

Visitation Report

St Giles Cripplegate

Date: 12th September 2016

The Venerable Rosemary Lain-Priestley, Associate Archdeacon of London

Thank you to the incumbent and PCC for their warm welcome and hospitality during the visitation.

Their passionate commitment to hospitality is apparent in the feel of the building, which is well cared for and maintained, and is signalled by the excellent and attractive noticeboards which display information signposting people to the church's activities and other matters of interest.

Most of the urgent works in the Quinquennial Inspection report from September 2015 relate to the roof. A grant has been obtained from the Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund and work will begin in October. The other urgent works relate to drainage. Maintenance and repair are the responsibility of the City of London Corporation who have been alerted to the need for a survey in order to ascertain what work is necessary and have indicated that a visit can be expected shortly.

The record-keeping at St Giles' is exemplary in all areas and the PCC Secretary, Churchwardens and Treasurer are to be commended for this and for the way in which they work as a team, each playing to their strengths and experience. All of the information requested for the visitation was made readily available.

Appended to this report is an action grid. Actions are prioritised 1 – 3 where 1 is for immediate urgent action, 2 is a request for action in the next few months and 3 is a desirable outcome.

Meeting with the Incumbent

The Revd Katharine Rumen

St Giles' is a church community committed to a deep, broad and inclusive hospitality and functions very much as a parish church to a 'village' which encompasses the Barbican, Golden Lane and Peabody flats. Katharine speaks of the significance of the ministry of presence, being seen and recognised as the Rector as she walks the parish. The success of this approach was evident at the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of St Giles' with St Luke's Old St, where local residents and people from nearby businesses mingled with ecumenical friends, aldermen, livery company representatives, pearly kings and others in an event which reflected St Giles' many relationships with a broad spectrum of the local community. It is

fascinating to see the extent to which St Giles' is embedded in the daily life and consciousness of the parish.

Negotiations are currently taking place with the developers responsible for the St Alphege Gardens' project. The PCC has a very strong sense of what is and is not appropriate in relation to the redevelopment of that area. Specifically, there is a determination that the sacred space of the church building and churchyard should be clearly indicated in the paved landscaping. The strong sense of ownership by the PCC and willingness to challenge the initial, inadequate, proposals is very encouraging.

Prior to the time of the present incumbent St Giles had two stipendiary posts plus an SSM. The reduction to one stipendiary post and an SSM with considerable responsibilities elsewhere is challenging. During Jennie Hogan's study leave the demands of being the only clergy for midweek and Sunday service became clear. This needs to be addressed should she at any point need to step down. On the back of this conversation a succession plan is being considered with some urgency, with the key priority being assistance on two Sundays a month.

Key members of the regular church community bring a wide range of gifts and are deeply committed. Many are time poor, getting home late from work and giving sacrificially to the church but with natural limits. Those who are retired therefore play a very key part.

The conversations around the setting up of a Bishop's Mission Order community in the parish - the Moorgate Talks - have been time consuming and members of the PCC have been hurt by an unwillingness to embrace inclusivity. A recent re-drafting of the relevant document suggests the wording 'St Giles' Cripplegate and Moorgate talks will share their Mission Action Plans and commit to working respectfully with each other where there are disagreements'. This will perhaps enable the arrangement to move forwards on a basis of mutual respect.

The church building is essentially one large space with no kitchen facilities or meeting rooms. The incumbent has a clear sense of the order of priorities in adapting and enhancing that space appropriately to enable the activities of the church. The vestry has undergone a much-needed refurbishment, there is wheelchair access but the toilets are not compliant, work on the roof is to be completed with the benefit of the roof grant and yet to come are the rewiring, new lighting scheme and creation of a hospitality area on the south side of the nave. A walkround with the inspecting architect, Kelley Christ, has elicited ideas which will be explored further and advice is being sought from the DAC as these plans are gradually rolled out. There is a measured and pragmatic approach which should gradually achieve the desired enhancements.

Meeting with the Assistant Priest

The Revd Jennie Hogan

Jennie describes St Giles' as 'Amazing: a proper parish church where the community felt real as soon as I walked in'. The hospitality is wonderful, everybody stays for tea after the Sunday service and whoever is organising it always bakes a cake. The incumbent has seemingly endless energy. Her ability to preach imaginatively both to the adults and to the children – and to the adults through the children - is deeply impressive, as she brings new ideas to each service. A number of couples who attend St Giles' are there because Katharine prepared them for marriage and whatever it is that she says to them it draws them in. Similarly, there are whole families who come along regularly because their children are to be baptised and Katharine makes it clear that they must therefore become part of the church community. The

Director of Music is also outstanding. She reflects on the readings and the seasons and with great insight chooses music which is exactly right for the occasion. Jennie meets with Katharine every four weeks for a proper look at the diary and discussion about pastoral matters and really appreciates the way that she is kept in touch even though she isn't at St Giles' every Sunday.

Meeting with the Director of Music

Anne Marsden Thomas

There is universal agreement at St Giles' that the ministry of Anne Marsden Thomas makes an exceptional contribution to the worshipping life of the church. Anne herself clearly sees her role for the vocation that it is and inhabits it accordingly. Her priority is to ensure that everyone's experience of worship is enhanced and underpinned by an excellent and appropriate offer of music, whether this be sung by professional musicians and/or the congregation. Anne speaks of the 'educated, involved and articulate' people who make up that congregation and her approach is to engage with their responses as she chooses and introduces music to the worshipping life of the church.

