

anglican parish of BOKSBURG;

RECTOR'S REPORT TO VESTRY 2017

Its my pleasure once again to present my report on the needs of the parish.

As always I begin with a look at the parish statistically.

(See attached)

This hides the personal story, a story of many people doing a lot.

I must presume that very few of the many congregants who arrive at church on a Sunday morning give a thought to the work that has to go into each service. (May I say in passing that many of them don't even have a thought to the money that it takes to hold the service on a Sunday either).

It is the dependability of so many that I value.

Sacristans;

I can arrive at the service (even at St Raphael's just before it is due to start) knowing that the sacristans have been busy; that the silver is shining and the linen clean and all is prepared. So thank you to our Sacristan Lay Deacons Dcn Barbara (an ordained Deacon), Desiree Pinn, and the their teams and the team at St Michael's.

Music and Sound;

Again, I know that if there was not to be an organist, I would have heard Long before, and that otherwise the organist / pianist will be there and that when and where the music is Karaoke-style, the sound-techs have got it all in hand. We are privileged to have an organist of the caliber of Kyle with us. We are privileged to have one so faithful as Merrill, who has continued growing in ability since the early days when as a recent beginner on the piano I persuaded her she could play in church. Thank you too to the techs who handle music and sound, to their Lay Deacons, Colin Douglas, Stanley Macherechedze and Ken Botha and their teams. Yes I have to say and their teams, because it would take me too long to mention all individuals by name - we have involved in Time and Talents, many in several capacities. You have seen from the stats that we have 132 individuals involved in time and talents fulfilling 227 tasks. Then there is the choir, having given up their time to go to either the Tuesday evening practice or the Sunday morning practice both of which Kyle lays on to accommodate people's lifestyles.

Servers, clergy and lay ministers;

I know that the services will not start late unless something extraordinary has happened; the Lay Ministers will be there, observing all our seasonal peculiarities, (particularly at St Raphael's under the watchful eye of the Lay Deacon Nadine Sviridov who will ensure that they have the correct book and that that applies to the President and readers as well, and likewise at St Gabriel's under the watchful eye of Dcn Barbara who will warn me in good time if I have slipped up in any way with providing anything, or if the reading in the book and the readings on the pew leaflet are not the same . Thanks to to the priests who come in to do services. In all the years Fr David and Fr Tony have been with us, there has only once been any confusion as to which priest is presiding where and 2 arrived for the same service. And the congregations are spoilt with the quality and variety of sermons they get from these two who squeeze preparation into their free time from work during the week, or weekend or late

on Saturday evenings. The designated servers at St Michel's, lovingly nurtured by their Lay Deacon Rebecca Davies, are almost always there and it seems seldom that there is a last minute scramble to find substitutes. Rod Douglas is just as efficient at St Gabriel's.

Readers:

Our standard of readers is very high, especially since the readers are not hand picked and specially selected, but drawn by open invitation. Most of the time one can hear that they have practised. Thanks to them all under the leadership of their Lay Deacons, Angie Broughton Johnson, Nadine Sviridov and Deacon Sheila Kibby.

Flowers

Amongst us we have some remarkable talent in flower arranging, with Lynn Russell and Deirdre Paterson looking after St Gabriel's, Lay Deacon Nadine Sviridov and the team at St Raphael's and Jenny Fairley and her team at St Michael's.

Sidesmen and Welcomers.

All of this is backed up by the care of the sidesman under Robbie Paterson, George Chaplin and Khaya Mnyandu. The churches are opened up without my worrying and all the little duties looked after, such as Youth Worship called in at the right time, windows opened, heaters put on and so on.

Recently we separated from the Sidesmen teams of welcomers who are greeting worshippers. I will be calling a meeting shortly so that they will be doing far more.

Prayer Ministry

Pastorally there are those who sit patiently in the prayer area during communion ready to listen to and pry with parishioners needing support in life. Then (it's not part of the service) we also have trained counsellors, licensed under the Diocesan Siyalalela programme, for those who need more support. Thank you too to both the prayer ministry teams and the counsellors. Thanks too while on this subject of prayer and support, to the two groups of the Guild of St Luke, and the Prayer Chain under Joyce Frederiksen.

