

RECTOR'S REPORT VESTRY 25 FEBRUARY 2018

This being my 26th Vestry I thought I would look back to my first Vestry meeting 25 years ago on the 28th March 1993. To quote from my 1993 Rector's Vestry report:

"St Cyprian's is my first appointment as Rector of a Parish and it was with great trepidation and uncertainty that I came here. When Bishop Ross appointed me Rector of this Parish he gave me a mandate consisting of three options:

Firstly – to build St Cyprian's into a viable and vibrant worshipping community;

Secondly – to move the location of the Church to a more suitable site and;

Thirdly – if need be, to close St Cyprian's down and to amalgamate with St John the Divine, Clark Road.

The threat of closure is nothing new and should not come as a surprise. In Fr Harold Crane's time 1983-1989 an urgent appeal was launched to parishioners to help save St Cyprian's from being sold and turned into a Supermarket. Last year, Fr Harker 1989-1992, in his report, warned that if St Cyprian's continued at its present pace it would literally die by the year 2000. The prospect of moving St Cyprian's nearly happened in Fr Rod Van Zuylen's time 1977-1985 when he set about to relocate St Cyprian's near to the University, but due to various constraints his plans were thwarted." End Quote.

Further to this the Rectory, which had probably not been touched since it was built in 1939 had become dilapidated. The Parish Council decided to gut the kitchen and bathroom to find that "the Parish had no money to repair the Rectory and we found ourselves in an impasse where the Rectory could not be repaired and we could not move in until it was habitable. I then went on to say "at this point in my report you may be thinking that it is a report of gloom, doom and despair.

"This is most definitely not the case. My report to you today is about hope, about a vision for the future and it is most certainly NOT about closing down St Cyprian's"

"The future for this Parish lies in hard work and a conscious participation in its activities. Unfortunately we require frightening sums of money to tackle other pressing maintenance needs, such as the Church building itself. In the next couple of years there will have to be ongoing activities and appeals to help break the back of the maintenance work." End quotes.

That was the situation 25 years ago. What has been accomplished in this time is remarkable. Not only in terms of maintenance, extending the Parish Hall, upkeep of the grounds and well managed finances, but more importantly the things for which we are primarily here for.

The faithful worship of God in the Sunday and weekday services that reflects a dignity, reverence and adoration that leads to a consciousness of the numinous; from the Latin Numen, meaning the feeling of attraction and awe characteristic of our sense of communion with God in the realisation of His divine majestic presence.

The strong sense of community whether it be Supper Club evenings, Men's Socials, Ladies meetings, the Layministers Cheese and Sherry evenings, the Fete, work parties, servers training and braais. These are the important expressions of our faith as the Gospel reading reminds us that our source Jesus is the vine and we are the branches connected to the vine.

In 25 years we have come from a position of insolvency to being in an enviable state of financial health. This has been due to a financial vision, plan and discipline that we have stuck to that enables future financial security for the Parish.

Similarly the same principles have applied to the Durban Hospice for Women and its shelter Kerr House, a shelter for "Women in Crises" catering up to 15 women and children.

Everything that has been accomplished has been due to the generous support of parishioners in time, skills, money, involvement and encouragement. The scriptures set for today remind us in Exodus that leadership and responsibility is shared which has been so true of the Churchwardens, Parish Councillors, Layministers, Head Servers, Finance Committee and Fundraising Convenors etc.

In Corinthians St Paul says the Church is the Body of Christ and while the body is a unit it is made up of different parts all who have been gifted by the Spirit with different gifts to enable the body to function.

What do we take from this reflection of 25 years and from the scriptures set for Vestry. Quite simply that each of us has a God given duty and responsibility to fulfil our calling as Christians to exercise the gifts God's Spirit has given to us in order for this Parish to be a true reflection of Christ in the community and to one another.

Looking ahead I feel particularly strongly that parishioners should take a greater interest in the management of the Parish and in particular to see that the finances are well managed. While I have full confidence in the way the Parish is run and use of the money received, this must not negate your responsibility to examine and to check that there is full, valid and proper accountability. It is always terrible to hear of Parishes struggling because of mismanagement and/or theft.

Recently at the Men's weekend we were reminiscing about the past 25 years and all the people who are no longer with us and the special moments we have shared through the years. While I never expected at the outset to have been here for so long it has been an absolute privilege. The love, support, loyalty and encouragement has been overwhelming. It is my intention, Deo Volente, or unless I am recalled, to stay here until retirement on 01 October 2027.

Together let us continue to strive to be a Parish of God's love, welcoming the stranger, helping the poor and needy, building up our community in support and love, that the love of Christ may be evident loud and clear at St Cyprian's.

FR DANE ELSWORTH