

RECTOR'S ADDRESS TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH, WIMBLEDON 2009

The last year has seen many changes in the society around us. There is less job security; there is anxiety about pensions and savings; and there is a loss of confidence in many of our institutions.

Amidst all this uncertainty, the message of Christian hope has seemed ever more pertinent. I have been increasingly struck by the number of couples wanting to get married at St Mary's who genuinely want God's blessing upon their relationship, and by the families bringing children to baptism who want their child to grow up with a faith in Christ. We have seen large congregations at Easter and Christmas and new people coming to our services almost every week.

We have facing us the most wonderful challenge – to enable people to live and hope and love through God.

This is the framework for everything that we do, whether we are talking about roof repairs, or baptism lunches, or new drains. Having said that, every detail is vitally important to the whole. So I am incredibly grateful to the host of people who make this church so attractive, both physically and socially, and also to those who monitor our financial resources and provide much needed advice -- for without all these people, who give so willingly of their time and talents, we would not be able to keep the church as it is.

So thank you to our gardeners, especially Jenny and John, who make the churchyard such a delightful place. Thank you to our flower ladies, our cleaners, and silver polishers and altar linen launderers all of whom contribute to making the inside of the church look beautiful. Thank you to the sidesmen, and welcomers, those who give lifts, the servers, those who make the coffee, those who help with Tuesday lunches, all of whom give the church warmth and humanity. Thank you too for all those who help with children's work, and in particular our children's wardens and those who run the crèche. It is always a delight to see all the children pouring in at the end of a service – sometimes to the great surprise of newcomers to the church.

Thank you to our musicians and bell ringers who lift our spirits and fill us with a sense of the numinous. We are very grateful to Liz Hamilton for all the work she has done in organising the restoration of the organ. It is very good to be able to hear the organ in its full glory and we look forward to the dedication concert on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

Thank you Jenny and Camilla who sort out hall hire, and to Fiona for all the admin work that goes on behind the scenes. Thank you to Tony, both for his verging duties and the innumerable tasks to which he turns his skilful hand, and thank you also to Vic for stepping in to verge at weddings and other services when Tony is unavailable.

This year we have had a great series of imaginative and fun social events, including a barn dance, a quiz evening and the wonderful parish breakfasts. Thank you to John and Jo for organising these most enjoyable occasions. We are now looking forward to the poetry evening.

We are blessed with so many volunteers that it is impossible to name everyone. However, there are some people I must thank by name.

Firstly Liz Collins, for the amazing work she has done in sorting out our accounts and utility bills.

Secondly my colleagues, Catherine, Joan, Hilary and Bruce, who do so much, with so much good humour and grace. I could not manage without them. Having seen how well Easter worked in my absence, I wonder if I am needed at all!

I am delighted that Martin Booth will be joining us at the end of June as Curate, and you will also be seeing more of Tracy up front as her training progresses.

And finally, thank you to my wardens, who work such long hours, and are unfailingly cheerful. I am delighted that Robert is continuing, but desolate at the thought of losing Rosemary. From plying plasterers with sherry before I arrived, to donning marigold gloves and dealing with unmentionable things, Rosemary has quietly and thoughtfully managed everything that has come her way.

Rosemary, enjoy a well earned rest now, and I hope that this is something that will remind you of your best times as churchwarden (while the worst times fade quickly from memory).