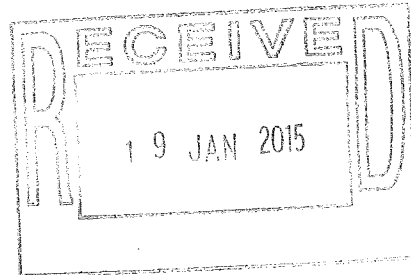


THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Greater Churches Network
An Inclusive Church



Mrs Helen Ball
Town Clerk
Shrewsbury Town Council
The Guildhall
Frankwell Quay
Shrewsbury SY3 8HR



Thursday, 15th January 2015

Dear Helen

It is now some 16 months since I became Vicar of St Chad's Church. It has been a most enjoyable time, albeit a fairly turbulent one as a result of the changes we have had to face, not least because of a significant number of deaths amongst our staff and senior church members during 2014.

This has meant that much of this first stage of my incumbency has been spent fire-fighting, with little time to spare to look to the growth and development of our mission. However, we are now addressing this and plan to hold a meeting of our church members this month to discuss all aspects of mission, both at home and abroad. My purpose in writing now is twofold, firstly to ask if we might set up a meeting with representatives of the Town Council to discuss how we might best move forward on the home front, and secondly to ask if the Council might consider transferring its grant made towards our abortive 2014 Music Festival to our Christmas Tree Festival.

ST CHAD'S MISSION

It goes without saying that St Chad's is proud to be the civic church of Shrewsbury, and I personally have enjoyed the many occasions on which we have worked together this year, not least the recent Queen's Dragoon Guards Service, which many have reported to me as being profound and moving. There are also many ways in which St Chad's fulfils its mission within the town of a less formal nature. Many of our members are key figures in the town's voluntary sector organisations, The Ark, Shrewsbury Street Pastors, Signal, Homes for All, A4U to name but a few.

Some 3 – 4 years ago, at the request of our Diocese in Lichfield, we undertook the first stage of a Parish Audit to determine, within the scenario of challenging times for churches today, how best we

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might grow and develop our mission. This first stage was an internal one, and it has already led to the growth of a number of activities. The next stage is to consult with our wider stakeholder group, both in the town and beyond. We would therefore like to meet with the Town Council, as our chief strategic partner, to see how best we might go about determining our future roles and activities. We would like to suggest that, to begin with, a small meeting of a few key representatives from each side might help us to get the process of consultation and planning going. I look forward to your response.

ST CHAD'S MUSIC AND CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVALS 2014

Shrewsbury Town Council has supported our annual Music Festival (held over the Mayday weekend) for many years. This year we were pleased to receive a grant of £2000.00 towards the Festival. Sadly, we could not go ahead as a result of the illness and then death of David Leeke, our Director of Music. We reported this to you, and were advised to hang onto the grant, until such time as we knew whether or not we would be able to continue with the Festival in 2014 – 15. David Leeke's successor, Tony Pinel, took up the post in early September, and after an induction period, participated in a meeting of trustees in December to discuss the possibility of holding the Festival. Unfortunately, it did not prove to be possible, not least because of the availability, or rather lack of it, of performers.

We are, of course, ready and willing to return the grant, if that is your decision, but wonder if you might consider transferring it to our Christmas Tree Festival, which has just taken place in the run-up to Christmas. We are proposing this for two reasons.

1. The two festivals have identical purposes. Quoting from our application to you for this year's grant: "Shrewsbury is both the county town of Shropshire and an increasingly important tourist centre. It has diverse musical life; but, prior to the establishment of the St Chad's Festival, did not have a music festival to sit alongside the many others which attract visitors and local people into the town (eg Cartoon; Folk; Street; Book; Carnival plus the nationally significant Flower Show and a major agricultural show). The festival began in 2009 with a commitment to provide high quality entertainment to the local community and visitors each year at prices that are affordable for the whole community. The festival has always promoted quality events with both local and national performers. The aim has been to draw as many people into the activities of this Festival weekend as possible, not least the increasing role of the local community and our engagement with schools and children's groups."

In addition, this year's Festival planned to commemorate the life of Charles Burney, a son of Shrewsbury, the 200th anniversary of whose death falls next year.

The involvement of schools, community groups and local businesses in the Christmas Tree Festival has been enormous, much larger than last year and indeed even more than for the Music Festival. You may gain some idea of this from the attached schedule of participants and sponsors.

2. The main prompting for this request is financial. Since the necessary building works to our Tower 2 years ago, and the reordering of our organ, together costing over £1 million, our finances have been very difficult indeed, and it is no secret that we are currently being sustained by a loan from our Diocese.

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In response to a question put to us by Andy Watkin, I would stress that we have never applied for a grant on the basis that the Festival would not go ahead if we did not get it. Our response to this question has always been that the Festival would go ahead, willy-nilly, but a failure to get adequate grant aid or sponsorship might bring into question the reality of mounting Festivals in future years.

This year's Christmas Tree Festival, our third, proved far more popular than we could have imagined, and as a result more costly. Attendance was more than 3 times that in 2013, and this is reflected substantially in the added costs of staff time, heating and lighting the church, refreshments etc. Indeed, the Christmas Tree Festival is much larger than the Music Festival, and involves many more individuals and organisations within the Community, although this is not reflected in the finances, since we do not pay performers, nor charge admission. In addition, to compensate for the cancellation of the Music Festival and the associated Charles Burney celebration, we are this week holding a charity evening celebrating the life of another renowned son of Shropshire, Wilfred Owen MC, in conjunction with Shropshire Horticultural Society and Combat Stress. I enclose information about both the Christmas Tree Festival and this charity evening.

We are not yet in a position to provide final figures for the Christmas Tree Festival, but those given in the accompanying report are unlikely to change substantially. They do not include figures for the Charles Burney evening which has yet to take place. We would therefore ask at this stage if it might be possible in principle for the grant to be transferred and, if so, we would of course provide any information you might require in support of this request.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,



Fr. Mark Chadwick
Vicar