

RECTOR'S LETTER, DECEMBER 2018

Dear Friends,

It's been good to be back 'in harness' for a month after my study leave in September and October. I'd like to thank you all very much for your support in that, and for not disturbing me with parish matters. Now, of course, I'm fully involved with them again.

I would particularly like to thank Nicola for taking on extra work to make my study leave possible. As a small *quid pro quo*, she's had time off (mainly mornings) during November to get on with writing a thesis for an MA, which has an imminent deadline. I know she's been working very hard on that, so it hasn't been a rest for her at all, and she is taking on a very full schedule in the run-up to Christmas. I hope she gets a good rest in the week after Christmas when she will be on holiday.

Some sad news I have to share is that in January, much earlier than expected, Nicola will effectively be leaving us. As the Church of England no longer has enough clergy for the newly ordained to do two whole curacies, it has been deemed a good idea that at least they should do long placements away from their main curacy parishes to get wider experience before they become incumbents themselves. In Nicola's case, this means that she is going to be working in the parish of Great Shelford from mid-January till the summer – by which time she will almost certainly have an incumbency to go to. So that means our having to say goodbye to her near the start of the New Year.

I wasn't fully aware of this when I went on sabbatical, and it all came as rather a shock to me when I came back, as not doubt it comes as a shock to all of you. I spent some time arguing that her placement need not be so long, and that she should be able to return to us during the Spring for the length of a school term - but, alas, it was not to be!

While 'placed' at Great Shelford, Nicola will continue to live in Linton, and happily Miles won't be leaving the bellringers or St Mary's, but I have to ask you to use as much sensitivity as you showed to me in not drawing her in to Linton or Team concerns and activities when her focus must be elsewhere.

Obviously, Nicola and all her hard work, particularly with children and families, as well as her creative gifts in communication and the use of the visual arts, will be very much missed by us all. I shall, of course, miss her as a colleague and sounding-board, and have to gird up my loins to take rather more services, and preach rather more sermons!

Different groups in the church will no doubt find their own ways to say 'goodbye', but it would be good if we could make the 10 am service on Sunday 13th January a special 'goodbye' from us all (and maybe from all the Team churches, if that can be arranged.) I hope we could also muster a bring-and-share lunch that day, if possible, as that is how Nicola was welcomed to her ministry among us. It will be the Sunday when some of our young people take a special role in the service as acolytes, etc., and we use our 'All Age Communion' format, which will be very fitting, as Nicola has contributed so much thought and work to the way this has developed recently.

Meanwhile, do come and benefit from the special services she will be leading in St Mary's, Linton, during December, starting with the Advent service 'Darkness and Light' this Sunday evening at 6, continuing with 'The Longest Night' – a quiet service for people who find Christmas difficult – on 20th December, the annual Carol Service on 23rd, the 'Midnight', and Christmas Day Festal Eucharist for all ages. (Nobody will be able to say she wasn't given enough to do while she was at Linton!) And do hold Nicola and her family in your prayers. The next six or seven months are going to be a time of transition for them, which is never easy.

With my best wishes and prayers for us all to experience Advent fully, and for everybody's preparations for Christmas, too,

from, Maggie.