

Ministry outside the benefice

I brought with me a number of wider diocesan commitments, the principal one being that of Diocesan Environment Adviser, requiring me to convene the Diocesan Environment Group which meets bi-monthly, and as the stewardship of God's creation is the 5th Mark of Mission, I am part of the Diocesan Ministry & Mission officers' meetings. Inter alia I am also on the DAC which has responsibility for church buildings and churchyards.

Conclusion

The three PCCs met together at an AwayDay in late February this year; it was an opportunity to listen to each other, reflect and build on where we have come from as a benefice, and to plan for the future. I remain committed to delivering confident ministry in the parish context, seeking to lead others in that execution, that people may come to know Jesus Christ in their lives.

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 you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8-9).

Revd Canon Mark Haworth, March 3rd 2022



St Peter and St Mary
Barham

St Mary
Great Blakenham

St Peter
Henley

THE CLAYDON BENEFICE

comprising the

Parishes of Claydon & Barham,
Great Blakenham and Henley

INTERIM PRIEST-IN-CHARGE'S REPORT 2021



Introduction

It is just over a year since I was asked to consider an interim ministry for up to two years as Priest-in-Charge of this benefice, eventually being licensed on May 24th 2021 by Zoom. This was some 15 months after the vacancy began, occasioned by the resignation of the previous incumbent, and a subsequent consultancy by a senior member of the diocese which resulted in an agreed request for a short-term interim appointment.

It is nearly two years now since the national Covid-pandemic began, with its many lock-down facets and implications, and so the whole of the year being reported on needs to be read in the light of its impact on our worship and ministry, in and out of church. Grateful thanks are extended here to everyone who felt able to maintain as much of 'normal operation' as possible, and our hearts go out to those who were, and may still be, isolated, to whom we continue to minister as best we can. The facility of meeting and worshipping by Zoom, despite its limitations, has been a vital component of our continuing life. So, my thanks to everyone for their continued enthusiasm and involvement, and also their forbearance in what I hope are those very few areas where we might have fallen short of expectations.

Staffing

I, as is true for the whole benefice, am indebted to the SSM Assistant Priest, Revd Cathy Austin, based in Henley, for leading the benefice ministry team during the vacancy. In this she was nobly supported by our three retired PTO clergy, viz Revd Canons Bernie Rose and Bruce Wakeling, and Revd Jenny Ablett, and also our able and loyal Readers, Chris Farley and Liz Stone (Barham-based) who were joined during the year by Ruth Dennigan, who is based at Henley.

Our two Lay Elders at Barham are Pauline Dennis and Isobel Mottram, the latter also working across the benefice, and our third Lay Elder, Wendy Hooper, is also a Licensed Evangelist in Great Blakenham, as well as being churchwarden and PCC secretary. We were very sad to lose the services of our Benefice Administrator, Jane Corbett, towards the end of the year, and are glad she continues as part of the Zoom team, and with husband Paul, as a Barham bellringer.

Looking into the new year, the diocese is working towards the launch of its Local Ministry Role, which is a particular 'first point of contact' focus for those who seek to live out God's call on their lives in their particular context (full details can be read on the diocesan website www.cofesuffolk.org); we hope to be able to play our part in this as it is rolled out.

Communications

In Jane Corbett's stead, we have for the time-being maintained this aspect of our life with the very able and technically-skilled volunteering of Wendy Hooper and Ruth Dennigan, working on the weekly Pewsheets and Porchsheet.

(The pewsheets were redesigned early in my time with all four readings now being provided on a Redemptorist double-sided A5 sheet, plus the Collect and Post-Communion prayer, also an A4 large print edition for lectern and other usage, paid for by a local firm of undertakers at no cost to ourselves, yielding space for a weekly Pastoral Letter and other news).

A Benefice Directory was developed to enable our shared ministry as a benefice, and to facilitate contact with one another, plus also a rolling monthly Benefice Calendar, the function of which is to help us plan further ahead, and thus to avoid date-clashes and support each other's events.

We don't have a monthly Newsletter, but the community 'In Touch' magazine carries a dedicated benefice page, with all service details and a pastoral letter. We note that the magazine has at least three editions covering different civil parishes, so for example the edition that covers Great Blakenham also covers the Bramford benefice villages.

Each parish has a national 'A Church Near You' page maintained by Roger Colthorpe, Wendy Hooper and Clare Thomas respectively, and the Benefice website and Facebook page are currently maintained by Wendy and Ruth, providing us with contemporary social media coverage, and an avenue of approach for many.

Schools

I have been glad to lead collective worship every few weeks at Henley CP School, where I have been made very welcome. The Covid-19 situation has spiked more tellingly at Claydon CP and Claydon High School (CHS), preventing any in-school involvement. Nevertheless, for the former I was able to speak at an outdoor Christmas carol service in the school carpark!

The CHS headteacher was kind enough to support our Remembrance Day observance in Claydon Village Hall, and read at the Claydon carol service; we now do have plans for collective worship in both Claydon schools as the pandemic eases. Liz Stone remains a community governor at CHS for which we are very grateful.

Worship

Mindful of all the difficulties during Covid-19 lockdown, we must be grateful that we are now slowly re-building our normal pattern of worship, which continues to be a major part of our 'shop-window' to the wider community. Zoom worship continues to serve a real need, and we are glad it sits alongside all our other worship. Henley's 4th Sunday Evensong at 6.30pm is a monthly opportunity for us to worship together, and we continue to have a single main morning service at the time of the host church on the four 5th Sundays of the year. We look forward to our benefice provision during Lent, Holy Week & Easter.

Devotional & Teaching

We have been grateful for the *Christian Basics* courses, the short *Faith Confirmed* course, and the restored *Bishops' Teaching Mornings* usually in Stowmarket. Our faith-sharing, as we perhaps tell our story, remains a key part of our Christian journey as we seek to disciple others, and work within the diocesan *Growing in God* plan. I remain convinced that the quality of our preaching and, pray God, consequent growth in personal confidence in our faith is the key to numerical growth of all ages; people will come to worship if by not doing so they feel they are missing something vital, a learning opportunity, an experience which is also enjoyable!

Occasional Offices

The number of weddings and funerals is only modest given the size and shape of the population, but Barham churchyard sees a constant stream of requests for interment and memorial, evidenced too by day visitors tending their graves.