

Sam Aldred: Pusey House Report 2014-15

With the financial support of the FSJE I returned to Oxford in September last year to take up the role of Sacristan of Pusey House. Whilst an undergraduate at Keble College (2006-9) Pusey House played a significant role in my introduction to the catholic tradition in the Church of England. My hope in taking up this position was to continue this education, particularly as I discerned how God was calling me to serve His Church. This year of living, worshipping and working has indeed been one of great spiritual development.

The Academic Year 2014-15 has seen substantial growth at this 'home of sacred learning', thanks in a large part to several new appointments made possible through the generosity of bodies such as the FSJE. Congregations have increased significantly year-on-year, and we have seen a growing breadth of engagement with different communities in both the university and the city of Oxford. There are, furthermore, around a dozen young men who have been drawn deeper into the Christian life at Pusey House this last year and who are discerning a vocation to ordained ministry in the Church of England.

As Sacristan my work has been largely in the chapel. Here I have been able to recruit and train a larger serving team than at any point in recent history, as well as maintaining the fabric and fittings of the chapel, to ensure Pusey House continues to offer beautiful and well-ordered services. I have been given several opportunities to preach this year, and I have lead the daily offices regularly. Outside of the chapel I have been privileged to contribute to the mission of the House in other ways, particularly through assisting in the library and with the organisation of the two lecture series which ran this year. I have helped to prepare our regular congregational meals and have arranged and hosted tea and drinks parties throughout the year, which have brought new people into the life of the House. I have also helped as Pusey House increases its work with Oxford's substantial homeless population, particularly in preparing food for the city's homeless shelters.

I returned to Oxford last year unsure of whether my calling was to serve God through lay or ordained ministry. My experience this year has led me to discern a vocation to ordained ministry, which I am pursuing through the Diocese of Oxford. I will continue both as student and as sacristan next year, and if my experience at Pusey next year is anything like as fulsome and edifying as this year then I will be well placed to begin the process of priestly formation. If, however, the Church of England decides that this is not my calling then my experiences at Pusey House will also have equipped me to explore other opportunities to serve the Church in a lay capacity.

The generous grant I received from the FSJE last year helped in a substantial way to cover my living costs, which enabled me to undertake my duties unencumbered by the need to seek alternative sources of funding. Without this grant it was unlikely that I could have afforded to return to Oxford. I have requested a similar grant to help cover the cost of living in Oxford next year, so that I may continue my work at Pusey House.

Some Images of my role as Sacristan in the academic year 2014-15



Preparing the altar for the annual 'Friends of Pusey House' Mass: Trinity I



Corpus Christi Procession to St Barnabas Jericho



MC on Trinity Sunday



Sub-Deacon for the Fourth Sunday in Lent