

## **Team Rector Report to PCC – Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021**

### **Corona-Virus**

The current situation is very difficult. We are monitoring the changes in infection levels, and looking for updates in what might cause or inhibit infection. The government has said there will be a major update in mid-February and we also look out for diocesan guidance. At present all four parishes in the Team have closed their church buildings.

We have updated and strengthened our Risk Assessment to take note of the increased chance of infection and the impact of colder weather on our practices. It is clear that, when we can open, we will need to be more rigorous still in keeping people from mingling and gathering, especially on arrival and leaving. However, I am not at all clear when the signals will be clear enough that we can re-open. It is not going to be easy and there may well be differing views.

### **Worship – Lent and Easter**

We continue to develop the online services, across the Team, and to share the Worship-at-Home resources, also across the Team. We are looking at an online Lent Course (also available on paper and to be delivered) focused on Prayer and ways of praying and we hope to offer Morning (and potentially) Evening Prayer in Lent, using a 'podcast' which may sound a bit techie but should be very easy for people to access. We know that online worship is not the same as gathering together and we hope that we will be able to gather back in our churches soon. We hope that we will be in our churches in some way for Easter but we will need a plan B, which will be online. We hope that a focus on prayer through Lent will help us all find the resilience and strength to remain faithful, hopeful and loving in these very wearisome times.

### **Diocesan Plans**

The archdeaconry meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> Jan will give some more indication both of what the diocese is planning and the time-scale for it. We expect that there will be a new full-time Area Dean for Bolton by June, who will be Area Dean for what were the three deaneries of Bolton, Deane and Walmsley. The Deanery Synod will be made up of all who are members of the three Deanery Synods and there will be elections for the various Deanery Officers. In itself this will not affect the Team or Parish.

There will then be a period in which plans are drawn up for Mission Communities, larger groups of parishes, with a team of clergy; we have no real idea what these will look like other but we do know that – overall – the number of paid posts in the area will be reduced. Clearly this will have an affect on the Turton Team and our parishes.

We also do not know what the plans are for any rationalisation of parishes / closure of buildings. As with all things C of E, there is a balance between the particular needs of a parish and the general well-being of the churches across the diocese. We are asked to have an eye on how we can be the local church here AND how we can support the mission and ministry of the Church across the diocese where, in many parishes, the resources are smaller and the needs, socio-economic and spiritual greater. This is not going to be easy, and it will not be immediately apparent what the main changes are going to be.

### **Pastoral Care**

Whatever the wider politics, our responsibility is to be a people who love God and who love our neighbour, and it is really important that we continue to look after those around us, practically and spiritually. The phone-call, the message, the card, all make a big difference. Where we can help with shopping or errands, we can do so.

We will make some mistakes and we will not always agree. None of us have experienced the situation we are in at the moment before. It may sound rather woolly, but putting the values of grace, mercy and peace at the forefront of all we do, is critical to what sort of church will emerge from this difficult time and how relevant it will (or will not) be to the wider community.

*Peter Reiss – Jan 2021*