

THE PARISH OF ST ERKENWALD, BARKING

VICAR'S REPORT

TO THE

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2018

A Picture of God

A six-year-old girl was drawing a picture one day. Her teacher said, 'What are you drawing?' The little girl answered, 'I am drawing a picture of God.' The teacher was surprised and said, 'But nobody knows what God looks like!' The little girl carried on drawing and replied, 'They will in a minute.'

We are having another Annual Parochial Church Meeting this year. The APCM gives us a great opportunity to get a rounded picture of the nature and character of God and a greater understanding of what God is like through our ministries over the year. And for me, it is like playing with jigsaw puzzles. Each one of us and each ministry may have a different shape and size of jigsaw puzzle. When you look at your piece only you wouldn't be able to draw or imagine the whole picture feeling that the piece you have is either too small or insignificant. However, when we put all the pieces together, then we can see the whole image of God.

There are several pieces that I would like to give thanks to God this year.

The first piece I have is our church leadership team – PCC and Focal Ministry Team. They have been great supporters, advisers and encouragers standing with me and for me, working together to discern our vision and direction and to lead and run various ministries, services and events to build God's kingdom in our community. Thank you for being my good (and also critical) friend.

The second piece I'm thankful is our church family. You are not talking about God's love but showing me what God's love might look like over the year. Thank you for your passionate worship, fervent prayers and sacrificial giving through finance/time/ talents.

The third piece I would like to share with you is what God has done through various ministries.

- One of my priorities in 2017 was re-launching of Lifegroups (House groups). We had a struggle in the beginning as we didn't have enough leaders to run them. However, we have found a viable model that we can run. And we are running it fortnightly at the moment. We have been using 'Gospel in Life' written by pastor Timothy Keller. It has a great depth of understanding of the gospel and challenges us how to live it out in our own context. If you haven't been to Lifegroups yet, please try once. It will give you fresh insight of the gospel and prayerful connection with other fellow brothers and sisters.
- Another priority was to create local community engagement. We had a lovely second luxury afternoon tea party for people who are over 60's in the community. We hope we will run it regularly.

- Last October, God opened another opportunity. We have launched a weekly toddler group called, 'Stay & Play' in 2017. In the first couple of weeks we had only 7 or 8 toddlers. After a month, it started growing rapidly and now we have around 12 team members and over 30 children with their carers each week. This has been such a great place to get connected with our local mums.
- Our Sunday worship has been second to none this year. In terms of teaching, we have learned "Finding true contentment" through Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and we have looked at "The Big Picture" series learning key events in the Bible and lastly we have visited what it means to be "Healthy Church." These teaching series help us to grow into spiritual maturity and to create God's kingdom culture in our church community. In terms of worship, the power of the Spirit touches many of us through songs, testimonies, prayers and prophetic words whenever we gather together in Jesus name. Particularly, ACTs group which is our All Age Worship preparation group and has helped children and young people to participate in the service and to grow in their gifts. Any children (8+), young people and adults who want to be part of the team, please speak to Anne or myself. We meet up on every 3rd and 4th Friday at 7pm in the church.

Where are the rest of pieces?

In the beginning of this year, we have received the words that this year is 'A Year of Opportunities'. And a word I have received from God is 'A Year of Growth'. When I put them together I have found that this year is 'A year of opportunity to grow.'

These are various opportunities that we can grow together as a church of Christ.

Firstly, we will run various fundraising events throughout the year. The purpose of these events is not only raising money but also raising fun/friendship/connection with one another – starting from our church community to the wider local community. Therefore we would like to call this, 'Funraising' rather than 'Fundraising'. These are proposed/planned events:

- 21st April: International Food Festival
- Early July: Community BBQ with Bazaar
- 22nd September: Fashion Show
- November: Afternoon Tea
- January 2019: Pudding Club
- March 2019: Quiz Night

To run these events, of course, we need your generous support through prayer, time, talent and finance. And I believe your contribution, no matter how big or small it is, will bring change and impact in our ministry.

Secondly, we may have a potential building project. We are going to arrange our church consultation after the day of the APCM. Some people might love the proposal and others might hate it when it is given. As a leader of this church, what I want to see is not what decision we are going to make. Personally I do not care whether we go for it or drop it. What I want to see is how we process it as people of God when we have different opinions and views on such things. Although it will be very challenging, I believe that this is a great opportunity for us to expand our thoughts and understanding of what it means to be a church and how to use our building for His kingdom and mission.

Lastly, the obvious but often hidden piece is “YOU”. You are wonderfully and fearfully formed and made by God. You are precious and worthy in God’s eyes. And it is God’s desire for you to grow into maturity, grow into holiness. Perhaps there might be many other ways we can grow. But the best way we can grow is by serving God and serving others. Jesus himself is called a servant king. He came not to be served but to serve. So this should be our calling. Each year I have to cry out for more volunteers and workers. Yes, this is the year of opportunity to grow. Already our Sunday school is growing. We need a bigger space for Footsteps. We need a room for young people though I am still happy to offer the Vicarage for the Sunday youth group. We need more people for refreshments, techie team, communion assistants, Sunday school, Youth group and so on.

In the Vicarage downstairs toilet, recently Youjin has hung a framed jigsaw puzzle. It is a beautiful picture of a sailing boat. Unfortunately, when Youjin put all the pieces together before she framed it, she found that one piece was missing. We couldn’t find it at all. But we have decided to put it on our wall.

Whenever I see the jigsaw puzzle, it reminds me of the missing piece. I really want to find it to make it whole. I believe that this is God’s desire to make his church whole. Perhaps you might be the missing piece in our ministries. If you want to grow this year, please allow God to use the gifts that he has given you, allow Him to use just who you are to love God and to love others.

This is my prayer for all of you.

“Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” (Colossians 2:6b-7)

Amen

Revd Young Lee