



St Thomas . Penny Street . Lancaster

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

Newsletter

October / November 2009

News, update and information for church members

I hope you will find this useful to help focus your prayers and understand some of the quaint ways of the Church of England and the process of its appointments of clergy.

Focus on Prayer

Praise God that we are a church that truly believes that Jesus is Lord of his church. I did have a heavy heart knowing I would have to announce my move to St Mark's, Gillingham in Kent. It is indeed difficult to think of saying good-bye to a church family and so many friends after 18 years in Lancaster. God is good. I sense that we are being so blessed by His presence and I am comforted by the knowledge that he has guided me to a new challenge and therefore he will guide St Thomas's to new challenges ahead. I was not planning to move, despite a number of requests (a recent temptation was an invite to become Chaplain to the Anglican Church in Cannes with a flat just 250 metres from the Mediterranean).

I am very conscious that though I think I know how to lead a church like St Thomas's, I still have much to learn about leading St Mark's. It has a similar longing to St T's – to be a relevant, Spirit-led church - but it is serving a very different community. St Mark's is considerably smaller, but its parish is huge and being expanded. The Deanery¹ is in the process of re-organization with the possibility of some church closures. There is high unemployment and it is designated an Urban

¹ Other local Anglican churches grouped in an area.

Priority Area despite new housing for London commuters where the former Admiralty Docks were demolished in the 1980s. However, I am excited that the parish representatives and the PCC members that I met have been leading St Mark's forward during the past year of the vacancy and challenging the congregation to pray for God to do more through them. Do please pray for St Marks, me and Michele that we might be filled with the Spirit of God for mission, evangelism and true worship. We shall be very sad to leave St T's, and have been blessed, particularly during the past year, by the love and joy of this community.

What happens next for St Thomas's?

The CPAS² who are our Patrons will soon be visiting us to meet with the Churchwardens and the PCC with the Bishop, to guide us through the process of appointing a new vicar. The Rev John Alderman is the Patronages Secretary. His job is to support evangelical parishes like St Thomas's to find suitable evangelical clergy. **The CPAS wisely state in their literature that prayer is key to the successful outcome. Please will you come to the Open Meeting on Tuesday 3rd November 7:30pm** where I will answer questions

² CPAS - Church Pastoral Aid Society. Is a mission and evangelism organization that we support in our mission giving. Ruth Hassall, our former Youth Pastor works for them. CPAS has taken on a new focus in developing leaders - our soon to start *Growing Leader's Course* and runs the *Arrow Leadership Programme* that Sam Corley did, and we hope Ian McGrath will soon begin.

and lead prayers for what lies ahead. Pray at all times in the Spirit. God does call and guide people, as I believe, he clearly guided me and St T's in my appointment process 18 years ago.

Within evangelicalism today there is a wide spectrum, from conservative to charismatic, from 'no' to women's ordination to its acceptance, and in my view rather oddly, there are 'liberal' evangelicals who do not hold a strong view on the authority of Scripture. The CPAS will aim to discern with the PCC what sort of minister the PCC believes is needed for the next phase of its journey in serving Jesus Christ in Lancaster. The post will then be advertised in the church press (if PCC so wishes it) and through the New Wine Networks and whatever other networks we may have. The CPAS will then shortlist candidates and send them for interview one by one or all together. The interviews will be conducted by the Parish Representatives. It is good for the candidates to meet some other significant people and staff team during their visit. It is a process of discernment, and the candidates need to see the premises, the parish and city as well as vicarage etc. When I was appointed, Michele and I came for a full two days, met several people and saw lots of places, local schools and the vicarage. The three candidates came on different days, because it was decided that it was a discernment process and not a competitive interview. The PCC with the help and guidance of the CPAS has to decide how to do things, and it is not for me to dictate even in this newsletter what you should do.

The CPAS has vast experience of this – they are Patrons of over 500 parishes. They also have knowledge of candidates who want a move, as well as a concern to respect the tradition of each local church.

A little bit of history

The Patronages were set up long ago, in order to prevent Bishops or others having sole responsibility for all the appointments in their diocese. Imagine a more hostile liberal non-evangelical bishop wanting to put his own liberal clergy in every parish. He can't do this because (a) the Patrons have their say and (b) the PCC chooses two Parish Representatives who will ultimately choose the new vicar. If a PCC doesn't get on with the process or keeps refusing to appoint someone, there is a time limit after which the Bishop has the right to make his own appointment. Rest assured that our Diocesan Bishop Nicholas and his Suffragan (ie

assistant), The Bishop of Lancaster, Bishop Geoff both want to respect the wishes of this parish and are very keen for the process to start as soon as possible. They have both assured me of this, and I know they have a very high regard for St Thomas's and its ministry.

The Current situation in the CofE and a little bit more history

The Church of England is in a period of change. New vicars are being appointed in a different way. Currently I am Vicar of St Thomas. When I was Inducted to the parish, I was given full authority to lead the church under the authority of the Bishop. In the Induction Service, I was publicly given authority to preach the Word, to lead worship, to administer the sacraments and was given full possession of the church buildings and the vicarage by holding the key of the main door (though legally in reality I don't own them at all!). This last feature was called the *Living or Freehold* and it meant that I had security of tenure of the post up to the age of 70 or my death. The CofE is currently cutting back on clergy posts (Since I arrived in Blackburn Diocese the aim has been to reduce by 40 posts in 18 years. There are recent plans to reduce by a further 30 stipendiary posts). Therefore the Bishops have used a right that was introduced some years ago to aid re-organisation of Deaneries and to close churches. This right to '*Suspend Livings*' has now been applied to *all* vacancies in our diocese. The vicars are replaced by '*Priest-in-charge*' posts. They do not have security of tenure. (My new post at St Mark's, Gillingham is only a priest-in-charge post. Mike Peatman was recently instituted as p-in-c of Morecambe, Holy Trinity). But note, it is still best to call them Vicars, because most people realise that it is only a technical legal change. In reality nothing is different. In 2010, the National Synod has decided that all clergy who do not have Freehold posts, should have more security of tenure under a new agreement called '*Common Tenure*'. This is a contract stating what are the expectations of the Bishop and what safeguards and job security the incumbent (vicar) has. The aim is that eventually all clergy in whatever post will all have the same terms of employment. At present, it is unfair, that Incumbents, like me, have security in their jobs, whereas clergy like Sam Corley, who has a diocesan post as Missioner for 18-30s and a half post as priest-in-charge of Galgate, has no security, and a bishop could in theory dismiss him without any recourse. Because it is unjust that some clergy had security and some not, General Synod decided after years of discussion to introduce *Common Tenure*. In the meantime therefore when a vicar post becomes vacant, they institute a Priest-in-Charge instead of a Vicar-with-Freehold. We will soon have Vicars again with a *Common Tenure* agreement. Isn't all this exciting!!

With my love and prayers. Peter Guinness.