

ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE APCM OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL'S CHURCH, SEAL

27th April 2008

St Peter & St Paul Church, Seal

**Financial Statements
of the
Parochial Church Council**

for the year ended 31 December 2007

Incumbent:

The Rev'd Anne Le Bas
The Vicarage
Church Road
Seal

Bank:

Lloyds TSB
83 High Street
Sevenoaks

Independent Examiner:

Anthony Llewellyn FCA
Kingswood, Parkfield
Seal, Sevenoaks
Kent TN15 0HX

BACKGROUND

At Seal Parish Church, with God's help, we seek:

- To enable a wide range of people to engage in worship that is varied, joyful, brings all life to God and permeates all life;
- To be open and welcoming, making it possible for people to join us at any time;
- To show that Christ makes a difference, by caring for ourselves and each other within and outside our Church.

CHURCH STATUS

The PCC of Seal Church is a charity that is authorised by Act of Parliament and is excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

PCC MEMBERSHIP

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation rules.

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

EX OFFICIO

Chair: The Revd Anne Le Bas Priest in Charge
The Churchwardens: Mrs Hilary Coffey
Mrs Christine Wightman

MEMBERS OF THE DEANERY SYNOD (UNTIL 31/5/2009)

Christine Wightman
Margaret Mountfield
Vacant

ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE PCC

Until 2008

Mrs Andrea Chapman,
Mrs Nicky Harvey
Mrs Jill Myers
Mr Malcolm Fox
Mrs Maggie Fox
Mrs Margaret Mountfield
Mrs Sally Medcraft

Until 2009

Mrs Victoria Wyatt
Mrs Marion Gilchrist
Mrs Hilary Curtis
Mrs Linda Wellington

Until 2010

Mrs Mary Evans
Mr Matt Bell
Mrs Rebecca Jones
Mr Mike Harvey

The Treasurer: Mike Harvey

The Secretary: Mrs Jennifer Kent

PRIEST IN CHARGE'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2008

A YEAR OF GROWTH

This year has seen sustained growth in numbers in the congregation. New faces have appeared and those who came occasionally have attended more regularly. Attendance at festival services – Christmas and Easter, Mothering Sunday and Harvest, for example, has increased, sometimes markedly. All this is encouraging, since it indicates that people are feeling confident that they will find what they need here.

As encouraging as the growth in numbers, however, has been the extent to which people have appreciated and made use of chances to deepen their faith and take new steps in their Christian commitment. Lent groups have been well attended as have the new "Breathing Space" communion services on the third Sunday of the month, and weekday evening Breathing Space services during Advent seemed to provide a much needed oasis of quiet for many in the run up to Christmas. I have had the privilege of helping some individuals explore their faith on a one to one basis – I am always more than happy to listen if people want to talk with me – and this has resulted in significant personal steps forward for them. One person has signed up for the Diocesan lay training scheme.

It has been an active year on many fronts. A successful flower festival last June brought many visitors into the church as well as involving local organisations. Thank you to all who helped with that event. Church music has been thriving, not only from our own very committed and talented choir and organist – thank you to Dan and to the choir for all their commitment and hard work - but also in the shape of several visiting choirs or instrumentalists who have given concerts here. We are beginning to get a reputation as a welcoming place for musicians which is something that can do nothing but good.

I have been especially encouraged by the extent to which people are coming up with ideas and taking initiatives within the church – the "meet your neighbours" sessions (see below) are a case in point, as are the church's musical activities. It bodes well for the future that people are so full of ideas for things we can do to enhance our church life and find points of connection with those who aren't regular churchgoers. All of this shows ways in which we are discovering and sharing what is "good news" for us as a church community.