Car Guards

At St Michael's the worshippers can worship in relative peace relying on our car guard teams to keep watch over their cars. Thanks to them. .

Teas

After the service there is always a cup of tea, sometimes biscuits at St Michael's, almost always Home baked biscuits at St Raphael's, and at St Gabriel' a spread every Sunday that constitutes a large breakfast and has great delicacies and treats. Thank you to their Lay Deacons, Deacon Barbara, Mathapelo Malema, and Patricia Jeremiah.

So much goes into each service that takes place ! As I have mentioned 132 individuals are involved in 227 tasks (and no I haven't counted them - the database provides that information.). I have not tried to mention them all by name. I have on many occasions suggested to council that we need some way of showing appreciation of all these individuals, say an annual dinner in their honour. Nothing has come of this to date.

Aside from these time and talents tasks, there are many other tasks that get done in the parish.

Parish Council

Thank you to the councillors for undertaking their task. During the past years I have tried to promote involvement and responsibility amongst the counsellors after we abandoned the sub-committees. Each meeting has a session in which we meet in what I call tea-groups, of just 3 of us, and talk at random about the parish. This seems to have led to greater participation and sharing of ideas. For me the moment of light came from Vusi Ndhlovu who remarked that the councillors need to talk to the parishioners and bring their views to the table. I have always maintained (sometimes against the idea of having a small efficient council) that the council is here to represent the people. To do so they must know the people. And they must be aware of the abilities and availabilities of the people so that when we are looking for someone to fill some gap, as we constantly are, they know who to suggest.

Thank you to the councillors.

Fund - Raising and Fellowship Committee.

We went back many years in having a sub-committee that meets at a separate time from council. Then there were three meetings, each under the chairmanship of one of the Rector or Churchwardens. This time the Executive have all been involved in the committee. It has worked well. Especially it seems to have drawn the parish as a whole in, whereas sub-committees we abandoned seemed to split the parish. Also the committee has worked well in inviting people outside committee to take responsibility for individual events. Thank you to the members.

However a sadness for me is that one of the objectives I hoped this would achieve, namely to start regular meetings for youth in different age groups, has not been achieved, and since January last year no particular youth event has taken place.

Maintenance:

This used to be the responsibility of a sub-committee under one of the Wardens. Now it is done by individuals. I would like to mention first Mike Beddy who comes each week to St Michael's and maintains such things as the lawn mower, weed-eater, light bulbs, well pump motor, vacuum cleaner, and so on. Ian Davies and his team do a lot of maintenance work as does Stanley Macherechedze in the plumbing line. It would be good though to have a responsible person at St Raphael's and St Gabriel's but yet there are people we can call upon for specific tasks, and Robbie Paterson has done several tasks at St Gabriel's. Robbie and his gardening crew do a lot of work in the garden at St Gabriel's.

Pedlar Place

Not only do Ian and Stanley do work in the church but they are also both regular at Pedlar Place. Pedlar Place is well managed by Pip Chaplin who spends a large amount of time keeping it going and keeping on top of maintenance and residents' requirements. Ian Davies too goes there every month to read the electricity meters. George Chaplin keeps the accounts in order. Thank you to them for that.

School

The school board acts voluntarily and have had to devote time to sorting out many matters. Thanks to Ann and Howard and Di. I will say more about the school later.

Creche.

Fr Michael and Ursula Scholtz carry on with this important ministry, preparing disadvantaged children for school. This creche is financed by the parish and no charge is made for attendance. The children are taught and fed and these two stalwarts recently had a great affirmation when one of their earliest pupils matriculated last year. This is making a real difference to the community.

Office Work

I would like to mention Ian Davies who comes in every Monday to help count the money, and Di Amore who has taken over the statistical data capture and capture of past records.

Dedicated Giving.

While I will be talking about this some more, we are indebted to those regular givers who fund the parish and keep our doors open and allow so much to be done.

Their contribution and all that I have mentioned above represent needs of the parish that are being met.

VISION

I want to move on to a different type of need; and look first at the vision of the parish. vision. Not our mission statement, but the underlying vision, that of one parish of 3 separate congregations, each with its own style of worship. Ideally the second part of the vision is two priests, one for St Raphael's and one for St Gabriel's, sharing the work at St Michael's.

