



TEAMword

12th June 2022

TRINITY SUNDAY

Dear Parishioners,

It's been several years since we gathered together for a parish-wide Corporate Communion on this special feast. Thanks to Fr Paul, the wardens Joyce and Louise and the congregation for receiving us all and offering hospitality. We increasingly value occasions such as these (there are typically three a year) and that is a sign of the gradual heightening of our sense of being part of *the* Parish. St Paul's image of the human body – one body with different members – fits well our Team Ministry and the three congregations it serves.

There's no point denying that getting to this point of shared public worship, of robust singing and of sharing the Blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Presence in both kinds has taken time. But thanks to everyone's loyalty and perseverance *here we are!* With all of those successes in mind Fr Paul and his team have produced a solemn, joyful Eucharist through which we can profess our Trinitarian faith. So, thanks to them as well as to our parish's talented musicians at the podium, on the bench and in the stalls.

The rest of this TEAMword tells you about aspects of our parish's Team Ministry and helpers, lay leadership and plans close at hand and further down the road.

The Revd Dr Charles Miller, Team Rector

New Faces in our Fellowship of Clergy

Since Advent 2021 the Revd **Elizabeth Birch**, formerly Chaplain of the School of St Helen & St Katharine, Abingdon, has been part of the group of retired or otherwise un-committed clergy who take a part in our service rota. The truth is that without such support the routine round of services on Sundays could not take place. So we're always glad for new offers of support on whatever basis. Last Holy Week Elizabeth delivered highly appreciated addresses to the congregation

at St Michael's so we know that whatever ministry she offers us in the months and years ahead will be of high quality indeed! About herself Elizabeth says this:



By background I am a classicist - my first degree was in classics and I taught Latin and French at a London prep school before I was ordained in 2006, after taking a theology degree on what was then the North Thames Ministerial Training Course. I served my title at St John the Baptist, Pinner from 2006 to 2009 and moved to South Oxfordshire in 2009 to become Rector of the Wantage Downs Benefice from 2009 to 2018. In 2018 I joined St Helen and St Katharine's School in Abingdon to be the chaplain where I have been until July 2021. I retired from SHSK School in order to be able to spend more time with older family members and while as a result, I am not around every weekend, I am very much looking forward to helping out within the St Helen's Team ministry where

possible. My husband David is an accountant by training and an engineer by instinct and inclination! My outside interests include print-making, all types of stitching and a great deal of baking! I have also taken up cycling again this year (after a gap of 35 non-cycling years) and am enjoying the additional time I now have to walk and be out and about in the countryside.

Fr Paul's Sabbatical: August through mid-November 2022

After far more than ten years of active priestly ministry Team Vicar Fr Paul Smith will take a sabbatical from the beginning of August through mid-November. Such time away from the routines of ministry are encouraged and approved by the Diocesan Sabbatical Committee. The Diocese encourages sabbaticals every ten years as part of its 'Flourishing in Ministry' initiative, and expects a sabbatical period (usually three months) to be an opportunity for rest, retreat and study of some sort. The Diocese also adds some financial support to what the home church(es) and other grant-giving bodies provide. Fr Paul has shared his plans with the Parochial Church Council and his churches' District Councils and has their

full support. So Fr Paul is now in the final phase of practical planning which includes, of course, working with me and others to see that the service rota for his churches is covered as fully as possible for the period of his absence.

Canon Charles Masheder to stay on

It's my pleasure to share with you that Canon Charles and Felicity Masheder have decided to stay in Abingdon for another year. Charles' License to our parish was originally for three years and will end in early November of this year. He and Felicity were with us just four and half months when the pandemic overtook us and so much of normal life and ministry came to a screeching halt. So until recently they experienced very little of our life and witness as a parish. Having said that, even through constrained times Canon Charles has made welcome initiatives, given his all to ministry and become a beloved part of our Team Ministry.

The decision to stay on beyond November 2022 – a one-year extension at the most – has been approved by the Area Bishop and others expected to have a say. For us it will mean reliable and familiar support through Fr Paul's sabbatical period. It will mean too gaining traction with his chiefly pastoral concerns as parish life picks up and gathers momentum.

So our parish will have the continued benefit of fifty years of ordained ministry – not quite up to the Queen's Jubilee of seventy years on the throne but a very notable achievement nonetheless! Canon Charles wants us all to celebrate that milestone with him, so we will have an extra occasion for combined worship and fellowship to do that. On **Saturday, July 2nd at 3 pm at St Helen's** Canon Charles will celebrate a Sung Eucharist to mark his fifty years in ordained service to God and his Church. A party will, of course, follow, so please mark that in your diaries now if you haven't already! A combined choir will aid and abet our worship that day and the Associate Archdeacon, David Tyler, our neighbour in Abingdon, will preach.

The Revd Jen Brown

At the time of writing our Associate Priest Jen Brown is completing her doctoral thesis for Coventry University. Jen had a sabbatical from her teaching at Ripon College Cuddesdon in the autumn to work on the thesis and she is now running the final 'lap' of that years-long endeavour. For that reason Jen's presence on our summer-time rota is less than usual. Though often out of sight, let her not be out of mind or out of our prayers.

