

Easter Vestry 2012

Thank you all for coming this evening and for giving of your time for this important meeting. This is the 16th time I have addressed an annual meeting of this congregation, 12 of those have been Easter Vestry Meetings. It is difficult to find something new to say because much of church life changes very little from year to year. However, we know in our own lives many changes, sometimes unwanted or unexpected changes, affect us daily. It is always reassuring to know that our God does not change and that He is sovereign over all things.

There are several people I want to publicly thank this evening:

Jack Blair – I want to thank Jack for his faithfulness in ministry and friendship over the past year. Jack has proved over the past 20 years to be a trusted and loyal colleague and to be an ever listening ear. His words of encouragement and his faithful consistency is a blessing to me personally and I know also to many at HT. I know also that over the past year people have sought him out in the congregation to seek advice and pastoral support and I want to thank him for taking on those extra responsibilities at times and also to acknowledge that it reflects very much the high esteem we all hold Jack in.

Bill Lunney – Billy has been my warden for the past four years and I want to thank him for his support, his prayers and his loyalty over those years. I want to put on record my appreciation for the quiet,

efficient and unassuming manner in which he has ensured everything was ready for Sunday worship. It has been very obvious to me that the glory of God was his only concern in the task of rector's warden and I have been blessed to have him carry out his duties for the past years. We should also thank Billy this evening for attending to the flower beds and grass at HT. The flower bed which borders the houses alongside us have been not only maintained but all the plants have been donated by Billy.

Garry Richmond – thank you to Garry also for carrying out faithfully his duties as people's warden. Again the chief aim of all that Garry has laboured in at HT was God's glory and the furtherance of his kingdom. I want to also thank him for the extra work that he has undertaken at times with overseeing odd jobs that needed sorting within this building.

Youth Leaders – every year I thank our youth leaders for their work but I really do not believe that as a congregation we truly appreciate the amount of work that they put in week by week. I must say once again that the vast majority of our congregation do not support them at events such as enrolment services. Can I encourage you all to make a point of personally thanking them and encouraging them over the next year. All of them work hard at winning young people for Christ and of teaching them the Christian faith – please support them and pray for them.

BB – thank Drew and officers, helpers

GB – Irene etc special mention – stepping down after 20 years

Youth Club - Youth Club – I want to speak for a moment about our youth club – sometimes it can get forgotten and yet it reaches a lot of kids who never know anything of Christ apart from what they hear there on a Friday evening.

Seed

Potter's House, J Club

The Discipleship Courses for young people

Ladies'/Men's Groups

Young at Heart Group

Bowls

Badminton

Buchanan Trust – thank Drew and Karen for setting up this trust which has enabled us over the years to train young people in ministry.

Flowers – thank all those who contributed to the flowers this year and to thank Hazel and Sandra for the decorating of the church week by week. I know that there have been occasions when other people have helped but thank you to you both for carrying the main burden of that work

Selwyn and Roger – I want to thank them both for playing the organ to enable us to sing the praises of almighty God. Selwyn has moved on from Holy Trinity and Roger has been unable to continue because of ongoing health issues. The SV have advertised and continue to look for a new organist.

Choir – I thank them for their faithfulness and their commitment to leading us in praise at public worship. I think it is fair to say that without them some Sundays there would be silence when it comes to a hymn. Thank you for the strong lead that you give and for serving God in this way. Thank you for your commitment to be here week by week, it is not taken for granted and we want to say how much we appreciate your ministry. I also want to thank them for the gracious way in they allow others to join them for special occasions. Many other choirs would be up in arms at such but I believe their acceptance of this is a reflection of the fact that they are there for the glory of God and not for their own glory and I thank them for that.

Praise Band – Thank you for enabling us to worship God through new music and new songs. We are blessed to be able to have available such a rich variety of music and song to worship. We are thankful to God that you freely give of your time and talent to serve Christ in this way here at HT.

Louise – thank you for taking on the position of musical co-ordinator/director. I believe that in the past year we have moved on with God through the music and worship that you have arranged and

organised for His glory here. I think Easter Day this year was an especially powerful service where God richly blessed us all. Thank you for your hard work in this area of our life as a fellowship.

Rotas – thank you to all who serve on the chair rota, tea rota, welcoming rota and for those who organise those each week. Thank you to Colin McIlwaine who organises the readers and prayer leaders for public worship – this is important as worship is a corporate act and not just for me and Jack to be heard. It is important that different voices are heard and different people get to lead us in intercessory prayer. Please take the step and volunteer to read or lead us in prayer – it is such an encouragement to us all.

Sound desk and laptop – thank you to those who oversee these each week so that we can worship. Technology is great when it works and I thank them for persevering through many trials with the technology.

Prayer Team – thank you for your prayer support for this parish, for our ministry and for our spiritual well-being each week. It has been a joy to see this ministry prosper and grow. Many people mention to me how thankful they are for the prayer team and for their ministry amongst us. Thank you for praying for us and with us on a Sunday morning and each Thursday evening. Only eternity will reveal the true value of those prayers but we know, even in a small way, how rich our lives are because of them now. Thank you.

