

4M

*Members and Friends of St Mary's Church Comberton
not quite Monthly Missive
Summer 2022*

Some context – for those reading this in 20??

It's mid-summer. We have not seen any significant rain for about three months, but lots of sunshine. Much work has been done on creating a 'greener' churchyard, and a more audible sound system. We have experienced Pentecost and now considering the Trinity. We have 'beaten the bounds', walked the labyrinth, lit the beacon and celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of our Queen Elizabeth II.

Hopefully we have come out of the worst of the Covid Pandemic, and are looking forward to a new normal. David has challenged us with Jesus' call 'Follow Me!' and 'Go home!' – No, not either. Both!

David has been appointed Team Rector of the Lordsbridge team- come on Friday 16 July at 7.30pm, and Chris ordained as a priest. So in this issue we are picking up on a number of things, over a few months – and even looking towards Christmas!.

Communication, Celebration, Contemplation

I've been spending a little time recently thinking through what the key priorities for St Mary's Church might be in the months ahead, as we begin to understand some of the permanent changes wrought over the last couple of years. As I've listened to what people have been saying, four key themes have begun to take shape in my mind. And I offer them here as tentative thoughts for communal wisdom...

The first theme is **compassion**. Fundamental to any church community is love – love for one another, as well as love for the wider community and world. This is and has been our key focus as a church. Through pastoral care, through work in the community, through partnerships with other organisations of good will, we have sought to be a people who build one another up in love and build the common good. May we continue to do so.

The second theme is **communication** and, with it, community. The church is more disparate than in previous times. Whilst the 9.30am service remains the largest gathering point, people also gather at the early BCP service, or they gather on Zoom with others across the Lordsbridge Team, or in the afternoon for Wild Church, or they stay connected at home via the phone or through people visiting them. There is also the work of the Friends of St Mary's, which works as a separate charity, and the new Churchyard Steering Group which work under PCC oversight but with significant autonomy. All this can make good communication, and the building of community, more difficult. Yet it remains more crucial than ever that we remain as one church community, gathering in different points and places but all belonging to the church here in Comberton, in various different ways. Ultimately, a community is built through communication and conversation. It requires good 'top-down' communication, but it is also about simple sharing and caring. It includes bring and share lunches, picking up the phone to someone who feels distant, letting someone know you are praying for them, meeting for coffee, and so on. All of that fosters a sense of community and so witnesses to the life of Christ within us.

The third major theme is **celebration**. The news in our days is often bleak. There is growing concern about the future - we are not sure that future generations are going to live in a better world

than we do. And there is, for all involved in the church in this country, growing concern about the future of the church, especially for the historic denominations. It is easy therefore for despondency to rise within us, and with despondency, complaints and grumbles of all kinds easily follow. Yet, there is much to celebrate in the rich tapestry of life. In the life of the church there is also much to celebrate: ordinations, new sound systems, churchyard awards, the children in our midst, good pastoral care, and more. And it has been good to celebrate some of this recently. We seek to be a people of celebration, not in order to ignore all that is broken, but precisely as a defiant resurrection stand in the face of it.

The final major theme is **contemplation**. Back in 2020, before the pandemic, I launched a 'Year of Discipleship'. It inevitably got lost! But perhaps now is the time to pick it up again, in one way or another. To be a people of contemplation does not mean having to spend 15 minutes meditating each day (although I personally would recommend the practice), but it does mean being people who gaze upon the goodness of God. There are depths within the mystery and love of God that are waiting for us to uncover and explore. And we are all invited to go on a journey of deepening faith, of contemplating – whatever that might mean for you – the glory and goodness of God.

Four themes, or big headlines, that I offer as potential priorities for us. They are of course all central to who we are and what we do already. Yet I think they might prove helpful points of orientation as we look ahead.

With love

David

Team Rector Appointment

Most of you will have heard by now that I have been appointed as Team Rector of Lordsbridge Team Ministry. It's a role I have been doing since September in an 'acting' capacity, and I am privileged to take it on formally.

