

A few words from the Vicar

But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:14)



Some progress has been achieved regarding our forming a team ministry with the Radcliffe parishes but, without breaching confidences, there is nothing I can report to you just yet. These things take time and it's better to take our time and get things right rather than rush into things and find ourselves with a mess on our hands.

Nonetheless change is in the air.

Hopefully, by the time you come to read this you will have heard the news that an ordained colleague will be joining us as an Ordained Local Minister, taking special responsibility for home and hospital visits and for ministry within nursing homes. Unfortunately, at the time of writing I am unable to tell you more as we are awaiting formal approval of the transfer.

Assuming the transfer is approved, it couldn't come at a better time. Not least because, as I have said on many occasions, when we do finally become part of a greater Radcliffe team, at most only 50% of my time will be available for ministry within Ainsworth parish. So an additional ordained colleague will, literally, be a God send.

Not that anyone should expect our new priest to make up the shortfall in my time. That would be impossible given that the individual concerned works full-time. Nonetheless, the timing is fortuitous.

Also, as many of you will know by now, Debra Johnstone will shortly be attending a Bishops' Advisory Panel, the outcome of which will determine whether she is selected for ordination training, with a view to serving this parish as another Ordained Local Minister. The expectation is that Debra will hold a particular brief for ministry amongst children and teenagers. Please hold Debra in your prayers and pray that she will be selected.

But let's not stop there. If this Church is to continue to thrive (and indeed grow) in the changed circumstances that are rapidly approaching us, then we need more individuals to answer God's call to ordination or to step forward to become Readers, Authorised Lay Ministers or indeed to exercise lay leadership in other ways. (By the way, we still need an additional Sunday School leader and additional volunteers to act as vergers at Baptisms.)

And that need is there regardless as to whether we become part of a team or not. The fact is the days of 'Vicar says' are long gone in most parishes (including this one) and the preferred model these days is one of 'collaborative ministry' where laity and clergy work together in partnership as a team in order to further God's mission in the world. This isn't a cynical ploy to address the falling number of available stipendiary clergy (although I suppose it might be in some cases) but rather results from the realisation that every single one of us is called to

mission and ministry through our baptisms. 'Collaborative ministry' quite simply is a better model of being Church.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, 18th February, and is a time for penitence and self-examination. So here's a challenge: during your personal devotions over Lent, ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern whether God is calling you into some kind of ministry (lay or ordained, authorised or not) and if you feel that he is, have a word with me.

So, change is in the air, and maybe God has something new in mind for you.

Every Blessing

Dave