Safe Guarding Trust – there is probably no more thankless task today in a church than being the person who has to oversee this area of church life. I want to thank Sam Skelly for being meticulous in this area of work. I know people complain and find all the forms etc to be irksome, to say the least, but we have no choice but to comply with the law of the land and the law of the church. Our church insurers have made it clear that if we do not adhere to the SGT rules then if anything were to happen our insurance would be invalidated. SGT is as much about protecting our leaders as it is protecting our children and vulnerable adults. The protection of children and vulnerable adults must be high on our agenda, but equally we need to protect our leaders from any spurious accusations. As you will be aware from the media such accusations can surface many years later and accurate records may one day help the innocent to defend themselves if falsely accused.

Shirley Moffett – I want to put on record the appreciation of the Select Vestry, myself, and the parishioners, to Shirley for her work in keeping this building clean and tidy. I think we all are a little guilty of taking that for granted and we may not fully appreciate the amount of work that goes into keeping this place spic and span. Thank you for your work and faithfulness in serving God in this way.

Maurice Langley – for putting the magazine together each month.

Drew Buchanan – for sorting out our web page, for the ezine each month and for the podcasts which allow many people to hear the word of God each week.

If there is anyone I have forgotten to thank please accept my apologies, it was not intentional.

Over the past year I would say to you all that I don't remember a heavier or pastorally more challenging period in ministry in Holy Trinity. I think as a church we need to be aware that a lot of our people and our leaders in particular have faced very difficult and trying times in their lives. I do not wish to share in any detail the past year but it has been an exhausting workload of pastoral care and I want to thank those people who have shared it with me and those who have offered professional advice and assistance when I have turned to them. I don't mind admitting to you that there are times when I have felt overwhelmed by the task of pastoring this congregation and it was in those moments that I thank God for the friendships and fellowship that I find within HTW to give me strength and support. May I also say to you that I sometimes find myself between a rock and hard place with pastoral issues. There have been occasions when I have been unable to say anything in answer to questions or even to defend my actions, or non-actions, because I am aware of pastoral information that the wider congregation is not. Those are difficult situations to find oneself in and sometimes it leaves others very frustrated and maybe even angry with the rector. There are many occasions when I have no

choice but to prioritise situations and people and the result is often that general visiting has to take a back seat for a period. If you have felt neglected I am sorry. I also suggest to you that you ask me directly to make a pastoral visit and especially I would ask that you let me know if someone goes into hospital.

May I say to you as a congregation thank you – thank you for caring for each other – for pastoring each other and supporting one another. You do far more pastoral ministry than I do – you just don't call it pastoral ministry.

Discovery – at synod last year the bishop launched a strategy for the diocese: Engage Culture, Equipping Ministry, Enabling Change. I think those three things are at the heart of what we want to do here at HT. To enable us to do that we will be launching the Tear Fund Discovery programme/journey for HT on the 29th April. We will launch it with a celebration service. Celebrating 20 years of faithful service to Christ in, through and from this community of Christ. I want you all to commit to this in prayer and in giving of your time. It is a journey of Discovery as a fellowship so that we might be able to understand our community better, understand its needs better and be better able to reach out with the love and grace of Christ to that community. I thank Fiona, Alison and Bert for taking on the task of leading us through this journey. I personally am excited by the prospects of what we will see God do through this journey together.

I don't think I have ever been as anxious about a meeting in HT as this one this evening. The past few weeks have been very draining in many ways and I thank the Lord Jesus for His grace, mercy and strength that has brought us through this far. I want to put on record my appreciation, admiration and respect for the SV in how they have handled the past few weeks. Without them I know I simply would not be standing here this evening. In a few moments Drew will outline, as best he can, the financial situation of the parish. It will come as a shock to you and I want you to know that before he speaks. I also want to say that he will be unable to answer many of the questions you may have because we simply do not have the information and we must await the auditor's report. As I said a few weeks ago when that report is with the SV a special congregational meeting will be called and all facts will be laid before you. There will be no secrets, no cover up and nothing will be hidden from you. I would ask for your patience, understanding and prayers as we work through this difficult period in the life of HT.

Personal Notes:

I want to thank you all for your love and support to me, to Janet and Taylor over the past year. Thank you for your prayers during my time off after my ankle operation. A special thanks to those of you who walked my dogs during those five weeks.

Pastorally the workload at HT never diminishes. I know that sometimes it may appear that general visiting is being neglected but the unseen work of pastoral care to the bereaved, to families in crisis, those in hospital, and those with long term issues often has to take priority in my diary. I am sorry and ask your forgiveness if at times you feel you or your family have been neglected but I often find myself in a no win situation when trying to prioritise visiting and I do not always get the decision correct.

I want to thank the SV for their support over the past year as I completed my studies at Union Theological College. I am glad to say that they are now complete and I will, God willing, graduate in May of this year.

I want to thank Janet and Taylor for their love and support. Without them in my life I simply could not be the rector of HT. Taylor keeps me well grounded in the real world and Janet is not only my best critic, but also my chief encourager and best friend. I thank them too for putting up with a grumpy old man at times.

Thank the Lord Jesus who called me by grace into saving faith and who has brought me to this point in ministry. Being in ministry is an immense privilege and one I never take for granted. It is very difficult at times but I would not change being your pastor for anything. I am sure many Sunday mornings you see me sitting on the steps of the sanctuary just watching you come in for morning worship. On those occasions I am thanking God in my heart for you

and for calling me here. Thank you for allowing me to be your pastor.