The Team Review

In the late summer and autumn of 2022 the Associate Archdeacon David Tyler began here a process which the Diocese of Oxford has initiated: to review all the Team ministries in the Diocese. Because David Tyler lives in Abingdon and has some acquaintance with our clergy and parish, he decided to start with us. His approach involved sharing his intention and 'method' with the Parochial Church Council, then he met with the Team clergy and ministers and others who, upon general invitation, took the opportunity to speak with him about our parish life. Finally he produced a report evaluating our Team. His conclusion was that our Team Ministry and the parish are in good health and that no major problems beset us. He drew attention to aspects which deserve attention so as to strengthen further our healthy position. Those include:

- The Team Rector's leading worship in each church at least once a quarter;
- A regular publication of TEAMword to keep the whole parish informed of ministry and other parish-wide concerns;
- Underlining the Team Vicar's 'incumbent status' as a member of the Team;
- Reviewing worship patterns and standards with the PCC at least once a year.

The Associate Archdeacon shared his report with the PCC in November of last year and the Team clergy and the Licensed Lay Minister discussed it among themselves in the first quarter of this year. Even before those meetings, however, the recommendations had begun to be implemented.

Since then some of those who had spoken with the Archdeacon asked to see the review report and it was duly sent to them.

It's always good to have another perspective on one's life and situation leading to comment – the sort of thing a 'life coach' does, I suppose. In our case we have come away from a few things to tidy-up and add to our general 'good practice' of Team ministering. I for one came away confirmed in our Team and parish 'culture', and I hope that you too sense that we are in good heart and good shape.

PCC Away Day

On Monday, July 4th the Parochial Church Council will have an 'away day' to consider aspects of parish life which the business burden of our regular meetings doesn't allow us to spend enough time on. The PCC Standing Committee and the PCC itself have agreed an agenda for the day, which we will spend in the beautiful and convenient new 'River Room' at All Saints', Sutton Courtenay. The day will

include prayer together and four facilitated sessions during which we will take up matters of shared interest. Look out for a report on the day later in July. Please feel free to follow-up on whatever you read if you have comments, questions or concerns. Those can be addressed to the PCC Secretary, Eluned Hallas.

‘Ringing People’ – Using our Church Bells

It may never have come to your notice that our parish is richly blessed with bells. Those in St Nicolas’ Church are the oldest. The three small bells at St Michael’s have recently been restored and are now in use thanks to a generous legacy from a devoted member of that congregation. In the summer of 2006 the then Bishop of Reading (now Archbishop of York) blessed the new bells in St Helen’s tower. Add to that richness a thriving group of bell-ringers of all ages, and you realize that we are fully equipped to make a ‘merry noise unto the Lord’!

You probably don’t know that the way we use of our bells, however new or old, however many or few, is a matter of the Church’s Canon Law and therefore part of the law of the land. **Canon F 8.1** says this: *‘In every church and chapel there shall be provided at least one bell to ring the people to divine service’*. (It adds in **F 8.2**: *‘No bell in any church or chapel should be rung contrary to the direction of the minister’*.)

In regard to those canons there is no question about the provision of bells, as I said in my opening paragraph. There is, though, a question about the phrase ‘to ring people to divine service’. My experience in the parish is that the practice is haphazard when it comes to ‘ringing people to divine service’. In all of our churches there is a least one bell which can be rung without difficulty by just about anyone cued as to the ‘how’ and ‘when’. The ‘how’ depends a bit on the bell itself and its situation; in each church that differs. The ‘when’ is clear in the Canon: *to call people to divine service*. That can only mean to ring the bell(s) *before* the service begins. Nor does the canon differentiate services, usual or special, on Sundays or weekdays, in the morning or in the evening, or for services big or small.

In a society where so few know or even notice the church, and where Christians fret and moan about making the Church and the faith known to others, it seems odd to me that we don’t make canonical and better use of the bells of our churches. The ringing of the bell or bells alerts people not just that we are here but that we are ‘alive and kicking’, that is, that something is going on in our church(es), that people are involved and that others should know that and are welcome to ‘come and see’.

I write this to encourage and promote “ringing people to church” across our parish. Each of our congregations should be supplied with people who can ring at least one small bell before any and every service. The clergy and licensed minister too, barring exceptional circumstances, should know how to do it too since there are indeed occasions when the clergy alone lead a service. It is my custom when present to ring the St Helen’s ‘sanctus bell’ from the tower ground-floor before daily services, before weddings, before funerals and before baptisms. Not only does it send a message to neighbours, townspeople and passers-by, it also lends dignity and a sense of ‘something special’ to the occasions. Surely that is both good and appropriate, as well as our bounded duty.

Our Parish’s Lay Leaders for 2022-3

Wardens

St Helen’s

Linda Hobbs

Geoff Meen

St Michael & All Angels

Louise Heffernan

Joyce Kelly

St Nicolas’

Eluned Hallas

The Parochial Church Council

Members

A R Birks

J Clare

S Read

G Lewis

J Fishpool

H Glennie

The District Church Councils

St Helen’s

Hon. Secretary

Gwen Bevington

Hon. Treasurer

Susan Read

Members

Alexandra Green

Alex Titcombe

Chris Jefferis

Elizabeth Simpson
Emmanuel Chukwuma
Geoff Meen
Gwen Bevington
Hazel Glennie
Linda Hobbs
Margaret Horton
Norman Gee
Peter Foster
Rob Bough
Sue Pemberton
Susan Read
The Revd Dr Charles Miller
The Revd Canon Charles Masheder
The Revd Jennifer Brown

Safe-Guarding Officer

Maria Gibson

Corpus Christi

Thursday 16th June 7 pm

Sung Mass

Preacher: The Revd Ross Meikle

Vicar of Redlands Parish Church, Reading.