



St Thomas . Penny Street . Lancaster

Worshipping God together and at home, we serve and proclaim Jesus wherever we are.

Newsletter

January 2010

News, update and information for church members

Thank you

Michele and I want to thank you so much for your fabulous send-off and your generous gift. Your kind notes and greetings which we treasure, the very joyful party, brilliant food and fellowship, and above all, your love so clearly expressed and demonstrated has touched us deeply. Thank you.

We do praise God for you all, and feel so privileged to have been shaped by you and for being able to be part of this church community - watching you excel in so many ways in Christian ministry both in the church and in wider society. The maturity of Christian commitment in St T's, the vision for all ages, and therefore financing and supporting those who make that ministry possible, the leadership initiative in pastoral care, house groups, organisation and world mission is fantastic. Many of you give your time to non-church ministry which oils the wheels of society and hold your Christian principles of integrity, kindness and humility in the workplace. Well done, good and faithful servants!

On Monday, after finally clearing my little office, I went into the church building. In the quiet, I was filled with a sense of praise for what the Lord is doing through you all, and huge gratitude for the privilege that you have given me in being part of it.

For 35 years, St T's has been moving forward in the so called 'Renewal Movement' which began in the early 1960's. I sense that you are ready and eager to move forward with the Lord in a new release of his Spirit.

Our children were blessed through their

teenage years here, thank you on their behalf for all that you gave them that has set them off in a life committed to Christ.

With your prayers and your words of wisdom to us, we go, full of joy for what you mean to us, apprehensive (a little) about what lies ahead, but ready as you have urged us, not to look back, but to look forward to what the reigning Lord Jesus Christ wants us to do in his service.

The Church Council (PCC) has begun the process of preparing for a new Vicar to be invited. Your prayers at this time are vital as we seek as a church to ask the Lord to guide us into his future.

In November, the PCC met with our Patron, The CPAS Patronage Secretary, The Rev John Alderman and the Bishop of Lancaster (Bishop Geoff). Our Area Dean, the Rev Phil Hudd was also in attendance. The importance of careful preparation, prayer and not rushing the process was emphasized. (I was not present at that meeting, because normally this initial meeting occurs *after* an incumbent has left - but the diocese has agreed that as St T's is a large church we should not delay the process.)

In our December PCC meeting, the Council began a process of discernment as to who should act as the two PCC Representatives in the appointment process - though staff and PCC members will be consulted throughout. The Council members are praying now, so that they can decide who best of their number can and would be available to take on this responsibility. Please pray for them.

We can praise God that the financial challenges we had earlier in 2009, to which a number of you have responded with increased regular Gift Aided giving, have been met and the church ends the year having met all its commitments. Thank you and praise God!

However, we have new challenges, particularly in yet another hefty increase in the Parish Share of just over £1,000 a month. The PCC is writing to the Diocesan Secretary to ask if there may be some grants to offset the steep increase. We paid roughly £56,000 in 2005 and it has increased year on year to a staggering £103,000 for 2010. Whilst it is true that almost half this amount pays for clergy, their housing and pensions, the remainder goes to pay for other parishes that are finding it difficult to pay, and some who are in deprived areas. Our central services eg child protection officers, legal and other advisors do provide us with backup and support when we need it - but in reality these costs are not that heavy. Simply put, St T's is a large church, and numbers attending other churches is still declining a little and so we bear a bigger share in the burden. We have prayed that the Lord will provide, and he has through your stewardship and the tight control we make on expenditure. Your PCC will be negotiating with the diocese however.

We have also had the wonderful surprise of a grant from the St Thomas Trust. This separate Trust was set up by the PCC to be independent of the PCC. It had been given a property some years ago by Mrs Rosemary Dobson for housing ex-offenders. After a number of years of this ministry, which has helped a number of ex-offenders find their way back into society, the work had clearly come to an end and the Trust decided to sell the property. It was Rosemary's wish that a number of charities be supported with the proceeds, and the Trustees of the Charity have agreed with her suggestions: £10,000 has been given for church based Youth Work in Bordon in the south of England where local amenities are lacking for young people; £15,000 for cleft palate operations in Peru, channelled through the George Müller Foundation; £5,000 for the Ark ministry, to get better crockery and utensils for the Friday meals as well as other needs; £5,000 for NISCU's ministry of evangelism in schools; £250 for the soup run by young people at Christians Alive; £600 to improve housing for a home for a poor family in Peru; £2,500 to provide

anti-malaria mosquito tents through our link, Bridget Hathaway in Tanzania and £20,000 to remodel our kitchen in the church Centre.

For a long time, the PCC Buildings Task Group has been urging, as have many of you, that we should refurbish the much used and now very worn out Centre kitchen. This unexpected grant is a great encouragement. Do pray that we will use the money wisely, and more importantly that God will bless the ministry of food, welcome and fellowship that the kitchen undergirds. The Ark, our Alpha courses and many events bless people because of the hospitality we can provide. Colin Burrow (a PCC member) is a professional caterer with considerable experience of commercial and community catering, will help guide the Task Group through the design and implementation. The PCC are also developing plans for refurbishing the main room and entrance area in addition to this.

You have a great staff team, and a mature PCC. Pray for them and for House Group leaders as you continue to be servant of the Lord in Lancaster. In an independent and confidential review of the staff, arranged by the PCC last summer to better support the staff, it was found that your staff are happy in their work, very highly committed to Christ and the vision of the church, united in purpose (and working far too long hours). Do pray for them and encourage them. They see themselves as there to serve Christ and you, so that you can minister effectively in God's work.

The PCC and the Advisory Group (a task group within the PCC - The Churchwardens, Sandie Lane-Dixon, Tony Bell, the Treasurer, Alan Jones, Kevin Glazebrook and Chris Dixon) has all agreed that Saju as Curate-in-charge, should chair the PCC and staff meetings. We are indeed fortunate to have such an able and wise person to serve in this capacity during the vacancy. I have been so blessed by Saju's ministry already, I hope that he will continue to be blessed through a demanding period

With this my last St Thomas newsletter I wish you rich blessings in Christ as you seek to abide in him - because in abiding in him, you will bear much fruit, fruit that will last.

Yours in Christ,
Peter Guinness

January 11th 2010.