower teams, our PCC members, there are so many of you, so I simply say thank you to you all, and to those who do things for us that I haven't mentioned. But before I move on I do need to say a special thank you to one person who just never stops – visiting people at home or in hospital, running our café in Fowlmere, and always being the first person to per hand up if we need help – a huge thank you to Sheila for all she does.

So with all these people doing so much, how can I stand here today and say we need more people to do more things to take our church forward? Well, it is because I, and I think increasingly we, are ambitious for our church. We want to achieve those three things I talked about in my sermon this morning, deepening our faith, increasing our numbers, and improving how we care for each other – and they all need people to happen. So when we come to the list of things we would like people to do after the PCCs meet at the beginning of June I hope you will have a good look and see if there is something you can do to help.

In terms of my priorities over the next year they look a bit like this:

May and June I want to try and get some of our buildings projects moving – a key one of which is the work to be done in the Dorothy Pluck room in Fowlmere which will enable us to open a public facing church office and employ a regular administrator.

In July and August, during the school holidays, I am looking to do something a bit different in our services on Sunday mornings – I haven't got much further than calling them Summer Sundays at the moment, but I hope it might give some of you who may feel rather daunted by the idea, of being part of leading one of these Summer Sunday services. So, if you think you might fancy that, watch this space.

September through to November (I am away for the first half of September) I'd like us to focus on developing our faith – whether that is through a bible study, or a home group, or a prayer group, I haven't decided yet, but that will be my focus then.

And then, it will be Christmas.

Finally, on the question of needing more people to do things, I have been asked by the Bishop to join the 2nd cohort of incumbents to be trained in how we can start some youth work in our benefices.

Now the conclusion in our case may be that now is not the time – which is certainly what I thought before being invited to join this group, but all I will say is that if I am to lead something like this in our churches, then something else that I do has to be passed over to someone else. Part of that may be to a new administrator, and if we are successful in finding the right person to employ, and I am successful in passing over work to that administrator, we may then be looking for some more money to increase the number of hours that we employ that person for.

When we break up into our four parishes in a few minutes you will each be asked to approve the accounts of your parish – ie the parish which you are on the electoral for. I was with Bishop Dagmar a few weeks ago and I asked her about the possibility of joining together our four parishes into one, and she assured me it was possible, but there would be a lot of work involved, and she wondered whether that was the best use of my, our time. So, for now, we need to do these legal things separately – but to me the bigger picture of the 4 parishes together is what really matters.

So, on that basis, I combined the 4 sets of accounts into one set, and it produced these headline figures.

Our total income as a church was just under £103,000 which included

Voluntary giving in the 4 churches, including recovered gift aid was just over £85,000.

Our total expenditure as just over £105,000, so we our funds reduced by about £2,500. And within that financial position we managed to pay our full ministry share – the cost of having a rector – about £64,000. Just so you are aware, that is what the rector gets paid – it cover's the rector's salary, housings costs, National Insurance and Pension contributions, training costs, and also the cost of curates across the Benefice – but then that total is subsidised by the Diocese from their investment income.

So hopefully, that gives you an idea of the direction I hope to lead our church in over the next year, and why finding people and money to support that work is important. But first, the PCCs will need to adopt a plan that we can all follow.