CHILDREN'S WORK

There have been developments in our children's work too. Sunday school is still going strong, and is faithfully led by a team of helpers. The junior church council, which had its first meeting in January is providing a way of giving the younger members of our church a greater voice in our common life, which will help to make sure that they see the church as "theirs" rather than as something which belongs solely to the adults. As a result of their suggestions children are now reading and leading prayers on two Sundays of the month, and more social activities are being planned. We have begun to discuss the possibility of admitting children to communion before confirmation and will hope to make a decision about whether we wish to submit a request for permission to do this to the Bishop by the July meeting of the PCC. I am planning confirmation classes for young people of secondary school age, starting in May, with a view to taking them to a confirmation in the Autumn. (Several adults have also requested confirmation, whom I shall prepare individually.)

"Faith and Fun", the session for the under-fives and their carers, though appreciated by those who come, has struggled to build up numbers in its current slot on a Friday afternoon both because parents often go back to work very quickly and also because children are in day-care provision (or in school) from an early age. I am planning to move "Faith and Fun" to the fourth Sunday of the month after the All Age Communion, therefore. Families can either come to the 10 am service and stay on, or come for coffee at 11 and then join in. The format of songs, stories and crafts, which has proved popular, will be the same.

The new Beavers colony is going from strength to strength and it is hoped that Cubs may begin this year. The Beavers have come in force to various parade services during the year and seem to have felt very welcome here. Links with the schools continue to thrive, though I am always frustrated by the lack of time available to respond to all the opportunities that arise.

Sally Bright has taken over responsibility for organising CRB clearance for those who work with children. Marion Gilchrist continues to be our Child Protection Officer and has attended training during the year. The PCC all receive copies of the parish Child Protection policy statement at the first meeting of the PCC after the APCM and a copy of the Diocesan Child protection policy, which we commit ourselves to following is available on the red table at the back of the church as well as on the Rochester Diocesan Website (www.rochester.anglican.org).

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

St Peter and St Paul is very much a village church, and links with the local community are strong. We were able to be very much involved in trying to respond to the Post Office closure, and though we weren't able to make much difference to the outcome, the fact that we were prepared to try was appreciated by people in the village. The events committee are organising three "get to know your neighbours" evenings in April, to which people will be invited for a purely social get together, and at which local organisations can either send representatives or literature to be displayed. We hope this will help to build up the sense of community that is at risk of being lost when so many people are rushing from pillar to post, often in the "bubble" of a car.

THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT

A major frustration this year was the rash of thefts and linked damage to the church. This now seems to have abated, but it took up a great deal of the churchwardens' time, and mine as well. The chandelier has now been fitted with a motion sensitive alarm and valuable objects in the church treated with "Smartwater" which enables them to be traced if stolen.

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The PCC has met 6 times during the year, discussing a wide range of issues including various works needed on the church building, fire safety, communion before confirmation, the stewardship campaign, changes to financial arrangements for the Friends of Seal and the flower fund, and the Quinquennial inspection. Sub-committees have been formed – Church hall; Children's work; Safety, health and accessibility; Events and a churchwardens committee. The formation of these committees has enabled us to work more efficiently in the PCC.

We held a stewardship campaign in Summer 07 which brought in pledges of an extra £8600 per year. This was not as much as we had ideally hoped to raise, but was nonetheless very welcome. The PCC have increased my stipend to 5/6ths of the full-time stipend as a result.

We are, as ever, indebted to many people who give generously of their time and talents to the day by day running of the church – Rosemary and Kevin who lead worship and provide pastoral care, our churchwardens, Hilary and Christine, the PCC and sidespeople, those who make coffee, readers, intercessors, and many other faithful workers. Thank you to you all.

Anne Le Bas

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The deanery synod has met twice since the last APCM. The first meeting had as its special focus environmental issues, and was led by Professor Sam Berry. This was a very fruitful gathering which gave much food for thought. The second meeting included an exercise in which local churches recorded some of the facts about their church – size, activities, facilities etc. so that we could consider ways in which we could work together. The spring Deanery synod was cancelled as there was insufficient business to discuss. There will be a new Deanery Synod elected this year, and there are significant issues which will be coming to the synod for discussion in the next cycle. The Deanery Synod elects the members of General Synod, whose members shape the policy and direction of the Church of England nationally. Bearing in mind the very important matters which currently divide the church, such as the possibility of legislation to permit women to become bishops, and the tensions in the Anglican Communion about homosexuality, it is important that every church has its full quota of representatives on Deanery Synod if the widest range of opinions is to be heard.

