

Churchwarden's Report for 2023

APCM

19th May 2024.

Introduction

The Churchwarden's report is divided into 3 x sections and is in summary form to cover what has yet again been a busy, challenging but inspiring year for Lancaster Priory.

The three sections are

1. Worship
2. Property
3. Current Issues and Opportunities

1. Worship

Generally support for worship ran relatively smoothly with initially some steep curve learning experiences . This was largely achieved through the help of our excellent team of sidespeople under the careful guidance of the Clergy Team, and Alice and the vergers. We aim to make everyone feel welcome into worship and to keep them safe during worship The bigger learning experiences for us all were around the larger services..... Remembrance Sunday, Christmas and Easter ,in handling significant larger congregations, seating them quickly but ensuring we make all feel welcome and safe. They also provide some re-thinking about managing the collections, especially for Remembrance Sunday

One highlight to focus on was our decision to breathe new life into the Men's Fellowship. Grateful for the support of Peter Hopwood and Andrew Nicholson to get this moved forward. Our planning commenced in Q4 2023 and pleased to report the Fellowship has now materialised in 2024

2. Property

Impossible to cover all the property issues in a summary report. We are blessed to worship in such a beautiful and iconic Parish Church but it undoubtedly creates many ongoing issues both in terms of priority and finance . In summary, on the positive side we have an active Property Group under Richard Carter's leadership. We are getting to grips with what are regarding as the short term red flag issues within the quinquennial report including urgent critical electrical repairs /upgrades and starting to get professional support/reporting on the state of our drains , structure of the overall building and agreeing the priorities for the next three years (at least). On the routine planned maintenance Alice as Operations Manager and I review this regularly and report in via the Property Group.

Ecclesiastical continues to provide our insurance cover and hold an annual insurance / risk review with Alice and me. They generally accept us as low risk and give us practical advice as to minimise any potential risk. This included changes to fire safety procedures/alarm, safety in the Tower and clarification on the requirements for certification /third party checks on the Font cover.

With support from Parish Buying we negotiated a new lower cost electricity supply contract with YU Energy, which has now settled down after some initial financial issues and needing to their new meter installed.

Training support was provided by Diocese including

- The mysteries of Faculty requirements and application
- Funding Opportunities ... where are they and how to effectively reply

We have managed to keep the Church open through the week from April to October with the great help of our welcoming team. Pleased to welcome a steady stream of visitors to enjoy our beautiful church, spend time for reflection and prayer, and many who just want to chat with our welcomers . Numbers vary a little naturally but we often have in excess of 350 visitors per week

3. Current : Issues and Opportunities

Essentially to focus on what are our immediate issues / tasks for 2024

- New gas contract negotiation from June 2024
- Agree a new strategy /plan with Vicar and PCC to replace the Priory Hall, create a Priory “Hub”office and meeting room(s).and resolve access issues via refectory door
- To receive Drain Survey report and review
- Ensure timely completion of the critical electrical I work
- Work with Vicar and PCC on the “Big Plan”...
- Volunteers and Sidespeople : H and S training, safeguarding, handling security issues
- Security on the building ... maximising our open church principle while balancing resource issues with security

Conclusion

So much to do,so little time!.

However, with ongoing prayer, teamwork ,communication and the combined skills within the PCC, the Clergy and the Verger Group, I am confident we are in for a very challenging few years. Equally sure we will make progress and come through it as an even more vibrant Christian community, in a safer improved Church building, enhanced to meet the needs of The Lancaster Priory Family and the community it serves.

Special thanks from me to Rebekah as assistant Churchwarden and her great help; and to Beverley and Pauline for their willing support when needed to help the Churchwarden group. We needed and received ongoing support from Leah and Louis for which we remain very grateful, and also from Alice Stuart and Steph who steered us away from many “potholes” and gave us help so willingly.

Dave Russell

Churchwarden

May 2024