

Worship at Easter 2021

The PCC met last night (Thursday 11th), and among other matters it considered whether St Mary's should open for worship 'in person' at Easter. It had already been decided that the Clergy and Reader team in our Team Parishes would provide on-line and paper 'virtual' worship for the special services of Holy Week, but the question of Easter Day itself had been left open.

Whilst we have not been legally required to close the church for in-person worship during the current lockdown, a strong steer from our bishops led us to think it best not to hold it until things had eased-up. The PCC had to consider various factors when it came to deciding whether to open for Easter services themselves:

On the one hand,

- The natural and proper desire of people to make their Easter Communion physically, and not just spiritually
- The nature of Easter as the major Christian festival, when it would be particularly apt to gather together and celebrate the Resurrection in a beautifully decorated church
- The increasing number among our congregation who have received at least one dose of Covid- vaccine, and thus feel a measure of security as regards serious illness arising from the virus

On the other hand,

- The continuing threat from transmission of the virus
- Restrictions on our worship which would have to persist, thus altering the nature of the celebration – i.e. that Communion would remain 'in one kind', the congregation could not sing, and that we would have to be very strict about not mingling or chatting socially with each other in church. No Easter egg hunt, or sprinkling with baptismal water, either!
- The fact that Easter Day pre-dates the government's next projected stage of loosening restrictions by over a week
- The fact that even after we start worship in church, there will be those who will still not feel safe to attend, so we would wish to continue with offering online and virtual worship as before, so they could be included – but this would 'divide our forces' and mean continuing duplication of effort in preparing worship
- The difficulty, because of the above-mentioned fact, of filling our rotas for lay participation in leading the worship in church

Having considered all these factors carefully, the PCC has decided that there will be a 10am service at St Mary's on Easter Day. There will be further information in due course on other services on this day and on the following Sundays which are still under consideration. Meanwhile, please don't forget to collect Mothering Sunday posies from the church porch this weekend, and Palm crosses in the week between March 21st and 28th – and make sure they get to people who might appreciate them!

'An end and a new beginning'

I had hoped to communicate the following news to people personally, in church. But unfortunately circumstances don't allow this, so please excuse this written message.

Last week I turned 68, and the time has come, I believe, for me to retire. When I originally came to Linton, I had intended to stay a bit longer, until I was 70, but even then, the Bishop was warning me that I should expect my energy-levels to decline as I progressed through my 60's, and though I was reluctant to believe this at the time I have found he was right. As it turns out, on re-reading the CofE pension information I discovered that 68 is, in fact the presumed normal age of retirement anyway. So, for all these reasons, I feel it's time to go, creating a new start both for Malcolm and me, and, of course, for the parish and Team Ministry.

This news may not come as much of a surprise to many of you, as you know that Malcolm and I bought a house in North Walsham in Norfolk in November and have been working since then to prepare it for our retirement. We don't intend to go immediately: I have agreed with the Bishop that my 'last Sunday' with you should be July 4th. I was very keen to remain in post until that date as it will mark, to the day, 6 years since my institution. (Less than 6 years strikes me as a rather minimal time for a parson to give a parish.)

I am pleased that I will be able to leave Linton with such an able team of active church workers and lay ministers, who take so many good initiatives without the need for the Rector to be involved in every single thing (as is the case in some parishes), and I foresee exciting times ahead for the parish, and I have hopes that all the other Team Ministry parishes will also develop as well. I am also confident in the clergy and LLM colleagues who will still be here with you, providing important continuity and support to the church's worship, teaching and pastoral care during the coming vacancy. In particular, Michael will be graduating from the status of Curate to that of Associate Priest this summer and is also planning to give up his part-time teaching job from the end of this term, so I'm sure you'll all look forward to enjoying more of the qualities and gifts he has already brought to ministry here over the last two years. But please don't overwork him – and remember, that it will be the churchwardens who are in charge!

The prospect of a vacancy will give added significance to the elections due to be held at our APCM during May. Don't let this consideration put people off the prospect of standing for election, either as PCC members or as a churchwarden. Rather let it be an invitation to consider what you could really contribute to the church at a crucial period: it's now generally agreed that vacancies are times with the potential for important growth and development in a parish. I'm sure you will grasp that possibility.

I have enjoyed being part of Linton and St Mary's, and have learnt a lot from you. Maybe I will have an opportunity to apply that learning somewhere else, in my new role as a retiree. Who knows? The prospect of retirement does seem an awfully great adventure!

With love from your friend and Rector, Maggie