

Norton Parish APCM, May 2024

Not the Vicar's Report.

This is not the vicar's report because, firstly, I am not the vicar and, secondly it only covers the activities of the ministry team during the vacancy and not the life of the whole parish. The ministry team has consisted of myself, Rev'd Don Dowling, and our three Readers, Helen Giles, Karen Williams and Jackie Halter.

It all started, as it did for all of us, on Mothering Sunday last year when we all heard the news of Trevor's resignation. At the end of the service Bill Britt, the Rural Dean, asked me where I would be on Easter Sunday. I indicated that I would be happy sitting in one of the back rows. He firmly suggested that I should be up the front. Since then, the ministry team has attempted and mostly managed to keep services going, with some help from outside.

We first requested that the Church Wardens find visiting priests to cover on the fourth Sunday of each month to give us all a break. There were exceptions to this as Christmas and Easter both fell on the last Sunday of the month, so the following Sunday was covered. Many thanks to Neil and Ros for achieving that. Soon after that we realised that Don and I are both of an age where taking three services on a Sunday morning was not sustainable, so we developed the pattern of services which you have received since. On some Sundays one of us will preside at 8.00 am and 9.30 am, the 11.15 service being Communion by Extension led by Jackie. On other Sundays either Helen or Karen have taken Communion by Extension at St Nicholas and the priests have taken the other two services. We are grateful to Bishop Jane for giving permission for the planned use of Communion by Extension which would normally be a last-minute emergency measure. We have also tried to lighten the load by only having one preacher each Sunday and so the St Nicholas folk have, on occasions, had a sermon read to them which was written by someone who was not there but who later preached at the two St Georges services. There were also other strange combinations from time to time as the need arose. We were also helped by Keith Taylor, our Discipleship Enabler, also preached on some occasions. Thanks are due to our team of Readers who assist the priests in taking the services by acting as deacons. This has been mainly done by Karen at the 9.30 and Jackie at the 11.15, with Helen filling in as required.

The ministry team and others have been involved in taking Home Communion to a number of housebound members of the church. Jackie and I have also visited people and taken services at the St Catherines Nursing Home, particularly at Christmas and Easter when we were assisted by a number of

other members of the congregation. St Catherines has been included in our parish since the boundary reorganisation.

Karen has also led a daily Morning Prayer service on Zoom, which was held in person in church before the covid pandemic.

As far as Occasion Offices go, (Baptisms Weddings and Funerals):

During the vacancy we have conducted only two baptisms although we have had a number of inquiries from families which have not yet converted into definite plans. Thanks go to Susan Taylor who assists in the administration of baptisms.

We have conducted six weddings in the past year. Trevor Sharp conducted one before his final departure. Three weddings were conducted by visiting clergy, one at the request of the family and two because I was not available. As well as conducting the remaining two weddings I also conducted two Thanksgivings for Marriage and Renewal of Vows, and one Blessing Following a Civil Ceremony, the latter in a parishioner's garden.

Over the next year we have one wedding definitely planned for September 2024 and several other inquiries waiting production of documents or detailed discussion.

During the vacancy we have conducted ten funerals, nine by myself and one by Karen Williams. Six of these were at St Nicholas Church, Three at St Georges and one at North Herts Crematorium. Most of the church funerals were followed by an interment at Wilbury Hill Cemetery with two going to the Crematorium. One burial was a reopening of an existing family grave at St Nicholas. In addition, we made the church available for funerals by two other church groups, one, a Caribbean church based in Luton for a parish resident connected with that church, and the other the Serbian Orthodox community which uses our churches for their regular services. There was also one interment of ashes at St Nicholas. There is one other funeral at St Nicholas planned near the end of May and we are in discussion with two families over the interment of ashes at St Nicholas in the near future.

I would also like to thank Michael Clements who acts as verger at weddings and funeral and Keith Sparrow who plays the organ whenever requested.

Rev'd Anthony Giles