

Team Rector's Report: 25th April 2021

Reading: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.' (*Philippians 4:4-9*).

Prayer: Almighty God,
you have knit together your elect
in one communion and fellowship
in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord:
grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints
In all virtuous and godly living
that we may come to those inexpressible joys
that you have prepared for those who truly love you;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen. (*Collect for All Saints*)

I will keep my report brief as it is only six months since our last Annual Meeting in October, and in that time we have been through two further lockdowns - from just after All Saints into early Advent, and from the beginning of Epiphany until now. Although now this is being eased and we have been back worshipping in Church since Palm Sunday.

Thank Yous

I would like to start with a big thank you to the members of our Standing Committee: Ken, Jo and Mark who have worked very hard over this past year to keep our Church life going. Thank you. Our thanks go also to Sue and Jeff Joseph who have contributed so much to our Church over many years and have now moved to live in Devon. In addition: thank you to all those who have done readings for our recorded services; to Elaine as she has continued to provide us with music even when we have been unable to sing; and to Angela and those who have produced the magazine who have not missed a single issue.

As I said back in October, we need to add a note of caution to us all. What does it say about us as a Church that we have so much trouble finding those to take on some of the commitment and responsibility of lay leadership here? What are we doing to ask ourselves what calling to ministry each Church member has?

This Year - and Looking Forward

Although it is by no means clear that the worst of the pandemic is definitely past us, and of course we cannot promise that there will be no further lockdowns, our Church life now picking up again. So now is a time to look forward - to look forward in hope and trust in God. Most of us have had at least our first jab, and we are worshipping together again and even singing outside for the first time in a year.

We have a number of weddings to look forward to in Church this year, including four brides from our Church family.

Now we need to start thinking seriously about what we should be doing: what have we laid down in the past twelve months that we should be taking up again and, just as important, what should be left? Also, what have we not been doing that we should now start? In other words, what should be the life and witness of our Church in the village?

On the worship side, we are revamping our list of readers and intercessors. If you can help in this way please do let us know. Looking beyond that, though, we should be thinking about lay-led services and what that may require of us. Whilst I cannot be specific, my retirement is due and we will be leaving before the end of the year. This will mean, quite simply, we do not have the priests to maintain the services you may want.

Our online service still remains an important part of our Church life, and even with Church services starting again they are still watched by about a dozen each week. That said, they require a lot of work and there are three produced across the Team each Sunday. So we are reducing the number of services recorded in St Laurence to three a month. This will mean that we will continue to have services on our website for the first, third and fourth Sundays in the month. Within the Team, there are also online services available from Redlynch and Landford.

Let me finish with words from Psalm 28:

'The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. O save your people, and bless your heritage; be their shepherd, and carry them for ever' (*Psalm 28:7-9*).

Amen.