CHURCH FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS

The following items on the maintenance of the church were reported to the PCC.

- Alarm checked and vestry alarm moved following fire risk assessment.
- Replacement of bottom section of lead drainpipe on southern aspect of tower following theft.
- Replacement of bolt on inner porch door of church together with latch and escutcheon plate following theft.
- Bottom rail and stiles of western door damaged during attempted break-in. Awaiting confirmation from diocese before initiating repairs. Insurance claim.
- Boiler room door repaired following attempted break-in.
- Damage to Camden vault, east of Lady Chapel, reported following attempted break-in.
- New curtains in tower completed.

- Completion of restoration of Lady Chapel altar frontals.
- Section of glass to church hall door replaced following accidental damage.
- Broken stay from tenor bell replaced free of charge by Whitechapel Bell Foundry as the original was faulty.
- Yew trees in graveyard pruned.
- The chandelier has been alarmed.
- Metal items marked with "Smartwater".
- Fire extinguishers have been inspected.
- Lightning protection system inspected.

Quinquennial report 31.10.07.

Matters arising from quinquennial report:-

- Electrical maintenance periodic inspection completed. Test certificate.
- Split gravestone adjacent to east wall of clergy vestry laid flat for safety.
- Gutters cleared, together with valley gutters, and turret roof on tower cleared of debris. Octagonal hopper north elevation of Chancel cleared.
- Dangerous table-top tomb made safe until repairs carried out. Faculty required.

C. Wightman and H. Coffey (churchwardens)

ELECTORAL ROLL

There are 143 members on the electoral roll 71 of whom are not resident in the parish. 13 names were added during the year, and 1 removed through death. The usual Sunday attendance, counted during October, was 84, but this number increased at Festivals.

J Myers (Electoral Roll Officer)

SEAL CHURCH CHOIR ANNUAL REPORT

The choir has had a great year and continues to lead the weekly sung worship at Seal with commitment, loyalty and dedication. There have been many highlights throughout the year including a concert to open the Patronal Festival which featured items sung by the whole choir and solo items from some of the junior choir, Choral Evensong at Easter, the choral contributions to weddings and of course the Carol Service at Christmas which was as successful as ever.

Recruitment continues to be on the agenda and with this in mind we held two "Open" choir practices to try and encourage anyone who previously hadn't thought about joining the choir to come and see for themselves what it's really like. Two more of these are planned for the 23rd and 30th April and it would be great to see new people coming and giving the choir a go. The junior choir has grown steadily in number and we have welcomed Lucy, Charles, Grace and Georgina as full members of the choir. There have been the usual round of outings and I would like, in particular, to thank Nicky Harvey who organised a whole junior church outing last term.

We are fortunate to have a number of the junior choir who, having been with us for a number of years, are ready to prepare for the RSCM higher awards. The aim is to prepare these children for these awards over the coming two terms with an aim to taking them in the early Summer of next year.

Future plans include more Open Choir Practices, a Joint Service with the choirs of Seal St Lawrence and Underriver (Sunday 30th November) and more regular Choral Evensongs (11th May, 29th June and 13th July).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the choir who have been so loyal and dedicated over this past year. Seal is extremely fortunate to have such a talented group of people who are prepared to give up hours of their time every week to enhance and enrich the worship of this church. I would also like to thank Anne for being so incredibly supportive of the choir and of all the music that goes on here; it's truly appreciated.