Meeting with the PCC and Churchwardens

The churchwardens and PCC describe St Giles' as an active and vibrant community with a desire to welcome all who come in and all whom they can reach. Tribute is paid to Frank Major whose ministry of welcome was outstanding and whose legacy to St Giles' includes a video tour of the church and a wonderful inspiration to others to build community and connections between the church and the whole parish. The parish is distinctive in the City in that there are sizeable residential areas and within those areas quite distinct communities. Historically there were very few children attending but the congregation have become better at welcoming and accommodating young families and this has resulted in growth in this key area, some of whom come from the old parish of St Luke's and the primary school there.

One member of the PCC spoke of his keen appreciation of the provision for children, which his son very much enjoys. The children meet in the Vestry during the Sunday Service but are always in church at the beginning of the service and return at the distribution of Communion. The approach is that children are the church of now, not just of the future. They are prepared for receiving communion prior to confirmation.

Parts of the local population are transient but the approach of tapping into people's desire to go to church at certain points of the year has been successful, with high numbers attending key festivals including, as well as the more obvious times, All Souls. Residents are leafleted twice a year in order to keep them in touch with these opportunities to attend and as an ongoing reminder of the life of the church. This is quite a task but a measure of the commitment of the regular congregation is that all of the piles of leaflets are taken and distributed, none ever left behind.

Holy Week and Easter are a high point of the year, with more people coming through the doors as the week progresses. They come for concerts and come back for the labyrinth and for worship and the music is a key thread drawing them through the week. Highlights on the spiritual journeys of regular members of the congregation were the 2015 parish weekend at Othona, together with an ecumenical visit to Belgium.

Other ways of drawing people in are offered during the week, including a prayer session once a month using a prayer sheet, with people sitting quietly and visitors often joining the regulars. Many people come into the building to pray during the week and from the prayer requests which are left on the board it is apparent that there are many people of faith out there, who value the church's prayers. Books are on permanent display in the church and people can buy or take a book and are encouraged to take bibles away with them.

Charitable giving is taken very seriously with large book sale events raising considerable amounts, and St Giles' gives to 'Help for Hurting Children' and the Children's Society as well as sponsoring a teenager in Egypt. The Food Bank Team does an emergency appeal at Waitrose four times a year and local people donate considerable amounts of food

The PCC speak of how St Giles' is a place where many people begin by feeling 'on the edge' and everyone is welcomed in and embraced. It is a diverse community with inclusion at its heart. Katharine, Jennie and Anne all play their part in this and the music makes an amazing contribution. Occasional rehearsals before the service ensure that everyone can join in well. Everyone stays for a long time over coffee after the service and 'if anyone is lonely they won't be lonely for at least two hours on a Sunday'.

The Cleaning Angels look after the church and provide social contact as well as performing this practical function. Tea, dusting and cake are combined and Katharine joins them.

The proximity of numerous cultural institutions and the incumbent's interest and experience in the arts ensure that relationships thrive, for example with the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal College of Organists, Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Royal College of Organists Academy Organ School. These are woven into the life of St Giles' in a way which greatly enriches the church's ministry to the glory of God. St Giles' is also home to a team of highly committed bellringers whose skills are appreciated by those whom they call to worship.

Ecumenical relationships thrive with the Methodists, Roman Catholics and the Welsh Church. The negotiations with the Moorgate talks, however, have been painful and there is a need to bring this to the best conclusion possible with the highest possible agreement regarding the ways in which the two communities can encourage one another's work. The PCC has made it clear that the parish is looking to the diocese to protect their interests in this matter.

One practical issue which the wardens and PCC long to see addressed is the temperature of the Rectory during the winter, which is unbearable low and impacts severely on the life of the incumbent and on the groups who meet there. A previous incumbent had the underfloor heating disconnected because it was too expensive. There is a committee looking into replacing the heating across the Estate and it will be worth looking to reconnect the Rectory to this new system when it is installed sometime in the future. There is a proposal to build an internal door in the hall to retain heat. The property department have visited and agree that this would make a difference. Work however, will not be done in time for winter 2016. The department has noted the lack of double glazing in the bedrooms.

Conclusion

St Giles' Cripplegate is a church with a very strong sense of its identity and mission, characterised by the desire to offer a broad and inclusive hospitality which is deeply rooted in the belief that God's love embraces all.

The incumbent, assistant priest, church officers and PCC work hard together to ensure that all aspects of the church's life are welcoming, well-organised and, in accordance with the church's mission statement, energised by their faith. The connections with all areas of the parish - the Barbican, Golden Lane and Peabody flats - witness to the desire truly to be a parish church, offering a ministry of presence which is the basis for a pastoral ministry to all who live nearby, visit or travel from elsewhere to worship here.

This is a church which reaches new people through baptisms, weddings, a ministry to those who come in to pray, through music, the arts and in many other ways, whilst offering many opportunities for the deepening and exploration of faith. The task ahead would seem to be to continue to enhance the building in order that all of these activities can be well-supported by the physical spaces available and so that the clergy and congregation of St Giles' can continue to offer the hospitality of God with their distinctive warmth and breadth.

Visitation To Do List

| Task | Urgency | By Whom to be done (parish to decide unless otherwise indicated) | Followed up | Completed | Notes |
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| To ensure that the City of London Corporation enables/progresses the work relating to drainage in the quinquennial inspection. | 2 | | | | This is in the parish's ongoing strategic plan. |
| To work with the inspecting architect to progress the re-wiring, lighting and creation of a hospitality area. | 2 | | | | This is in the parish's ongoing strategic plan. |
| To ensure that the Independent Examiner meets with the PCC once every 2-3 years as recommended. | 2 | | | | The Treasurer has pointed out the expense involved as the IE is based in Lancashire. The IE is in London on occasions to see family and once a year meets the Treasurer for lunch. Those lunches will now include the Rector, and Churchwardens as available. |
| To consider introducing an annual budget in order to plan and prioritise expenditure. | 3 | | | | Standing Committee has agreed that a budget package is to be installed using Sage. |