The great struggle is to keep these congregations from thinking only of themselves. And to educate people into the strange creature that we are. Only this morning Debbie had a phone call from a parishioner who wanted to know the phone number of St Raphael's. When the parishioner was told it's the same number, she went on to ask for the bank account number for St Raphael's - only St Raphael's, she said. She was not happy at being given a number for the parish bank account. She worships at St Raphael's. She wanted her dedication to go there.

There are many parish activities that serve to unite us; there are the fellowship events, services on special occasions like Ash Wednesday and the Great Feasts (Christmass midnight, Easter dawn service) , and the Solemn Evensong and Benedictions on Great Feasts, Advent and Epiphany Carols services and so on. Courses like Confirmation, Baptism, Alpha and Home Groups especially in Lent and other programmes like Renew Africa, and Network also bring us together as one.

But I dread every time a councillor proposes that we combine services and have only one service on a Sunday morning. Numbers will drop. People will feel its not the time that suits them, not the style of worship that suits them and so on, and not their church. Spring Sunday showed it doesn't work. And were it by some intervention of the Spirit to work, we would not be able to accommodate them all. We don't need that. Fortunately on both occasions the majority of councillors have felt the same way as me.

So what am I talking about. Well when we make decisions in council or vestry for instance its important that we understand the differences in the congregations. Its not fair to burden the Rector with being the only one who has a feel for that. We tried in this past year to enforce the wardens and the vestry elected councillors to rotate from church to church. This was mildly successful with the wardens (though although it was stated particularly they should make sure one of them was present at every service the Rector could not be present, to give the notices, and this was often not true). The wardens and councillors tend to be those who are very involved in the responsibilities of their home congregation and this makes rotating difficult. In the case of the councillors it was not very successful. Vestry need to look at this - a rule made which is not going to be kept is harmful to morale.

In the previous large council we had a fair balance between congregations, and the electoral college tended to elect wardens not by congregation but by their concern for the parish as a

whole (and mostly to fit their job description, another thing we abandoned.) . In abandoning this we have weakened this collegial aspect.. (In the previous dispensation under Fr Oriol, the wardens would collect him on Sunday morning, take him to St Gabriel's and be the sidesmen there, then take him to St Michael's where they were again the sidesmen. There was a definite strong bond of congregations through them.)

We need to look for some other way of holding the needs of the three congregations in balance. A neighbouring parish with two congregations has a rule that there should be a warden from each.

ADMIN STYLE AND DEDICATIONS.

In the church of the reformation there were two key figures in the parish, the priest (known as the clerk in holy orders) and the parish clerk. The parish clerk gradually lost his responsibilities as over the years there has been added the Wardens and Councillors, lay ministers (originating from sub-deacons), servers, and parish secretaries and administrators.

This last, the secretary and administrator is a feature of urban churches. In the townships there are seldom secretaries and the admin is performed by the wardens in the foyer on Sunday mornings. We have been for decades in the urban mould. Now as the number of members joining us from township parishes increases, there is an expectation that they can do their admin with the parish through those in the foyer. I have had a session with the council debating the style we need to have and the council are divided. We are not only therefore likely to fall between two stools, we are already falling between two stools. This is shown in the disastrous response to our dedication campaign, where by the end of last year only 113 had pledged for this year and by the end of February that number had only reached 120. Unlike previous years, we held back issuing envelopes to previous givers who had not re-pledged.

I have discussed with Debbie and with some Councillors a way in which we can administer the DG from the 3 foyers, and still be able to record the giving of each individual. But I am concerned that that allows people to avoid the challenge of pledging each year. Each year as we fill in our pledge forms we are challenged to put down on paper what our commitment to God is for that year. It is too easy to carry on at the same level and not keep one's giving in line with one's income. We have two parish families who are today, 27 years later, still giving the same amount which they were giving by bank stop order when I came to his parish. If administering DG in the foyers includes filling in pledge cards, then that is perhaps a way to consider, provided we can keep the confidentiality of giving.

I realise that in life there is so much admin that each family has to do. But I think we need to keep our members responsible and ask them to assist in filling in forms, which are anyway available in the foyers.

