

THE VICAR'S REPORT 2020

AGM October 2020

First Section – Andrew Giles

The last 18 months has been an interesting one for Sue & I dealing with the various issues that arose during Nigel's time here, the fall out of his departure, the subsequent interregnum and the pandemic.

All this time I watched the congregation and leadership teams evolve. Prior the last interregnum Louise had divided us into mutually exclusive teams but due in part to Louise's strong leadership we were largely unused to operating in this way and being churchwarden was a lot about smoothing things over and gap-filling when it wasn't any particular team leader's responsibility. It was a tough but mercifully short 5 months.

Nigel was a dream vicar for many and he had more of a light touch style (each has its advantages and disadvantages) and one of the consequences was that the teams began to become more integrated. Strong relationships began to form between people who did not regularly communicate before.

There were various challenges during his time here, although this was outweighed by the many good things that happened like the unifying project with homeless. A churchwarden is supposed to look after the vicar so his departure was particularly difficult for me to handle. The things that have happened then and since would have split and broken a lesser church but I feel there was a strong sense of God's purpose and of His hand upon us. Once Nigel left and we subsequently moved into lockdown there was immediately a sense of common purpose and of pulling together which was truly awesome. I also felt for the first time that people were starting to look out of their own agenda and consider what was best for the church as a whole. We have still some way to go on this but we are headed in the right direction.

Of course the last 3.5 tumultuous years have been enormously challenging for me personally, even though Mike Brooks and Sue Morgan have been superb fellow-Churchwardens. Although I had a clear call to be a leader when we knew Louise was leaving and another clear call at the start of Covid to step up, as I had the contacts and experience and could do enough on the IT side I have received another clear call to step aside. I believe Ken working with Sue is now what this church needs along with the PCC and it's many new members working with the integrated teams. My new role as Church secretary will be sorting out the diary and admin which was weak, shall we say, when I arrived and I'll be still be around.

I believe that everything is now in place as far as possible for powering through the rest of the pandemic and pressing forward with recruitment of who I hope will be a Vicar who can

guide us with God's help to the next level. I'm confident Sue and Ken and the PCC will be able to move us forward to a new Spring for All Saints Dedworth

Regarding recruitment you first have to hold a so-called section 11 meeting to select from the PCC the two parish representatives who will manage the interviewing, this can only be done once the parish profile (which has to be revised massively because of Covid) is almost complete and thanks to the efforts of the PCC and the latest editing work by Carolyn Carter, John Sturgeon, Jackie Wiggins and Ruth Norris it is very close. We will arrange this for November shortly after the first PCC. Then we have the Archdeacon or representative down to kick off the advertising process – the so called section 12 meeting which we will aim to arrange before Christmas.

Indeed, the lockdown with all the desperate misery and heartache it has caused has been a trigger for the light of Christ to burn even brighter from this church right across Dedworth through us all. We can't solve many of the problems but in so many little and not so little ways we are making a difference and providing hope. With everything we are doing including the Hub the community is being to get we are a group of people who just want to serve, help and provide comfort without an agenda and they are responding, not to "the church" but seeing the reality of Christian love.

Second Section – Sue Morgan

Well... let us start with the obvious...I am not a vicar. We don't have a vicar yet, although the team are hard at work doing all the background paperwork that has to be produced in order to recruit one. The lock down has slowed the whole process down, I'm afraid. But we will have the person of God's choosing to lead us in the end. And in the meantime we have a strong team of people who are working together to bring God's kingdom here and now in Dedworth. You will be able to gauge from other people's reports the details of what is going on in the different areas of our life together and I would like to say a big thank you to all those people who have worked so hard, in so many ways, to keep us "on the road" at this extraordinarily difficult time of pandemic and interregnum. In the absence of a vicar, legal responsibility for the church lies with the church wardens. So as Andrew steps aside now and takes up the role of secretary in this next period of time, I am delighted to know that Ken Kilner will help me in the task ahead. Now, therefore, I am not going to dwell on the way that we have done things in the past, as would normally happen in an AGM, but I am going to talk about what God is asking us to do in the now.

In order to understand where we are now, we need to look back into the earlier part of the pandemic. After the initial total lockdown, we reached a point when we were allowed to go for socially distanced walks in the park. We worked out that we could meet in the church gardens as long as we were socially distanced, of course. So we started meeting, at 9.30am

and 5pm every day, all spaced out, to pray for our community of Dedworth. One of the intentions was to have a real meeting to encourage each other (a step up from Zoom). But it quickly took on a life of its own!

This week we have completed 19 weeks of prayers in the garden, which we do twice each day. That comes to more than 260 services during this period. We read a bible passage and pray at every session. Around 45 different people have taken part, in small groups and different combinations. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of these people are folk from our own congregation, but the other $\frac{1}{4}$ are outsiders. When we meet we make a point of pronouncing God's blessing over the whole community of Dedworth, those who live here, those who work here and those who are simply passing through. God is using this time to build up those who are on the edge of our community and those who've never heard the good news of Jesus, Son of God.

The reason why I want to share this with you today is because it is a very important part of what God is doing at this time and in this place. He is sending us 2 distinctly different groups of people that he wants us to draw alongside: a) those who had a relationship with him many years ago, but have simply fallen away over the course of time and b) those who have never heard. These are the people God is waiting to meet with at this highly unusual time in history, and our part of the deal is to be available to them.

We are not the only place for which God has Revival on his mind. We believe that we are painting our part of a much bigger canvas that God is creating at this time. God, who did not send the pandemic in the 1st place, is nonetheless using it, to reach out in love towards mankind as mankind asks the question "Where is God in all of this?"

We understand that we are just one of a number of places that God wants to bless with revival at this time. If we are faithful to him, and trust him to lead and guide us, I believe that we, along with other similar groups in our land, will witness a mighty spiritual revival, like a forest fire, spreading across our land. Amen