The role of the Team is to support the mission and ministry of the parishes. It does this principally through enabling supportive collaboration and efficient administration. As Rector, my job is to oversee that, and to make sure that both the collaboration and administration are working as well as possible to allow the parishes churches to get on with what they can do best in their own villages.

Having now been appointed to this role there is a vacancy in the team for a Team Vicar. We hope to advertise for this from 8th July. We will be advertising for a Lead Minister in Caldecote with Childerley, Dry Drayton, and Hardwick. This means I will be stepping down as Lead Minister in Caldecote, creating more space for my role as Rector. I will continue as Lead Minister / Vicar in Comberton and Toft.

Institution of the Rev'd David Newton as Team Rector

Friday 15th July at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church.

Followed by Drinks and Nibbles.

Some Diary Dates to note.

Thursday 28 July 2.30 Oasis Tea – Village Hall

Monday 29 August 2.00 – 4.30 Church Fete at St Mary's

Tuesday 30 August 10.00 – 4.30 Oasis – 'A Grand Day Out' at Comberton Baptist Church

A prayer for Ukraine

God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of
weapons.

We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.

We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion
to guide their decisions.

Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in
fear,

that you would hold and protect them.

We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Amen.

Archbishop Justin Welby

Archbishop Stephen Cottrell



Who are These People?

Recently I came into the church during the week with my grandson William, now aged 4. I was intending to clear the wilting daffodils from the windowsills and anticipated that he would be happy to rediscover cars in the children's corner. However William had a different idea- 'Come and sit down', he instructed, choosing our pew. It was immediately on the right in the chancel; a prime vantage point. We sat... and looked, in silence. Then I told him how people had come here for hundreds of years to pray to God, when they were happy and when they were sad... and so we prayed together for all the people William chose to name. Then he had a question- 'Who are these people?' he asked, studying the stained glass windows.

He came up with the first answer immediately recognising Mary. But when we got to the two panes on the left of the chancel I was struggling. I had never taken much notice of them before. Yes Jesus was clearly in both pictures, but who were the other people? I had a few ideas, but wasn't sure, so had to admit defeat and promise to find out. My round of questioning remained inconclusive until Chris approached her colleague at Papworth, a stained glass expert. His verdict confirmed that on the left we have the Restoration of Peter... and on the right the Good Samaritan. Of course, it was obvious-There is the donkey, the priest and the Levite are disappearing in the background... **but**, there is Jesus, half-dead in the foreground... How does that work? Didn't the craftsman know that Jesus was the narrator in this drama?



I continued to mull over this, until the light dawned! Jesus **is** in the story, not just telling it, and NO he is not the Good Samaritan as we might like to cast him... instead he is wounded at the roadside. Then I remembered Matthew writes... 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Jesus is the unnamed traveller... the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, who falls into the hands of robbers, is beaten and left half-dead... this, I thought, was going to be tricky to explain.

The next time William came to visit I told him I had found out about the people in the window. 'Can we go to church now?' he immediately asked. Sadly there wasn't time, but I said we could read the story. Did he know about The Good Samaritan?...

answer 'No'. And so I read and he listened attentively. I said we would go to church to look at the window again very soon, and I was wondering how I would explain that Jesus was not only telling the story, but lying at the roadside.

William was still studying the picture in the Children's Bible. 'There's Jesus!' he announced. 'Where?' I asked. 'He's the man at the side of the road'... I was taken aback! 'I can see from his face that it's Jesus' he said, as if stating the obvious.

Thank you William for inviting me to a new vantage point.

Thank you for your question... Thank you unknown craftsman for opening my eyes to new truth in a familiar story. I continue to think about the traveller in the window... and the countless other unnamed travellers I see on more familiar screens almost every day... Then I ask William's question 'Who are these people?' And I remember his answer.

Brenda

Listen to the word that God has spoken.

Listen to the word that is close at hand.

Listen to the voice behind creation.

Listen even if you don't understand.

Chris' reflections from The Woodland Burial Ground....

As many know I was on placement at the woodland burial ground during the month of March.