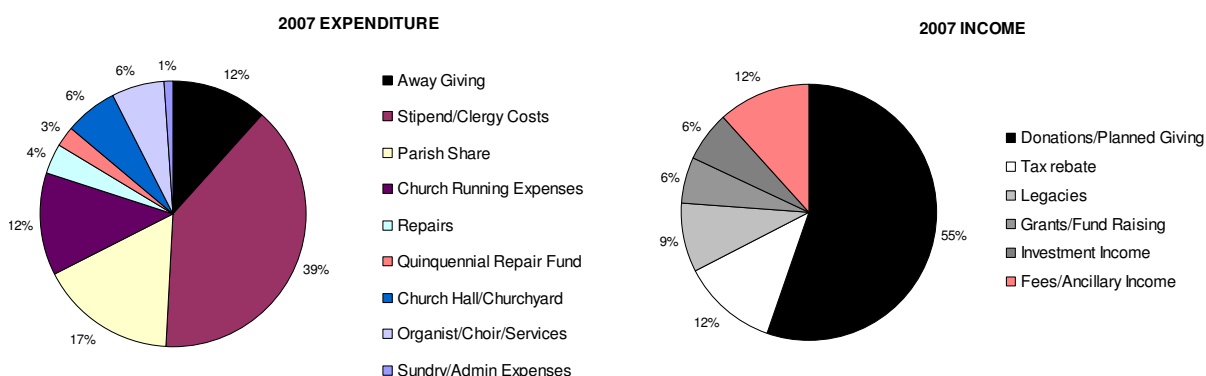
D Eaton (Organist and Choirmaster)

FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PCC (TREASURER'S REPORT)

The Financial Statements for the year ending 31st December 2007 are provided separately. These have been examined and approved by the Independent Examiner, Anthony Llewellyn, and a copy of his Report is also attached thereto together with a statement of the Church's accounting and reserves policy and the usual graphs for those who prefer pictures to pages of numbers.

Last year a shortfall of about £1,500 was predicted for 2007, as a result of which we were planning a Stewardship Campaign with a target of increasing our core income by 33% by 2009. In fact, expenditure was £1,280 less than budgeted at £57,400, due to lower Ministry and repair costs and, thanks particularly to some sizeable legacies and higher giving, income was nearly £6,000 higher than budgeted at £63,100. This resulted in an overall surplus (profit) for 2007 of nearly £5,700, most of which has been set aside for capital expenditure arising out of the quinquennial inspection undertaken recently (see below). So far, the Stewardship Campaign has yielded an increase of just under £10,000 in a full year (including the tax rebate) which is about two-thirds of our original target.

For a snapshot breakdown of both income and expenditure in 2007, please see the pie charts below.



Capital expenditure was relatively minor last year, involving residual costs for the South West wall totalling just £1,400. As a result of this and due to the healthy surplus in 2007, balance sheet assets (total cash and savings/investments) increased by £6,500 at the year end by comparison with 2006. Arising out of the recent quinquennial inspection we will have to undertake major repair works to the roof structure (death watch beetle) and to the boiler and chimney, plus various less urgent but nevertheless essential repairs. Estimates are being obtained but our current 'guesstimate' is that these items will cost between £10,000 and £15,000.

For 2008, we are predicting a small profit of around £1,000. Expenditure will be significantly higher at circa £64,500, mainly due to increased Ministry, Repair Fund and Parish Share costs, but, thanks to the increased giving resulting from the Stewardship Campaign, income should exceed this slightly.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels and need to raise substantial funds to maintain and preserve the Church building as well as to provide for the inevitability of cost inflation going forward. In particular, as you know it was our intention to increase Anne's stipend commensurate with her actual situation – as a full time working Priest – which unfortunately we have only partly achieved in 2007.

Therefore, for any of you who do not yet make a regular financial contribution to Seal Church or who may be able to afford to give more than you currently do, please give serious consideration to your financial giving, particularly to joining the planned giving scheme and, for those who are taxpayers, to using Gift Aid so that we can reclaim the basic rate tax you have paid back from the Government. One-off donations (again Gift Aided if possible) will also be extremely welcome in order to finance the substantial capital expenditure envisaged during the year.

Please remember that, apart from the tax rebate on Gift Aided donations, Seal Church receives no financial support whatsoever from Central or Local Government. We have to raise 100% of our annual running costs from the congregation and pay for any capital repair work ourselves or seek outside grant assistance.

M Harvey (Treasurer)