

## Rector's Letter 2022

Every annual report is out of date before it is written, let alone presented to an annual meeting. Saying that, annual reports give a useful summary of how things have been and how we have arrived at a present moment in time, and I thank everyone who has contributed to the report and to the activities described in it.

The report is, I hope, encouraging, and it suggests that we move forward through 2022 and into the future from a secure base. By the end of this summer, the building work undertaken as part of St Marylebone Changing Lives will have been completed albeit over budget and not quite on the time-frame imagined. In some areas much more has been done than we thought necessary at the outset of the project and in others work has not been done to save time and money. Some of this work which includes new heating boilers, replacing the Sacristy Steps and Torchères along with stabilizing the southeast transept and planting the long-unloved eyesore of the east bank with an environmentally friendly and pollution-eating plants, will begin in August and should be completed in time for Easter next year, just in time for the Rieger organ to be decommissioned ready for its 40-year rebuild.

The Changing Lives project has dominated the past nine years of my ministry here at St Marylebone and, whilst there will always be repairs and renovations to carry out on a Grade 1-listed living and working building, I hope that, as we reach the end of the project, we will be able to concentrate more on worship and people and serving the community than we have been able to do for the past few years, which is not to say that we have not been engaged in this work as well.

Fr Jack's departure at Easter was a great blow to many people: to our two schools, to members of the congregation and to me. His leaving highlighted a problem which, whilst long known, has never been properly addressed and that is that the enterprise that is St Marylebone cannot keep going on its present clergy staffing numbers. It is unfair for any institution, but perhaps even more so for a parish church like St Marylebone, to expect its incumbent to work for twelve or fourteen hours a day, often without a day off. It is widely said in the diocese that all the Rectors of St Marylebone have gone mad, bad or both! After almost twelve years, I can tell you that I have come pretty close to emulating, if not, indeed, surpassing them!

The Standing Committee and the PCC have begun to talk about the possibility of appointing an Associate Rector and I have been having discussions (not for the first time) with the diocese about how this might become a reality in the not-too-distant future, although the sticking will be finding and paying for suitable housing.

In the meantime, I am delighted to report that the Revd Canon Dr Robert Titley has offered to join the team as an Honorary Assistant Priest from this coming Sunday (May 29<sup>th</sup>). Fr Robert, who is married to Caroline, the Priest-in-Charge of St Andrew's, Islington, has recently retired as Canon Treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral, having previously served in the Diocese of Southwark, where he was ordained in 1985.

During his time at Salisbury, Fr Robert had oversight of the last stages of a major repair programme, fundraising campaign, a programme of social responsibility and the ministerial life of the cathedral. He also helped the cathedral to achieve the A Rocha UK Bronze Eco Award, which St Marylebone achieved earlier this year.

Fr Robert will work for a few sessions a week alongside Mother Katy and me and, if we are successful in interviews tomorrow, Fr Jack's replacement as Chaplain.

But St Marylebone is not just about its clergy, it is about churchwardens and PCC members, children and adults who come to worship, the ten and a half thousand patients and staff of the Marylebone Health Centre, the hundred and thirty clients and therapists of the St Marylebone HCC, the fourteen hundred staff and pupils of our two schools, the twenty four members of the staff team working out of the parish church, the members of the choir and the eight thousand people who live in this parish, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of people who come to the streets of this parish every single day for surgery and

diagnostic interventions, to work, learn, play, sleep rough or to who work in our parish's hospitals and schools and national institutions.

I have said before, there is no-where like St Marylebone "the great city north of Oxford Street" and, as we now move forward, the PCC has approved a response to Vision 2030, the Diocese of London's vision that "every Londoner encounters the love of God in Christ".

You have all been given a copy of St Marylebone's response to this challenge and, as I say in it, nothing 'just happens', nor can anything happen if everyone thinks it can all be 'done' by the clergy on behalf of everyone else; it is, or should be, the 'duty and the joy' of each and every one of *us* to make sure that 'every Londoner encounters the love of God in Christ'. The clergy and the staff team can help you, but we can't do it for you.

Serving the Community, Equipping Confident Disciples and Growing Creatively is the baptismal calling and responsibility of everyone associated with the parish church.

So, my challenge at the end of these Annual Meetings is this, that as we learn to live with Covid, a rising cost of living crisis and a world at war with itself, we work out *together* how we can share the love of Christ more effectively.

I'll end my letter with a paraphrase of the words which ended last year's letter, by saying that I hope that *everyone*, I do mean everyone, will at least try to pray more regularly (and give more realistically); come to worship more often and volunteer to help. Each of us has something to give, however small or inadequate we feel that might be. The list of the ways in which *everyone* can play their part is almost limitless.

My God bless us all in our endeavours to play our part in making sure that every Londoner encounters the love of God in Christ.

**The Revd Canon Dr Stephen Evans**  
**Rector of St Marylebone with Holy Trinity, St Marylebone**

**25<sup>th</sup> May 2021**