What did I get up to? I spent a good time walking and chatting with folk on their grief journey, being a listening ear- Bertie, my dog came too and was great pastorally. It was such a special time!

I would pack my rucksack, picnic there and breathe deeply...

One day I found a white rose petal - and sat down and wrote a few thoughts about it...



'The fragility of the rose petal...
How delicate, still holding a sweet perfume...
The edges bruised by the storm of life...
Yet it journeys on...
Blow by the wind of God

As Pentecost approaches my prayer is that, wherever we are... we may be blown by the wind of God!

With love and prayers,

Chris

Revd Chris Westgarth

Sandra's memoirs of Jubilee day

Fun. Families. The Village coming together .

Seeing children, running in races. - Egg spoon, three legged, sack race.

Seeing Adults running races, - tug of War.

Oh the joy seeing the adults letting their hair down, having fun, making memories .

Families picnicking together, with friends, next door neighbours.

The weather .

The group of young people spending months pulling it together .

Just giving ,children memories of That Great day.

Fun .

Thank you Jubilee Committee

Small Mammal Survey at St Mary's Church.

On the evening of Tuesday 19th April the biodiversity group met up with local mammal expert Roger Featherstone to put out a dozen "Longwor" small mammal traps.

Roger showed us how to set them up, stuff them with straw and bait them with fly pupae and sunflower seeds. We positioned them around the perimeter of the main churchyard, with one in the hedge between the causeway and the new graveyard and one in the central box bush.

Roger Featherstone with a Longworth trap with the churchwardens



The next morning at 08.30 we gathered again to see what we might have caught and were pretty chuffed with the tally! Three bank voles availed themselves of a night in the warm (one is in Teresa's hand in the photo, right) and two wood mice. We also found a common shrew on the Causeway, sadly dead, probably dropped by an owl as they don't always take to shrew for their supper. We were wondering whether they might also be tempted into the traps during the daytime so reset them for collection on Wednesday evening, resulting in one more bank vole. Clearly, we have a pretty good population of small rodents in the churchyard, suggesting that they have plenty to eat and, in their turn, are probably feeding owls, hawks and possibly grass snakes and larger mammals such as stoats, weasels and foxes.

Bank vole caught in the churchyard, prior to release



We're hoping to repeat the exercise during the Autumn half-term school break – do come along next time and meet our friendly rodent neighbours!

Mark Collins

April 2022

We are indebted to Roger Featherstone for his help and support for the project

Operation Christmas Child

Alice will be coordinating Operation Christmas Child again this year. Leaflets for this year's Campaign of 2022 are already available.

If you or someone else has a spare medium sized shoebox please could this be either left in the church for others to use or pass it to Alice if you wish to have one covered.

Also again if you feel you are unable to fill a box but wish to donate an item or two or put a donation towards the cost of transporting the shoebox and to other work of international relief that Samaritans purse do throughout the world.

Then by all means pass it on to Alice any time between now and the beginning of November. Even a pound would do towards something (if you state what you would like brought with it. Money in an envelope can even be passed to Alice or put through my door at 1 Cannons close, Toft.

Some of last year's boxes were delivered to fleeing children from Ukraine and Moldova.

Alice wishes to suggest items to think about during July and August could be a sun hat, or fun small toys, a skipping rope or a small ball. In August you could think about stationery as supermarkets have all this ready to go back to school. Fun pencil sharpeners, geometry sets, or a cool pencil case.

Also for those who can knit and you find yourself with a bit of spare time, knitted hats and mittens are always warmly welcomed.

And don't forget you can always pray for volunteers working for Samaritans purse international throughout the year, at the moment especially for those volunteers working in the field hospitals, helping those injured from Ukraine.

Contributions, Comments, ...

Please send your comments, contributions or ideas to my email or through my or David's door.

4M is currently available electronically via the church website, or in print and large print. If you, or someone you know, would prefer to receive it in some other format, such as audio, please let me or the Vicar know.

John Simpson

Church website: www.stmaryscomberton.org