



St PETER'S
& St PAUL'S

Pastoral Letter - May 2018

As I reported in our great APCM last weekend I continue to enjoy the privilege and opportunities as your new vicar. The demands and responsibilities are sizeable and together with Julie, we covet your continued prayers in this all.

There are encouragements galore as I listen, learn, love and serve you. In the 13 weeks since joining you, I've enjoyed 308 individual 1-2-1 meetings, 43 meetings with couples, 17-group team meetings, and 11 outward facing meetings with key community leaders in our two village communities. There are endless natural and joyful opportunities for occasional offices and there is much that is needful and important to be about as your servant in this place.

One of my discernable convictions is the value of reflecting, renewing and refreshing many areas of church life. This program of works will, I believe, have our attention for at least the next two years or more as we address a mix of both the urgent and important. Working with the Leadership Team and PCC in this is a substantial and significant journey.

I'm so encouraged as I hear, see and discern the new engagement, participation, optimism and kingdom life that is amongst us. ***There's great heart as we better understand being one church family in two locations. Julie and I had great delight welcoming 184 guests in the four, coffee and cake events at The Vicarage.*** As a church we are being appreciated for the significant re-engagement with both our deanery and diocese. Most especially to have newcomers connect with ideas of God and trust us with their journey of faith, as well as returning prodigals, spouses and backsliders journeying to a new place with God is something special. ***We had a great first Easter together, and there's more heart for depth, scripture and Holy Spirit life together.***

Understandably challenges have been discovered. There are more than a few including our unfolding building annexe. ***Whilst we could get easily stuck on the old script of "we've always done it this way", we have a long-term journey of trust, understanding and a bright future to forge with our two village communities.***

In the autumn of 2017, the PCC, which is also the oversight body for the Kindergarten, made a commitment to undertake a review of the Kindergarten's structure and management by Easter 2018. There have been continued conversations with Sam Butler, the Acting Manager of the Kindergarten, throughout this period. Sam resigned from her position at the Kindergarten on 30th April; this may come as a surprise to you, as it did to us. As a PCC we have granted Sam gardening leave for the period of her notice to benefit her ongoing studies and future employment search. The PCC held an additional meeting this week and have agreed to recruit a new permanent Manager we seek to serve and advance our Kindergarten and the role it fulfils in our community as soon as possible. In the meantime we are pleased that Sarah Larkby, who was Sam's deputy has agreed to be the senior staff member responsible for leading our excellent team. Sarah will continue to oversee the setting until the appointment of a new manager is made. The PCC also agreed the establishment of a new Kindergarten Management Team to oversee this work on behalf of the PCC. Be assured that our intention remains to pursue best practice and the flourishing of children and families in our village communities through the Kindergarten.

Yes there's a lot on at the moment, and some of this is unavoidable, so where I'm not getting to be all that I would wish for and with you, might you forgive me? *Pray for the right appointment as our new Kindergarten Manager, our ongoing search for a Childrens Mission Leader, applications close on 31st May, and a new search for two possible Pastoral Apprentices to serve & grow with us.*

Might you note these dates for your participation and prayerfulness?

6-7th May, Thy Kingdom Come, Postcard 'big-drop' in our two villages

10-20th May 'Thy Kingdom come' prayer gatherings daily at 7am or 7pm

Tuesday 8th May at 8pm Hextable Village Consultation at St Peter's Church

Wednesday 23rd May at 8pm Swanley Village Consultation, at St Paul's Church

Monday 4th June at 8pm St Peter's Church future conversation at St Peters

8-10th June Church family weekend away at Ashburnham Place

Sunday 10th June, limited gathered Sunday worship at 0830 only at St Paul's Church

Monday 11th June – potential shortlist talks with our Children's Mission Leader candidates

Tuesday 12th June at 7pm – Building annexe walk-about tour, 7:45pm talks

Wednesday 13th June at 8pm St Paul's Church future conversation at St Paul's

Might you plan to come to the village consultation where you live, the church conversation that most relates to you and the building conversation on the 12th June? These three or more! Please pray for us in the many diary dates as we listen, gather up wisdom, learn and discern the clues of the people and the Holy Spirit, so that perhaps by early autumn, we'll be able to explore some of the ways we'll lean forward into 2019-2025.

Might you pray on for

- God's leading for us as a church family
- My capacity to build on good beginnings.
- God's help in the review and refresh of all areas of church life.
- More of the in-breaking life of God as we approach Pentecost.
- For openness and a desire that God will work afresh!
- More salvations, more of God's spirit at work in our lives...

In the words of Augustine, may we "trust the past to God's mercy, the present to God's love and the future to God's providence."

Love and thankfulness,

Johnny

