

Rector's Ramblings

January/February 2016

Dear Friends,

A slightly belated Happy New Year to you all! As the excitement and activity of Christmas fades for another year, let's look forward to 2016 together.

Services

After a successful experimental period, we will continue with two services of Holy Communion at **10.30am** each month - All Together on the second Sunday, and with Junior Church on the fourth Sunday. We have also decided that baptisms will take place during the 10.30am service only on the third Sunday of the month in future. This may mean that some families will have to wait a bit longer for a service, but will avoid having too many baptisms on adjacent Sundays. Following the excellent service led by our young people last autumn (which I'm very sorry to have missed!), this will become a regular feature, probably two or three times a year.

Also, the Evening Service will now happen **every Sunday at 6.30pm**, unless there is a very good reason not to, which will be well publicised. It is hoped that this service can develop over time to include more variety, for example an occasional traditional Evensong.

Messy Church will also continue on a regular basis, and I have been really encouraged by the growing numbers enjoying **Praise and Play** on a Wednesday morning. Christian will be looking for more people to help with this: please do consider responding if you possibly can - this event is clearly meeting a need in our community.

Midweek Holy Communion is available monthly at Barnabas Court (in the first floor residents' lounge) on the third Wednesday of the month at 2.00pm (although it's always best to double check the weekly notice sheet before turning out!). Anyone is welcome to join us; come to the main door and someone (usually Mary Strickland) will let you in and point you in the right direction.

Prayer

We still meet in the Sanctuary for 30 minutes of prayer at **7.00am on Friday mornings**. There are only a few of us, but I feel it's important that we continue with this prayer time, as it gives an opportunity to bring our weekend events and services before God, and to pray

for other needs as they arise. As the mornings get a bit lighter, why not give this meeting a try?

Specific needs meant that 'Prayer for the Nations' was particularly well attended on 13th January. This was a special time of intercession, both for those needs, and for wider concerns. I'd like us to make this evening hour, from 7.45 to 8.45pm, on the second Wednesday of each month, a **regular prayer time for the whole church** - whether attending the meeting in the small hall, or praying wherever you happen to be. We'll make sure it is well publicised before the next date, which will be on 10th February, and will be part of our Ash Wednesday Holy Communion service in church. Please make every effort to attend on these occasions - I have a sense that we will see real breakthrough in our common life and witness as we seek God together in this way. The monthly **Tuesday morning** prayer meeting will continue as at present, and I am grateful to Brenda and Barbie for their faithfulness in facilitating these times of prayer on our behalf.

Serving

Just because we have a Rector, two Associate Ministers, three Licensed Lay Ministers (and one in training), a Children and Families Worker, an Administrator, two Lay Pastors, four Ordinands on attachment, two Churchwardens and a Deputy, there is no need for you to sit back and put your feet up!

There is still plenty to be done in the life of our church, lots of opportunities for service. I was really heartened by the response to my recent plea for the silver and brass to be cleaned regularly: it's now cleaned pretty much weekly, which is a big change from hardly ever! The small team that cleans the church could really benefit from reinforcements, and I'm sure that Christian would be delighted to hear from you if you felt able to offer to help with Junior Church, Toddlers or Praise and Play. We could still do with more drivers for Lunch Club, so that the work is shared more widely, and emergency absences can be better handled. The fact that you are reading this suggests that you are qualified to join the reader's rota for Sunday services! How's your smile? You could be on the welcome team. Can you pray? You could lead the intercessions. Can you make a cup of tea? You get the idea... Many other needs come up during the year, and it would be great to see an increasingly wide cross-section of the church involved in serving.

I'll be running a training session on leading intercessions and reading the Bible in church (including microphone technique) soon - please look out for publicity and come along (without obligation!).

The serious bit: there's an important principle at work here. We're quite a large church now, with around 250 adults on our address list, and it's just not possible for me, or anyone else in leadership, to know everyone well enough to be aware of all their talents, gifts and abilities. So the message is that it's up to you to volunteer for things, as we're fairly unlikely to come asking you personally (although we might!). We're not a church that puts pressure on people to do things, and I don't intend to change that, but one of our core values is that 'Everyone is welcomed, everyone is valued, everyone has the opportunity to be involved.' So, I hope you feel welcomed and valued; the opportunities for service are there for you to take!

People

It has been great to welcome three new ordinands - Phil, Paul and Gareth - and their families, who will be attached with us for the next couple of years. Matt and Emily are still with us, but will be moving on after Easter, as they get ready to move to Milton Keynes as Matt begins his curacy. It is a real privilege to be able to host those training for ministry, and to provide a safe place for them to be themselves, and to put into practice some of what they are learning at College. Thanks to all of you for the consistently warm welcome you provide.

I mentioned a Deputy Churchwarden earlier, and I'm delighted that Nat Johnson (for it is he!) has agreed to take on an increasing role, supporting Barry and Barrie, especially with matters to do with our buildings (of which more shortly).

Speaking of Barry and Barrie, as you know both our Churchwardens have had issues with their health in recent times, and I'm sure you have been joining with me in praying for them regularly. I'd like to thank those who have stepped in to the breach when they've not been able to be here - especially Terry Moore and John Uttin. We're in the process of identifying further Assistant Churchwardens, who will be able to serve on Sunday mornings, directing the Welcome Team, setting up for Holy Communion, and generally attending to the practical aspects of our services. If Pearl approaches you, please do give this serious and prayerful consideration.

The building

Our building is a great asset, and a flexible facility for so much besides Sunday worship. However, the larger part of it is ancient, listed, and in need of attention. Nat is working through the various items on the most recent architect's report, with a view to presenting a costed plan of action to the Annual

Church Meeting in April. This is likely to mean some fairly significant expenditure in the short to medium term. The North Aisle roof is a particular concern, and anything to do with roofs on ancient buildings is always expensive! I can confidently predict that there will be no fundraising thermometer outside the church, but we will have to think seriously and creatively about how we respond to the challenge this work will present to our finances. I'm mentioning this now, not to worry you, but to prepare you for further news later in the year. At this stage, all I'd ask is that you prayerfully consider this matter, and any response you may be able to make, whether practically or financially.

The future

A tricky subject, as none of us knows what's coming next - that ability is limited to God! However, we can and should think, pray and plan for the future. With this in mind, I am convening a Strategy Group, with the remit of looking at our overall direction as a church, reviewing our Mission Action Plan (which is now very out of date), and seeing how we can engage with the new Ely 2025 Diocesan Strategy. Also (and I can't quite believe this) it's ten years since we reviewed our Purpose, Principles and Vision document, and it's high time we had another look at that.

This is quite a big task, and I'd like to involve a wide cross-section of our church members in the process. If you'd like to put yourself forward for membership of the Strategy Group, please e-mail me on rector@allsaintsmilton.org.uk, or text me on 07805 083300. A caveat: if I get a large response, I'll have to choose who gets in, based on having a balanced group, so please be prepared for that - it's nothing personal! I intend the first meeting to be in February, so please don't delay in responding.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.