I am going to form a powerful team of the welcomers who will I hope ensure the link between congregants and the office.

YOUTH WORSHIP

If you look at the YW statistics you will see that the numbers went through a terrible depression and indeed are not even available for some years. I struggle to keep this up. Sadly very few people recognise the importance of this ministry. Both some among those who

volunteer their services as ministers (a term I use to try and stress the importance) and parents see it as no more than keeping the children quiet out of church, so the adults can worship in peace. Such a view can only lead to enormous fall-out after confirmation. It is a crucial part of formation in the faith story of the child. It takes an enormous amount of my time in putting together syllabus material especially as we have revised the syllabus and the approach quite a few times. (For example the bishops when they at such short notice switched us from the CL to the RCL had no thought to the re-writing of Youth Worship material based on the Sunday lectionary.) A full complement of youth worship ministers in the parish would be 24. Currently we have 14. (The ideal is that they should not be on duty every Sunday. Because we are not “school” we do not keep “holidays from worship” so they need to work as a team alternating duties to have time off to worship themselves. I value the work of these 14 enormously. We have had to combine groups where preferably they should be split. Sometimes though this is dictated by numbers.

THE SCHOOL

There is a great deal of dissatisfaction in the congregation of St Raphael’s over the school. I would like to stress that education is one of the 5 key areas of ministry identified by ACSA. We need to see our school (and our creche at St Michael’s) as key contributors in our overall ministry to the community - just as much as the Tambo baby project.

The school had a very unfortunate beginning. Launched at the same time as a plethora of pre-schools when it was suddenly recognised that there was money to be made from this. We suffered a severe setback when the head we had carefully selected (at a high salary to attract the right person), interviewed by an experienced HR person as well as external educators, had to be dismissed when tensions between board members surfaced at what seemed like her instigation. Prospective parents who came to see the school, found on their return a temporary head in place of the one they had seen. In a competitive market we started badly. We then went through 4 heads in a short space of time with further tensions among board members aggravating the situation. Last year there was an uprising among staff members that we had to deal with - staff members even went to the public and maligned the school so that we have had two inspections from social welfare after complaints were laid by parents. They appear to have been fed false information from within. Social Welfare has upheld the school on both inspections. However our brand among the community has been seriously marred. All this has led to a very slow growth in numbers, and without the huge financial input from the parish the school would have had to close.

But the school is meeting its running costs (I must stress that these running costs include financing St Raphael’s in municipal rates and taxes (yes our rates are higher as we no longer qualify for the church exemption) and lights and water, - and the cost of the cleaner and gardener). The continuing growth in debt is from the interest owed to the parish on the outstanding debt.

Not only is the school a ministry in itself, but also it does fund the parish, and will fund the parish more as it grows. There is a challenge the board needs to face though. The majority of our applicants are looking for a guarantee of entry into urban rather than township schools. We cannot give them this. The challenge is thus to grow the school from a pre-school into a primary or perhaps eventually also secondary school. But that will necessitate a move and the purchase of ground.

I appeal to you not to see this as a reason why we don’t yet have a church building at St

Raphael's. See it as an outreach, a vital outreach.

LAST WORDS

In my thanks I have left out some - I have left out the employees of the parish. We recently had opportunity to employ Stellah Chitenje, a parishioner, as part-time cleaner at St Gabriel's in place of Patricia Jofisi who left us. Sylvia Tagane, originally employed by the church and subsequently employed by the School, cleans St Raphael's, working around the needs of the karate group. Amanda Motsoane with her cheerful smile keeps the Plein St property in order. Peter Mohlala does the grounds of all of our properties including Pedlar Place except for St Raphael's. All of them work diligently and cheerfully. They represent the spokes of the wheel. At the hub is Debbie West-Mace who cheerfully and efficiently keeps the office going and keeps the whole together. My thanks to them for their great contributions.

A last thank you to the Wardens and to my wife Di for their support for me.

FINALLY

The Bishop has agreed to extend my tenure here for another year. I was due to retire at the end of July, and will continue till the end of July 2018. I thank the council particularly for approving this, and all of you for the privilege of serving here.