

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

We are the Body of Christ, and as we were all baptised by the same Holy Spirit we part of the same Body, not two or more bodies. We are all different and all essential to the wellbeing and healthy running of the Body. We have all been given different gifts to bless the Body, help it function and grow the KOG.

First I would like to thank-you all, for your part in making this body function. And most of all I would like to thank my husband, Paul, who makes it possible for me to be part of this body, and able to play my part in its health and wellbeing.

I'd also like to thank a great many of you ... thanks particularly go to Rev Carol Mitson who has given so many years of faithful service to this parish, and without whom it would not be the parish it is today. Carol is now worshipping and ministering in Dedham, where she lives, and though we miss her, we wish all of Gods blessings on her and John. Rev. Geoff Read and a team of three recently retired Priests have offered to work in the parish so you will get to know them over the coming year. They are sharing leading the services on the first Sunday in the month between them.

Thank-you to Graham and Jos, Clifford and Laura, for being our Churchwardens for the past year. As you most probably know Jos, Clifford and Laura have not offered themselves for re-election and so will stand down at the end of their term of office, 31st July if they aren't replaced. Particularly we thank Jos who I think has been a Churchwarden for 14 years, it was very generous of you to do so much, for so long, thank-you. And thank-you for being prepared to carry on being verger at weddings and funerals for the time being.

Thank-you Jasper for being our PCC Treasurer for so long, and particularly for the last two years when you have asked to stand down, and no one has offered to take over your mantle. Your work is really appreciated, thank-you. We will miss your wisdom and your diligence.

Thanks must also be given to Gemma Smith who has been the PCC Secretary for the past year, but who has moved, so is no longer able to fulfil this role. Thank-you to those who have taken our minutes since she has left, and thanks to Stephen Garner for drawing up our Annual Report again this year, your work in this direction is much appreciated.

With this list of retirements, and those who had come to the end of their three year term of office on the PCC, I came to church last week with a WANTED sheet! At that time we needed 3 Churchwardens, a PCC Treasurer, a PCC Secretary and 2 PCC Members. (Patsy Ann had already agreed to be nominated for re-election onto the PCC). Thank-you to all of you who have been prepared to be nominated.

Stephen Garner and Denise Hobday have been prepared to be nominated as Churchwardens for Langham, Liz Nickerson has offered to be nominated as PCC Secretary, Stephen Whybrow and Anthony Corin have offered to be nominated to the PCC Treasurer's post. (It is permissible for two people to share this role between them.)

If elected, Liz Nickerson will take one of the PCC Members positions and Michelle Percival has offered to be nominated into the second position.

All Members of the Deanery Synod have to be elected every three years and this is one of these years. The good news is that three of our four representatives, Stephen Garner, Dominic Sheil and Denise Hobday have offered to be re-elected. Thank-you. If anyone else is prepared to represent us in the way we'd be very grateful if you would offer to be nominated.

I would also like to give thanks to Ian who stood down as the Newsletter Editor during the year. Thanks go to Pauline Coverley for taking on his mantle and the Editorship of the Langham and Boxted Newsletter. During the year Scott Dolling continued his work relating to the advertisements in the Newsletter, and he has been joined by Claire Arculus, thank-you both.

I would also like to thank Brian Flack, and Graham, who quietly behind the scenes make it possible for our buildings remain in good order, so that we can worship in comfort. At the same time I would like to thank the Langham Church Support Trust for paying for the re-roofing of the Hurlock Room, and thank-you to those for the work that has been done in improving the Hurlock Room since. Thanks go to Mrs Tolhurst for arranging for the repairs to the lych gate and for paying half of the associated costs.

I would also like to thank Denise Hobday for all of her work as our Reader; to Mark our organist; to Patsy Ann and all those who care for our children in Sunday Group. Thank-you to Dominic and Linda, and the team who run The Zone, and The Edge, in Boxted Methodist Chapel hall. Thank-you to Don and Carola and all who run the Drop-In Café on a Friday morning, this is a great success and a blessing to the village. As is Good Neighbours, thank-you to everyone who volunteers to drive.

Thank-you to you who pray for our parish and the wider world; to everyone who offers hospitality and provides tea, coffee and food after services; thank-you to those who clean our churches: thank-you to all of you who have decorated them so beautifully, not only for our festivals but also faithfully on a week-by-week basis, Dot and Annette, and the teams in both churches, thank-you.

There are many more who work tirelessly for our churches ... thank-you all, too many to name, for your time and commitment. Thank-you for your contribution to making the Body of Christ in Langham and Boxted. You are all very much appreciated.

Following the elections, after my report, we will see quite a change in the PCC, thank-you again to all of you who have done so much for the parish, and thank-you to all of you who are prepared to be nominated for office. I really appreciate all of you. But the Body of Christ in Langham and Boxted can't continue to function in this way, it isn't sustainable. During the coming year we are going to have to consider ways that we can function more efficiently, reduce our overall running costs, reflect on our spirituality and do our bit to improve the health of the Body of Christ. These are matters which we will have to bring to our PCC Meetings.

During the year

- The 9.30 services on the third Sunday of each month have continued to grow. The team planning these services is growing in confidence and skills and they are becoming a blessing to many.

- Thanks go to the team who are working on raising the profile of our finances in the parish, they have made a difference ... we are not eating into our reserves in the same way as we were.
- The three parishes are doing more together, supporting each other in Men's and Women's breakfast, Advent and Lent Groups, joint fifth Sunday services, PCC away days, and not least of all our Church Administrator, Liz Dixon, who is here with us tonight. Thank-you Liz.
- I have undertaken training for Baptism and post-funeral visiting with members of the parish so we are moving forward in these directions
- Spearheaded by a team in West Bergholt we are in the process of applying to get funding towards a part-time Families Worker who will work in all of the churches and schools
- Langham with Boxted, along with West Bergholt and Great Horkesley, have agreed to start the journey to be part of the North Colchester Mission and Ministry Unit. This will be a grouping of eight parishes, ourselves, Myland, St. Luke's in Colchester and Little Horkesley, Mount Bures and Wormingford. We will then, as a group of parishes, share our resources. It will also mean that the Priests are not working alone but have the support of colleagues. We will learn more of what it means to be in an MMU as the year progresses.
- We ran the Resolve Course for folk who made New Year's Resolutions, with the aim of helping them to keep them. As a progression we plan to run an ALPHA Course starting on 25th April, after Easter and during the Autumn Term there will be a confirmation Course leading up to Bishop Roger holding a Confirmation Service in one of our churches.
- Sadly Evensong at St. Peter's was not well supported and so it stopped for a while. It has recommenced on a quarterly basis and we will see how this works out.

We should celebrate is our relationship with St. Peter's School, Boxted and with Langham School. Our relationship with both schools has significantly deepened during the past year, and we are being invited in to both school more than previously.

I think that these thoughts illuminate much of the journey Langham with Boxted has made this year, and will make in the year to come.

So, looking forward to the coming year ... there are some things in the pipeline and some questions to ask ourselves.

Questions we can be asking ourselves include

- How have we grown spiritually during the last year?
- Have we had a life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ this year, or not?
- Are we like the church in Ephesus, having lost its first love of God?
- Are we lukewarm like the Laodicean church?
- Or are we like the church in Thyatira, on fire for God, full of love, faith and service, with perseverance and growth?
- How confident are we in our growth in maturity and numbers in the coming year?

And as we ask these questions, let us pray for ourselves and the coming year in the life of this parish. Amen.