

A Letter from the Rector

When you apply for a new post, the first thing you do is to read what the Benefice write about themselves and their aspirations for a new Rector. I first read this Benefice profile well over a year ago and thought, yes, I like what they are asking for, I think I can help them achieve some of those things.

Recently, someone challenged me to verbalise my response to those needs, and it seemed the right time to also put it in writing in the way of a vision for the future.

In the Benefice Profile, you asked for someone who would do 4 things, for each of those points, I have begun to work a way forward which I hope will go some way towards meeting those needs.

“Rejoice in the diversity of our 6 parishes and strengthen the bonds of unity between us”

Worship: Once a month we come together, all 6 parishes, to worship. It is not uncommon for us to have 150 worshippers across the Benefice in smaller groups. By coming together once a month, our spirits will be lifted further, we will have more opportunity for fellowship, mutual support and a haring of talents and resources. In addition, each church has 3 or 4 Sundays to depend their own individual style, reaching out to the rich diversity of spiritualities that we celebrate within our boundaries.

“Be creative and encourage new ways to reach out to all age groups in our communities”

Heritage: I would like to root our communities in the agricultural year. Although not out in the sticks as such, we are rural parishes and are intrinsically bound up in the seasons of harvest and sowing. I would like to see us come together socially for the great 4 agricultural festivals of Plough Sunday, Rogation, Lammas & Harvest.

“Help us develop a pattern of ministry where parishioners in each parish instinctively know where to turn for pastoral support”

When our Lord came to earth, his vision of 'church' was community. Our communities are strong, and they work well supporting each other. What we need to recognise with our hearts is that the acts of kindness and support in our communities are 'church'. The neighbour who shops for the housebound, the Mum who on the way through the village stops to chat to an elderly man on his mobility scooter, the residences which allow parents to park in their drive whilst doing the school run. All of these acts, are Christian acts, and exactly what Christ wanted from his Church.

“Open our hearts and minds to Jesus”

Often when in a situation where nothing seemingly practical can be done, I hear myself saying 'we can pray'. Our Benefice needs to be completely and utterly underpinned by prayer, with prayer diaries, reflective spaces in each church, physical symbols in the churches to help people pray. There are leaflets with this vision in more detail in every church for you to take and on every noticeboard for you to read.

St Paul said to the Ephesians (4.15-16) :

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

If, as a Benefice we can corporately share and uphold this vision, then whatever the future of the rural church we will be a surviving church, underpinned by prayer, focused on the needs of the community and anchored by our agricultural and Anglican roots. Then we will truly represent our 'mission statement':

“Not just going to church, but being the church”

God Bless you, Rev'd Chloe