

Rector's Letter, May 2018

Dear Friends,

It's quite a long time since I wrote a Rector's Letter. There are three matters I would like to draw to your attention:

1) Ministry of Prayer for Healing and Wholeness

From May 27th we shall be offering the opportunity once a month for people to be prayed for individually in church by people who have been chosen to offer this ministry. This will be a quiet ministry, offered in the Resurrection Chapel during the time that Communion is being administered. It is suggested that you slip into the chapel after receiving Communion or a blessing. A couple of members of the prayer team will be waiting there and will invite you to sit down and tell them who or what situation you are seeking prayer for. You need not tell them any more than a name – it could be yourself, or someone else for whom you are seeking healing, wholeness, peace and strength. Alternatively, you can tell them some more of the circumstances or problem if you feel it would be helpful for them to pray more specifically.

As actions speak louder than words, and touch can sometimes offer a message of love and reassurance, the prayer team members will ask if you would like to have hands laid on your shoulder or head: it's entirely up to you to say yes or no.

Prayer may be offered in two ways – possibly in the 'own words' of a prayer team member, and but certainly also in this short formula: 'May Christ bring you [*or* X] wholeness of body, mind and spirit, deliver you [X] from every evil, and give you [X] his peace'.

You may remain in the chapel as long as you like, to pray or just relax in the knowledge of God's love for you and those who are on your heart, even though the service in the rest of the church will progress towards its end.

The emphasis is very much on a holistic view of healing *and wholeness*: remarkable outward things might happen, but equally, an increase in inward peace, confidence, courage, trust or healed relationships, would also be a wonderful expression of God's healing at work. We would welcome anyone who finds the ministry a channel of this work to tell us what God has been doing, so that we can thank him with you. However, anything you tell us, either in asking for prayer, or giving thanks, will remain confidential unless you make it clear that you would like it shared more widely.

2) Confirmation

There will be a confirmation service held in St Mary's on the evening of Sunday November 18th. Other parishes in our deanery have been invited also to bring candidates. Nicola and I would like to hear from anyone who is not yet confirmed who would like to take this step, so that we could have some preliminary meetings together before the summer. If required, we will have groups for young people and adults.

3) All Age Worship

The PCC agreed on Monday that we will experiment, *as from September*, with having two All Age services a month: on the second Sunday of the month, we shall continue to have an All age Eucharist at 10 am, in which we hope that young people will take a part as readers, servers, acolytes, intercessors etc. It will be relatively 'formal', with perhaps a single 'interactive' element (apart from the Communion itself!) , and the excellent activity bags for children will be available as well.

On the fourth Sunday of the month, we shall have a non-eucharistic All Age Service at 10 am, with plenty of activity and use of different media in teaching,. On the afternoons of the fourth Sunday we shall offer the opportunity for a quiet Communion service at 5 pm to those who would miss the sacrament otherwise on those Sundays because 8 o'clock in the morning just isn't for them! It may be that this five o'clock service will develop its own distinctive reflective ethos, by incorporating more shared silence than is usual in our other services if those who come would like this.

It is hoped that by this experiment with the 10 am services we will build up our sense of being a worshipping community not divided by age, make it easier for families to get to church together on a Sunday morning, keep services within a reasonable length, and – last but not least - draw more fully upon the talents of some of our excellent lay ministers in leading worship. I will be discussing with the musicians shortly what arrangements will be best for their contributions to these services.

I hope people will support this experiment: it came out of discussions within our 'Children and Families' committee, and the PCC accepted the proposal to give it a go unanimously on your behalf.

With my very best wishes, and prayers for our going forward together in God's worship and service,

Maggie.