

## Team Rector's Letter January 2018

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year!

It's some time since I put metaphorical 'pen to paper', and wrote to you all, but there are some matters I would like to share with as many of you as possible, and this seems the best way to do it.

First of all, some good news! **Michael Wilcockson**, whom many of us know both from his participation at Linton, both in the choir, and having preached for us, and people in the other parishes will remember because he has led carol services for them so well over the past few years, is to be ordained Deacon in the summer in Oxford. He has been a Reader for many years, and also a very experienced teacher, writer and examiner in secondary school Religious Studies, with a strong theological background. This is why the diocese of Oxford has decided that he can be ordained without some of the normal training requirements. The ordination will be on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June at Christ Church cathedral in Oxford, and Michael has said he would love it if some of us went to support him. He will be continuing in his teaching post for the following academic year at Eton, but by the summer of 2019, when he will be due to be ordained Priest, he will be about to retire from there, and come and live in Linton! It may even be that he will be ordained Priest in Ely Cathedral, as he will then be serving here. He hopes, once back here, to find some part-time teaching work, so he would be following a traditional 'NSM' model from 2019, and not be a full-time curate; but it will be great to have him to help us, especially as sometime during the summer or early autumn of 2019, Nicola will have to leave us for her first incumbency. More details of all this later, but I'm sure you will all join me in congratulating Michael, and looking forward to his more permanent among us along with Alison.

Secondly, I need to let you know that the Bishop has granted me some **Study Leave** this coming autumn. I hope to take it from the beginning of September to the beginning of November. The plan is that I should do some work on the papers of Stephen Sykes, one-time Bishop of Ely, but also a leading academic theologian of the recent past. I was his student both in Cambridge and Durham, and he also ordained me as a priest, and inducted me to my first incumbency. He was a good friend to me and Malcolm (whom he also ordained). Four years ago, or so, I rather rashly agreed to be his literary executor. Not long afterwards he died, and any of you who have been in my study will know that there are an unusual number of filing boxes and other files along one wall: they are the papers he left, and it's my job to sort them, find a proper home for those which relate to official church commissions and committees on which he served, and also read through other papers to see whether there is as yet unpublished theological material which might 'see the light of day'. It is a huge task, which I have scarcely begun in the last three years, so I am grateful to the present Bishop Stephen for discerning that I need an uninterrupted period of time in which to make some inroads into it. It will not be practical for me to take all this material and go somewhere else with it, so I shall be taking the study leave at home, which will require great discipline from me, and from you, to keep me entirely out of parish affairs over that period of time. So, I seek your understanding and cooperation! (I shall probably

make a practice over those 9 weeks of worshipping not only outside the benefice, but even outside the diocese - which our geographical location makes a very easy thing to do – so as to keep my head completely down!)

I am very grateful that the clergy team in the benefice is fully staffed, with the wonderful bonus of Nicola as curate: taking this period of study leave would scarcely be possible if that were not so. In Linton, for the most part, Nicola will be stepping into my shoes, which I hope will be useful experience for her in the year before she moves to her first incumbency. I know that she is well capable of it. Ian and Lesley's support will also be invaluable.

In Linton we shall be starting at some point soon to offer prayers for **Healing and Wholeness** with the laying on of hands on an individual basis during the Parish Eucharists on the fourth Sunday of the month. We need to assemble a team of trusted people who will receive some training, and then be available in pairs (on a rota basis) in the Resurrection Chapel during and after Communion. The idea is that those who would like to receive such prayer ministry, either for themselves or on behalf of another, could slip into the chapel once they had received Communion and ask for prayer, with the laying on of hands *if they desired*. The praying would probably be fairly brief for each person, but the ministry might spill over till after the administration of Communion was finished if there were several people asking. In which case, the service would proceed through its final stages, while the ministry continued discreetly in the chapel. This pattern worked well in my previous parish.

As I said above, we first need to assemble a team of those willing to pray – not of people who feel that they are personally 'healers', but of those who are of mature faith, and willing to represent the prayer and concern of the whole Body of Christ, and be channels of the Spirit, for God to work in people's lives as he sees best. WE shall not be trying to tell God what he should do, but bringing situations and concerns to God in trust that he always wills to do what is best, and that there are many kinds of healing of body, mind and Spirit, and that wholeness of life manifests itself in different ways.

Before the ministry begins, I will make sure that we preach a bit more about the church's teaching and experience in this area, so that no one need fear that we are getting into something wacky!

Setting all this up may take a little time – so, 'watch this space'!

Finally, although it's a bit late to say it,

Happy New Year! Let's hope and pray that it's one in which the world finds better balance, and a greater sense of wholeness and healing in so many ways.

With my love and prayers,

Maggie.