

Team Rector Report - PCC April 28th 2021

Lockdown

We continue to monitor the requirements from the diocese, the changes from the government, and how we can do things. While we expect a greater loosening of restrictions we do not know if distancing will remain a requirement, whether singing will be allowed (or when), when groups can meet again – Mothers' Union, Toddlers, etc, when coffee and tea and socialising will be permitted etc.

We still have some way to go before many of these will be in place.

APCM

As this will be on Zoom, I am concerned about how we will manage any elections, if we need to have them. We will do our best to be as inclusive as possible, but it may be harder if people are put forward late in the process.

We will keep the meetings to what is required, and will do our utmost to include all who want to be involved.

Deanery Re-organisation

Each Parish is being asked to consider what sort of parish groupings it might come up with, and to make suggestions to the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee which will look to see if there are any groupings which find more general favour, or if there are any groupings where one or more parishes would be resistant.

For a fuller consideration please see the separate document.

I hope that the current Team would remain together, but I suspect that the future Mission Community would be larger than just the Team, and therefore the other local parishes that *might* be brought together would include one or more of St Paul's, Astley Bridge, Christ's Church, Harwood and St James', Breightmet. We are asked for our views, and we should also give some thought to what other groups might be if we propose a group of a particular shape. The Turton Team is very much on the edge of the diocese so there are not many other options other than to stay the same which I don't think would be agreed.

This is a discussion about groupings; clearly there would also be a discussion about stipendiary staffing, potentially about housing, and also where the Mission Community Leader would be based, and what the legal configuration of the parishes would be and by when, but those are not the focus of the current discussions.

The Deanery also has some funds (£1900) at its disposal and needs to decide what to do with them. There are three options: the money or some of it could be given to the new Deanery to help its coffers; the money or some of it could be used for something in Walmsley Deanery that would help the mission of the churches in the deanery; the money or some of it, could be used for mission projects in some of the parishes in the deanery.

Before lockdown we decided as a PCC to buy two large flat-screens one for each church in the parish. Because of lockdown we put this on pause, but we may want to consider asking the deanery if they would contribute to a flat-screen and stand for St James' where I hope we could use it imaginatively in worship and, when allowed, also have some study groups or classes there.

We will discuss this more fully but I am suggesting something we might want to consider. We don't know what other parishes will decide or propose, and others in this parish may have other ideas. But this is an opportunity to put in a proposal of whatever kind.

Future Plans

As we emerge from the restrictions we will need to look at what we should be prioritising, what we have learnt is no longer needed, what we know remains essential, and what we should learn to do differently. The disruption has not been easy but it has forced us to think afresh, and we must try and hear what God is calling us to be and to do for the future, not assume we must reclaim everything that we used to have.

How we do this is not easy, and will need prayer, conversations, and careful thought. I don't know when we will have more opportunities nor what will emerge, but I am sure we are called to be brave in the emerging, as we have tried to be in the crisis.

As a for instance, the online resources and the online service are something we would not have done, except for lockdown, and they have become "popular" and the evidence is that there are people who are not church-goers who are viewing the service on Facebook or YouTube; should this continue to be part of the mission and outreach of the Team? I hope so, but it is a chunk of work each week. Our Facebook Page continues to attract new likes and new followers, again people who are not church-goers. This is a way to share our faith which is connecting to others.

Service Pattern – Sundays and Occasional Services

I have had a request for a baptism at St Anne's during the Sunday Service; we have agreed that baptisms, which are not a part of the main service, will be at St James' on Sundays when there is no service. For this request I have said that the baptism family need to limit numbers to 25 and that only parents and god-parents would be sitting downstairs, while the others would have to be in the gallery. I do not think it is helpful to have too many baptisms in the main services unless the families are already attending regularly, but we should not prohibit it.

We have a number of weddings booked in for the summer – and we will follow covid-guidelines as they apply.

I suggest that the Sunday Service pattern at St James' remains twice a month until the end of August and the start of the new term.

Eco-Church

The developments in the Churchyard will help us towards a silver award as Eco-Church but we also need to look at how we can encourage a more eco-sustainable lifestyle among our church members.

This is another thing that has rather been on hold this past year, although the churchyard developments have gone on a pace.

I would like to encourage St James' to look at the Eco-Church awards for themselves, and we have had a request for some allotment space at St James'.

Admission of Children to Communion

Although things have not returned to normal, we have a number of children attending regularly, and I would like to invite those in Year 3 and above to consider being admitted to Communion, prior to their confirmation in due course.