

The Rector's Report 2019 (for 2020 APCM)

I was appointed as Rector in September 2018 and moved into the Rectory in December 2019. It feels like the transition to being with you is complete.

We had planned to hold concurrent Annual Meetings of Parishioners, and Annual Parish Church Meetings on Palm Sunday. The aim was to meet as a visible sign of unity and to reduce the organisation/admin required for seven individual sets of meetings. Duplication of tasks and different processes create inefficiencies across the group. These formal meetings are required, and the archaic nature makes it harder to invite new people to them. Where Churches wish to have local meetings to help spread the good news of what we do then this could happen with an informal and joyous intention.

In 2019 we suffered the loss of lead from St Margaret's and St Lawrence'. Teams lead by churchwardens undertook much planning and financial work to repair the damage. Barry and Jane Hodgson and Malcolm Ravillious deserve an enormous thank you for the fantastic work undertaken to replace the losses.

All churches have been busy maintaining and building as needed. Whilst we maintain our buildings, we need to continue the work we do across the group to meet more people and grow our worshipping community. Our new facilities will help this. In the year passed, we have been busy running services based around the service schedule that I inherited. I have welcomed how we have tried new things in addition to the traditional service provision, but it feels we are anchored and prevented from growing by rota we use. We may have the ambition to invite more people and to introduce new initiatives, but are limited by the resources of time and money.

It has been wonderful to work more closely with Schools. I lead collective worship most weeks in The Uffington School, and we are growing the number of services where we invite parent and carers to Church. We need to find ways to encourage more of those we meet to engage with us more often. This will mean more time meeting and developing relationships before they are drawn to be part of the regular worshipping community. I hope to offer more Children (and Adults) the opportunity to receive Holy Communion and other ways to deepen faith. This builds on the work of the Open the Book team. I am getting to know Cophill School and have welcomed them to St Michael and All Angels' as well as taking their Easter School assembly.

The Church is focussed on and is most visibly used in the group on Sundays. I am pleased that several families have used the Church for funerals and burials. An Alpha course was planned to start during Lent 2020 (this was paused halfway through because of Covid-19). Anyone who wants to use Church for Baptisms, Funerals and Marriages will receive a warm and generous welcome from the team they meet and me. I want everyone to know they are welcome, and we will find a way to meet their need.

We had planned two pilgrimages for 2020. One weekend pilgrimage for adults to the Walsingham, and another for children aged 11-17 to come with me to the National Youth Pilgrimage. (these have been rearranged for 2021).

My priorities for the future are:

- To engage with our children (the Schoolchildren and those who live in the area) in more meaningful ways.
- To create a plan that shows more people what the "people of God" do in terms of worship and loving their neighbours. [I set out to be, and also to help Church be, more visible, to be a blessing to the whole community, to help us grow (numerically and in our faith) and to create distinct ways to be the people of God].
- To ensure our plan is sustainable in term of resource especially with regard to increasing Parish Share.
- To lead and enable opportunities to worship and develop relationships with each other and God throughout the week.

I am grateful for all who serve and worship within the group. I could not function without the Churchwardens, Secretaries and Treasurers and the administrative support given by Carole Martin. I am incredibly grateful to PCC members and the Ministry Team for the work and support they give me, which allows me to be your Parish Priest.

Fr Aran P. Beesley, 2020

