

WHAT DO CHURCHWARDENS DO?

Churchwardens are "officers of the Bishop" and as such need to be sworn in on an annual basis, by the end of June after the Annual Parochial Meeting at which they were elected or re-elected.

They have a responsibility to carry out annual checks of all the church fabric, and an inventory of all the belongings and to keep proper records. At St. Peter's we are fortunate to have a very active and knowledgeable Fabric Committee that undertakes this function, but it is the Churchwardens' responsibility to see that it is done.

Most alterations which are made to the fabric of the church need the approval of the Diocesan Advisory Committee in the form of a faculty - we needed this for the changes from pews to chairs, for the porch, for the hatch from the kitchen to the Louisa Smith Rooms (and doubtless for the Louisa Smith Rooms themselves, but that was before my time!) Getting screens removed seems to be more difficult than making changes. However, I have no doubt that our alterations have made an enormous difference in the life and worship of the church - we are now able to do so many more activities, both worship and community social activities, supporting a really living church.

We also have to make sure that the Vicar is performing his priestly duties properly! i.e taking communion services, ensuring that at least one sermon is preached on a Sunday, that he is available to his congregation when they need advice, pastoral visiting etc.

Over the past two years that I have been a Churchwarden, this has been a very stimulating experience with the start of the services at St. Peter's in the Pub - and now moving on to three services a month there. There has also been the start of Sunday Night Live: now a praise and prayer service, and I have been pleased to see the increase in the 9am Eucharist services over the past few months.

Recently the P.C.C. visited St. George's Church in Stamford, which has a large congregation, though we were all surprised that the church building is not very big - certainly no larger than St. Peter's. Over the years they have started a regular 9.15am service; in addition to their previous 11am service, a service at 4pm for families, and their 6.30pm service. They also have some services held away from the church; ie Kings' Cafe, held in a local school. They are further down the road along which we are travelling, and certainly gave us all inspiration to continue.

My own particular areas of interest (and perhaps not surprising as a retired paediatrician) are the children's and youth work - though the size of the St. Peter's Rock groups in the mornings can cause practical problems, challenging the leaders' ingenuity at times! I am also now a member of the pastoral care team, and run a monthly carers group in church

(quite variable, as people come when they particularly need to talk). I have supported Kenneth Elisapana from the onset and am very interested in South Sudan. Since the visit to Tirunelveli Diocese in India with Edward and Margaret, I have quite a personal interest in all they do - though I find the social work supporting the leprosy sufferers the most emotive.

It is so important to be an outward-looking church, as well as building up our own congregation. All in all, I have learnt a lot, and thoroughly enjoyed the last two years being part of such an inspired and inspiring team.

Carol Millns