

Vicar's Report 2022

This past Friday marked six months since being installed as Vicar here at St Peter's... The first thing I want to say is thank you to all those who went out of their way to make me feel so welcome and so quickly part of the church family gathered here at St Peter's. It's a sign of the warmth of our welcome as a community that I soon felt very much at home, so much so that it's hard to believe that it's only been six months!

Vacancy & Pandemic

Thank you to all who did so much during the vacancy, especially in the context of the pandemic. This includes visiting clergy who celebrated the Eucharist and enabled us to restart occasional offices, particularly Irena Edgcumbe and Andy Rider. Thank you especially to all those who do so much to enable the life of St Peter's in all its varied and many ways: from cleaning the church, tending and arranging our flowers, providing refreshments, feeding our community during Souper Tuesday, singing, making music, serving at the altar, preaching, teaching our shared faith and inspiring our children and young people, looking after our buildings and finances, leading teams, serving as Churchwardens, welcoming all those who come in to the church and crypt, engaging with our community and driving our contribution to social justice. Thank you!

Celebration

This morning we celebrate especially the contribution Eckart has made to our life here at St Peter's and continues to make as a valued member of our church family. I know how appreciated Eckart's ministry was during the vacancy and in his many years service leading the servers, chairing the worship team, and more latterly in the work of Save the Music. Today allows us to celebrate all that he has been for St Peter's! We also celebrate Vivette's ministry as Pastoral Assistant and all that she does and has done in the life of St Peter's. Vivette has kindly agreed to maintain some of her many responsibilities for a further year as she helps others transition to some of these roles.

Julie and Haren both go above and beyond in their roles and their work is often unnoticed but essential in our everyday life. Likewise, thanks go to those who assist them - our paid cleaners for the crypt, Debby and all those who act as stewards.

In December, the sudden death of Liz Kohler was a shock to our entire church family. Liz was a keen volunteer at the heart of many of the teams which help St Peter's to flourish, and involved with many organisations locally and beyond. Her legacy to us is being used to help improve our accessibility, a cause which she would have championed. May she rest in peace, and rise in glory.

Community

We continue to build new relationships and friendships across our community. Highlights include, thanks to Jane's leadership, our sponsoring an Afghan family who will be arriving imminently through our work as De Beauvoir Welcomes Refugees, and hosting Another Drop in the Ocean. We continue to deepen our relationship with the DBA, together arranging the Pop-Up Concert for Ukraine which raised thousands of pounds. We've celebrated local organisations, including Tropical Isles at Mardi Gras and De Beauvoir WI with our International Women's Day Mass and cocktails at the Vicarage. We look forward to the community celebration of Happy Baby and Woven Gold on the evening of June 19th!

Christian Unity & Vocation

It was a joy to watch our livestream from my Covid isolation and see our relationships strengthened with Fr Derek and our Roman Catholic siblings in Christ on Palm Sunday. I hope this is something we can build on in future as a sign of Christian unity and witness to our communities. We've welcomed Charlie, Sarah, and Robin, young people discerning their vocation to lay and ordained ministries, who have joined us during the week leading stations of the cross, or at morning and evening prayer. It's wonderful too that we're able to welcome Fr Nathan who now has permission to officiate adding to those whose ministry enriches our parish, including Sarah, Boachie, and Amanda.

Music and Worship

Whilst we are very sad to have to say good bye to David, his wonderful work in our musical life offers us a strong foundation on which to build. The appointment of a new Director of Music with a remit to enhance our celebration of the Eucharist, whilst building links and relationships through song across the community is an exciting step as we continue to try to grow St Peter's together as a church family. Romee continues to support us wonderfully each Sunday and enables us to share her musical talent so generously. Her playing of the Ukrainian National Anthem at our prayer vigil, the Pop-Up concert and as a communion motet during Lent has been a powerful reminder of the power of music to hold and enable a community in prayer and worship.

Life Events, Children and Young People

Since I've arrived, we've celebrated two weddings, and six baptisms. 8 candidates are being prepared to make their first Communion. Noisy Church now runs on the first two Sundays of each month thanks to the efforts of the fantastic volunteers who make the chaos of Noisy Church ordered! We continue to seek ways to increase our offering for young people by increase their visibility, agency and participation in our shared life. Our Christingle and Easter children's service drew in large numbers of new children and families, many of whom had previously been unconnected with the church.

Where We Are: Hopes and Challenges

As our reports show, St Peter's is making good progress as we continue to recover from the pandemic. We do face some challenges. Financially, we need to continue to increase our income to enable us to pay our parish share, to grow our church family, and extend our ministry to our community, particular amongst communities and age groups currently less well served and represented. This will mean renewing our focus on the stewardship of all the many gifts entrusted to us, including our finances. We need new volunteers to support existing volunteers, especially in offering refreshments as a vital way of building relationships.

Encouragingly, there are already signs of the good things God is up to in our midst. New people are encountering God in prayer. New and refreshed relationships are enjoyed across our community. We're finding new ways to join in with God's mission through social justice and worship. In the year ahead, each of us can ask ourselves the exciting question: what does God has in store for *us* as a member of our church family here at St Peter's? How is God calling *you* to play your part in all that God is doing in the life of St Peter's? How is God calling you to be involved?

Fr Simon, Vicar