



Thank you

Thank you to each one of you, for the part you have played in supporting the work of our churches across the benefice. Thank you particularly to our parish officers and ministry team for their ongoing service across our villages, churches and schools.

Many good things have taken place since our last AGMs and it is important to bring them to mind as we prepare to look ahead to a new administrative year in the benefice.

Connecting with each other

The opportunity to meet together for worship as a benefice has been strengthened as we have introduced our new service rota. We now have a well-established pattern of third Sunday United Services alongside our fifth Sunday services, when we listen to an invited speaker and share lunch together at the local pub or through a "bring and share" meal.

As you know North Wiltshire Deanery has been designated as one of three Mission Areas in the Diocese. Here in Draycot Benefice this has meant the opportunity to engage in a two year programme run by CPAS (Church Pastoral Aid Society) called "Thrive". This programme, designed especially for multi-parish benefices, seeks to help us establish ways to thrive as church communities. I am pleased that our strong team, from across the group, has enthusiastically moved this project forward. In February we held an Open Meeting to talk about strategic changes which will enable us to function more efficiently together. The findings from this meeting will inform the work of the group going forward.

Connecting with our community

Services to commemorate the festivals of the church year have been well attended by those on the edges of our churches; and we have had a significant number of occasional offices. This year we have a large number of weddings booked across the group and it is a blessing that we have our new administrator who is now dealing with the paperwork around occasional offices, as well as other matters of administration.

Our pastoral teams continue to take a lead in caring for those in need in our villages. In February we held our third Marriage Preparation Day and we have now begun Baptism Preparation Sessions too. In this way we are able to connect better with those coming to us at significant times in their lives.

Making disciples

This Lent our Lay Ministers are leading discussion groups on Saturday mornings. Thanks are due for the time and energy they have put into preparing the material and also to those who are hosting and attending these sessions. Our well-established Pilgrim Group continues to meet in Kington Langley, working with young parents who enjoy the Bible study and hospitality. "Church in the Week" also offers opportunities to think about faith, meeting monthly in Sutton Benger.

Growing leaders

At the end of June we will be receiving our curate Mark, who will be with us for the next three years. He is currently completing his initial ministerial training in London and will join us after his ordination on 30th June at Bristol Cathedral. He is not "a spare pair of hands" but a gift to us from the national church and in particular from the Diocese, who are entrusting him to us for the next stage of his formation. I

see his arrival with us as a sign of the trust the Diocese places in us all to be “good ground” in which Mark can grow. We will be sending him on in three years’ time to be an incumbent of his own parish/es and so we need to make sure that he is equipped for the role ahead. This will mean that he will be shadowing me a great deal, particularly in the early days as he learns about the role of a priest. Later I want him to have the opportunity to try new things, to experiment a little, and to have the opportunity to develop his skills and gifts. I believe that rural ministry is a great place to learn, and that Draycot in particular is an excellent training ground. With your help we can enable Mark to go on to become the priest that God is calling him to be. This is a responsibility and commitment which I am sure we can honour.

Engaging younger generations

Our third Holiday Club for Primary Aged Children took place in October and was well supported. Our benefice children’s choir is now very well established and continues to sing at services across the group. During Advent we again sent out our “Knitivity” Pilgrimage to schools, pre-schools and families. Most importantly we continue to support our village schools in many ways, as governors, and local board members, leading “Open the Book” and Collective Worship, through our Experiences and Trails, Worship Councils and Church Services. I see this work as being vital to our ministry here in Draycot – we have a responsibility to enable our younger generations to know about God’s love for them as they grow into the people God is calling them to be.

Connecting with God

As disciples of the risen Jesus we are called to connect with God and during the summer we took this theme as a focus for our United Services in August. We thought about different ways to pray; from the more traditional to the more creative. We also engaged with “Thy Kingdom Come” and set up prayer stations in each of our churches culminating in a Prayer Bear Picnic!

A 10 Years celebration!

In July Revd Evelyn will be celebrating 10 years of ordained ministry. We are thankful for her loving service here in Draycot Benefice and will miss her very much when she steps down from her role as Assistant Minister. On 15th July we will be holding a service of celebration here in Kington Langley followed by a “bring and share” lunch in the village hall.

I do hope that you will join Evelyn and Graham as we wish them well and as we thank Evelyn for the wonderful work she has done here among us. We pray God’s blessing on them as they make plans for the future.

Revd Alison Love