

Rector's notes for the AGM

This AGM is the chance for us to look back together as a church, to see what has been achieved this year, and to begin to discern together how we need to prepare to move further into God's kingdom.

In terms of occasional offices, we had no weddings last year, although we do have 3 booked for May and June this year, and already another 2 in the diary for next year. We've 13 baptisms, and a total of 35 funerals, 20 of those being held in church.

We've continued with the regular pattern of Sunday services, as well as holding a couple of services in the Redwood Drive Community Centre. We're also continued our links with St Paul's, with Christmas and Easter services held there, although a change of staff has led to some uncertainty about the future of our involvement there.

There's been a full programme of events for Christmas, and Lent, Holy Week and Easter, where this year we had a new addition with the after-service Easter egg hunt, which encouraged some of the families that joined us on Good Friday to come again on Easter Day, we hope we will be able to build on this in future years.

The Little Angels Group has continued, numbers attending vary widely, with the maximum of 26 children coming to our first birthday party.

The Developing Discipleship Programme was an opportunity for everyone to be involved in discerning the future direction for the church. The sessions were fun and productive. Out of this our **Vocation statement** was:

Our calling from God is to enable the communities of Waddington to discover that God's love is for all.

Our Values statement was:

We are an outward-looking parish church that values our Christian faith and the whole community of Waddington. We believe that all people are important in God's sight and welcome everyone to join our worship and church life.

Our Vision (what God is calling us to in the next 5 years) was:

We believe that God is calling us to grow in numbers and develop our faith. We anticipate a flourishing congregation drawn from all sections of the parish, who value St Michael's as a true centre of Christian spirituality, worship and practice.

From this, we developed 5-year goals for the church, and set our priorities for the first year, I'm now going to talk a bit about what has been achieved as a result.

We planned to set up a regular monthly coffee morning at Redwood Drive Community Centre. Sue has been heading up this, with other people helping her. Attendance has been patchy, but is growing. The team have a fish and chip lunch planned for this group as well.

We had a well-supported Christmas service at RDCC and have another Songs of Praise in the planning stages (May 22nd)

We've been working on the list of practical things that need doing to make our church accessible, welcoming and worshipful with good facilities. Our achievements so far are: the door closer problem has been sorted, the sound systems has been upgraded, and we have plans for upgrading the lighting. The next step is for our Quinquennial inspection to be made, this is booked for later this month and we hope this will make it easier for us to apply for grant money to cover some aspects of the work.

We planned to develop our communication with those on the fringes of the church. So we now have a very attractive, regularly updated website and facebook pages. And we have produced two issues of a Newsletter, which has gone out to about 200 homes we've had recent contact with

We've had Advent and Lent groups, as well as a short course and we're planning another one to begin in early May. Some of the time we've used material that the Diocese has produced, our other sessions have made use of the Pilgrim courses, which include books, video and audio clips. These have been well-received, with 10-12 people regularly attending.

The Worship group has begun looking at the Sunday service pattern, with a view to developing an Alternative, more reflective Sunday afternoon/evening service, probably once a month. The first step has been to begin developing lay-led Sunday morning services, we've had two so far, which have been received well, and we shall be building on this in future. This is an exciting development, partly because it has shown the talents we have amongst our laity.

As some of my work with the Discipleship team involves me in Sunday services in other parts of the Diocese we have had other Sunday preachers, and we've also had a successful sermon series on 'light in the Darkness', which saw us hosting Jonnie Parkin and Andrew Chapman (one of the Chaplains from the Base) as Guest preachers during Lent.

We continue to have a good relationship with the RAF, the Remembrance day and ANZAC services were well-attended, and the RAF team provided the sound system for Remembrance Sunday, which was a great help. We have quite a few RAF families whose children are involved with Little Angels and the ASC and this involvement with service families is likely to increase as the number of people employed at the base increases over the next few years.

We also wanted to have a semi-regular series of family-based events, which would enable us to strengthen our contacts with children and families from Little Angels, the After-school club, baptisms and weddings. The summer party, with barbeque, bouncy castle, games, face painting and races was perhaps a bit ambitious, but was very well attended and a great fun event. We also had a good number of people who came to our St Michael's Birthday party. What was particularly encouraging at both this and the pancake party was the age range, it was lovely seeing the babies and toddlers there together with some of the more mature members of our congregation. We also had more children at our holiday club in the summer on the Wild West theme, and at the harvest festival, messy Christingle, and particularly the Crib service.

I've also built on my contacts with the two schools in the parish, I took the canvas labyrinth into both schools for the leavers (and at Redwood Drive their parents as well) to walk, as a way of helping them to mark moving on to their secondary schools. I've been asked back into both schools to repeat this at the end of the summer term. And we've also hosted groups of children from both schools (Redwood Drive children even walked here!), as well as the local Beaver pack.

As I said at the beginning, it's only when we look back that we see how far we've come, and what we've been able to achieve in a year. There have (as always) been sadnesses in the year as well for us, particularly with the deaths of some much-loved members of our community. But we have also been able to rejoice with Craig and Emma on the safe arrival of little Lucy.

Developing as a disciple is about walking closely with Jesus and patterning your life on his teaching. We are moving forward together as a community, but I hope that you feel your own spiritual life is being strengthened, and I want us to keep this aim in the foreground of our planning for the future. We have developed our vision for the future of St Michael's and begun to work towards becoming a vibrant church community that connects with all the village, and enables us to walk together more closely with Jesus. In the years ahead we will continue to build on this.