

**St Peter and St Paul, Old Brampton**  
**REPORT OF THE PRIEST-IN-CHARGE**  
**January to December 2009**

**Change but not decay**

Celia left us for home territory in January. Her ministry was deeply valued. She left with our love and gratitude. In Spring I was asked to take responsibility for Loundsley Green when Fr Frank left, and that happened in November. It meant that past relationships were renewed, but since I am unable to be in two places at once, it also meant that not one but two 9.30 services a month must be non-Eucharistic. On these Sundays Eucharist is celebrated at 8 am, so a *Service of the Word* allows other options, with the preacher less pressed for time. It means that we need to find people to lead such services when the Vicar is at one of his other churches. We need to grow our own Worship Leaders, as well as using Readers and retired clergy from elsewhere. The 8 am Eucharist congregation is healthy, and the 9.45 Thursday Eucharist and Sunday Evensong have their own devoted congregations.

**Vision, growth ...**

Celia's departure highlighted the need for All Age Worship Leaders. This brave group of pioneers was commissioned in Derby Cathedral during the year, and Helen Proudfoot, the Diocesan Children's Adviser, came to Old Brampton to hear the team renew their vows in the presence of the congregation. Other visitors included The Revd Richard Jordan (Diocese and Society officer), Canon Andie Brown (Derby Cathedral), The Revd Paul Bettison (Ashgate Hospice), Ingrid Keith (Christian Aid), The Bishop of Repton and The Revd Michael Mitton. Michael started the process of developing a vision for the next ten years or so. This is of critical importance, for history demonstrates that a church without healthy links with the people of its parish is likely to come to grief, and Old Brampton church exists in a 'bubble', away from the bulk of the parish population. With this in mind, members of the church attended workshops in Bakewell, Walton and Derby. I hope that the awareness of the need for a vision will gradually trickle through, for without vision I can see the church within the next 10 years (look around and see how many of us will have returned to dust by then) having a service once a fortnight, then once a month, once a quarter .... I don't know how to get this message across other than by saying it again and again. Water upon a stone.

**... and filthy lucre**

We spend more than we receive. It is a great sadness to me, and no little shame, that the PCC decided not to pay the 2009 Diocesan share in full. To have contributed £4K to charities while withholding £2K from the Diocese is nothing more than trying to buy an easy conscience. The Reformation began by revulsion at just such a practice. If we continue as we are, Old Brampton will be bankrupt in 5 years' time. Maybe this is what needs to happen to concentrate the mind. Archbishop Michael Ramsey said 'it may be the will of God that our Church should have its heart broken, and if that were to happen it wouldn't mean that we were heading for the world's misery but quite likely pointing the way to the deepest joy.' Or maybe we need a financial strategy too—not just asking worshippers to give more, but also having a public fundraising campaign. The trouble is that people will need to know what they are contributing to, and the maintenance of what they see as a private members' club is hardly likely to be attractive.

**Growing in faith**

Old Brampton people have been loyal supporters of the Adult Education discussion groups. We have covered four topics in 2009: Lent groups, *Parables, Exploring Holy Scripture, What it means to be human*. These have been supported by the MMA, and more recently by ordinands. My responsibilities as Assistant Diocesan Director of Ordinands have brought us Keith Cocking and Marcia Bown on extended placement, and several visitors on other occasions. There were two candidates for Confirmation in November 2009, and one young lady was prepared for Holy Communion before Confirmation. I encourage all who come to church but are not confirmed to contact me about confirmation. *Little Lambs* and *Junior Church* prosper thanks to the dedicated work of their leaders, but as I wrote last year, we make no provision for teenagers. Research shows that there is no point expecting teenagers to go to church unless their mates are there. It is not a matter of worship style, but of people being with their peers. I do not know how to address this.

**Serving the community: Old Brampton's biggest challenge**

It is good to report that James Wilson has resumed a pastoral role in his ministry to the sick and the care homes of the parish. What is more, James has established the prayer group. I hope his example will inspire others. I continue to be invited to Holme Hall and Cutthorpe schools. Help would be welcome. I move around the parish and am beginning to be known. Do people connect me with the church? Old Brampton is a popular

wedding venue because of its setting and appearance. The fete draws people from outside the parish. But otherwise, the church community is curiously insular and inward-looking. Its social activities sustain existing members, but apart from weddings and the fete, there is no table spread for outsiders. What about imaginative use of the church: concerts, exhibitions, ministry to walkers and tourists? What about cooperating with neighbours to serve the community? What about any activity that holds out a hand to outsiders? If we want the financial support of the community, we need to show by our actions that we serve them. Archbishop William Temple said 'The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.' Lift your eyes to the messy wide world out there: that is what the Incarnation is all about.

### **Growing pains**

Six years ago Old Brampton had a vicar to itself; now you have to share a Vicar with two other parishes. This means that today's Vicar can not do what the Vicar did 10 years ago. The church community is being forced to grow up and take responsibility for itself. Some of you don't like this. Stick at it: your future depends upon it. There is nothing I would like more than to see people volunteering, taking the initiative and displaying get-up-and-go. The Christian life is not about being comfortable; the Gospel is not a soft-option. 'God loves us where we are, but loves us too much to leave us there.' When I move on, it is likely that the interregnum will be lengthy, and that ordained ministers will be even harder to find than they are now, so you will come to appreciate my wisdom. A prophet is never welcomed in his own back yard.

### **Thanks**

There are many unsung heroes who sing, ring, play, read, pray, tidy up, feed, run stalls and coordinate groups of one sort or another: thank you all. The website is a great blessing, and producing the pewsheet is more complex than you realise, so thank you to the technical experts. And of course I acknowledge the work of the Churchwardens, the PCC and its officers: thank you.

### **Finally ...**

"Don't ask, 'Why were things better in the old days?' It's not an intelligent question." *Ecclesiastes 7:10*. We live in 'interesting times', so gird your loins for the challenges that face us. There are difficult decisions to be made and it is inevitable—indeed desirable—that there will be gritty clashes. But remember that pearls form around grit, and for us the pearl is of great price.

Lord God of creation, stir up in our hearts the will to serve you in the world and in worship. Dispel our fears and bring healing so that Old Brampton church life may be refreshed and enriched as we offer back to you the gifts and grace you give us.

*Oremus invicem*

Fr Stanley  
25 February 2010