

Rectors Report 2023

A sense of Direction

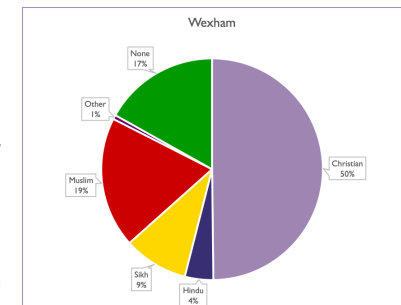
We made it through the pandemic together though we, like many, carry the scars. There are fresh troubles in the world but I feel we can lift our eyes and look ahead.

The PCC has had this in mind for some time, and met on 15 January 2022 to take stock post-Covid, and to reaffirm our focus. That meeting was very encouraging and confirmed that we feel confident about the future and our general direction.

On 24 September 2022 the PCC and some other members of the church met again for a few hours and decided on three priorities for the next few years. Only three because we can't really deal with more than that. We want to do a few things, the right things, well. I'm sharing this because it will be guiding a lot of our efforts in the next few years.

We started by analyzing the numbers available to us (2011 as the detailed 2021 data is not yet available). We know that our parish is very ethnically diverse - of the 17 parishes in our Deanery, only 3 are more diverse. This suggests that if we are to reach out to the wider parish, we need to include people who might not think of coming to St Mary's Wexham.

The chart shown is slightly different from the one we used in the planning but is drawn from Church of England data and so is parish-specific. This shows that our parish is religiously diverse. Half the people in the census responded that they were Christian.



So our three priorities. While these began in 2023 and are strictly speaking not part of this report, their roots are firmly in the years before that, we started thinking about this in July 2019.

We concluded that need to reach out to people who might not have visited St Mary's Wexham, who might hardly realise that it is their parish church. We decided on something we have come to call the **Community Hub**, which is designed primarily to be a service to all members of the parish, a place where people of all faiths can meet and meet us.

A second priority - much quieter, much more low-key, is to offer a regular **service of Wholeness and Healing**. The last few years have been hard on us all in so

many ways. As Christians we believe that God is the great Healer, so we have planned and launched a service which is designed for people to come if they have a need. They need not come with faith, they need not make a profession of faith. They need not come to one of our regular services. They are invited to come, to sit with us, to be as active or as passive as they choose, but to bring their burdens to God.

Our final priority is still in its early stages, but we intend to **raise our online presence** by means of streaming more services, recording short reflections and other activities.

Other Activities

I mention below my activities external to the parish because my time in the parish is limited to (ostensibly) three days a week. So there is no time to be frittered away!

- I have stopped my voluntary chaplaincy at Wexham Park Hospital, instead working on a Wednesday as a member of staff in the chaplaincy team.
- I continue to serve on the Deanery Standing and Finance Committee.
- I have recently resigned as a Bishop's Reviewer of Clergy.

As St Paul Said:

I still thank God for calling me to this gem of a parish - I have some understanding of what Paul felt when he wrote to his beloved church in Philippi: "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

My most sincere thanks to all of you who are part of this parish. People in up-front roles (five people actively involved in up-front ministry — all of whom are volunteers); formal leadership, people who help with the churchyard and church and in a thousand other ways.

I am grateful to you, who have helped to nurture our tree of faith. I look forward with confidence and excitement to what awaits us. Please, pray for me.

Andrew Parry
April 2023

