

From: The Reverend Andrew Burt

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29<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Dear Parishioners,

### **Christmas Fayre – Open Letter to all Parishioners**

This letter is a little overdue, for which I apologise, but it is an important letter following on from the ‘wash-up’ meeting that was held for the stallholders in March.



#### **The Review**

At that meeting, as well as discussing and evaluating the Fayre, in general terms, discussion was very much directed to the future of the Fayre.

This was prompted by the fact that Margaret Keeble, after many years as the coordinator, wishes to step down from this role and her two very able assistants, John and Penny Smith, have moved back to the UK. There is no one stepping forward to take their place(s).

Discussion also revolved around the smaller number of people attending and the consequent smaller amount made on the day. In addition, it was noted that other charities, having noted our success, are holding their own fayres, to some extent in competition with our own.

Finally, there was a very strong feeling that the stall holders and their assistants are getting older and that they are no longer feeling able to cope with both the demands of the day

or the build-up to the Fayre, itself. In short, the question that was being asked was: 'Has the Fayre, in its present form, run its course?' The answer from the meeting was that a similar Fayre, in its current form, could not be run, again.



However, as a counterbalance, there was a very tangible feeling that the Fayre formed our main source of charitable giving, that the amount disbursed was a valuable form of Christian giving and witness and that in some way this charitable work must not be lost or overlooked.

## **The Future**

Discussion then focused on what might take the Fayre's place:

1. Could it be a smaller more slimmed down Fayre at a different location?
2. Could there be an alternative form of planned giving amongst a group of committed parishioners (a personal saving of €1-2 per week, over the course of the year) that would allow for a significant amount to be given over the year that could then be donated to a smaller range of local charities?
3. Or should there be simply one or two charities which became, for the course of the year, our focus of attention and fund raising could be directed to these.

Whatever solution is decided on, there was also a strong feeling that this should not in any way jeopardise our giving to fund the day-to-day running of the parish, nor should it cut across the other important charitable giving that we make as a parish throughout the year – for example: our Lent donations or our Christmas charitable giving.

**The Conclusion:** The meeting ended with the voicing of a number of ideas for the way forward. However, no particular one was predominant nor was there anyone, present, willing to take a lead concerning the future. But there was strong desire to not overlook what has been achieved but, rather, to see what new ideas might emerge. To this end, I agreed to write to all parishioners to ask for their ideas and input.

Now it is your turn to have your say. As you ponder what might be, I would ask that you have in mind that for the last twenty-two years we have been raising money for local charities (Cypriot and British) and this is a tremendous witness to our Christian faith.

In addition, a further thought: a 'healthy' church should be able to give a portion of its yearly funds to charitable causes. It is often suggested that 10% might be so donated. Our Christmas Fayre has long assisted us to work towards this goal and we should continue to strive to maintain this charitable giving.

### **The Way Ahead**

Please don't turn your back on this wonderful heritage and witness. Rather, I ask you, now, to think and to pray creatively and imaginatively about the way forward. Yes, there are practical difficulties associated with age and frailty, but we witness to our faith until the moment of our death. We do not retire from our faith. Neither can we retire from our Christian giving, we simply need to find new ways of making it happen. Please let me know by email, or in writing, what your thoughts are – no, not a conversation at the church door, please. This matter is too urgent and too serious.

In wondering how I might write to you, I was much taken with the following thought from an American Methodist Bishop, Will Willimon when he wrote a commentary, recently, on the Gospel for the sixth Sunday of Easter. He comments:

*“Without the empowering and prodding of the Holy Spirit, the church is always in danger of becoming just another well-meaning, sometimes-helpful, only human organisation. Could one reason, why so few congregations attempt anything demanding, be that they are*

*attempting to be the church on their own, and so limiting their work to what they, on their own, are able to accomplish? Come Holy Spirit.”*

So, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire your thinking and ideas and come back to me during this month of June with your ideas.  
**Reverend Andrew.**

